The role of administrative discretion in the coping behaviour of street-level bureaucrats in higher education institutions of Pakistan

S. Hania Batool Naqvi[1] | Yaamina Salman[2] | Sobia Hassan[1] | Maryam Gull*[3] | Kusrat Capraz[4]

1. Department of Public Administration, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan.
2. Institute of Administrative Sciences, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.
3. Department of Management Sciences, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan.
4. Department of International Trade and Finance, Sakarya University, Turkey.

*Corresponding Author Email: ms.maryamgull@gmail.com | maryam.gull@lcwu.edu.pk

Abstract:
Policies are created at the highest level, and street-level bureaucrats (SLBs) implement them at lower levels. SLBs work directly with citizens and exercise significant discretion in their service. According to Lipsky's theory, SLBs face various problems and use multiple coping techniques to deal with them. This study focused on the discretionary powers of the heads of departments (HODs) and the use of coping mechanisms when faced with challenges in enacting the semester system policy. The existing study used the theoretical model of coping mechanisms using a single-case research methodology to investigate the HODs of a prestigious public university's coping behaviour in implementing the semester system. Semi-structured interviews were employed to get the perspectives of HODs in this qualitative research. This study used the classification model of coping families developed by Tummers, Bekkers, Vink, and Michael (2015) and concludes that management has given HODs some task-discretionary authority for carrying out the semester system policy based on thematic analysis. The findings reveal that HODs move against the students rather than towards or away from them in coping behaviour. HODs strictly follow the semester system's policy by adhering to rigid rule-following.

How to Cite: Naqvi, S. H. B., Salman, Y., Hassan, S., Gull, M. & Capraz, K. (2024). The role of administrative discretion in the coping behaviour of street-level bureaucrats in higher education institutions of Pakistan. *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS), 5*(1), 135-159. https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.jhsms/5.1.8

1. Introduction

The annual and semester systems are two ways to categorize the educational system. A committee was set up by Pakistan's Higher Education Commission in 2003 to assess the nation's test practices. The committee recommended that the semester system policy be adopted by all Pakistani universities in its final report to the HEC in 2005. Since implementing the semester system policy in public and private universities, research has yet to be explored on the coping behaviour of teaching faculty (SLB) exercises using discretion while facing challenges in implementing the semester system. Michal Lipsky first used the phrase "street-level bureaucracy" in his 1969 in his article "Towards a theory of street-level bureaucracy." This phrase has been used frequently about organizational policies and has developed into a broad area of research for academics. A new version of Lipsky's famous book has shed light to the contribution of bottom-up methodologies in policy study (Brodkin, 2012).

According to Lipsky, street-level bureaucrats (SLBs) are "public service employees who directly interact with citizens in the course of their work and have substantial discretion in carrying out their duties" (Lipsky, 2010). Law enforcement officials, police officers, educators, public prosecutors, medical professionals, social workers, and other public servants are known as SLBs. They are authorized to access a wide range of laws and provide public services. When exercising significant discretion, SLBs act as both policy implementers and policymakers. They occasionally defy established regulations due to extreme discretion (Hadna et al., 2022). Front-line personnel coping skills are crucial for the efficient provision of services to residents in the field of public administration (Lipsky, 1980). Lipsky refers to these people as front-line employees in his ground-breaking study on SLB and advances the idea of coping (Lipsky, 2010). Lipsky claims that front-line workers or SLBs face stressful working environments or challenges, like severe workloads, resource constraints, and client conflicts. They use a range of coping strategies to deal with these circumstances.

According to Tummers et al (2015), public administration still needs to classify coping behaviour comprehensively and shows how families and employees cope while serving by filling the gap through the model. The behavioural strategies front-line staff use with clients to master, tolerate, or lessen the pressures and conflicts they encounter on a daily basis—both internal and external—are known as coping behaviours (Tummers et al., 2015). Coping is managing one's emotions and coping with daily stresses. According to Tummers et al (2015), coping strategies fall into three families: "moving away from, moving toward, and moving against clients." Rules can be bent, broken, used as tools, arranged among clients, and used individually for the client's advantage. Nine different coping mechanisms were identified in families which are "moving towards clients" were associated with "routinizing and rationing", "moving away from clients" with "rigid rule-following" and "aggression" with "moving against clients". The last two families may be considered behavioural coping, but there is no benefit to the clients.

The aforementioned coping family model was implemented in this study, and it was then used to analyze how HODs implement the semester system policy while utilizing proven coping mechanisms as an SLB. The study's goals are to specify department heads' discretionary authority in carrying out semester system policy, determine the difficulties HODs have when implementing the semester system, and look at the coping behaviour HODs use in dealing with problems during the semester system policy implementation.

The semester system has been the subject of numerous research (Jadoon et al., 2008; Singh & Kumar, 2016). Theoretical and practical studies on how teaching faculty use coping behaviour while implementing semester system policy still need to be conducted. This is the first study to examine how HODs in the teaching staff use their discretion to address issues generated by the semester system. The same theoretical framework for coping classification was used to examine SLBs in different circumstances with distinct rules (Tummers & Rocco, 2015). Evidence supports the idea that HODs react to difficulties differently depending on the situation. It can sometimes drive them toward, away from, or against students even though the semester system places additional pressures on both HODs and students. The study's central inquiry is: How do SLBs employ coping behaviour using administrative discretion while implementing policies? The broad question has two sub-questions: a) what administrative discretion do SLBs (HOD) exercise in the policy implementation of the semester system? and b) what coping behaviour ways do SLBs (HOD) employ to overcome problems during the implementation of the policy of the semester system?

2.   Literature review

This study examines how SLBs respond when administrative discretion is used to implement policies. The literature is reviewed in four areas—policy implementation, SLB, challenges to SLB in policy implementation, and coping mechanisms to address this. The details of these different areas are discussed below:

2.1.   The application of policy

Edwards (1980) pointed out that the implementation phase of policymaking, which occurs between the establishment of a policy and its outcomes for individuals, includes the passing of legislation, the granting of an executive order, the rendering of a court decision, or the adoption of regulatory rules. The numerous players in the policy process pay attention to putting the policy into effect when the designer constructs the policy instruments (Birkland, 2015). Implementing policy can be viewed as developing due to periodic adjustments in response to pressures and changing environments (Powell et al., 2009). According to a literature review, two schools of thought focus on policy implementation: top-down and bottom-up. The first is concerned with macro implementation, where middle-level participants develop government policies or programs, and the second is with micro implementation, where individuals or organizations respond to these programs and policies and decide how to carry them out (Matland, 1995). Cerna (2013) asserts that there are distinctions between these two schools of thought or viewpoints concerning actors, their roles, how they interact, and the kinds of policies they adopt in a particular context.

According to proponents of the top-down technique, policies are created by higher authorities and communicated to front-line employees, who promptly put them into practice (Fox, 1987). It focuses on variables under the control of higher management and those decision-makers at the top. The behavioural implementation element of actors and the critical role of implementers at the local level, as well as top-down models, were criticized by bottom-up models (Schofield, 2001). The desired population and service offerings are given much attention by bottom-up strategy theorists who maintain that local autonomy delegation leads to the formulation of public policy at the local level according to local needs. Because it sees the public policy from the perspective of service providers, therefore, this approach is more valuable in the execution

phase than the centrally controlled top-down approach (Abas, 2019). Michal Lipsky is credited with creating this bottom-up methodology and developing the term "Street-level bureaucracy" (Hill & Hupe, 2002).

2.2. Street-Level Bureaucracy (SLBs)

The domain of Public administration is always lively by the vital role of Street-level bureaucracy in the implementation of Policy (Lipsky, 2022). The term "bureaucracy" describes an administrative authority's organizational structures, procedures, and policies. On the other hand, "street level" represents the distance that the organization's higher authority is from the centre (Lipsky, 2010). Lipsky employs a common factor for street-level bureaucracies, such as welfare departments, legal aid offices, police, schools, and lower courts, where employees have much freedom in deciding which public rewards and penalties to impose. It also considers the possibility that street workers are only sometimes front-line employees who contact clients directly, such as when teachers interact with students in a classroom. A street-level bureaucrat is still seen as a street-level bureaucrat whether they speak with clients face-to-face, over the phone, or by email (Vedung, 2015). Nonetheless, most of the street-level bureaucrats are subject to the highly politicized bureaucracies and various institutional incentives (Zarychta et al., 2020).

SLB is a "sociological theory" that examines the various methods employed by front-line employees in public organizations to carry out public policy and how they apply their beliefs to their work. The theory is based on the premise that public sector services are the welfare industry's risky, demanding, and dangerous coal mines (Cooper et al., 2015). The work of SLB fills in the gaps between the "policy as formulated" and the "policy as implemented." Street-level bureaucracy incorporates the paradox of handling individual cases when appropriate while treating all individuals equitably in their claims to the government (Lipsky, 2010). In the theory of SLB, the concept of discretion is essential to how policy is applied (Mutereko & Chitakunye, 2015). Contexts and processes decide whether it is suitable to employ discretionary power in conjunction with policymakers to optimize client requirements. The corporate culture, structure, and professional function can occasionally influence the responses to launch policy, and resilient higher education institutions can face enormous challenges in many situations (Gull et al., 2023).

2.3. Administrative discretion

In the literature on policy implementation, SLB and discretion have received a lot of attention (Tummers et al., 2009). According to Hupe and Hill (2007), discretion is the ability of public servants to choose between different options for action and inaction. According to Tummers and Bekkers (2014), discretion is the excessive allocation of resources during policy implementation and the capacity to make decisions on one's own. Administrative discretion was defined by Scott (1997) using either worldwide or micro perspectives. From a broad perspective, discretion is connected to the expanded latitude that a public entity has in making judgments. A micro perspective, by contrast, concentrates on the choices made by field workers on the front lines or street levels. One perspective asserts that administrative discretion empowers public servants to respond to residents' needs (Sowa & Selden, 2003). However, because of their discretionary power, public employees can alter implementation policies against the wishes of policymakers (Reddick et al., 2011).

2.3.1. Typologies of discretion

There are numerous categories of administrative discretion. Despite their diversity, they do not all conflict with one another. Below is a list of the numerous discretionary categories identified in the literature.

a) Decision-making under states of high uncertainty

Shapiro (1983) asserts that bureaucrats can make decisions despite a "high and equal level of uncertainty" regarding the results of specific policy ideas. They can occasionally feel secure in the course of action they have taken. Still, they can occasionally go through a state that makes them wonder whether their chosen plan will be successful. They try to use decisions taken in comparable circumstances in the past (Angervil, 2017).

b) Task discretion

The administrator's responsibilities are closely related to his discretionary power. According to Taylor and Kelly (2006), task discretion also applies to "priority setting" or to "thematic statutes or lottery statutes" when the government has prioritized objectives. When policymakers do not issue specific directions, task discretion refers to decisions made by administrators to lessen the burden and enhance performance over time (Shapiro, 1983).

c) Administrative discretion to enhance implementers' predilection

"Street-level bureaucrat discretion" refers to administrative discretion made at a lower level of an institution. According to the street-level method, officials create rules, regulations, and procedures to deal with issues that come up when policies are being applied. When an organization has few resources or its policies could be more precise, bureaucrats use their discretion to craft regulations and procedures to deal with these problems. By compelling those receiving social services to follow the rules and laws to get benefits, they exercise their significant discretionary influence over them (Lipsky, 1980).

2.3.2. Prominence of street-level discretion for awareness of policy execution

Lipsky provided SLB's "power position" a lot of attention. The organization's acceptance of bureaucrats' discretion directly affects their position of authority. SLBs are different from lower-level workers in that they have great flexibility in determining the kind, scope, and form of incentives and sanctions imposed by their organizations. Teachers have the authority to determine, for example, which students will be suspended, which ones can attend class, and which ones cannot. Second, it is up to the police to decide whether to detain, exemplary, or release a person with a verbal or written warning once they are detained for obnoxious behaviour (Lipsky, 2010). The SLB has the freedom to interpret the regulations when implementing the policy, as articulated by Stensöta (2011), which qualifies them de facto as "bureaucratic policymakers."

Both "top-down" and "bottom-up" methods of implementing policy must take into account the concept of discretion in street-level bureaucracy (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002). The practical implication of discretion is not favoured in the top-down approach. In a bottom-up approach,

discretion is evaluated differently. In specific cases, SLBs may exercise discretion but cannot circumvent broad norms, rules, and regulations because they support the policy program democratically and help it function efficiently. Additionally, they typically have a finite amount of time, money, and rules, norms, and regulations to use in enacting policy; as a result, SLB must use its discretion to decide which resources should be used and which rules to apply in the particular context in which they operate (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2000). Numerous works have explained SLB in various ways at their discretion after Lipsky's idea. Strong and weak discretion are two distinctions (Evans & Harris, 2004). Vital discretion is typically used by professional organizations, such as doctors, who determine the criteria for decision-making and then decide based on those criteria. On a different continuum, weak discretion involves a set of guidelines or norms; SLBs are permitted to make decisions but only follow specific guidelines (Gilson, 2015)SLBs deal with clients with great discretion, and they encounter a typical range of difficulties while implementing public policy.

## 2.4.	Challenges faced by SLB in the implementation of policy

The pressure or stress front-line employees or SLBs experience when providing public service is a topic that receives much attention in the literature on public administration (Hassan et al., 2021). Front-line workers, including social workers, doctors, public servants, and teachers, occasionally struggle with heavy workloads and limited resources, as well as conflicts between client demands and needs and the rules and values of the organization (Lipsky, 2010; Tummers et al., 2012).

2.4.1. Inadequate resources

SLB operates in a setting with insufficient resources to complete the task. Different types of resource deficiency may exist. One of the under-resource issues is that there need to be more SLBs, yet they have many cases or clients compared to what they should be doing. They also have administrative duties like completing forms, which can speed up client service. Others could require additional soft skills, such as handling a demanding work environment due to insufficient experience or training.

2.4.2. Ambiguous Goals

As government entities frequently need their objectives to be more precise and consistent, SLB frequently needs more clarity when defining its activities. For instance, does the organization's function in the educational system consist of imparting specific knowledge and ideals or meeting employers' training requirements? The program may contain opposing viewpoints that were never reconciled when the program was designed, or an organization may have accumulated its objectives year after year without critically evaluating them and, if necessary, needed to develop them again to align with customer compliance. These and other factors are among the many causes of vague, ambiguous, or contradictory objectives.

2.4.3   Role conflict

In the opinion of Tubre and Collins (2000), a position is a pattern of behaviours that an employee believes to be anticipated. Tummers et al (2012) discuss the conflicts that frontline employees have when carrying out government policy. Role conflicts frequently occur when

employees on the front lines see a discrepancy between demand and policy. A common conflict is "Policy-client role conflict," which happens when front-line staff members believe that the client's demands (who want their needs or circumstances met) and the behaviour necessary for the policy to be implemented (such as strict adherence to the rules) are incompatible. To address these difficulties, institutions use control mechanisms to achieve their goals (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014).

2.5. Coping behaviour of SLB

SLB requires more information or more time to make decisions for citizens while enforcing public rules. When citizens are involved, the SLB's rules for carrying out a policy may only sometimes apply. Due to their high levels of autonomy, or "discretion," at work, SLBs create coping strategies or behaviours to be responsive. In response to job stress, front-line employees engaged in coping behaviour, known as " managing work stresses" (Lipsky, 1980). Mohammed (2022) proposes that, SLB in spite of being charged with immense responsibilities, they utilize coping ways to carry out tasks and serve to the requirements of clients.

By condensing their ideal representation of the job to a more realistic form, officials on the ground can change their core beliefs about their work. By establishing emergency preferences for the solution, classifying clients based on merit, giving more attention to the easy clients, such as creaming, and developing techniques to manage workload during service provision, they modify the conception of the beneficiaries (Ellis, 2011). Winter (2002) asserts that coping can help lessen workload and make the job more tolerable. According to Lipsky, who believes this conduct needs to be fixed, implementing policies and accomplishing the organizational aim is systematically hampered and distorted by SLB's coping behaviour.

Front-line staff members use behavioural attempts while interacting with their citizens to overcome, tolerate, or decrease the pressures and confrontations they experience every day, according to the notion of coping proposed by (Tummers et al., 2015). Three families of coping behaviours have been categorized in the study, and nine different ways of coping are included within each family. Moving towards the client is referred to as the first family, and it serves the client's interests. The second family, which moves away from clients, and the third family, which moves against clients, serve opposite clients' interests.

2.5.1. Moving towards clients

Street-level employees frequently pragmatically alter customers' requirements to assist them ultimately. It can be viewed as a coping mechanism used to the client's advantage (Tummers & Rocco, 2015). It is also linked to public service motivation, which illustrates front-line employees' willingness to provide meaningful public service even in confusing circumstances (Perry, 1996; Wright et al., 2012).

a) Rule bending

In the family of moving toward clients, "adjusting the rules to meet client demands" is the most common coping mechanism. It describes how front-line employees alter rules or regulations to satisfy client needs. Front-line employees' experiences implementing policies are fundamentally characterized by role conflict. It explains the rules and guidelines developed for

a policy incompatible with the needs and wants of beneficiaries (Tummers, et al., 2012). For the client to profit from the policy, rules are modified to deal with the role conflict (Tummers & Rocco, 2015).

b)   Rule breaking

Neglecting or purposefully impeding the rules in order to satisfy a client's requests is known as Rule breaking, and it is the second most commonly recommended coping style. It's comparable to the first approach. However, rules are intentionally broken for beneficiaries instead of the other way around.

c)   Instrumental action

In this family, the instrumental action is the third form of the coping behaviour. It is characterized by the implementation of durable solutions to resolve difficult circumstances and satisfy client requests. This action requires long-term perseverance, and there is enough time to find solutions.

d)   Setting priorities

Setting priorities among clients, such as "giving particular customers additional time, resources, or energy," is the fourth coping strategy in the list of coping strategies. Workers on the street level employ this method when confronted with a severe workload and a lack of resources. Consequently, treating every citizen with justice can be a challenging task. This coping mechanism works well for some beneficiaries or client groups but might need to work better for other residents.

e)   Utilizing personal resources

Utilizing personal resources is the final method of overcoming difficulties in this family, defined as "using one's own time, money, or energy to benefit the client." Even though this coping behaviour goes above and beyond what is required by their job descriptions, this type also applies to street-level workers who spend their time assisting consumers in meeting their requests. When employees use their resources, they can spend extra time and money (Tummers et al., 2015).

2.5.2. Moving away from clients

Moving away from clients refers to behavioural patterns when front-line staff avoid developing deep relationships with their clients.

a)   Routinizing

The first and most commonly mentioned coping method in this family is routinizing interacting with citizens in a standard manner. With a severe workload, employees on the ground endeavour to offer the same services to many citizens quickly. Receivers compromise the calibre of the services as a result.

b)   Rationing

The final coping strategy in this family list is rationing, defined as "decreasing service availability, attractiveness or expectations to clients or client groups." In this way, using public services created by bureaucrats at the street level is taxing for citizens. When extreme work pressure and staff have significant control over the accessibility of service delivery, rationing is frequently practised (Tummers et al., 2015).

2.5.3. Moving against clients

The front-line employees directly compete with the clients, as explained by moving against the clients.

a)   Rigid rule-following

In the family portrayed, one coping strategy is strictly enforcing the rules, even if it means ignoring the client's requests. The front-line staff adheres to the regulations. This method is the antithesis of breaking and bending the rules. When there is a contradiction between the demand and the policy regulations and the workload is heavy, SLB will employ this coping mechanism. To control their clients, particularly those beneficiaries who are particularly demanding or manipulative, front-line staff members typically adhere closely to set guidelines (Tummers et al., 2015).

b)   Aggression

The family's final coping mechanism is "hostilely confronting clients." Front-line employees routinely deal with aggressive clients (Barling et al., 2001). Nevertheless, aggressiveness is a pertinent link between workers and clients, and the client hostility is not the only source; the front-line personnel may also respond aggressively, according to Hershcovis & Reich (2013). The workers occasionally act violently to vent their dissatisfaction. As a result, the clients may not necessarily be the primary source of the stress that leads to the aggressiveness (Tummers et al., 2015).

Due to the availability of research on this topic, the coping families stated above were used in the context of semester system policy (Jadoon et al., 2008; Rahman, 2013; Singh & Kumar, 2016) demonstrate the theoretical and empirical gap that the researcher identified because no studies have been conducted on how teaching faculty use discretion to cope with difficulties when implementing semester system policy. Teachers, members of law enforcement, public servants, social workers, health professionals, and other public officials having direct contact with residents and complete discretion in handling difficulties can all be SLBs (Lipsky, 2010) because they have many choices in executing semester system policies, instructional staff like HODs were considered to determine the gap.

2.6.   Semester system policy

Higher education institutes provide advanced education services for individuals to learn high-level knowledge (Afni, 2024; Sitopu et al., 2024). To improve the standard of higher education and support research and development, HEC was founded in Pakistan in 2002. There is still

much to learn about the expansion and changes of colleges since independence. One of the examination system changes made by HEC in 2005 was the implementation of the semester system policy in Pakistani universities. The word's root is "menstrual," which means "six months." The semester system splits the academic year into two semesters. A semester is the term used to describe the six months students receive their education. Students can advance via this discussion of the system, presentation, task delivery, and midterm and final exams. According to Yousaf and Hashim (2012), since the semester system test was introduced in universities, there have been variances in the exam's approach, including semester tenure, paper setting, semester examination behaviour, and students' attitudes, discipline, and learning in the system. Some of the factors influencing the quality assurance of the semester system include unskilled staff, inadequate facilities, shortage of budget, below-standard feedback techniques, and incompetent institutions (Ullah, 2023).

3. Research methodology

The 'case study' method was selected as the research design to address the research issues. One public university's HODs serve as a single-case study group for this comprehensive investigation of the coping mechanisms that HODs use to administer the semester system while exercising individual discretion. For this research, a selected case study may be the best research strategy for various reasons. Yin (2003) believes that a case study is the best technique for contextual analysis when a contemporary occurrence is the main topic and it is set in a real-world setting. The phenomena of SLB utilizing discretion to cope with obstacles (under investigation) is not remote from its context (policy implementation) because SLB needs to meet challenges and cope with them during policy implementation.

This study examines how HODs coped with the introduction of the semester system. It also examines how HODs approach, sidestep, and engage students to deal with issues. Moreover, the case study research technique can be used to collect a variety of data types. Yin (2003) states, "The case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence documents, artefacts, interviews, and observations." Due to its adaptability, the case study is most suited to addressing the research issues through the gathering of data from the selected unit of analysis utilizing a qualitative approach (semi-structured interview).

Table 1: A quality check methods

Quality tests	Tactics used by the researcher	Stages of research
Construct Validity	• Creation of a literature review to operationalize the ideas. • key informants reviewing the interview guide for validity	• Pre-data collection • Data gathering (Pilot tests)
Internal Validity	• Explanation development • Use of the theme analysis approach	• Data analysis
External Validity	• Careful Case Selection • Use of Theory for Analytical Generalization	• Research design • Data analysis • Discussion
Reliability	With diligence, creating a case study methodology that includes an interview guide, a letter of permission requesting informed consent, and thorough documentation of data collecting constructing a case study database with care.	• Pre-data collection • Data collection

3.1. Case evaluation

The current study views HODs as a "critical" and "unique" circumstance to support the single-case analysis. The HOD is essential because it establishes the framework for applying SLB's well-designed theory when executing the semester system policy. It is also a unique problem because no research has been done to examine how HODs function when the semester policy is implemented.

3.2. Sampling method

Data was gathered through purposive sampling from the HODs. Purposive sampling aims to deliberately sample people or instances for the samples chosen to be pertinent to the research goals, (Bryman, 2016). HODs were selected for data collection because they are pertinent to the predetermined study topics, interact directly with students, and resolve issues by using their discretion within the semester system at the departmental level.

3.3. The sample size

Small sample sizes are likely to be emphasized in case study research. Its goal is to investigate a real-life phenomenon rather than draw statistical conclusions about a vast population (Yin, 2003b). The researchers chose 11 participants for this investigation. These 11 responses were from HODs and instrumental in implementing the semester system policy.

3.4. Strategy for research

For this study, the qualitative research approach was adopted. We can understand the thoughts and opinions of HODs on their ability to use discretionary powers and coping mechanisms to address issues that arise throughout the semester system, as well as how this behaviour causes them to act against, away from, or toward students.

3.5. Methodology of study

"A research method is simply a technique for collecting data"(Bryman, 2016). Because the study involved individual interviews, a semi-structured technique of data collecting using purposive sampling was adopted. We conducted in-depth interviews in which respondents responded to open-ended questions that allowed for debate to get rich information (Sultana, Ansari, & Ilyas, 2020). This method of qualitative interview was adopted because it allows interviewees to express themselves in their own words (Hassan, Ansari, & Rehman, 2022). The researchers interviewed HODs to obtain their perspectives on discretionary powers and whether or not they employ copying methods under the semester system. The interview guideline includes 11 questions about respondent discretion, problems, and coping mechanisms. The questions about copying methods were developed from (Tummers & Rocco, 2015) categorization model, as the author provided definitions in nine ways, which the researcher translated into questions with context alterations.

4. Analysis of data

Data from qualitative research were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. It identifies,

examines, and interprets themes or patterns in qualitative research data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Sultana et al., 2020). Creating codes, creating categories, and identifying themes are typically the three stages of thematic analysis (Gibbs, 2007). The interviews recorded as part of the data-gathering procedure were transcribed by the researchers, who then produced the written text of each interview. Researchers first created codes after carefully examining the interview transcript. Data coding is the process by which the researcher separates the data into its component segments and then gives each piece a label (Bryman, 2016). After coding the initial data, the second phase creates the categories. According to Wong (2008), this procedure assigns codes into categories and after developing categories, more prominent themes were formed.

Figure 1: Thematic analysis stages
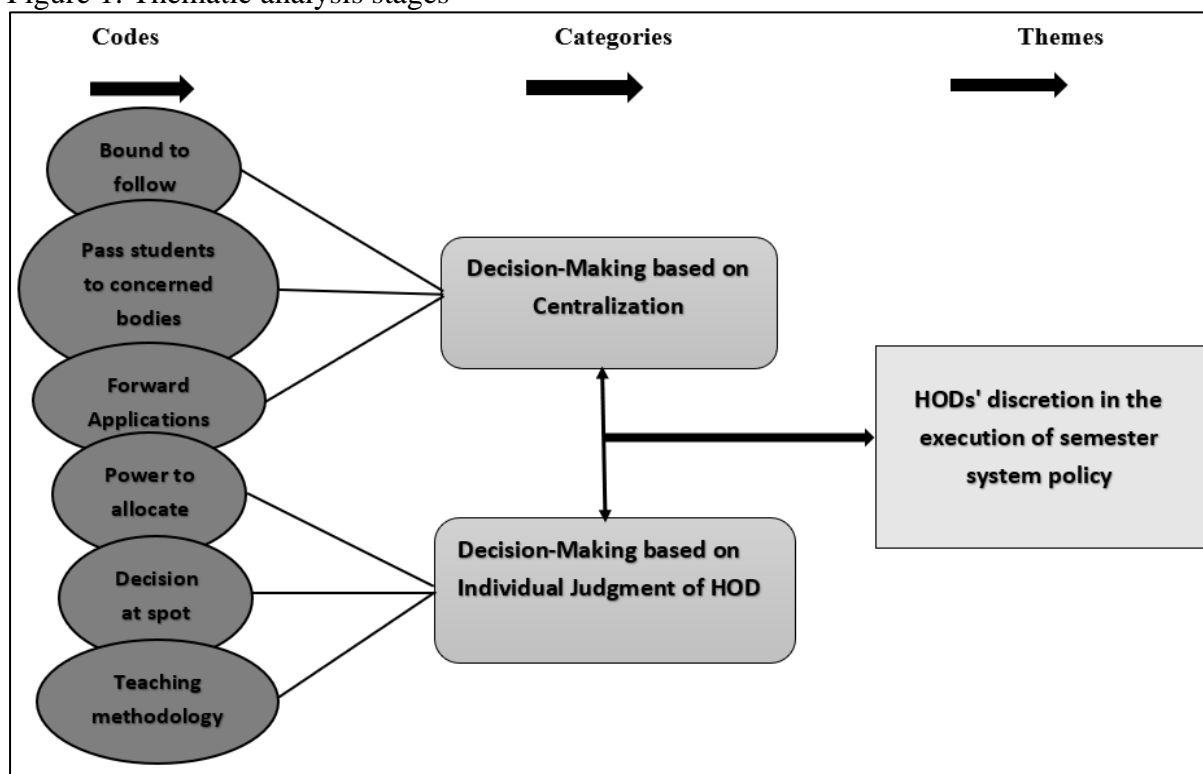
4.1. Theme 1: HODs' discretion in the execution of semester system policy

The subject of this study is the SLBs/HODs' administrative discretion in executing semester system policy. Some respondents claimed that our system is centralized. However, some respondents have decision-making authority based on individual judgment under the semester system. The following categories were created following the analysis of 11 interviews from the respondents:

4.1.1. Decision-making based on centralization

Interviews with HODs from several departments were undertaken. Everyone expressed how they defined discretion. Due to respondents' beliefs that they must adhere to the rules and regulations, this category was created. Like the academic calendar at the start of the year, the examination office provides all these regulations, and HODs must abide by them. Any unwise

action may have been brought to the attention of the university's higher authorities. One of the responses remarked that rather than making the decision themselves, they forward the student issues to the relevant bodies. One of the respondents said:

"As a HOD or faculty member, do not possess discretionary rights or authority in the examination system. All of the powers are set according to the exam rules. The problem is that the semester system has established rules, so why must a HOD use discretion? Second, there is a thorough procedure in place for how things operate, even in the case of exceptional circumstances, difficult situations, or inconsequential situations. After going through a process, the application moves to the exam branch for compliance." (HOD-02).

Some respondents claimed they need discretionary authority that can be exercised according to the circumstances. They cannot help students with problems; they must deal with them according to the regulations. One of the participants stated: "If a student takes frequent vacations, it is up to the exam branch to decide what to do about the missed lessons or absence. HOD can submit the student's application, but the exam branch will make the final call. HOD possesses no SPECIAL POWERS that allow him to make decisions dependently" (HOD-03). Most participants said they must get approval from the related authorities to make their decision official.

4.1.2. Decision-making based on individual judgment of HOD

This category draws attention to the influence of some respondents who value discretion in their decision-making. Regarding some departmental decisions, the HODs have the last say. The decision is then carried out in the department. The HODs also spoke about their authority, including their ability to run the semester system smoothly. The HODs chose the departmental timetable. The HODs can assign faculty members to various courses and modules.
One of the respondents said:

"The HOD has all the authority to properly manage the semester system since those at the operational level of the departments understand how to run it. HOD choose certain aspects, such as the timetable. They consider the faculty's convenience and how they prefer to run their classes." (HOD-04)

The HODs retorted that higher authorities had assigned some authority to ensure a successful semester. They believe the exam branch provides students with a time planner for their final and midterm exams; the department is responsible for setting up the rest, like discretion in making data sheets.

4.2. Theme 2: HODs employ coping behaviour to address challenges while implementing the semester system policy

This study also looks at how SLBs/HODs employ coping behaviours to respond to challenges throughout the implementation of policies. The HODs were questioned about their experiences utilizing coping mechanisms after the researchers adapted the model of coping ways. Each respondent gives insight into their difficulties with semester system policies and how they have applied those copying behaviours in various circumstances while exercising their discretion and authority. They were based on the idea that every circumstance is different and should be

handled differently depending on the department. The following categories were created after interview data was analyzed and interpreted.

4.2.1. Witness of moving toward students

This category states that problem-solving strategies are advantageous to the client. It includes priority, instrumental action, breaking and bending rules, and personal resources. Each respondent talks about these kinds of encounters. When the HODs were asked if they had ever adjusted the regulations to benefit or assist students in times of need, they said no. Most respondents stated that, as a HOD, they had no authority to change the rules. It must be done by exam branch officials, not even staff at the front line. However, just two respondents responded to the researchers about how they changed the rule to assist students. They believed they could alter rules according to the conditions to help the students. One respondent described how she modified the evaluation test for the student's benefit.

"Midterm exams are now decentralized, but it was previously conducted under the examination department" and adhere to their weekly dates. It is entirely up to the HOD to prepare a date sheet for that week. So, if a student cannot attend the mid-exam for genuine reasons, she given an assignment instead. Yes, this is an amendment in the rule because HOD assigned an assignment instead of a midterm." (HOD-01)

The researchers also acquired evidence concerning long-term solutions proposed by departmental HODs. The difficulties differ by department and necessitate different remedies. Two HODs responded to the researchers on how students in our department encounter resource constraints, such as a lack of classrooms. They solved the challenge by working together across departments, called it "intra-departmental collaboration". Through resource sharing, they built a plan at their level between HODs.

"A year ago, departments were facing the problem of a lack of space (classrooms)," remarked one respondent. HOD devised a strategy for sharing rooms with other departments. They share rooms with another department by locating the free slots, and then accommodate students in those classes. (HOD-07)

Using personal resources was the most practical means of moving towards students. Each respondent contributed to the student's success by devoting their efforts, such as working longer hours and utilizing personal funds from their pockets. Respondent Said:

"An example of this is my student who froze her last semester when I asked her, and she told me that she could not pay a fee for the semester," I told her she could finish the semester and paid her money." (HOD-01)

Some HODs also told the researcher that they assist students by submitting a fee, purchasing books or resources etc.

4.2.2. Witness of moving away from students

The examination of the interviews revealed evidence of the HOD's coping way of moving away from the students. When the SLB has a severe workload, "Routinizing and Rationing" are used

in this family. They usually attempt to contact clients in a standard way, such as through meetings or by telling them to wait. The HODs informed the researchers on how to deal with the circumstances when the work pressure is intense. The researcher has discovered more evidence of rationing than of routinizing.

During data collection, some HODs informed the researchers that they are now dealing with a tremendous workload due to parallel semesters in progress and first-semester admissions having yet to begin. Classes, upcoming admissions examinations, ongoing semester exams— all these are workloads, along with students' issues, and they make themselves available to them when they get free. They do, however, make every effort to accommodate students. As a HOD stated:

"The internship viva are going on, and most of my classes could not commence on time." As a result, I organize make-up classes as a priority. It is how I approach the matter." (HOD-04)

The researchers witnessed only one behaviour: routinizing work. One of the HODs responded: "Due to heavy workload along with administrative tasks, the quality of work suffers. We have demanding schedules of classes, administrative tasks and research at the same time. A solution to this problem is for the supervisor to have a less workload and fewer research students to manage." (HOD-09)

4.2.3. Witness of moving against students

Under the stated category, students' coping with challenges is against their benefits. It consists of rigid rule-following and aggression. The analysis of the interviews showed that practically every responder exercised rigid rule-following behaviour. They used aggression with the students only to enforce the rules firmly.

The HODs made a point of rigidly adhering to the rules and regulations, whether for the benefit of the students or not. The examination branch is authorized to change and create rules. They exclusively implement them because, according to the HODs, they are accountable for implementing the rules. One HOD stated:

"There was a student who was carrying cheating material. She had that piece of paper in her pocket. Her dishonesty was exposed. The department forwarded her matter to the investigation branch. genuine cases like these cannot be handled at the departmental level. "(HOD-04)

"If a student comes to us with an issue of frequent leaves without intimation," another respondent added, "we forward their case to the concerned officers to lessen our involvement." (HOD-10)

The HODs told the researchers that, to their frustration, they try not to be nasty toward the students. However, they considered that when students exploit teacher leniency against them, they must be strict with them. One of the respondents responded:

"I have never had anything like this before. It happened while teaching undergraduate students in the early years of my job. When I showed students the marked scripts, a student started acting out against me, saying that I had treated her unfairly by giving her less marks, and so

on. I was surprised. How does a student challenge our impartiality? I satisfied her with my detailed feedback" (HOD-06).

5.   Discussion and conclusion

The study used a single-case design to apply the (Tummers et al., 2015) classification model of coping families to the HODs to examine how they used their administrative discretion to move toward, away from, or against students. There are five ways to go toward clients: Rule bending, Rule breaking, Institutional action, prioritizing clients, and Personal resources. Two ways are included in moving away from clients: rationing and routinizing. The final family uses Rigid rule-following and aggressiveness to move against clients. The study was designed with two sub-questions based on the primary research issue:

a)   **What administrative discretion do SLBs (HOD) exercise in the policy implementation of the semester system?**

According to the literature, SLBs have solid and weak discretions when executing policies (Evans & Harris, 2004). This study validated the low discretion of HODS by using their judgments when making decisions. During the research analysis, this study found surprising and fascinating data that directly contradicted the SLB theory. The study discovered the viewpoint of some of the HODs that they are executing policy in a centralized system. Many control authorities manage student-related issues, such as the exam branch, student affairs, and student council office. The study observed that HODs must abide by the rules and can only help students by suggesting them to the appropriate authorities. Because policies are created by higher authorities and disseminated to front-line personnel, who implement them without discretion, these findings confirmed the top-down approach reported in the literature (Fox, 1987). According to the discussion, it can be deduced that the semester system policy can be implemented using the SLB theory. The HODs are given discretionary authority as part of their duties. However, the amount of discretion depends on the policy at hand and the number of powers that higher authorities have granted to be used in policy implementation.

b)   **What coping behaviours do SLBs/HODs employ to overcome problems while implementing the semester system policy?**

The main goal of this study is to examine how SLBs as HODs cope with the difficulties of using discretion when implementing the semester system policy at a higher education institution. The study discovered that HODs face a variety of difficulties in the semester system, including the workload in the system, role conflicts between students and examination rules, a lack of resources, and student financial issues (Lipsky, 2010; Tummers et al., 2012). This study discovered that HODs employ nine coping ways to execute the semester system policy. Each way they exercise has its problems and must be solved according to the circumstances of the semester system. The empirical utilization of nine coping behaviours by the HODs involves moving either toward, away from, or against the students.

5.1.   Witness of moving towards clients/students

Regarding evidence pointing toward clients, SLB is frequently seen adjusting clients' requirements to assist them, and clients may benefit from using it as a coping practice. Five

coping behaviours are practised in this family: rule-bending, rule-breaking, prioritizing among clients, instrumental action and personal resource. HODs deal with various problems and cope by utilizing these coping behaviours, but one of the main challenges HODs face is students' financial issues; the study revealed that personal resources were the most practical method inside the specific family (moving toward clients). HODs support students by spending their money.

In keeping with the concept of moving towards clients, one coping behaviour "rule bending" that has been documented in the literature is that SLB bends the rules or regulations to accommodate client demands to resolve a role conflict and enable the client to benefit from the policy (Tummers et al., 2015). The research found minimal evidence related to rule-bending because HODs had a perspective that in the semester system, we do not get any authority related to discretion to alter or amend examination rules and regulations. With the help of the literature, it was discovered that SLBs experience role conflict when the demand and the rule are incompatible(Tummers et al., 2012) and the study came to an unexpected conclusion when the HODs had to deal with the problem of incompatibility between the demands of the students and rules. They amended the assessment test rule to help the students cope with this challenge.

Another instance of "rule-breaking" inside the former family documented in the literature involves SLBs who purposefully flout the law rather than collaborating with beneficiaries(Tummers et al., 2012). This study did not support the idea that HODs utilized examination rule-breaking as a coping mechanism to help the students. Although no one could break the regulations of the test branch, the HODs had a strong opinion on this since they could amend it according to the circumstances but not break it.

The previous family's practice of "prioritizing among clients" is another coping mechanism SLBs use to deal with overwhelming workloads and limited resources. Because SLB invests time, effort and resources in specific clients, this approach benefits sure clients more than the remaining citizens (Tummers et al., 2015). The study found evidence of prioritization between MS and PhD students due to a lack of resources; for example, when there is a seating area issue in the department, to cope with the problem, we provide less resources for MS students and give PhD students a priority, including the best resources and more time for their quality work than other students.

Another approach inside the former family is "instrumental action." The SLB uses this coping method to implement long-term solutions based on severe issues for an extended period (Tummers et al., 2015). The current study validated this approach since HODs used their discretion to create departmental-level solutions to the persistent problem. The study discovered an intra-departmental collaboration method within instrumental action to deal with the issue of resource shortage, such as in a classroom.

SLBs' utilization of their "personal resources" is the last method of coping used inside the family. They practice coping with the challenges by exercising their money and extra hours above the job description to support the client (Tummers et al., 2015). This is the most functioning one found in the research. HODs utilize their money to assist students who are having financial difficulties. Each HOD revealed their experiences helping students undercover using their own pocket money. The research found that HODs support the students with semester fees, book purchases, and pay for photocopying, scanning, or printing.

5.2. Witness of moving way clients/students

The literature shows that SLBs move away from clients to avoid significant interactions with them. Two coping methods are stated in this family: Routinizing and Rationing. While there is a heavy workload and the SLB has control over the attainability of service supply, they act this way while implementing policies(Tummers et al., 2015). The study found evidence that HODs often adopted rationing behaviour to deal with work pressure and seldom became unavailable to students. The literature supported this behaviour of SLB to limit client demand by asking them to wait or referring them to higher authorities (Vedung, 2015).

In this coping family, routinizing is the first coping mechanism SLB employs to deal with the problem of the heavy workload. SLB uses a standard way to treat clients by attempting to offer numerous citizens the same level of services, making it a matter of routine (Tummers et al., 2015). The research analysis did not support the coping method of HODs in the semester system because every student face challenges and needs help to resolve them in a standard way. When facing the challenge of a heavy workload, they employ rationing behaviour rather than routinizing. Surprisingly, the research only witnessed one routinizing behaviour in the semester system. During the semester system, they face the challenges of heavy work pressure because of dealing with various things simultaneously, including managing their time for classes and research supervision.

"Rationing" is the second or final coping mechanism in this family. When SLBs face extreme pressure in policy execution, they exercise this coping mechanism. In this way, workers at the street level lower client expectations and service availability. They only employ this behaviour when they have significant control over the possibility of service provision(Tummers et al., 2015). The study witnessed rationing behaviour in HODs' actions when coping with the workload issue. The study claimed that to deal with the pressure of work, they held waiting the students for some time but accommodated them later on.

5.3. Witness of moving against clients/students

This is the final family in the coping mechanism employed by SLB. The literature identified that SLBs exercise this behavioural pattern to include each other in confrontations with clients. Coping exercised by workers at the street level who are not serving the client's interests can help us understand this family, and this is the opposite of the client's benefit. SLBs utilize this coping mechanism when they face heavy workloads. Rigid rule-following and Aggression are the two coping behaviours defined in this family (Tummers et al., 2015). HODs strictly employed this action in executing the semester system. As stated by HODs, if the rules are against the students' interests or if the students are having any issues with the rules or regulations of the examination, we advise them to contact the concerned body. In the semester system, the investigation also discovered the aggressive actions of HODs with students.

The first coping mechanism, "Rigid rule-following," falls under the family of moving against clients. According to the literature, SLB adheres to rules or regulations that may not be in the client's best interests or go against them. SLB sticks to following the rules rather than bending and breaking them. They employ this coping mechanism (Tummers et al., 2015). This coping way was identified in the HODs in the semester system by the current study's analysis. Examination rules are against students' benefit or not; they follow them strictly. According to

this study, HODs more closely adhere to rules and regulations than rule bending or breaking for students. The literature demonstrates that SLBs rigorously adhere to regulations to make their work safer and simpler (Tummers & Rocco, 2015).

Aggression is the last coping way used within a family. SLB engages in adversarial dialogue with its clients in this way. According to the Literature, SLBs use aggression to ease frustration (Tummers et al., 2015). This study discovered evidence of aggressive behaviour on the part of HODs but stringent rule-following for students, such as failing to submit assignments on time. The study also found that clients can be aggressive toward employees at the front line and that students can sometimes become frustrated (Barling et al., 2001). Stress and burnout can also affect how street-level bureaucrats interact with their clients (Mikkelsen et al., 2023).

6.   Conclusion

According to the current study's results, HODs are more likely to move against students than toward or away from them to deal with challenges. When there is a role conflict between students and examination rules, HODs are more likely to adhere to the rules than to bend or break them. This research reveals some restrictions and future directions. This study is initially "gender specific." The researchers examined only female HODs' coping strategies for implementing the semester system. Because the institution chosen was a female university, female HODs were the unit of analysis. Therefore, more research is needed in which academics may apply the same theoretical model to various SLBs, such as social workers, physicians, police officers, lawyers, and lower court judges, employing both genders (female and male) and different policies in various contexts or scenarios.

Declaration of conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest(s) with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCiD ID

Syeda Hania Batool Naqvi   https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6174-1048

Yamina Salman   https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6103-4453

Sobia Hassan   https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6117-6905

Maryam Gull   https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5077-6729

Kusrat Capraz   https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7133-6052

Publisher's Note

IDEA PUBLISHERS (IDEA Publishers Group) stands neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in the published maps and institutional affiliations.

References

Afni, T. N. A. (2024). Problematika Pembelajaran Fiqih Di Kelas Iv Mis Darul Ihsan Sepinggan Pasca Kebakaran Tahun Pelajaran 2022/2023. *Lunggi Journal, 2*(2), 297-306.

Angervil, G. (2017). *Administrative discretion in public policy implementation: the case of no child left behind (NCLB)*: Florida Atlantic University.

Barling, J., Rogers, A. G., & Kelloway, E. K. (2001). Behind closed doors: in-home workers' experience of sexual harassment and workplace violence. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 6*(3), 255. https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.6.3.255

Birkland, T. A. (2015). *An introduction to the policy process: Theories, concepts, and models of public policy making*: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351023948

Brodkin, E. Z. (2012). Reflections on street-level bureaucracy: past, present, and future. *Public Administration Review, 72*(6), 940-949. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2012.02657.x

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford University.

Cerna, L. (2013). The nature of policy change and implementation: a review of different theoretical approaches. *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report*, 492–502.

Cooper, M. J., Sornalingam, S., & O'Donnell, C. (2015). Street-level bureaucracy: an underused theoretical model for general practice? *Br J Gen Pract, 65*(636), 376–377. https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp15X685921

DeLeon, P., & DeLeon, L. (2002). What ever happened to policy implementation? an alternative approach. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 12*(4), 467-492. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a003544

Edwards, G. C. (1980). *Implementing public policy*. Congressional Quarterly Press.

Ellis, K. (2011). Street-level bureaucracy revisited: the changing face of frontline discretion in adult social care in England. *Social Policy and Administration, 45*(3), 221-244. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2011.00766.x

Evans, T., & Harris, J. (2004). Street-level bureaucracy, social work and the (exaggerated) death of discretion. *The British Journal of Social Work, 34*(6), 871–895. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bch106

Fox, C. J. (1987). Biases in public policy implementation evaluation. *Review of Policy Research, 7*(1), 128–141. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-1338.1987.tb00033.x

Gibbs, G. R. (2007). Thematic coding and categorizing. *Analyzing Qualitative Data, 703*, 38–56.

Gilson, L. (2015). Michael Lipsky,' Street-level bureaucracy: dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service'. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199646135.013.19

Gull, M., Parveen, S., & Sridadi, A. R. (2023). Resilient higher educational institutions in a world of digital transformation. *foresight*. https://doi.org/10.1108/FS-12-2022-0186

Hadna, A. H., Listyaningsih, U., & Ihwanudin, I. (2022). To what extent have street-level bureaucrats used their discretionary powers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia? *International Journal of Public Sector Management*(ahead-of-print). https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-12-2021-0272

Hassan, S., Ansari, N., & Rehman, A. (2022). An exploratory study of workplace spirituality and employee well-being affecting public service motivation: an institutional perspective. *Qualitative Research Journal, 22*(2), 209–235. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-07-2021-0078

Hassan, S., Fiaz, M., & Asif, R. (2021). Public service motivation and quality of working life in public institutions: analyzing the moderating role of po fit. *Journal of Management and Research, 8*(2), 159-181.

Hershcovis, M. S., & Reich, T. C. (2013). Integrating workplace aggression research: relational, contextual, and method considerations. *Journal of organizational behavior, 34*(S1), S26-S42. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1886

Hill, M., & Hupe, P. (2002). *Implementing public policy: Governance in theory and in practice*: Sage.

Jadoon, J., Jabeen, N., & Zeba, F. (2008). *Towards effective implementation of semester system in Pakistan: Lessons from Punjab University.* Paper presented at the 2nd International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education, 1-3 December, 2008.

Lipsky, M. (1980). *Dilemmas of the individual in public services.* Sage Foundation.

Lipsky, M. (2010). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public service.* Sage Foundation.

Lipsky, M. (2022). A note on pursuing work on street-level bureaucracy in developing and transitional countries. *Public Administration and Development, 42*(1), 11–11. https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1969

Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *AISHE-J: The All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 9*(3), 77-90.

Matland, R. E. (1995). Synthesizing the implementation literature: the ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 5*(2), 145-174. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a037242

Maynard-Moody, S., & Musheno, M. (2000). State agent or citizen agent: two narratives of discretion. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 10*(2), 329–358. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024272

Mikkelsen, K. S., Madsen, J. K., & Baekgaard, M. (2023). Is stress among street-level bureaucrats associated with experiences of administrative burden among clients? A multilevel study of the Danish unemployment sector. *Public Administration Review*. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13673

Mohammed, A. R. (2022). Discretion on the frontlines of the implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme: Street-Level Bureaucrats Adapting to Austerity in Northern Ghana. *Public Administration and Development, 42*(1), 33–43. https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1905

Mutereko, S., & Chitakunye, P. (2015). Discretion and autonomy: public administrators dilemmas in the implementation of national curriculum statements. *International Journal of Public Administration, 38*(2), 143-155. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2014.934835

Perry, J. L. (1996). Measuring public service motivation: An assessment of construct reliability and validity. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 6*(1), 5-22. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024303

Powell, D. C., Stout, M., Naylor, L. A., Wilson, L. A., Infeld, D. L., Wenzhao, L., . . . Frasco, J. (2009). JPAE. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 15*(3).

Rahman, T. P. M. A. (2013). Perception of students and teachers towards semester system: a study in some selected degree colleges of Nagaon Town of Nagaon district of Assam. *Perception, 4*(1), 47-60.

Reddick, C. G., Abdelsalam, H. M., & Elkadi, H. (2011). The influence of E-Government on administrative discretion: The case of local governments in Egypt. *Public Administration and Development, 31*(5), 390-407. https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.615

Schofield, J. (2001). Time for a revival? Public policy implementation: a review of the literature and an agenda for future research. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 3*(3), 245-263. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2370.00066

Scott, P. G. (1997). Assessing determinants of bureaucratic discretion: An experiment in street-level decision making. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 7*(1), 35-58. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024341

Shapiro, M. (1983). Administrative discretion: The next stage. *The Yale Law Journal, 92*(8), 1487-1522. https://doi.org/10.2307/796185

Singh, V. K., & Kumar, P. (2016). Challenges in implementation of semester system in globalized world. *International journal of applied research, 2*(3), 89-91.

Sitopu, J. W., Khairani, M., Roza, M., Judijanto, L., & Aslan, A. (2024). The importance of integrating mathematical literacy in the Primary Education Curriculum: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning, 2*(1), 121-134.

Stensöta, H. O. (2011). Political influence on street-level bureaucratic outcome: testing the interaction between bureaucratic ideology and local community political orientation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 22*(3), 553-571. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mur062

Sultana, S., Ansari, N., & Ilyas, S. (2020). Conceptualizing the Perceived Meaning of Workplace Spirituality and Religion in Higher Education Institution. *Bannu University Research Journal in Islamic Studies, 7*(1), 35-46.

Taylor, I., & Kelly, J. (2006). Professionals, discretion and public sector reform in the UK: re-visiting Lipsky. *International Journal of Public Sector Management, 19*(7), 629-642. https://doi.org/10.1108/09513550610704662

Tubre, T. C., & Collins, J. M. (2000). Jackson and Schuler (1985) revisited: A meta-analysis of the relationships between role ambiguity, role conflict, and job performance. *Journal of Management, 26*(1), 155-169. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0149-2063(99)00035-5

Tummers, L., & Bekkers, V. (2014). Policy implementation, street-level bureaucracy, and the importance of discretion. *Public Management Review, 16*(4), 527-547. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2013.841978

Tummers, L., Bekkers, V., Vink, E., & Michael, M. (2015). Coping during public service delivery: A conceptualized and systematic review of the Literature. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 25*(4), 1099-1126. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muu056

Tummers, L., & Rocco, P. (2015). Serving clients when the server crashes: how frontline workers cope with E-government challenges. *Public Administration Review, 75*(6), 817-827. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12379

Tummers, L., Steijn, B., & Bekkers, V. (2012). Explaining the willingness of public professionals to implement public policies: Content, context, and personality characteristics. *Public administration, 90*(3), 716-736. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2011.02016.x

Tummers, L., Vermeeren, B., Steijn, B., & Bekkers, V. (2012). Public professionals and policy implementation: Conceptualizing and measuring three types of role conflicts. *Public Management Review, 14*(8), 1041-1059. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2012.662443

Ullah, H., Arshad, S., Akram, M., & Mahmood, W. (2023). Factors influencing Quality Assurance through Semester System at University Level. *Voyage Journal of Educational Studies, 3*(2), 17-30. https://doi.org/10.58622/vjes.v3i2.48

Vedung, E. (2015). Autonomy and street-level bureaucrats' coping strategies. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 2015*(2), 28643. https://doi.org/10.3402/nstep.v1.28643

Winter, S. C. (2002). *Explaining street-level bureaucratic behaviour in social and regulatory policies.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Boston.

Wong, L. (2008). Data analysis in qualitative research: A brief guide to using NVivo. *Malaysian Family Physician: The official journal of the Academy of Family Physicians of Malaysia, 3*(1), 14-24.

Wright, B. E., Moynihan, D. P., & Pandey, S. K. (2012). Pulling the levers: transformational leadership, public service motivation, and mission valence. *Public Administration Review, 72*(2), 206-215. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02496.x

Yin, R. (2003a). K.(2003). Case study research: design and methods. *Sage Publications.*

Yin, R. K. (2003b). *Case Study Research. Sage Publications.*

Yousaf, A., & Hashim, M. (2012). A case study of annual and semester systems of examination on government college of management sciences, Peshawar, Pakistan. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 2*(9), 53-60.

Zarychta, A., Grillos, T., & Andersson, K. P. (2020). Public sector governance reform and the motivation of street-level bureaucrats in developing countries. *Public Administration Review, 80*(1), 75-91. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13132