



## The Impact of Power Structure on Sustainable Ecotourism at Chitral Gol National Park Pakistan

Vol. III, No. I (2018) | Page: 197 – 207 | DOI: 10.31703/grr.2018(III-I).14

p- ISSN: 2616-955X | e-ISSN: 2663-7030 | ISSN-L: 2616-955X

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### Key Words

Policy  
Implementation,  
Power Structure,  
Sustainability,  
Chitral Gol  
National Park

**Abstract** *This research investigated the issues of power structure and government policies and its implementation towards sustainable ecotourism development in Chitral Gol National Park Pakistan (CGNP). Data was collected through unstructured questionnaires from staff members, community and tourists. The respondents were selected by using purposive sampling technique. Qualitative data techniques such as focus group discussion and in-depth interviews were conducted with the key stakeholders to explore the effect of policies, implementation and power structure on sustainable ecotourism. The results suggest that there is an imbalance of power structure and poor policy implementation that badly affect the sustainable ecotourism at CGNP. This study can be replicated in other National Parks to verify the findings of this study.*

### Introduction

This research project will highlight the latest research issues, regarding power structure and government policies and its proper implementation towards sustainable ecotourism development at Chitral Gol National Park (CGNP). Currently, it is evident from the current research published in various renowned articles, where numerous authors have discussed this issue and have argued about power structures and government policies and its implementations towards sustainable ecotourism.

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The current research has identified a conflict around the globe in between the local community, tourists and government organizations. Among them the most powerful proved from the current research are the government organizations, and how their power structure is affecting the local community and tourists.

Proper research is of the utmost importance, particularly at CGNP. As, this research will help in identifying the effect of the power structure on local community, tourists and its overall effect on the government policies and its effective implementation which ultimately can results sustainability in CGNP. Research gap from the literature review has been identified by the researcher. Therefore, further research is very important which need to be conducted in CGNP. This park is situated in District Chitral of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan.

### **Study Area: Chitral Gol National Park**

From the focus group discussion with the staff of Wildlife Department, it was revealed that CGNP is located in the Hindukush Range of Northwest of Pakistan Khyber Pakhtunkhwa neighboring Afghanistan. The total area is about 7750 hectares. This park was declared as protected area back in 1984. And since then is popular among the tourists and local community due to, its beautiful sceneries and Wildlife. Two tourist's lodges were built by the Wildlife Department at the top of the park. The staff members of the Wildlife department during the focus group discussion also revealed that approximately 2500 Markhor goats are living in this National Park. According to the local community members that other Wild animals also living here such as Black Bear, Siberian Ibex, Snow Leopards, Tibetan Wolf, Red fox, and birds such as Snow Partridge and Rock Partridge are also residing here.

### **Significance of the Study**

This is study will be highly significant and important for Wildlife Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular and other national parks in general. Because, it will highlight a very important issue of policies formulation and implementation, identified in the latest world research under study. The outcome of this research finds ways, how, to develop sustainable eco-tourism research policies and its proper implementation at CGNP.

### **Research Objectives**

This study proposes to identify the effect of the power structure on various stakeholders and its overall effect on government policy formulation and its implementation issues towards sustainable ecotourism at CGNP. 1). To identify the power structure that affects sustainable ecotourism at CGNP. 2). To identify

the effect of the power structure on the local community, tourists and its overall effect on the government policies and its effective implementation towards sustainable ecotourism in CGNP.

## **Literature Review**

In this section recent critical literature regarding policy formulation and implementation issues followed by power structure will be discussed in detail.

## **Policy Formulation and Implementation Issues**

The key question of sustainable ecotourism lies in the successful policy formulation (Benedetto *et al.*, 2016). The inputs from the researcher's in-respect of National Parks and protected areas are highly recommended for policymakers such as Wildlife Department. Sustainable tourism policies emerged as potential outcome which can result in economic growth in the form of employment opportunities, new businesses, protection of landscapes, wildlife and developing of National Parks (Castellani and Sala, 2010). However, by just discussing sustainable tourism policies the matter seems easy, but in reality it is quite difficult to implement them (Muangasame and McKercher, 2015). The effectiveness of the policies is directly proportional to its implementation. Muangasame and McKercher (2015, p. 4) Defines tourism policy as: "a progressive course of actions, guidelines, directives, principles and procedures set in an ethical framework that is issues-focused and best represents the intent of a community to effectively meet its planned development, product, service, marketing, and sustainability goals and objectives for the future growth of tourism." Dredge and Jenkins (2007, p. 170), further defined tourism policy and its implementation as "the process through which ideas and plans are translated into practice".

The involvement of different stakeholders such as tourism department, local communities, National Parks, Wildlife Department, research scholars in policy-making for tourism development can be an effective tool for sustainable tourism development (Muangasame and McKercher, 2015). Krutwaysho and Bramwell (2010), argue that the policy implementation stage is difficult and required results lead towards actuality and measurability of the policy, not just simply writing the policy. It is obvious from the fact that from the last 25 years sustainable tourism development policy has been defined and draft well in term of its objectives which has been driven by certain principles, however, the level of those objectives have been achieved still remain vague (Sharpley, 2014).

It is still not clear in the literature that policies and other notions in relation to sustainable tourism have really coped to convert tourism into sustainable tourism (Sharpley, 2014). However, Farmaki *et al.* (2015), identified two main areas that can be reviewed, first is the role of government in tourism policy-making and

secondly are the factors that can challenge its implementation. This can be a challenge for the government of KPK as to what extent they can implement tourism policies in order to develop sustainable tourism as it is not yet reported in the currently available literature. According to Yasarata *et al.* (2010), who argue, that the key assumptions in factors influencing sustainable tourism development are a challenge for the government and research scholars need to identify how to document the governmental policies and the power structure of the tourist destinations. The role of government in the development of tourism-related policies have been discussed during the last three decades (Farmaki *et al.*, 2015). The amalgamation of tourism and political science and its effects on the encouragement of research scholars in a way to investigate further politics of tourism (Farmaki *et al.*, 2015).

During the last 3 decades, research regarding political intervention in tourism has been increased and the number of authors' are agreed upon the three distinguished dimensions, namely public policy planning and development, analysis, Studies related to political economy, and research related to political stability and sustainable tourism development (Bianchi, 2002; Farmaki *et al.*, 2015; Hanqin Zhang *et al.*, 2002; Jordan *et al.*, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2012; Nunkoo *et al.*, 2013; Pechlaner and Tschurtschenthaler, 2003). Taking into consideration the relationship of the government with politics and state was considered as economic dimensions as compared to political construction (Farmaki *et al.*, 2015; Sofield, 2003). However, from the current literature as discussed earlier that in the context of tourism, very little contribution to the literature is available to identify governmental policies and implementations of those policies towards sustainable tourism development (Farmaki *et al.*, 2015; Hall, 2004; Yasarata *et al.*, 2010). This means that the main issue of developing sustainable tourism policies and power structures among various stakeholders including the local community, Wildlife Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Tourism Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is yet to be properly documented and implemented in the context of sustainable tourism development.

## **Power Structure**

Another aspect mostly considered, discussed and conceptualized by many researchers is the power structures and their impact on policy formulation and implementation issues. The contribution of power can play an effective role in social order and can be an outcome of social interaction (Church and Coles, 2006). In other social sciences subject's, power has been discussed frequently. However, in relation to tourism concepts very little literature is available in relation of power with tourism studies particularly, in implementing and developing policies for sustainable tourism (Church and Coles, 2006; Farmaki *et al.*, 2015).

However, Shaw *et al.* (2004), find discrepancies in the understanding of power among local community, tourists and government organizations. Certain studies suggest two main relationships of power, one with social networking and secondly with tourism policy development (Deng *et al.*, 2019; Gunn and Var, 2002; Hall, 2011; Liasidou, 2019; Pforr, 2006; Wang and Wall, 2007). In relation to tourism the concept of power, of interest further has been skewed to two more aspects; 'Power to' which design tourist activities and 'Power over' among the local community and local government (Damayanti *et al.*, 2019).

It is now clear from the literature that there is a link of power between the local, governmental and non-governmental organizations, who have an effect on the policy development, its implementation in relation to sustainable tourism development (Soulard *et al.*, 2019). However, it is obvious that the government always wants the most powerful stakeholders among all which seems not possible most of the time while designing tourism policy and path for its implementations. Therefore, development of sustainable tourism policies and its effective implementation required coordinating role of the government who can sustain the balance of interests among all stakeholders (Farmaki *et al.*, 2015).

Hence, the phenomenon of sustainable tourism development is not a straight forward domain to be accomplished, it is quite complex in its nature and involved multiple stakeholders in its policy-making and then how to implement those policies in its true spirit will be a challenge for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa tourism department. According to Bramwell and Meyer (2007), in western democracy, power is forcefully exercised by governments in relation to the development of sustainable tourism policies by private and public sector associations and investors.

Many authors hinted that sustainable tourism failures happen due to unnecessary focusing on their economic perspectives, political misdirection, terrorism and conflict of interest among various stakeholders (Donaldson and McKay, 2017; Elmahdy *et al.*, 2017). However, the influence of the humans on government, the social framework where tourism policies are developing can enhance sustainable tourism development (Farmaki, 2015).

Thus, the issue of policy formulation for sustainable tourism and then proper implementation of those policies developed in respect of sustainable tourism development seems less discussed in the available literature.

## **Methodology**

Qualitative data techniques have been used in order to explore the issues of sustainability in eco-tourism at CGNP through the lens of the power structure of various stakeholders. Moreover, this study will also suggest various policy recommendations to further develop and sustain the ecotourism towards CGNP. Data was collected from Wildlife department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, staff members

of the local office, members from the local community and tourists through focus group discussion and interviews (refer table 1). In order to explore the issue in-depth, the researcher mainly focuses on the following key questions during focus group discussion and interviews.

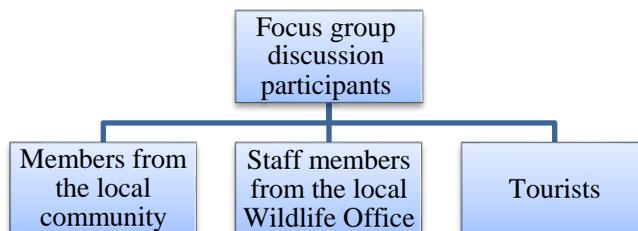
- Q.1 what is the power structure between the wildlife department and local community at CGNP?
- Q.2 how this power structure helps in protecting and sustaining CGNP?
- Q.3 what policy recommendations are essentials for further improvement in the sustainability of this National Park?

**Table 1. Details of the interviews**

S.No	Number of Interviewees	Description
1.	Five staff members of the Wildlife department take participation both in focus group discussion and in-depth interviews.	One subdivisional officer Two range officers Three Watchman
2.	Fifteen individuals were interviewed from villagers located near the park vicinity	All of them were residing near the National Park
3.	Ten tourists	Tourists were randomly interviewed

## Results

As designed earlier three main questions were asked during focus group discussion and in-depth interviews with various stakeholders (refer fig. 1) At Chitral Gol National Park: i) What is the power structure between the wildlife department and local community at Chitral Gol National Park?; ii) How this power structure helps in protecting and sustaining Chitral Gol National Park?; iii) What policy recommendations are essentials for further improvement in the sustainability of this National Park.



**Figure 1:** Participants of Focus Group Discussion

## **Discussion**

From the focus group discussion, only the main points relevant to this research project were extracted such as, majority of the stakeholders were agreed that the powerful stakeholder in this National Park is the Wildlife Department and they are trying to protect this park from encroachment and illegal hunting of Markhors goats and other Wild animals. However, some local community members during interviews revealed, “there is a dispute on the ownership of this park among the villages located in the vicinity of this park”. When further explores regarding the dispute, one of the community members replied, “governments have their own claims regarding the ownership of this National Park. But with the passage of time both parties come to an agreement on the ownership of this land” Some of the community members pointed that, “there is a lack of proper communication between the Wildlife Department and local community”. An elder from the local community member suggested, “the staff members and people in the local community need proper training on the National park act 2015”. Another local community member suggests that: “trophy hunting should be allowed and the income should be distributed among the local community and government.”

In order to further improve the security and easiness in the counting of Markhors goats, one of the watchmen suggests that: “Drone technology need to be used in counting and protecting Markhors goats from illegal hunting”. Another community member said that; “trophy hunting needs to allow as already permitted in Village Gamez of Toshii which is located about 15Km from Chitral city. Yet another community member pointed that: “20 rupees entry ticket should be charged for tourists and the amount then need to be distributed among the local community”.

According to Benedetto *et al.* (2016), tourism related business is emerging, particularly in protected areas, thus provides business opportunities for all stakeholders. One of the tourists replied that; “this National Park is very unique in its beautiful scenery, plus live watching of Markhors goats is also very exciting”. These kinds of activities will enhance business opportunities for the local and Wildlife Department.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This research project is very specific in terms of identifying power structure and its implementation towards the development of sustainability at Chitral Gol National Park. This park is mainly controlled by the Wildlife Department under the, ‘2015 Wildlife act’, of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This act gives ultimate power to the Wildlife department to control and manage this National Park and also preserve and protect the Wildlife animals living here. However, it is also important to understand the interest of the local community and tourists visiting this National

Park. As this National Park will be economically beneficial to all stakeholders in terms of generating money from various available options as recommended in the following paragraphs. Thus, there is a dire need of making policy by the government, which is inevitable in terms of sustaining growth of Wildlife, attracting tourists and collaborative distribution of power with villagers living near the Park vicinity.

Therefore, the following key recommendations extracted from focus group discussion and interviews will be a guideline for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife department to develop sustainable ecotourism model duly acceptable to all stakeholders. For proper security and counting of Markhors, Drones Technology should be adopted. The trophy hunting game will bring a huge amount of income to the locals as well as to the Wildlife Department. Tourist's accommodation facilities must be upgraded. Training on Wildlife act 2015 is also recommended for all stakeholders. Regeneration of plants must be initiated. Local community members also need to be encouraged to take participation in the decision making process.

The power of controlling the park also needs to be shared with the local community members. Thus, mutual understanding will be developed. Entry fee of rupees 50 for local and 200 for foreign tourists is recommended. Wildlife department needs to encourage proper communication in order to facilitate cooperation among local communities. Such kind of rules and regulations should be developed which plays its role in uniting all the stakeholders.

Alternative parameters must also be considered by the Wildlife department such as, making videos and pictures of Chitral Gol National Park and make necessary arrangement of advertising them on social media to attract foreign tourists as well

### **Limitations and Suggestions For Future Research**

The cost of this study was very high and therefore, it was limited to one national park. The cost of comparative study for another national park in the vicinity was beyond the researcher expenditure. This research study was only limited to qualitative research techniques were applied. However, quantitative data can also be collected in this area. As, this national park is located in Chitral district, which culture is different from other parts of the country and also international national parks around the globe. Thus, for other national parks, studies result might differ from this research study. It is also recommended that other marketing theories related studies can be conducted in this part to attract more and more tourists.

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