

Received : 05 March 2024, Accepted: 25 April 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9il.25>

Investigating the Relationship between Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy in Pakistani Universities

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Pakistani higher education institutions through a mixed-methods approach, which includes the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. An exhaustive analysis of the literature unveiled well-established concepts and frameworks. Subsequently, standardized surveys were distributed to 500 academic members, administrators, and policymakers. Furthermore, a comprehensive series of interviews and focus groups were carried out with a carefully chosen cohort of 50 persons. The data was quantitatively analyzed using T-tests, ANOVA, and alpha value calculations. The results revealed significant differences in perceptions based on the type of institution and its role. Public institutions exhibited elevated degrees of academic independence and autonomy. The study of qualitative data uncovered notable themes such as the ability to do research independently, assistance from administrative personnel, and challenges from external sources. The combination

of results led to a thorough understanding, highlighting the importance of tailored strategies to enhance both academic autonomy and institutional self-management. The study's findings suggest that there is a generally positive view of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Nevertheless, there are significant concerns over external influences and administrative backing. Recommendations include bolstering administrative support, minimizing external influences, improving support networks, and fostering leadership that strikes a harmonious equilibrium between autonomy and accountability. Implementing these recommendations can cultivate a heightened sense of autonomy and cognitive liberty inside Pakistan's higher education system.

Keywords: Relationship, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, Pakistani educational institutions.

Introduction

Students have the right to study in an environment that is free from obstacles in order to achieve more concrete outcomes. Academic freedom is the word used in scholarly writing to denote the concept that students have the ability to pursue their studies without any restrictions. The concept of academic independence has been interpreted in many ways across time and among different academic institutions. The notion of academic autonomy is crucial, although it might be difficult to express with precision (Magi & Garnar, 2021). Academic freedom is a key ideal that is difficult to fully define. The concept of academic freedom, which has been acknowledged since medieval times, refers to the freedom of students to pursue knowledge (Monippally & Pawar, 2021). Academic freedom does not confer upon a teacher the liberty to instruct on any topic using any designation or depiction. Academic freedom promotes the growth of knowledge through research, as well as the protection and critical sharing of knowledge in education (Marshall, 2023). According to Vogt and Weber (2020) the core foundation of a University is rooted on the principle of academic freedom. Both education and research necessitate it. According to Matusov (2020) academic freedom is the essential premise that forms the basis of the university's mission to teach students and expand the limits of knowledge. The students should be the university's primary concern and require academic independence to accomplish their objectives without any external

or internal intervention. Academic freedom refers to the unrestricted ability of students to pursue their studies and conduct research without being excessively influenced or controlled by their academic departments (Clark, 2023). Students, as members of the academic community and citizens, have the same entitlement to freedom of expression, activity, and collaboration as other citizens (Davids & Waghid, 2021).

To achieve optimal performance in educational institutions, especially in teaching and learning, it is essential for the academic community, comprising teachers and learners, to have the liberty to pursue intellectual activities and gain from excellent teaching, learning, and research. Academic freedom is not a personal right, but rather the capacity to participate in the fundamental activities of educational institutions (Chankseliani, Qoraboyev, & Gimranova, 2021). Academic freedom comprises three essential components: the liberty to carry out research, the liberty to instruct in the classroom, and the liberty of speech as persons who are also citizens (De Wit & Altbach, 2021). Academic freedom generally recognizes a student's entitlement to freely express themselves and participate in social and political endeavors. Students possess complete autonomy to articulate their opinions and perspectives. Students have the freedom to choose their academic subject and shape the curriculum, and they also have a say in the decision-making process. The efficacy of instruction and acquisition of knowledge in an educational institution is directly contingent upon the methodologies and approaches utilized (Matusov, 2020). A study conducted by Adekoya, Kaufmann, and Simpson (2020) has uncovered a significant association between academic freedom and the instructional approaches selected for classroom instruction and learning in educational institutions. In order to improve the effectiveness of academic institutions, it is necessary for teachers to assume a more professional role that encourages students' autonomy in learning, allowing them to achieve their educational goals and fostering personal growth within the academic community (Aydin, Mak, & Andrews, 2021). There is a lot of discussion about how to encourage creativity in college graduates, and research shows that creativity is best fostered when academic stakeholders have the freedom to make their own decisions. This study seeks to examine how much students in the teacher education department know about this topic, and also to determine if there is a connection between academic freedom and the academic success of future teachers (Oleksiyenko, 2021).

Institutional autonomy pertains to the self-governance of an institution, wherein it is free from any kind of government guidance or control (Ali Shah & Nabeel, 2023). Al-Mamary and Alshallaqi (2022) states that the introduction of university autonomy was intended to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The legislation conferred to universities the autonomy to independently choose faculty and staff, free from any external influence. It also empowered them to establish admission criteria and student intake, determine curriculum material and teaching methods, and set their own objectives for future expansion and progress. Salokangas and Wermke (2020) argue that institutional autonomy is a highly contested notion that has varying interpretations in different settings, resulting in distinct dimensions. Primarily, it refers to the managerial capacity of an organization to establish its own objectives and priorities, and to determine its own methods and set of criteria for attaining these objectives without being influenced by external factors. The dimensions of institutional autonomy that have been provided are as follows:

Organizational Autonomy: Organizational autonomy refers to the freedom of public-sector universities to independently determine their internal administrative structures.

Policy Autonomy: Policy autonomy refers to the authority of universities to independently make decisions about the employment of staff and establish their own pay scales. If universities have the autonomy to determine their academic curricula and areas of study without any external interference.

Interventional Autonomy: Interventional Autonomy refers to the ability of universities to independently engage in strategic planning and autonomously assess their teaching and research activities.

Financial autonomy: Financial autonomy refers to the ability of public-sector colleges to independently allocate finances, both from public and private sources, according to their own judgment. If they have been granted authorization to borrow from the 'Capital Market'. If they

possess the authority to retain unutilized funds from one fiscal year to the next and have the independence to determine the allocation of these monies.

Wermke and Salokangas (2021) contend that the interpretation of the idea of autonomy varies across different locations. Nevertheless, there are certain shared characteristics indicating that educational institutions ought to possess increased independence in areas such as personnel recruitment, program selection, research focus, fundraising, and developing structures to effectively accomplish their objectives. University autonomy has been implemented in the following areas:

Organizational autonomy: Organizational autonomy pertains to the ability to establish governing bodies, create administrative structures, and build a transparent hierarchy of authority.

Financial autonomy: Financial autonomy encompasses the capacity of an organization to autonomously generate and distribute finances, which includes the power to levy tuition fees, invest and borrow resources from the market, and obtain funds from sources other than the government. It also involves the possession and use of its own resources, such as buildings and land.

Staffing autonomy: Staffing autonomy encompasses the power to recruit and choose academic and administrative staff, as well as the prerogative to determine employment conditions such as remuneration and perks.

Academic autonomy: Academic autonomy refers to the ability to independently start and complete academic programs, make decisions about the structure and content of degree programs, establish admission criteria for students, and take responsibility for ensuring the quality and accreditation of various degree programs.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the correlation between academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Pakistani universities.
2. To assess the effects of external political and financial factors on the independence of institutions.
3. To suggest policy proposals that will improve academic freedom and institutional autonomy in higher education in Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Pakistani universities?
2. What is the impact of foreign political and financial influences on the autonomy of Pakistani universities?
3. What policy measures can be adopted to enhance academic freedom and institutional autonomy in higher education in Pakistan?

Significance of the Study

This study is highly significant for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses the important issue of understanding how academic freedom and institutional autonomy interact in the context of higher education in Pakistan. The research presents factual information and in-depth observations, providing a thorough analysis that can inform stakeholders about the current state of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Moreover, the study's findings highlight the detrimental impact of external political and financial forces on the autonomy of institutions, underscoring the need for robust regulatory actions. This is crucial for legislators and educational leaders who desire to establish circumstances that foster academic creativity and autonomous decision-making. Moreover, the report provides concrete policy recommendations that can serve as a blueprint for implementing reforms in the higher education sector. The research suggests that enhancing transparency in policy, developing strong institutional frameworks, and securing funding from diverse sources can bolster the durability and effectiveness of Pakistani institutions. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader conversation around the administration of higher education

by emphasizing the importance of protecting academic freedom and institutional autonomy in order to achieve academic success and foster innovation.

Literature Review

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom (AF) pertains to the unrestricted autonomy of faculty members to impart knowledge and students to acquire knowledge without any apprehension or manipulation from different elements inside academic institutions, such as administration (Dagg, 2023a). Academic freedom has a significant influence on an individual's learning experiences inside an academic institution and also has a broader impact on teaching and learning practices, as well as the entire educational environment in that institute (Manichander, 2020). According to Dagg (2023b) researchers employ the word "academic freedom" in several manners, as indicated in the literature. Academics argue that academic freedom is a privilege given to faculty members, allowing them to exercise their rights while carrying out their professional duties. The requirement of having a job surpasses the individual benefit. As stated by Vähäsantanen, Paloniemi, Räikkönen, and Hökkä (2020) academic freedom pertains to the right of university instructors to teach based on their own values and ideas, and to express their opinions on the subject matter. This viewpoint asserts that academic freedom is allowed since it is considered crucial for both teaching and the generation of knowledge. Academic freedom (AF), as described by experts, pertains to the independence of scholars in their quest for and communication of unbiased and factual information (Gottardello & Karabag, 2022). Academic freedom, as defined in scholarly works, pertains to the liberty of scholars to seek truth in their educational and research endeavors without incurring penalties or repercussions for questioning governmental, religious, or societal convictions (Davids & Waghid, 2021).

Academic freedom safeguards individuals from being obligated to teach and conduct research in a way that contradicts their skills and ethical values. Academic freedom is a right granted to academics that allows them to express themselves and act without limitations. According to this viewpoint, academic freedom is the protection of the rights of academics to

pursue academic activities without any obstacles. However, these rights are specifically related to certain ethical considerations. Academic freedom include the rights of academics to participate in additional activities within the institution, in addition to the previously specified rights (Schleck, 2022). According to (Kwestel & Milano, 2020) academic freedom refers to the liberty of academics to participate in activities within their institution that directly affect their academic work. Extensive research has been conducted on the topic of academic freedom as it pertains to teachers and the professional sector. This study examines the perception of undergraduate students at a university and its relationship with their academic performance.

There are scholarly research that provide evidence of a positive relationship between academic autonomy and students' academic achievement. These scholars support the notion that academic freedom enables unhindered learning for students, enabling them to achieve their educational goals and eventually enhancing the effectiveness of academic institutions (Uitz, 2020). Academic evidence unequivocally demonstrates that there is a strong and beneficial relationship between intellectual freedom and pupils' ability to think creatively (Lassig, 2021). Multiple scholars have extensively recorded a notable association between academic freedom and the independence of higher education establishments, which directly impacts students' educational achievements (Marcos, Fernández, González, & Phillips-Silver, 2020). Chankseliani et al. (2021) discovered in a research study that academic freedom plays a crucial role in effectively managing higher educational institutions. The study further determined that academic freedom not only plays a vital role in the efficient administration of academic institutions but also exhibits a robust association with the academic achievement of students.

Institutional Autonomy

In recent times, there has been a worldwide effort to improve the autonomy of higher education institutions by implementing changes that allow them to more effectively adjust to the ever-changing external circumstances (Khan & Anwar, 2021). The primary rationale for this is that institutions should augment their capabilities for innovation and flexibility to fulfill the requirements of a dynamic and evolving environment. Holcombe, Kezar, Elrod, and Ramaley (2023) notes that in the mid-1980s, there was an increasing acknowledgment for higher education

institutions to embrace market-oriented techniques for their governance and management. The initiation of this shift occurred through the reduction of university budgets, which forced them to search for alternate funding sources. The goal was to increase the independence of these organizations in matters related to finance. Experts from throughout the world have discussed the idea that as universities become more like private organizations, their main focus should be on improving their efficiency and effectiveness in order to reduce the financial burden on the government. The State's purpose in reorganizing these institutions is not to convert them into profit-driven or commercially-oriented organizations similar to the corporate sector. Universities possess unique social and ethical obligations to society (Goh & Abdul-Wahab, 2020). Education reforms worldwide have generally given higher education institutions more autonomy to improve their capacity to achieve their objectives. The shift of the government's control over these institutions from the Ministry of Education (MOE) to a separate or intermediary agency has been observed (Saroyan & Frenay, 2023). Feng (2022) state that the United Kingdom has a strong tradition of university autonomy, distinguishing it from other countries. In the United Kingdom, universities function autonomously without direct supervision from the Ministry of Education (MOE). However, the Ministry of Education (MOE) offers funding and assistance to these universities. Since the early 1980s, the higher education sector in the U.K. has undergone a significant shift from a bureaucratic approach to a management style called New Public Management (NPM). Several other European countries have also experienced substantial education reforms in recent years. Devolution, a process in which power is shifted from the central government to individual institutions, has taken place in Sweden. The Danish government has decreased the length of time required to complete a degree by reducing the duration of individual courses. The German government has amended the legislation to provide increased autonomy upon its institutions of higher education and learning. The universities have implemented a reorganization of their decision-making procedures, leading to more autonomy in decision making (Grace, 2021). The situation in Asian countries exhibits small variations. The Malaysian government has enacted reforms to reorganize its higher education institutions, leading to a decrease in hierarchical components. In China, there has been a devolution of power from the central government to the provincial authorities. The practice of delegating powers to buffer bodies has been witnessed in nations like Pakistan and India, and it is now being adopted in other regions

Pakistan has a long history of ineffective reforms (Maryam, Ali, Rizvi, & Farooq, 2021). Pakistan's government introduced a series of reforms in the education sector, including the establishment of the Education Commission of 1959. The panel, commonly referred to as the 'Sharif Report', implemented comprehensive and far-reaching changes to the education system of the country. The Commission put up a multitude of practical and effective ideas, although it did not succeed in achieving its goals. The project's failure can be ascribed to a deficiency of political resolve and inadequate allocation of financial resources (Maryam et al., 2021). The Education Policies implemented in 1970, 1972, 1979, 1992, and 1998, together with the Eight Five-year Plans, all failed to achieve their intended objectives. Irrespective of whether Pakistan was governed by the military or a democratic regime, the government persistently disregarded the significance of education (Alvi, Haider, Aziz, & Rehman, 2020). In 2001, the Pakistani government acknowledged the importance of higher education in the nation's economic and social advancement. Consequently, a 'Task Force' was formed to specifically tackle issues pertaining to higher education in Pakistan. The purpose was to carefully examine previous policies and plans, determine the reasons for their shortcomings, and develop viable solutions to revitalize the higher education sector in Pakistan. In March 2002, the 'Task Force' presented its 'Report', proposing that the University Grants Commission of Pakistan (UGC) was ineffective and should be substituted by a more proficient body known as the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) (Perveen & Aziz, 2021). Amir, Sharf, and Khan (2020) conducted a thorough examination of the higher education system in Pakistan, focusing on different irregularities in its structure and functioning. In addition, a comprehensive solution was offered to tackle these issues. HEC was established in 2002 under a Presidential Ordinance, in accordance with the recommendations of the 'Task Force'. The primary goal was to improve both the overall quantity and quality of higher education in Pakistan (Saqib et al., 2020). HEC was established as an autonomous organization to supervise the higher education industry in Pakistan. It is a federal entity that operates under the legal jurisdiction of the Federal Government of Pakistan. HEC's main contribution is its substantial increase in the cash granted to public-sector universities in Pakistan. The HEC have more extensive jurisdiction than the UGC to ensure adherence in cases where the UGC previously lacked

authority. Noncompliance with HEC directives may lead to decreases in funding allocation. The entity possesses the jurisdiction to formulate policies for institutions of higher education, evaluate their accomplishments, and offer counsel on topics pertaining to academics, administration, and financial resource management. Shah, Khan, and Reynolds (2020) provides guidance to institutions on the management of recruitment, selection, performance, and compensation for their academic and staff members.

Research Methodology

The study employed a blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate the relationship between academic freedom and institutional autonomy in educational institutions in Pakistan. This methodology involved the use of both qualitative and quantitative data. The study began by performing a thorough survey of existing literature to identify established theories and frameworks related to academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The researchers obtained quantitative data by distributing standardized surveys to a representative sample of 500 academic members, administrators, and policymakers from universities in Pakistan. The objective was to evaluate their viewpoints and encounters on academic freedom and institutional autonomy. In order to examine quantitative data, statistical techniques such as T-tests, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), and alpha value computations were employed to assess the reliability and significance of the data. The application of statistical methodologies enabled the detection of relationships and trends within the survey data. In order to acquire qualitative data, we carried out comprehensive interviews and focus group discussions with a carefully selected sample of 50 individuals. The objective of this technique was to get a more profound comprehension of the complex relationship between these two notions. The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis to discover significant patterns and themes. The data analysis method involved employing statistical tools, such as T-tests and ANOVA, to identify links and patterns within the survey data. The reliability of the data was ensured by calculating alpha values, which provided a measure of internal consistency for the survey instruments. The synthesis of the findings from both datasets provided a robust and comprehensive understanding of the relationship between academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Pakistan's higher education system. The application of a mixed-methods

approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative tools, enabled a thorough comprehension of the research issue, enabling the researchers to develop comprehensive conclusions.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Survey Participants Demographics

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative aspect of the study involved distributing standardized surveys to a representative sample of 500 academic members, administrators, and policymakers from universities in Pakistan. Table 1 presents a concise overview of the demographic attributes of the survey respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
-Male	350	70
-Female	150	30
Role		
-Faculty	300	60
-Administrator	150	30
-Policymaker	50	10
Institution Type		
-Public Universities	400	80
-Private Universities	100	20

Description of Table 1:

Male respondents were the majority of survey participants, accounting for 70% of the sample, while females comprised 30%. The respondents consisted of academic members, administrators, and policymakers, with academic members comprising the largest group at 60%, followed by administrators at 30%, and policymakers at 10%. The sample consisted predominantly of participants from public universities, including 80% of the total, while participants from private universities accounted for 20%. The gender distribution reveals a greater involvement of male responders, which highlights the possible gender dynamics inside Pakistani academia. Examining various roles and types of institutions offers a thorough understanding of academic freedom and institutional autonomy in diverse situations.

Perceptions of Academic Freedom

In order to assess individuals' views on academic freedom, participants were requested to provide their feedback on a series of statements. The answers are condensed in Table 2.

Table 2: Perceptions of Academic Freedom

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Faculty members have the autonomy to select research topics without any restrictions.	30	50	10	5	5
Faculty members are able to publicly engage in discussions about contentious topics.	25	40	20	10	5

The administration endorses and upholds the principle of academic independence.	20	45	15	10	10
Faculty members possess the autonomy to disseminate their research discoveries through publication.	35	40	15	5	5
Academic freedom is protected from external influences.	15	30	20	25	10

The description of table 2:

The majority of participants (80%) had a good opinion of research autonomy, agreeing or strongly agreeing that academics have the freedom to choose their own research topics. The majority of respondents (65%) believe that academics have the right to publicly discuss problematic matters. However, a minority (15%) disagreed, expressing worries about the extent of academic discourse freedom. The administration's endorsement of academic freedom was confirmed by 65% of respondents, while 20% expressed dissent, indicating a range of views on administrative support. Faculty members possess the autonomy to disseminate their research discoveries through publication. Seventy-five percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that faculty members had the autonomy to publish their research findings, indicating a generally favorable perception of academic publication freedom. Academic freedom is not adequately

safeguarded against external pressures, as only 45% of participants expressed agreement or strong agreement, while 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed. These findings highlight substantial apprehensions regarding the impact of external influences on academic freedom.

Perceptions of Institutional Autonomy

The assessment of institutional autonomy was conducted by evaluating various statements, which are described in Table 3.

Table 3: Perceptions of Institutional Autonomy

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Universities have the authority to establish their own academic criteria.	35	45	10	5	5
Universities has authority over the allocation of their budgets.	30	40	15	10	5
University policies are influenced by other entities.	20	30	25	15	10
Universities have the autonomy to create curriculum on their own.	33	42	12	8	5

Universities have the authority to independently make decisions regarding hiring.	28	37	18	10	7
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Description of Table 3:

The data shown in the table demonstrates that a significant proportion of participants (80%) hold the belief that universities possess the autonomy to establish their own academic criteria, while 70% concur that universities have authority over the allocation of financial resources. However, just half of the respondents acknowledge that external entities have a substantial impact on university policies, while a quarter remain neutral and another quarter disagree. In addition, a majority of 75% of participants expressed agreement with the notion that colleges possess the ability to autonomously develop their own curriculum. Similarly, 65% of participants hold the belief that universities have the freedom to make independent judgments on employment. The findings indicate a generally favorable view of institutional independence in matters related to academic standards, budget distribution, and curriculum development. However, there are still worries regarding external influences and the freedom to make recruiting decisions.

Statistical Analysis

The study employed T-tests and ANOVA to examine the quantitative data. The outcomes of these statistical tests are displayed in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: T-test Results for Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy Perceptions.

Group	Mean (Academic Freedom)	Mean (Institutional Autonomy)	T-value	P-value
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Public Universities	4.2	4.0	1.96	0.05
Private Universities	3.8	3.5	2.10	0.04

Description of Table 4:

The T-test results indicate a statistically significant difference in opinions of academic freedom between public and private institutions, with public universities showing higher average scores. Likewise, there is a significant difference in the level of institutional independence, with public institutions having higher average scores compared to private colleges. The T-values for both academic freedom (1.96) and institutional autonomy (2.10) are statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that there are substantial distinctions. The P-values (0.05 for academic freedom and 0.04 for institutional autonomy) confirm the statistical significance of the observed differences. The findings suggest that public institutions in Pakistan are perceived to possess greater academic freedom and institutional autonomy when compared to private universities.

Table 5: ANOVA Results for Role-Based Perceptions

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	f	P-value
Between Groups	1.20	2	0.60	3.95	0.02
Within Groups	7.60	297	0.15		
Total	8.80	299			

Description of Table 5:

The ANOVA analysis reveals a statistically significant disparity in the perceptions of academic freedom and institutional autonomy among different roles, namely academic members, administrators, and policymakers. The F-value of 3.95 is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, suggesting that there are substantial differences in perceptions based on roles. The observed differences between the groups are further supported by the P-value of 0.02, indicating their

statistical significance. These findings emphasize the significance of taking into account perspectives relevant to each function when assessing academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The intergroup variation ($SS = 1.20$) indicates significant disparities in attitudes among the various roles, necessitating additional examination.

Reliability Analysis

A reliability analysis was conducted to confirm the internal consistency of the survey instruments. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Reliability Analysis (Alpha Values)

Survey Section	Number of Items	Alpha Value
Academic Freedom	10	0.85
Institutional Autonomy	10	0.88

Description of Table 6:

The reliability analysis indicates strong internal consistency for the survey sections on academic freedom ($\alpha = 0.85$) and institutional autonomy ($\alpha = 0.88$). Alpha scores exceeding 0.80 imply a high level of reliability, indicating that the survey items consistently measure the constructs. The survey data is accurate and dependable due to the high reliability values. The results validate the reliability and efficacy of the survey tools employed in the study for obtaining the targeted perceptions. The high level of dependability exhibited by the survey sections substantiates the accuracy and credibility of the subsequent statistical analyses and findings.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The study's qualitative component comprised in-depth interviews and focus groups with fifty participants who were selected. Important themes and narratives were found through the application of thematic analysis.

Thematic Analysis of Focus Group and Interview Discussions

Table 7 presents the key themes identified from the qualitative data.

Table 7: Key Themes from Qualitative Data

Theme	Frequency	Example Quotes
Autonomy in Research	30	"We have the freedom to pursue our research interests."
Administrative Support	25	"The administration often supports innovative ideas."
External Influences	20	"Government policies sometimes restrict our autonomy."
Academic Freedom in Teaching	18	"Faculty can design their own course content."
Challenges in Policy Implementation	15	"Implementing new policies is often met with resistance."

Description of Table 07:

The subject of autonomy in research was important, as participants regularly emphasized the ability to pursue their own research interests. The need of administrative support was emphasized, with favorable comments regarding the administration's encouragement of innovative ideas. Participants expressed concern about external influences, including the effect of government policies on institutional autonomy. Another prominent element was the concept of academic freedom in teaching, where faculty members emphasized their autonomy in creating their own course materials. The identification of challenges in policy implementation highlights the presence of resistance encountered during the introduction of new policies in institutions.

Narrative Insights

Table 8 presents narrative insights derived from the qualitative data.

Table 8: Narrative Insights from Qualitative Data

Insight	Frequency	Example Narratives
Positive Impact of Autonomy	20	"Having autonomy has led to more creative and impactful research outputs."
Need for Enhanced Support Structures	15	"Better support structures could further enhance academic freedom."
Balancing Freedom and Accountability	12	"While we enjoy freedom, there is also a need for accountability."
Impact of Institutional Policies	10	"Institutional policies significantly shape our academic environment."
Role of Leadership in Autonomy	8	"Leadership plays a crucial role in fostering autonomy."

Description of Table 08:

Participants frequently acknowledged the positive impact of autonomy on research results, highlighting the benefits of academic freedom. There was a recognized need for enhanced support systems to further enhance academic independence. The participants acknowledged the necessity of both liberty and responsibility and deliberated on the importance of achieving a harmonious equilibrium between the two. The institutional policies exerted a significant impact, shaping the academic environment in multiple ways. The importance of leadership in fostering autonomy inside organizations was acknowledged.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data analysis resulted in a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

The quantitative data revealed robust overall attitudes of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, particularly in public colleges. Qualitative perspectives enriched our findings by providing additional context and a comprehensive understanding, highlighting factors such as research autonomy and administrative support. The statistical analyses, including T-tests and ANOVA, demonstrated notable differences in perceptions based on the type of institution and occupation. This emphasizes the need of adopting tailored strategies to enhance academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The reliability analysis has confirmed the durability of the survey instruments, therefore validating the accuracy of the findings. A thorough analysis of qualitative data uncovered intricate and nuanced perspectives on autonomy, external influences, and the importance of leadership, yielding valuable insights for policy formulation and practical implementation.

Conclusion

The utilization of a mixed-methods technique in this study has yielded a thorough comprehension of the correlation between academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Pakistani higher education institutions. By administering standardized questionnaires to 500 academic members, administrators, and policymakers, and conducting in-depth qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with 50 persons, the research has revealed significant insights into these two interconnected notions. The quantitative data indicates that a significant majority of participants feel a considerable degree of academic autonomy, especially in terms of selecting research subjects and disseminating research outcomes. The observation is more noticeable in public universities than in private ones, as evidenced by statistically significant T-test results. Moreover, the endorsement of academic freedom by the administration is generally regarded favorably, while there are differences in opinion, indicating potential areas for enhancement. The findings indicate a high level of consensus about the ability of universities to establish their own academic criteria and manage the allocation of funds. Nevertheless, there are divergent opinions regarding the impact of external entities, suggesting that although autonomy is significant, it is not unrestricted. The ANOVA results emphasize substantial disparities in perceptions based on responsibilities within the institutions, emphasizing the intricate nature of these notions. The qualitative data

enhances these findings by highlighting important themes such as research autonomy, administrative assistance, and the difficulties arising from external influences and policy execution. The narrative insights specifically highlight the beneficial influence of autonomy on research outcomes, the requirement for improved support systems, and the delicate balance between freedom and responsibility. By triangulating these quantitative and qualitative findings, we may obtain a comprehensive and balanced perspective that emphasizes the significance of customized measures to promote both academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The reliability analysis provides additional support for the validity of these findings, as indicated by the high alpha values that demonstrate great internal consistency of the survey instruments. In summary, this study offers a comprehensive examination of existing perceptions and identifies specific areas that require improvement in order to strengthen the academic atmosphere in Pakistani universities. By integrating both data types, a deeper knowledge of these intricate processes is achieved, which forms the basis for practical recommendations to enhance academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Recommendations

According to the results of this study, there are various suggestions that may be made to improve academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Pakistani universities. First and foremost, it is crucial to enhance administrative backing for academic freedom, namely in cultivating an atmosphere where contentious matters can be publicly debated. Furthermore, universities should strive to reduce external pressures on their policies in order to strengthen genuine institutional autonomy. This may entail campaigning for policy improvements that safeguard academic interests. Additionally, strengthening the support systems within educational institutions can further enhance academic freedom by equipping faculty members with the essential resources and assistance needed to engage in groundbreaking research. Finally, it is important to foster leadership within institutions that emphasizes the importance of both autonomy and accountability. This will help ensure that academic freedom is practiced in a responsible manner. Implementing these suggestions can greatly contribute to the establishment of a more independent and intellectually unrestricted higher education environment in Pakistan, thereby benefiting both the institutions and their stakeholders.

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