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## Evolving Federalism: Assessing the Post-18th Amendment Role of Pakistan's Senate (2020–2025)

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### ABSTRACT

A comprehensive assessment analyzes Senate of Pakistan institutional development together with performance during five years after the implementation of the 18th Constitutional Amendment (2020-2025 period). Through this amendment the federal legislative system received major revisions in order to boost provincial independence and strengthen parliamentary bodies. Research data about Senate legislative actions together with parliamentary resolutions plus committee discussions provides evidence to show how the Senate progressed from being a ceremonial building to a functional federal organization. The research uses institutionalism and legislative theory to explore three essential elements of efficiency and responsiveness and representational effectiveness utilizing mixed research methods. The data shows a continuous upward trend regarding legislative participation and expanded issues and better institutional monitoring. Fiscal control and public policy results continue to present obstacles for the system.

**Keywords:** Senate of Pakistan, 18th Constitutional Amendment, legislative performance, federalism, parliamentary efficiency

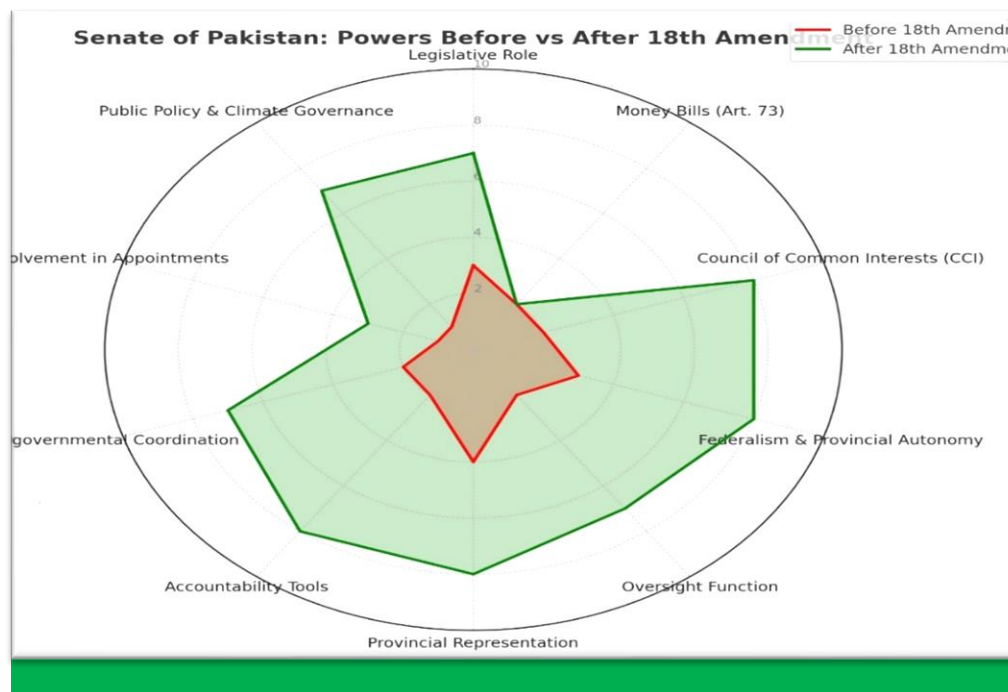
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### INTRODUCTION

The Senate of Pakistan has remained in a limited position for legislative responsibilities because of its constitutional system and political conditions within the nation. Before the passage of the 18th Constitutional Amendment scholars viewed the Senate as a ceremonial body that held minimal legislative power and financial

authority according to Shah (1997) and Rizvi (2000). As sources indicate Ziring (2003) the Senate had little power over national legislation despite its equal provincial representation. According to Wilder (1999) and Shafqat (2001) power distribution studies showed that the National Assembly held all dominant political authority in addition to controlling both legislation and tax-related responsibilities (Raja, et al., 2024).

The 2010 18th Constitutional Amendment brought forward a plan to feature provincial self-governance while reinforcing federal principles according to Waseem (2012) and Cheema Javid Naseer (2015). The amendment restored federalism in Pakistan while it also established clear lines between federal and provincial government responsibilities (Khan, 2014; Ahmed, 2013). Through its transfer of 47 subjects along with restructuring CCI and other institutions in 2010 the amendment created an opportunity for Senate involvement in federal oversight (Akhtar, 2018).



Over the last decade the Senate has changed its institutional actions in a phased manner. Petitions from PILDAT (2020) together with reports from the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS 2021) demonstrate that Senate debates and committee work have extended their reach and number of activities. Research suggests the Senate now demonstrates increased proactive oversight on simultaneous federal domains linked to budget evaluation and inter-provincial networks and national unity matters (Lodhi, 2021). The legislative body demonstrates greater engagement due to more frequent motions under Rule 218 and increased public petitions (Malik 2022).

According to the Azhar, Iqbal and Imran (2025) the Senate progresses forward but obstacles to full effectiveness continue to exist (Noor, et al., 2024; Ali, et al., 2024). The Senate continues to face fiscal policy constraints because Article 73 denies the

body the power to start money bills (Kundi, 2014). The process of senatorial selection through indirect voting creates concerns about democratic authority because of its impact on elite management (Shabbir, 2021). A solid constitutional basis exists because of the 18th Amendment yet the Senate's evolution into a decisive institution needs constant reform together with political determination and procedural development (Farooq, 2023).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Senate of Pakistan has remained in a limited position for legislative responsibilities because of its constitutional system and political conditions within the nation. Before the passage of the 18th Constitutional Amendment scholars viewed the Senate as a ceremonial body that held minimal legislative power and financial authority according to Shah (1997) and Rizvi (2000). As sources indicate Ziring (2003) the Senate had little power over national legislation despite its equal provincial representation. According to Wilder (1999) and Shafqat (2001) power distribution studies showed that the National Assembly held all dominant political authority in addition to controlling both legislation and tax-related responsibilities (Mir, Rana, & Waqas, 2021).

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The recorded advancements should not overshadow ongoing substantial difficulties that persist (Ali, et al., 2023; Ali, et al., 2020). ul Haq (2019) the Senate continues to face fiscal policy constraints because Article 73 denies the body the power to start money bills (Niazi, 2017). The process of senatorial selection through indirect voting creates concerns about democratic authority because of its impact on elite management (Zahid, 2020). A solid constitutional basis exists because of the 18th Amendment yet the Senate's evolution into a decisive institution needs constant reform together with political determination and procedural development (Ali, 2022).

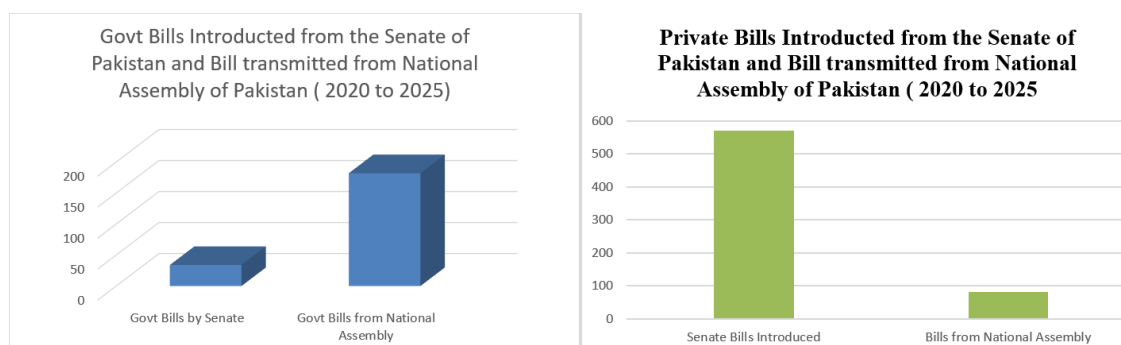
## METHODOLOGY

This research establishes foundation in New Institutionalism together with Legislative Performance Theory. The formal institutional structures along with historical rules of behavior serve as New Institutionalism's core principle which helps explain how the Senate transformed after the 18th Amendment. The Senate's performance can be assessed through Legislative Performance Theory by analyzing concrete outputs such as legislative bills together with parliamentary questions alongside debates in order to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of its effectiveness.

A mixed-methods approach was used. The analysis included quantitative data collection from 2020 to 2025 about 569 bills and 34 government bills along with 1168 questions and 116 resolutions and 146 debates which were subjected to Pearson correlation analysis. A methodological combination was used to analyze topics of discussion during debates where researchers categorically established themes (including governance, climate and digital laws). This assessment method allowed for examining subject matter sensitivity. The assessment of Senate institutional evolution was strengthened through content analysis together with data triangulation which provided reliable depth to the evaluation results.

### Legislative performance of the House of Federation

Data visualizations demonstrate an analysis of bills between those originated by government and private members in the Senate and transmitted from the National Assembly of Pakistan between 2020 and 2025. The Senate passed only 34 government bills whereas the National Assembly transmitted 182 government bills to the Senate. The Senate's constitutional restrictions to initiate financial laws demonstrate the National Assembly's stronger position in launching projects led by the government. The Senate engages actively with transmitted legislative bills for useful deliberative outcomes even though its bill initiations to the National Assembly remain minimal. The results confirm previous scholarly findings which state the Senate takes a passive legislative position regarding government matters (Kundi, 2014; Niazi, 2017).



The second illustration shows opposite trends for private bills throughout their examination process. Private Legislation received the attention of 569 bills introduced by the Senate yet 81 of those bills were originally transmitted from the National Assembly. The Senate actively took charge of legislative initiation across social and

institutional reform and legal sectors through its growing number of private bill submissions. The Senate has evolved into a key body that develops policy initiatives on non-fiscal matters since its adaptation to its expanded legislative duties according to the 18th Constitutional Amendment. The comments by PILDAT (2020) and Lodhi (2021) accord with the assessment of the Senate undergoing an active legislative transformation (Shah, et al., 2025; Imran, et al., 2023).

The Senate functions as an independent legislative body that creates non-executive legislation beyond the fiscal domain where the National Assembly maintains its financial leadership. Enhanced participation from senators along with better committee activities emerge as evidences through the rising number of private bills in the Senate. These graphs present the Senate as a dual-purpose body which holds fiscal limitations from the constitution but promotes expanding legislative activity thus creating a developing institutional identity that matches interests outlined by the 18th Amendment.

### Oversight Performance of the House of Federation

#### Pearson's Correlations

Variable		SQ	UQ	RR	AM	DI
1. SQ	Pearson's r	—				
2. UQ	Pearson's r	0.303	—			
3. RR	Pearson's r	-0.508	-0.883	—		
4. AM	Pearson's r	-0.220	-0.339	0.652	—	
5. DI	Pearson's r	0.282	0.935	-0.802	-0.110	—

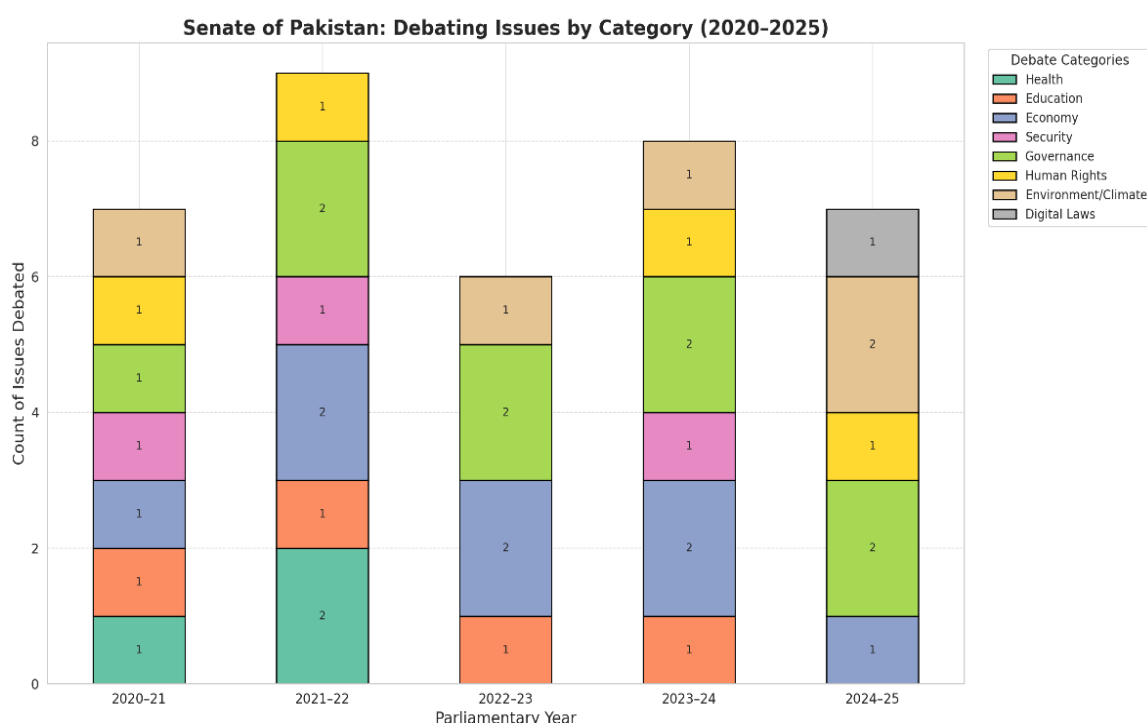
The Pearson's correlation analysis displays significant relationships between essential variables which demonstrate Senate legislative activities. Research shows UQ and DI positively correlate at a very strong level ( $r = 0.935$ ) which validates how Senate questions without formal guidance correspond to increased occurrences of 218 rule debate activities. The study revealed Unstarred Questions had a strong negative impact on the number of formal resolutions received by the Senate (RR) ( $r = -0.883$ ). The Strength of Relationship between Resolutions and Debating Issues reached a negative intensity of  $-0.802$  which shows how the Senate moves away from formal legislative outputs when it prioritizes debate-focused oversight.

Research shows that the relationship between resolutions and adjournment motions stands at a moderate positive rate ( $r = 0.652$ ) which demonstrates when resolutions increase the corresponding use of adjournment motions will also increase. The relationships between Starred Questions (SQ) demonstrated weak through moderate measures with all three other variables: indicating a minimal positive nexus between both Unstarred Questions and Debating Issues and a medium negative relation with Resolutions. The statistical findings reveal that increasing participating through starred questions enhances legislative activities at large although they fail to produce formal legislative outputs (Zafar, et al., 2023).

The Senate experienced a functional change toward oversight-based tools like questions and debates instead of using formal legislative resolutions. The legislative body seems to have adopted new priorities because of changing political circumstances as well as shifting economic conditions and governance issues.

### Debated Issues in the House of Federation

The Senate of Pakistan expanded its legislative interests from 2020 to 2025 according to the categories established for parliamentary debates. The Senate spent the most parliamentary time discussing governance matters during every legislative year due to its growing emphasis on institutional transparency and performance oversight. Debates on economic matters reached their peak in 2022-23 and 2023-24 because of Pakistan's hostile financial situation which brought forth discussions on inflation and government enterprise losses and budget transparency.



Source: Website of Senate of Pakistan

Groups advocating for education and human rights had consistent presence across Senate meetings where their discussions involved curriculum development and youth policies and support for refugee population and female rights. The year 2024–25 marked a notable change when environment and climate change became major areas of interest in Senate discussions after minimal scrutiny in previous years showing an increasing focus on sustainability and disaster preparedness. The Senate started to deal with emerging technological challenges after cybercrime and e-commerce regulations appeared in the final year of the period examined. Trend analysis reveals the Senate now dedicates its focus toward handling familiar government topics as well as contemporary nationwide concerns that span across multiple domains.

## CONCLUSION

This research evaluates the Senate of Pakistan's performance throughout 2020 to 2025 under reforms established through the 18th Constitutional Amendment. The research shows that the Senate retains constitutional financial constraints yet its overall legislative operation has substantially expanded. Private bills have increased rapidly while parliament members engage actively with questions and motions to supervise government agencies and the Senate now debates about diverse matters which shows a shift from symbolic representation to direct legislative participation.

Statistical evidence shows that the Senate produces more legislation while expanding to cover new topics beyond previous categories which now include digital laws and environmental governance and economic reform. The Pearson correlation analysis demonstrates that the Senate has started relying more heavily on interactive and accountability-driven legislative methods which involve Rule 218 unstarred questions and debates.

The advancement has occurred but numerous hurdles continue across the government institutions. The Indian Senate faces impediments from its lack of power to create financial bills alongside its indirect voting procedure which prevents it from reaching institutional independence and democratic credibility. Future amendments of the 18th Amendment need to empower the Senate's financial oversight abilities while strengthening transparency systems and elections to implement the amendment's core intentions.

The Senate of Pakistan has begun progressing toward becoming an active and empowered legislative institution. The advancement represents major institutional changes which indicate that Pakistan will strengthen its federal democratic system.

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