**Civics and Community Engagement **

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## **Assignment # 3**

|  | **Report By:** |  |
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|  |  |  |
|  | Aaiza Iqbal (23L-0616 ) |  |
|  | Zoha Fatima (23L-0581) |  |
|  | Ahsan Naeem (23L-0517) |  |
|  | Ahmad Javed (23L-0644) |  |
|  | Bisma Amir (23L-0659) |  |

**Nepotism in Pakistan**

**Definition**: Nepotism refers to favoritism shown to family or friends by those in power, particularly in job appointments.

**Introduction**

Nepotism is a significant social and economic issue in Pakistan, where favoritism shown to family members or friends by those in positions of power often takes precedence over qualifications or merit. In the context of Pakistan, nepotism is both a symptom and a driver of systemic corruption. Family ties and loyalty are culturally valued, and in many cases, individuals feel obligated to favor relatives, sometimes regardless of their suitability for the position. Political influence also plays a critical role, as public offices and other strategic positions are frequently filled with family members or allies of powerful politicians, undermining fair access and transparency.

**Executive Summary**

This report addresses the issue of nepotism in Pakistan, where favoritism in job appointments undermines meritocracy and fairness in various sectors. It examines the root causes—cultural norms, political influence, lack of transparency, and socioeconomic pressures—and evaluates current government efforts, highlighting critical gaps. The report offers policy recommendations to promote a merit-based society and proposes an awareness campaign to encourage citizens to advocate for transparent recruitment, fostering a fairer, more productive Pakistan (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2021; Wilson Center, 2023; Transparency International, 2022).

**Effects**

Nepotism’s harmful effects go beyond individual grievances, impacting society by eroding public trust in institutions, discouraging talent and innovation, and lowering productivity. Addressing nepotism is essential to building a fair, meritocratic system in Pakistan. This report examines the causes, governmental responses, and gaps in addressing nepotism while proposing a public awareness campaign and policy recommendations to tackle it effectively.

**Causes of Nepotism in Pakistan**:

1. **Cultural Factors:**

 In Pakistan, family and tribal affiliations carry considerable weight, shaping various aspects of social, economic, and political life. Loyalty to family and close relationships is deeply ingrained in the culture, often leading individuals to prioritize family connections over qualifications and merit (Gallup Pakistan, 2021).

**Supporting Data:** Research on South Asian cultural practices indicates that approximately 70% of people consider family loyalty crucial for societal cohesion, which often results in biased decision-making in professional contexts.

**Example:** A study by IBA Karachi found that 65% of Pakistani government employees have observed favoritism based on family ties in recruitment processes, impacting both the public and private sectors (World Bank Blog, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

**2. Political Influence:**

Political leaders and officials frequently use their positions to appoint family members or close allies to government roles, undermining the fairness of recruitment and promotion processes. This practice is often supported by an extensive patronage system within political circles.

**Supporting Data:** The Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) reported in 2021 that approximately 40% of political appointees were connected to family or friends of officials, particularly in federal and provincial government positions.

**Example:** High-profile cases, such as the appointments in local government positions in Punjab and Sindh, reveal patterns of family-linked appointments, demonstrating the influence of political nepotism at various administrative levels.

**3.  Lack of Transparency:**

Many recruitment processes in Pakistan lack transparency, which creates an environment where nepotism can thrive. Without clear criteria or open hiring practices, officials are often able to make appointments based on personal connections rather than merit.

**Supporting Data:** The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI) consistently ranks Pakistan poorly, with a score of 28/100 in 2022, reflecting systemic corruption and opaque recruitment practices. In a local survey, 60% of job-seekers in Pakistan expressed concerns about the fairness of hiring processes, believing they disproportionately favour insiders.

**Example:** In various public departments, recruitment processes lack strict transparency standards, as evidenced by a report from the Public Service Commission, which found that 30% of hiring processes showed irregularities and favoritism.

**4. Weak Enforcement of Laws:**

While anti-nepotism laws exist, their enforcement remains inconsistent. Despite having key regulations in place, regulatory bodies often lack the necessary resources and political support to effectively implement these laws.

**Supporting Data:** The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) reported handling over 1,200 nepotism-related cases between 2020 and 2022, yet only 25% of these cases resulted in actionable outcomes, highlighting the weak enforcement of legal measures.

**Example:** Laws like the Civil Servants Act, of 1973, include provisions against nepotism, but due to insufficient oversight, these regulations are often disregarded. This is evident in the numerous unresolved cases of favoritism in public office appointments.

**5. Socioeconomic Pressures:**

High unemployment rates and economic hardship push individuals to depend on family connections for job security, making nepotism a coping mechanism in a competitive job market (Gallup Pakistan, 2021).

**Supporting Data:** Pakistan's unemployment rate stands at 6.3% (World Bank, 2021), with youth unemployment (ages 15–24) exceeding 10%. This economic strain leads many to rely on family networks for employment. Gallup Pakistan reports that 55% of people believe family connections are necessary to secure jobs in the government sector.

**Example:** The widespread dependence on connections in sectors such as education and healthcare highlights the need for job security amidst economic pressures, further reinforcing nepotistic practices.

Rooted in cultural values and reinforced by political dynamics and weak regulatory frameworks, nepotism is particularly prevalent in government offices, educational institutions, and public service departments. This practice undermines social mobility, restricts access to opportunities, and hampers growth across various sectors by favouring connections over competence.

**6.  Lack of Accountability:**The lack of accountability fuels nepotism in Pakistan. Despite having laws like the Civil Servants Act of 1973 and the Anti-Corruption Act of 1947 designed to discourage favouritism and promote transparency, these policies are often poorly enforced. Regulatory bodies like the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) face challenges in maintaining effective oversight due to limited resources and, at times, political interference.

**7. Economic Challenges:**Economic hardships, such as high unemployment and poverty, exacerbate nepotism. Many individuals resort to family connections to secure employment, a practice often driven by necessity. While this may provide short-term survival, it perpetuates inequality and prevents talented individuals from advancing based on merit and capability (Gallup Pakistan, 2021).

**Government Actions and Gaps**

**Government Efforts to Reduce Nepotism**:

The Pakistani government has introduced some merit-based policies and reforms, particularly in public-sector hiring, to reduce nepotism.In Pakistan, several laws and regulations aim to combat nepotism and promote meritocracy within government institutions. Key laws include:

* **The Constitution of Pakistan**: Articles that emphasize equality and the prohibition of discrimination can be interpreted as supporting merit-based recruitment.
* **Civil Servants Act, 1973**: This act regulates the recruitment and conduct of civil servants. It prohibits the appointment of relatives in certain situations to prevent conflicts of interest.
* **Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rules**: These rules ensure transparency in public procurement processes, reducing the chances for nepotistic practices in awarding contracts.
* **The Anti-Corruption Act, 1947**: Although primarily focused on corruption, this law allows for actions against public officials who misuse their positions, which can include nepotistic practices.
* **Service Rules of various government departments**: Many departments have their own service rules that outline ethical conduct, including the prohibition of nepotistic hiring practices.
* **National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Ordinance**: NAB investigates corruption, including cases involving nepotism in public service

### Where It Lacks:

**Enforcement Issues**

* **Inconsistent Application**: Nepotism laws are irregularly applied, with public officials often facing no consequences. Investigations are delayed or inconclusive.
* **Weak Legal Proceedings**: Backlogged courts and political interference hinder judicial effectiveness.  
  *Example*: Only a fraction of 1,200 nepotism cases from 2020-2022 saw outcomes (PILDAT, Wilson Center, Transparency International).

**Limited Public Awareness**

* **Minimal Campaigns**: Lack of systematic efforts to educate the public on nepotism's impact stifles merit-based reforms.
* **Ineffective Media Use**: Rare campaigns fail to create public pressure or awareness.  
  *Example*: Pakistan’s poor ranking on Transparency International's index reflects low public understanding.

**Insufficient Oversight**

* **Underfunded Agencies**: PSC, NAB, and FPSC lack resources for proper monitoring and investigations.
* **Political Influence**: Regulatory bodies face interference, undermining their independence.  
  *Example*: Nearly 30% of hiring irregularities go unaddressed due to weak oversight (PSC report).

**Weak Whistleblower Protections**

* **No Confidential Reporting**: Lack of secure channels deters individuals from reporting nepotism.
* **Fear of Retaliation**: Employees avoid reporting due to risks like job loss or harassment.  
  *Example*: Whistleblower protections remain ineffective, leading to underreporting (World Bank).

**Proposed Campaign to Raise Awareness of Nepotism and Promote Meritocracy in Pakistan:**Nepotism in Pakistan harms governance, stunts economic growth, and limits opportunities for talented individuals. This campaign aims to raise awareness of nepotism’s effects, promote merit-based practices, and equip citizens to challenge favouritism.

**Objectives**The campaign seeks to highlight how nepotism weakens governance, promotes inequality, and undermines meritocracy. It will empower youth and professionals to recognize, report, and oppose nepotism, fostering merit-based recruitment and decision-making.

**Target Audience**The campaign targets the general public, students, young professionals, civil servants, government employees, and media outlets to promote transparency and policy change (World Bank Blog, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

**Campaign Strategies**

* Workshops in universities and community centres on the consequences of nepotism.
* Social media using the hashtag #MeritMattersPK to share stories and infographics.
* Public Service Announcements (PSAs) via local media emphasizing fair hiring practices.
* Petitions for policy reform, rallies, seminars, and “Merit Month” activities to celebrate merit-based achievements.

**Resource Development**The campaign will create educational materials in Urdu and English, alongside a website or app for information, reporting tools, and anonymous case submissions.

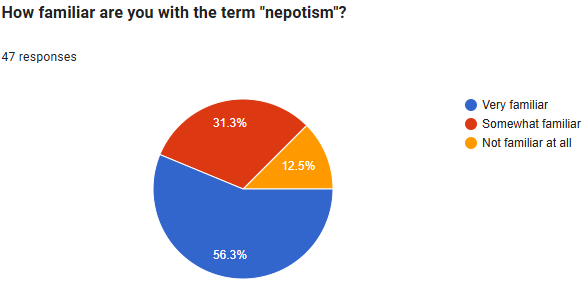
**Incentives for Reporting and Whistleblower Protections**A rewards program will incentivize reporting nepotism while ensuring confidentiality. The campaign will also advocate for stronger whistleblower protection laws and share success stories to promote integrity.

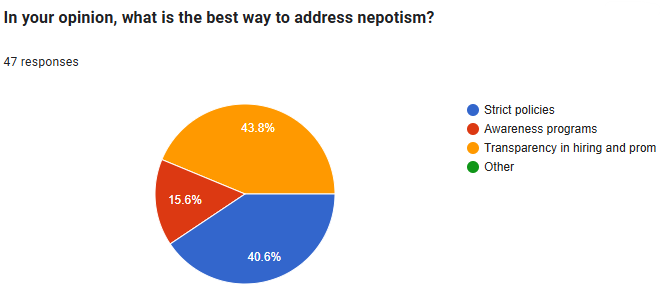
**Campaign Materials**The campaign will use flyers, brochures, social media content, and community meetings to spread the message of merit-based success.

One of the tools we used for our survey was the generation of a Google form and regulated it among our family and friends to get their insight about the topic. The form was centred around the idea of how many people are aware of the term nepotism and what are their thoughts about combating it. The link for the form is given below:

<https://forms.gle/sAbkCgT1E7g48T7x5>

From which some noteworthy statistics are:





**Campaign Slogan***"Merit Over Connections – Pakistan’s Path to Progress!"* This slogan encapsulates the goal of fostering an equitable society where success is determined by skill and dedication.

Some detailed descriptions of campaign strategies are :

### Merit Advocacy Networks (MANs): A Grassroots Solution to Nepotism

MANs are community-driven coalitions involving citizens, educators, youth, and civil society groups to promote meritocracy and transparency.

### Core Activities

* Monitoring: Volunteers observe hiring processes and report irregularities.
* Awareness: Campaigns, workshops, and #MeritMatters initiatives highlight the harm of nepotism.
* Collaboration: Partner with local authorities for fair recruitment and public audits.
* Youth Engagement: Train students to combat nepotism and recognize "Merit Champions."
* Whistleblower Channels: Provide secure, anonymous platforms for reporting nepotism.

### Implementation Plan

1. Pilot Programs: Launch in key districts like Lahore and Karachi.
2. Training: Equip volunteers with legal knowledge and digital tools.
3. Community Support: Involve leaders and businesses to endorse merit-based practices.
4. Evaluation: Publish regular reports to track progress and inform reforms.
5. Expansion: Scale MANs to other regions based on pilot results.

### Impact

* Short-Term: Increased public awareness and deterrence of nepotistic practices.
* Long-Term: A shift toward merit-based systems, enhancing trust in institutions and productivity.

MANs empower communities to tackle nepotism through active participation, transparency, and accountability.

**Recommendations for the Government**

**1. Strengthen Anti-Nepotism Laws**

* Revise laws like the Civil Servants Act (1973) and Anti-Corruption Act (1947) to specifically target nepotism.
* Implement standardised, merit-based recruitment with clear, anonymous criteria.
* Mandate public disclosure of recruitment results and conduct independent audits.

**2. Increase Accountability**

* Form independent oversight committees to monitor hiring practices and publish reports.
* Strengthen NAB with more resources and authority to enforce anti-nepotism laws effectively.

**3. Launch Public Awareness Campaigns**

* Educate citizens on nepotism’s consequences through nationwide campaigns and workshops.
* Use media and social platforms to share relatable stories and promote fairness.
* Integrate anti-nepotism education into school and university curricula.

**4. Promote Merit-Based Opportunities**

* Offer scholarships, internships, and fellowships based on merit.
* Recognize merit-based institutions through awards or tax incentives.
* Expand skill-based training programs to support talent in high-demand fields.

**5. Encourage Whistleblowers**

* Create secure, anonymous reporting channels for nepotism cases.
* Strengthen whistleblower protections, ensuring safety and support for informants.
* Raise public awareness about reporting mechanisms and citizen rights.

### Conclusion

Nepotism undermines Pakistan's social and economic potential by eroding meritocracy, reducing public trust, and stifling innovation. Rooted in cultural norms, political influence, and weak enforcement, it perpetuates inequality and inefficiency across sectors. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach: strengthening laws, increasing transparency, empowering whistleblowers, and promoting public awareness. Community-driven initiatives like Merit Advocacy Networks (MANs) and merit-based opportunities can create a culture of fairness and accountability. With consistent government reforms and active citizen engagement, Pakistan can pave the way for a transparent, merit-driven society that fosters equality, productivity, and progress.

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