



Economic Innovation in Public Markets: The Case of Naveed Rafaqat and Punjab Model Bazaars Delivering Essentials Below Government-Set Prices

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ABSTRACT

The author evaluates Economic Innovation in Public Markets using the case of Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority (PSBA) to examine how the institution has been successful in offering fundamental commodities at a price that is lower than the government. It is made in a qualitative manner, as the researcher relies on the official government reports, legislation, third-party analysis, and independent media to examine the legal, financial, and operational performance of PSBA. The discussion gives radical modifications which were proposed by Ahmad such as dynamic pricing boards, market infrastructure which is powered by the sun, vendor systems which are friendly to women, mobile bazaars which serve underserved groups. The results suggest that PSBA has been performing better than old welfare institutions in terms of their affordability, efficiency and innovative governance-price relief to up to 35 per cent without any subsidies. As a model of economic power and market penetration PBS may be easy to institutionalise in other developing economies because it is legislated and transparent and responsive to the citizen. The study uses a documentary case study approach, triangulated with audit reports and media sources, to assess governance, innovation, and affordability outcomes.

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1. Introduction

Public sector retail in Pakistan has long been shaped by fiscal dependency, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and politically-driven subsidy programs. Most government-run interventions such as the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) have historically relied on billions of rupees in annual subsidies, yet failed to deliver consistent affordability or service transparency (Government of Pakistan, 2023). Amid this landscape, the transformation of the Punjab Model Bazaars Management Company (PMBMC) under the leadership of Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad emerges as a breakthrough case of economic innovation in welfare markets. Operating as a Section 42 company, PMBMC was initially conceptualized as a network of district-level bazaars aimed at easing price pressures on the general public. However, under Ahmad's strategic leadership, PMBMC executed a series of non-routine, scalable reforms that not only eliminated reliance on recurrent subsidies but also consistently delivered essential items at prices 7–10% lower than even the government-notified (DC) rates. Pakistan's longstanding reliance on subsidies for essential goods has placed immense pressure on fiscal resources without ensuring equitable access or pricing transparency. Despite numerous interventions, retail outlets such as the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) have struggled to meet affordability and operational efficiency targets. This governance gap opened space for a new public service model. The Punjab Model Bazaars Management Company (PMBMC), now Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority (PSBA), emerged from this policy vacuum with a distinct institutional structure and a subsidy-free pricing model. Under the leadership of Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad, the PMBMC introduced structural and legal reforms to institutionalize affordability and vendor inclusion through statutory authority, CSR-based procurement, and digital monitoring tools. This paper investigates how these interventions spanning procurement reform, digital enforcement, and inclusive vendor governance redefined affordability in Punjab's public retail markets and laid the institutional groundwork for PMBMC's

elevation into the Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority (PSBA), Pakistan's first statutory public welfare retail entity.

1.1. The Limitations of Traditional Public Retail Models

Historically, public sector price relief mechanisms in Pakistan have followed a top-down subsidy-based model. Institutions such as USC operated through direct fiscal injections from the federal government, with little focus on operational sustainability, vendor regulation, or data-backed enforcement. Auditor General reports have frequently flagged inefficiencies including:

- Supply chain leakages
- Ghost vendors
- Mismatch between subsidy volumes and consumer benefit

Moreover, provincial price control regimes were often reactive rather than proactive, lacking any standardized enforcement mechanism across districts. These failures created an urgent need for a financially autonomous, data-driven, and citizen-oriented retail framework.

1.2. The PMBMC Disruption: Original, Measurable, Scalable

PMBMC, under the leadership of Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad (then CFO and Acting CEO), rejected this subsidy-dependent paradigm and implemented a market-integrated welfare model. Instead of relying on federal or donor support, the company created a self-revenue system through controlled vendor licensing, reduced stall rents, and efficient procurement mechanisms. Key innovations introduced include:

- Direct producer and wholesale procurement, cutting supply chain costs by up to 18%
- Commodity prices pegged 7–10% below DC rates, verified daily by DG IPWM reports
- AI-supported digital dashboards for real-time price enforcement and vendor monitoring
- Solar-powered infrastructure reducing monthly utility bills by up to 90%
- Inclusive vendor programs: 30% quota for women, widows, senior citizens, and differently-abled individuals with 50% rental discounts
- Subsidy-free operations backed by board-sanctioned policies and quarterly audits

According to DG IPWM (2024), PMBMC markets were able to offer flour at Rs. 1,020 per 20kg (vs. Rs. 1,150 in open markets), red lentils at Rs. 260 per kg (vs. Rs. 320), and oil at Rs. 540 per liter (vs. Rs. 650+). These figures were not projections they were independently verified through official bulletins and third-party evaluations.

1.3. Data-Driven Transparency and Price Enforcement

Perhaps one of PMBMC's most important innovations was its real-time digital price display system, which enabled consumers, district authorities, and internal monitors to verify compliance instantly. Prices were uploaded every morning to an open-access platform, linked to bazaar LED displays and vendor apps. Price violations triggered automated alerts to the district enforcement cell, which, under Mr. Ahmad's reform policy, was authorized to revoke vendor licenses or impose fines within 24 hours. This automated enforcement loop replaced the outdated manual reporting systems, which had long been vulnerable to bribery, delay, and political interference. This approach also reduced the workload on Deputy Commissioners' offices, streamlining enforcement by integrating technology with regulatory practice.

1.4. Social Inclusion as Market Strategy

In addition to affordability, PMBMC reimagined public retail as a platform for inclusive economic participation. Under the revised vendor policy:

- 50% stall rental subsidies were offered to women vendors
- Widows and persons with disabilities were prioritized through a digital lottery-based allotment
- CSR stalls were offered free-of-cost to registered charitable organizations

By late 2024, over 1,800 women vendors were active in PMBMC-managed bazaars (Solochoicez, 2025), many of whom reported earning higher net profits due to subsidized stall costs and guaranteed consumer footfall. This was particularly transformative in districts like

Bahawalpur, DG Khan, and Multan, where women's participation in market spaces has traditionally been low.

1.5. Institutional Recognition and Transition to Statutory Authority

The success of PMBMC's model did not go unnoticed. Following the 2024 third-party audit by Solochoicez and the benchmarking study by Baker Tilly, which rated PMBMC as among the highest performing public welfare entities in Punjab (score: 86/100), the Punjab Cabinet approved the Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority Act, 2025.

This legislation:

- Transformed PMBMC into a statutory authority with legal, administrative, and fiscal autonomy
- Empowered the new authority to expand bazaars to 100+ locations by 2026
- Authorized the development of "Sahulat-on-the-Go" mobile bazaars to reach underserved areas

1.6. Purpose of the Study

This article analyzes the

- Essentials were delivered below government-set prices without subsidies
- Affordability was systematized using legal tools, digital enforcement, and operational reform
- Vendor equity and consumer trust were institutionalized
- PMBMC's model can serve as a replicable governance framework for other provinces and sectors

Through comparative analysis and factual validation the study places PMBMC's transformation as a case of original contribution in public-sector governance because it goes beyond routine administration and enters the realm of policy innovation.

1.7. Research Questions

Q.1 What institutional and legal reforms were introduced during PMBMC's transition into a statutory authority?

Q.2 How did these reforms impact affordability, vendor inclusion, and fiscal transparency in the retail sector?

Q.3 How does the PMBMC/PSBA model compare with other public-sector welfare institutions in terms of structure, innovation, and sustainability?

1.8. Significance of the Study

The research is significant because it identifies the reforms being implemented by the Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad at the Punjab Model Bazaars Management Company (PMBMC), which is the reason why the research adds to the discourse of sustainable welfare governance in the emerging markets. Unlike the traditional models, on the basis of the unvarying fiscal support, PMBMC developed the system where the price regulation, online openness and integration of vendors turned out to be the tangible impact that would not presuppose the consumption of the budgetary funds. This work not only fills a research gap in literature on Section 42 company reform and public retail digitization, but also offers a model of governance currently being copied by provincial policy agencies as well as academics.

1.9. Research Hypotheses

- Strategic interventions led by Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad at PMBMC enabled essential goods to be delivered at prices below government-notified levels without reliance on subsidies.
- PMBMC's digital pricing enforcement and vendor management systems introduced an original, non-routine innovation in public-sector affordability governance.
- The transition of PMBMC into a statutory authority (PSBA) was driven by verifiable institutional outcomes, distinguishing it from other welfare models in Pakistan.

1.10. Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to the operational and institutional reforms introduced at PMBMC between 2021 and 2025, specifically under the strategic leadership of Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad. It focuses solely on the Punjab province, with reference to internal pricing data, audit reports, and legal documents available through public channels. Comparative references to USC, PFA, or other entities are made for benchmarking purposes only and do not include a full institutional analysis of those bodies. Additionally, the scope of this study is limited to economic and governance innovation and does not include broader political economy variables such as electoral influence or ministerial interventions. Finally, the study does not assess PSBA's post-2025 expansion in full, focusing instead on the foundational innovations that led to PMBMC's transition from company to statutory authority.

1.11. Data Collection

Data for this study was collected using a document-based approach, reinforced with quantitative pricing verification and performance benchmarking. Primary legal data was extracted from the Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority Act, 2025, which codifies PMBMC's elevation into a statutory authority. This document was accessed from official Punjab Gazette records, ensuring its validity. Public audit and operational data were sourced from the (BTCA, 2025), which evaluated 14 government-linked welfare bodies. PMBMC's top ranking (86/100) in governance, finance, and delivery was central to the analysis. Additional institutional insights were drawn from the Solochoicez (2025) CFO Impact Report (2025), which verified affordability, vendor inclusion, and digital enforcement statistics. Quantitative data was drawn from DG IPWM daily bulletins, showing commodity price trends across open markets, DC-notified ceilings, USC outlets, and PMBMC bazaars. Prices for essential goods like flour, sugar, lentils, and oil were cross-checked across five districts. Further third-party validation was obtained through over 25 media reports, published in reputable national outlets including *ProPakistani*, *The Nation*, *ARY News*, and *Minute Mirror*, confirming key milestones such as the Rs. 10 billion funding, Rs. 2.21 billion public savings, and real-time monitoring successes. This triangulated, multi-source approach ensures credibility, factual integrity, and compliance with evidence-based evaluation standards.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Bazaar Governance and Market Access

Two things are the basis of a bazaar structure of governing open communities. First of all, just like any other kind of governance, it is also dictated by a given set of contractual basis. Specifically, it is guided by explicit or unspoken contract where the members of the open community are permitted to use, copy, modify, improve or share a variety of assets that are predominantly of an informational and knowledge based nature, but are also of physical goods. Unlike other governance models, where it operates based on the control of assets (individual ownership, in a firm) or shared ownership (as in a network), the bazaar model does not permit contributors to appropriate the shared assets fully (Demil, Lecocq, & Warnier, 2013). The bazaar model is able to enhance the correlation between the goods and the consumer preferences. The participants are also producers and consumers and this means that they are likely to build their solutions depending on the needs. Such a way of governing the bazaar will reveal the insider information of people in the market compared to market practices like prices. As an example, fab labs provide access to computer-controlled machines such as cutting machines, milling machines, and laser machines (Gershenfeld, 2005). This access enables the participants to come up with their own projects and objects that cannot be found in the traditional markets. Fab labs cannot support the economies of scale of mass production, yet they can support niche markets by promoting sharing of knowledge at the community level and broader network, and thus creating a long tail of products with unique products (Anderson, 2012).

Even today, the dynamic and competitive landscape dictates that organizations, both in the public and the private sector, continue to evolve in order to remain afloat in the environment. Change can be accommodated in two broad areas and it may involve planned and emergent. Organizations normally have planned change since it is systematic as it is a gradual process of altering a status quo to preferable one through a series of pre-organized activities. This can be a brilliant thought particularly when one feels dissatisfied with the status quo that can bring some order of systematic approach to one in addressing the transitions (Nawaz et al., 2025). Human resource ability in the ability of the organization is also envious to provide its goals. It involves the presence of a capable and competent labour force, a driving force in the effecting of change

in the organization. The poor performance of the capacity can have a direct impact on the implementation of the programs, the performance of its roles and the responsiveness of the organization to the changes. Even though the human aspect is the most important element of functioning of any organization, lack of technical competence and appropriate training of the personnel members is sure to become the most significant challenge towards the successful process of change. Socio-cultural factors are practices, values and tradition, which define a society. Culture factor is significant in the context of the organizational change especially in situations where the reforms are radical and entail values and norms. Another factor that will determine how the employees will receive the change and to what degree will they accept the new programs will be the organizational culture. Thus, the public organizations should foster the culture that facilitates the innovation and acceptability of the change (Goniewicz, Burkle, & Khorram-Manesh, 2025). In their research, Ahmad (2024) attempted to understand what emotional labor can create regarding individuals and well-being concerning the employees of the service sector. According to the focus on hospitality, medical and customer service facilities, the study supported the use of emotional labor as a crucial factor in burnout occurrence and reduced job satisfaction. It, nevertheless, proved as well that these negative impacts are buffered under the assistance of positive organizational support networks that is why the psychologically supportive work environment is so important (Ragmoun, 2023; Ragmoun & Ben-Salha, 2024).

2.2. Institutional Innovation in Public Welfare

To determine how the consumer engagement strategies evolved over time, N. Ahmad (2025a) contrasted the traditional and e-commerce business brand consumer engagement strategies. The paper has discovered that the e-commerce companies are better placed to attract and retain customers with the assistance of personalized content, advertising, and real time data analytics. On the other hand, the more established businesses are more disposed toward the more generic marketing strategies that would be less responsive to the evolving consumerism. The study by N. Ahmad (2025b), speculates on the prospect of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things as the technologies of the future that can be implemented to enhance the efficiency of the supply chain in the e-commerce market. The paper has determined that these technologies enhance precision of inventory and ease the handling of orders and real time monitoring that translates to minimum costs and satisfaction of customers. N. Ahmad (2025a) has taken a closer look at how convenient it is to achieve the financial inclusion of the emerging markets via digital banking tools. Findings also revealed that the mobile banking and e-wallets services can be used to reach the underserved populations, particularly rural areas. These platforms provide safe and low-cost financial services, to the degree that inequality is reduced and financial access is improved overall.

N. Ahmad (2025b) explored institutional reforms in state services provision by studying the experience of reforming the Model Bazaars in Punjab to more authority-based model rather than company-based model. The research team found out that this transformation has led to increased levels of transparency and operational efficiency and citizen satisfaction that in the long-run have led to increased levels of trust among the populace. Breaking down the consumer behaviour in the digital markets, N. Ahmad (2025b) qualitatively analysed the repeat buyer behaviour of the most effective e-commerce sites in Pakistan including Daraz and OLX. Its findings proved that quality of products, secure payment systems, good customer services, and the like experiences of the past are some of the most crucial variables that deliver consumer loyalty. The paper has pointed out that the credibility and dependability of their services is relevant to the sustainability of customer relations of competitive market online markets. N. R. Ahmad (2025) discusses the problem of the practical application of the blockchain technology to the supply chain networks in Pakistan and, more specifically, the way the technology is being adapted to facilitate transparency, diminish products of fraud basis, and remove operation based inefficiencies. Elaborating on the qualitative interviews of the stakeholders in the different industries of agriculture, pharmaceuticals, textile, and logistics, the study concludes that blockchain positively impacts traceability and inter-organizational coordination in a meaningful manner. Despite the promise, it has not been adopted in most cases, mainly because of technology related flaws, lack of adequate infrastructure, uncertainty in regulations and cultural resistance. The paper cites the fact that it would involve some capital investment in capacity building, infrastructure and policy changes to effect blockchain integration. Ahmad cites the fact that this will necessitate need to be at a new stage of needing to make some significant change

by going beyond the theory interest to possessing something which is scaled and contextual (Ahmed, Azhar, & Mohammad, 2024; Mohammad, 2015a, 2015b).

2.3. Inclusive Vendor and Procurement Models

Modernization of the public sector has become the bane of the developing countries especially those who have entrenched the culture of bureaucracy and lack of institutional structures. In most cases, the reforms do not work due to the kind of issues associated with the system such as bad infrastructures, financial and human resources, cases of endemic corruption, bad leadership and constraining political environment. These circumstances are not simply reversing the progress, but they are even demolishing the popular faith on the activities of reform. The explanations of the organizational change also include resistance and institutional inertia of the entities in such environment (Prasad Agrawal, 2024). However it has been found that there still exist certain internal and external forces that can be either a hindrance to change or a support to change depending on how they are managed. The leadership in the institutions of the society must take these contextual variables into account and respond to them in such a manner that they might be capable of changing in a significant manner. These obstacles are to be overcome in order to align the organizational goals with the developmental performance and make the public sector closer to accountability and responsiveness (Akeel & Indra, 2013).

N. Ahmad (2025b) discusses the concept of artificial intelligence usage in the supply chain sector in Pakistan and how it can be utilized to optimally utilize demand-forecasting, inventory management and logistics. The study performed following the interview with the most important industries and comes to the conclusion that AI allows reacting to the situation on time and contributes to improving the quality of the decisions. Despite the obviousness of these benefits, it is not applied due to the absence of technical culture and financial capabilities, outdated structures and unwilling to innovate. Ahmad focuses on the leadership requirements, the training of employees, and a culture of innovativeness and arrives at the conclusion that AI will become the job that will depend on the long-term investment and context-specific digital strategy. Meanwhile, the change of this emergence is not as predictable and is formed on the foundation of the external force or the schooling within. The organization world is becoming more complex, but the majority of change management strategies continue to exercise the planned model as it is clear, controllable, and therefore measures the progress made in the process of the change that is going on. Good planned change processes have thus been a core element of success of institutions as far as reforming or restructuring is concerned (Gelaidan & Ahmad, 2013). This study draws on Elinor Ostrom's concept of polycentric governance, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy, and Amartya Sen's capabilities approach. The statutory autonomy of PMBMC/PSBA, combined with decentralized operational discretion and vendor engagement, demonstrates how these theoretical models intersect in practice. The empirical results affirm the role of institutional diversity and local innovation in achieving cost-effective welfare outcomes without recurrent subsidies.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study methodology embedded within a documentary research framework, supplemented by quantitative triangulation from verified institutional sources. The core unit of analysis is the Punjab Model Bazaars Management Company (PMBMC), with a temporal focus on its institutional performance between 2021 and 2025, under the leadership of Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad. The study is situated within the broader discourse of public welfare innovation, affordability governance, and legal reform in emerging economies. The case study method was selected due to the exceptional and non-replicated nature of PMBMC's transformation. The company transitioned from a traditional Section 42 nonprofit into Pakistan's first statutory public welfare retail authority, without reliance on recurrent subsidies. The research design allows for the in-depth exploration of systems, processes, legal structures, and impact mechanisms implemented by PMBMC.

3.1. Analytical Framework

The analysis follows a comparative institutional benchmarking model, assessing PMBMC against peer organizations such as the Utility Stores Corporation (USC), Punjab Food Authority (PFA), and Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC). Performance indicators are analyzed under three broad dimensions:

- Affordability and Price Delivery Mechanism

- Governance and Legal Framework
- Operational Scalability and Replication

3.2. Data Sources

The methodology integrates both primary and secondary data, including:

- Legislative documents (e.g., *Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority Act, 2025*)
- Public audit reports (e.g., Baker Tilly 2025)
- Real-time pricing bulletins from DG IPWM
- Institutional review reports (e.g., Solochoicez, 2025)
- Verified media reporting from *ProPakistani*, *The Nation*, and *ARY News*

These documents were selected for their legal validity, institutional independence, and policy relevance to the Pakistani public welfare sector.

3.3. Triangulation and Validation

Data triangulation was conducted by comparing:

- PMBMC pricing with DC-notified rates and open-market prices
- PMBMC operational outcomes with USC and PFA data
- Performance audit scores with media-reported impacts

Where available, findings were corroborated with third-party reviews and media confirmations to satisfy requirements for independent validation and originality, ensuring alignment with USCIS criteria for evidence of extraordinary contributions.

3.4. Theoretical Grounding

The methodological framework is grounded in:

- Elinor Ostrom’s polycentric governance theory, for decentralization of regulatory control
- Michael Lipsky’s theory of street-level bureaucracy, explaining how enforcement officers empowered by digital systems deliver better public service
- Amartya Sen’s capability approach, emphasizing the impact of inclusive vendor policies on economic agency

By embedding these theories into institutional and policy evaluation, the research situates PMBMC’s model as innovative, field-transformative, and nationally significant. Due to the institutional nature of the data, interviews and field surveys were not conducted. Instead, the study relies on triangulation between government documents, audit reports (e.g., Baker Tilly), internal strategy manuals, and validated media coverage. This approach enhances transparency and source verification, although it limits direct access to stakeholder narratives.

4. Analysis

4.1. Institutional Innovation in Context

The transformation of the Punjab Model Bazaars Management Company (PMBMC) under the leadership of Naveed Razaqat Ahmad represents a turning point in Pakistan’s approach to welfare-oriented public retail. Unlike traditional interventions such as the Utility Stores Corporation (USC), which depend heavily on subsidies, PMBMC demonstrated that structural affordability, transparency, and inclusivity can be achieved without fiscal dependence. Operating as a Section 42 non-profit company, PMBMC introduced a unique, subsidy-free retail system that successfully delivered essential commodities at prices 7–10% below even Deputy Commissioner-notified rates. This analysis explores the technical, operational, and institutional reforms that enabled PMBMC to outperform legacy systems and eventually be legislatively elevated into the Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority (PSBA, 2025).

4.2. Real-Time Digital Pricing and Enforcement Mechanism

PMBMC’s standout reform was the introduction of a digital price enforcement system that connected real-time commodity pricing data to bazaar displays, consumer dashboards, and district enforcement cells. Vendors were obligated to update their rates daily, and non-compliance was auto-flagged through a smart monitoring dashboard.

According to the Directorate General of Internal Price Monitoring (DG IPWM, 2024):

- Overpricing complaints dropped by 62% between 2022 and 2024
 - District enforcement response time reduced from 72 hours to 18 hours
 - More than 1,100 vendor violations were addressed through this system
- This level of transparency and enforcement automation has no precedent in other Section 42 welfare companies or federal programs such as USC.

4.3. Achieving Affordability Without Subsidies

Unlike the USC which receives over Rs. 12 billion annually in federal subsidies (Government of Pakistan, 2023) PMBMC operated entirely without recurring grants. Through wholesale procurement, transparent vendor licensing, and operational digitization, it successfully offered daily essentials at prices significantly below market levels.

Table 1: Price Comparison of Essential Items (2024)

Item	Market Price	DC Rate	USC Price	PMBMC Price
Wheat Flour (20kg)	Rs. 1,250	Rs. 1,200	Rs. 1,150	Rs. 1,020
Sugar (1kg)	Rs. 190	Rs. 175	Rs. 170	Rs. 150
Red Lentils (1kg)	Rs. 320	Rs. 300	Rs. 280	Rs. 260
Cooking Oil (1L)	Rs. 650	Rs. 630	Rs. 620	Rs. 540

(Source: DG IPWM Daily Bulletins, 2024)

By operating 26 bazaars across 22 districts, PMBMC served over 32 million citizens annually, producing Rs. 2.21 billion in public savings, verified by the Planning & Development Board (2024).

Table 2: Summary of Impact Indicators

Indicator	PMBMC / PSBA Value
Vendor Inclusion	12,000+ stalls, 60% CSR-based allocation
Price Reduction Achieved	30–38% below open market rates
Energy Cost Savings	Rs. 129.6 million saved via solarization annually

4.4. Governance Benchmarking and Institutional Validation

In 2025, Baker Tilly Chartered Accountants conducted an audit across 14 public welfare organizations. PMBMC outperformed all others, receiving:

Table 3: Institutional Audit Scores (Baker Tilly, 2025)

Institution	Financial Sustainability	Governance	Service Delivery	Total Score (/100)
PMBMC	91	87	81	86
PHIMC	72	68	64	68
LWMC	64	60	58	60
PEEF	78	75	73	75

The report's findings directly supported the legislative upgrade of PMBMC into PSBA under the Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority Act, 2025.

4.5. Vendor Governance and CSR Inclusion

Another key reform was the vendor licensing system, wherein all vendors:

- Registered digitally
- Signed compliance declarations
- Were monitored via real-time pricing audits

Violators were automatically flagged, fined, or blacklisted. Additionally, PMBMC implemented a CSR vendor policy allocating 30% of stalls for:

- Women entrepreneurs
- Senior citizens
- Persons with disabilities

By end-2024:

- 1,800+ women vendors were actively selling through PMBMC-managed bazaars
- 85,000+ free home deliveries had been executed
- 13 mobile units were launched in urban-slum zones (Solochoicz, 2025)

4.6. Theoretical Foundations of Reform

PMBMC's governance model reflects several theoretical frameworks:

- Elinor Ostrom's Polycentric Governance: PMBMC decentralized control across district units, allowing adaptive enforcement, multi-actor cooperation, and local feedback mechanisms.
- Michael Lipsky's Street-Level Bureaucracy: Frontline price monitors and officers were empowered with decision-making authority and digital tools.
- Amartya Sen's Capability Approach: Through vendor inclusion and equitable access, PMBMC did not just offer goods it offered agency and economic participation to marginalized populations.

4.7. Legal Transition

The Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority Act, 2025 was passed unanimously in the Punjab Assembly after documented evidence was submitted, including:

- Baker Tilly's audit
- DG IPWM pricing verification
- Solochoicez CSR impact report

Following this transition:

- PSBA received Rs. 10 billion ADP funding for FY 2025–26
- Autonomous procurement
- Mobile bazaar deployment
- CSR stall regulation
- Province-wide digital enforcement

4.8. Cross-Provincial Replication and National Influence

PMBMC's performance attracted attention beyond Punjab. In 2025:

- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Planning Board requested vendor policy documentation
- Lahore School of Economics and PERI published white papers citing it as a "governance breakthrough in price regulation"

These developments demonstrate that PMBMC's model has not only succeeded institutionally but has also shaped national welfare discourse.

4.9. Summary of Achievements

- Delivered 30–35% price relief without any fiscal subsidy
- Developed real-time AI-linked price enforcement system
- Implemented transparent and equitable vendor policies
- Enabled cross-provincial policy replication
- Earned third-party audit validation
- Transitioned into a statutory authority via legislative process

All of these outcomes were achieved through strategic leadership, not inherited advantage, proving the originality and non-routine nature of Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad's contributions.

5. Discussion

The PMBMC/PSBA model provides an institutional example of how legal autonomy and retail design based on citizen concerns can provide price stability, vendor involvement, and digital responsibility without being reliant on state subsidies. It is compatible with the theory of polycentric governance proposed by Ostrom in that it devolves the decision in procurement and strengthens the local discretion that is statutorily prohibited. Nonetheless, the sustainability of the model is not risk free in the long term. The implementation consistency may be influenced by the political changes, financial limitations, and changes in the leadership. Although the authority is currently in operation without regularly repeated subsidies, capital expenditures (e.g., solarization, digital systems) were also made possible through provincial development

funds. To scale or replicate the model in other provinces, replication of the law is required and continuity of institutions.

6. Conclusion

The transformation of the Punjab Model Bazaars Management Company (PMBMC) into the Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority (PSBA) is one of the few success stories in Pakistan on how to introduce data-driven innovation, structural change, and fiscal austerity to the state. Unsolvable issues of overreliance on subsidies, inefficient management of suppliers, loss of the poor, and discrimination in the implementation of price controls were already being debated to satisfactory levels. It was the embodiment of an effective and sensible form of government, not built upon the theory but the facts, foreign judgments, legislative approval and concrete outcomes. PSBA has since gone national and has helped create an economical legal and organizational framework of the market regulation. It has come to be a viable lesson as to how retail markets might be tamed in Punjab and perhaps in other economically disadvantaged states in an effort to not only secure the well-being of the citizens but also guarantee house of finances afloat. These findings also offer policy relevance beyond Pakistan, particularly for developing economies seeking affordable public retail solutions through governance restructuring and institutional autonomy.

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