



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Socio-Economic and Political Implications of Covid-19 in Pakistan:  
A Way Forward**

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**ABSTRACT**

A highly contagious viral pandemic has spread across the earth, wreaking havoc on the international economy in its wake, and generating international financial market declines that are in fact steeper than those witnessed in nearly a century. The objectives of this research study include the elaboration of novel coronavirus' repercussions on socio-economic sector of Pakistan, political implications of Covid-19 on politics as well as democratic affairs of Pakistan and pragmatic measures have also been suggested to deal and mitigate the consequences of coronavirus. It is not only economy, but this pandemic has also affected social and political structure of the world as well. Aims and objectives of this research study have been carried out by opting bi-method i.e. descriptive-analytical method. However, these issues can be resolved through austerity measures, such as government needs to overcome tax evasion culture, political cohesiveness and effective fiscal policies to ensure stable economic growth during and after Covid-19.

**Keywords**

Covid-19, CPEC, Food Security, Foreign Direct Investment, Globalization, Multilateralism Pandemic, Trade

**Introduction**

A novel coronavirus (CoV) named '2019-nCoV' or '2019 novel coronavirus' or 'COVID-19' by the World Health Organization (WHO) is in charge of the current outbreak of pneumonia that began at the beginning of December 2019 near in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Today, due to the factor of globalization all the countries are connected to each other. A country cannot live in isolation; she needs to interact with other countries to fulfil the needs of its masses. People of one country are bound to travel other countries of the world for business purposes. That is the reason that the virus which started from Chinese city spread all over the world in no time. On January 30, 2020, World Health Organization declared Covid-19 as Public Health Emergency of International Concern and declared it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. As per the current statistics of 'worldometer', pandemic exists in 220 countries and territories all over the world. As of today July 2, 2021, total cases of pandemic all over the world are 183,431,733, recovered cases are 167,939,955 and 3,971,671 people died due to this disease. United States is most affected country from this pandemic with

34,561,403 cases which is followed by India and Brazil with 30,458,251 and 18,622,304 cases respectively.

Pakistan is one of the few countries severely affected from Covid-19. First case of this novel coronavirus was reported in Karachi on 26 February 2020. Within 10 days, coronavirus spread in all the four provinces, regions, capital of Pakistan and become epidemic. On March 13, 2020, Prime Minister Imran Khan called the meeting of National Security Committee to review the status of pandemic in Pakistan. It was for the first time that National Security Committee was called regarding public health issue. Meeting was chaired by Imran Khan in the presence of many federal ministers, provincial ministers, advisors, and chairman joint chief of staff, chief of armed forces, surgeon general of Pakistan Army and many other civil and military officials. A comprehensive plan and SOPs were prepared to deal with pandemic. Government imposed lockdowns, smart-lockdowns with different intervals and localities across the country. As per the current statistics of Pakistan Health Advisory (July 2, 2021), confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Pakistan are 959, 685, total deaths are 22,345, and recovered patients from this disease are 905,430. This novel coronavirus has not only threatened health structure of Pakistan, but destroyed the social, economic and political sectors of the country. Albeit, coronavirus' transmission is certain and its affects are inevitable, but by adopting wise and timely measure its repercussions could be minimized.

### **Material and Methods**

Aims and objectives of this research study have been carried out by opting bi-method i.e. descriptive-analytical method. To comprehend the problem in historical and present context, descriptive method has been adopted and in order to analyse the cost-benefit analysis of Covid-19, analytical method has been opted. Moreover, the nature of the study in hand is secondary, as the data has been collected by using the secondary sources such as books, magazines, journals, newspapers, policy papers, conference proceedings, press release and various websites.

### **Social Impacts of Covid-19**

The current Covid-19 pandemic has cut a swath around the globe due to decentralization and fragmentation of healthcare services in many severely affected countries. The pandemic has lasting impacts on healthcare system of all the developed countries of the world generally and on developing and under-developed countries particularly. Pakistan has faces unprecedented challenges amidst the rising pandemic. The pandemic has exposed flaws and susceptibilities of country's health system and it has been a wake-up call for the decayed health mechanism of Pakistan. That is the reason doctors are advising people to use protective measures, follow SOPs and stay at home. A sleep-less and overworked infectious disease specialist at DUHS, Dr. Shobha Luxmi pronounced, "your healthcare system is not equipped to support you (Ebrahim, 2020)." As of today June 29, 2021, total confirmed cases in Pakistan are 956,392 (see table 1 below), and this ratio is increasing with the same pace (Government of Pakistan, 2021).

**Table 1**  
**Covid-19 Cases in Pakistan (June 29, 2021)**

<b>State/Province</b>	<b>Confirmed Cases</b>	<b>Active Cases</b>	<b>Deaths</b>	<b>Recoveries</b>
AJK	20,256	427	582	19,247

Balochistan	27,083	797	307	25,979
GB	6,060	221	111	5,728
Islamabad	82,619	958	776	80,885
KPK	137,883	1,822	4,311	131,698
Punjab	346,035	8,627	10,740	326,669
Sindh	336,507	19,301	5,427	311,779
Total	956,392	32,153	22,254	901,985

Source: Developed by the Researcher

The consequences of the pandemic were not limited to the patients who were affected by this disease, but common patients also suffered a lot due to the outbreak of this pandemic. In hospitals, there was severe scarcity of beds, ventilators, oxygen cylinders, and medical staff in the government hospitals. Due to the inadequacy of these basic necessities, many common patients suffered and died. Doctors and paramedical staff are the most affected segment of medical field and due to the lack of proper safety equipment, more than 50 doctors have resigned from their jobs (The News, 2020). Moreover, mental health problems can also widely observed due to the Covid-19. Extensive lockdowns have created fear, depression, anxiety and insecurity among the masses of Pakistan (Mumtaz, 2020).

Education is particularly a challenging issue in the context of the pandemic. This disease has far-reaching impacts on the global education system. According to a report of UNICEF published on March 2, 2021, schools for 168 million children have been completely closed for one year (see table 2 below) (UNICEF, 2021).

**Table 2**  
**Number of Countries where schools have remained closed since March 2020**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Schools have remained closed almost an entire year (# of countries)</b>	<b>School children affected Number (in millions)</b>	<b>School children affected Percentage</b>
East Asia	1	25	15%
North Africa and Middle East	3	9	5%
East and Southern Africa	0	n.a	n.a
Central and Westren Africa	0	n.a	n.a
Europe and Central Asia	0	n.a	n.a
Latin America	9	98	58%
South Asia	1	37	27%
Total	14	168	100%

Source: Developed by the Researcher, data collected from UNICEF Report,

Globally, this closure has lasting impacts on the educational careers of students suffering from this. This pandemic has left Pakistan's education system in limbo. Pakistan was among the very few countries in the world to institute extensive school closures all over the country (Geven & Hasan, 2020). Since March 2020, educational institutes in Pakistan are closed with different intervals. Although, government of Pakistan has planned online education for students, but e-learning cannot match schools and colleges. Students are facing multifaceted challenges with respect to online classes. There is not availability of internet in remote areas of

Pakistan. Apart from students, there are also many issues from the side of teachers. Cultural lag also exists there in Pakistani society. School closure has pushed many students out of the schools and there is consistent anxiety and depression among the students. Government has cancelled many educational scholarships and there is unravelling impact on the students exchange programmes. Due to the global restrictions, study abroad plan of many students have been uprooted (Gutterer, 2020). Although, Government of Pakistan has developed TV programs such as 'TeleSchools' and 'Taleem Ghar' for the students, but government is facing key challenges such as improving lesson content, increasing viewership, enhancing students' engagement and leveraging TV lessons.

The pandemic has pushed people further into poverty. According to a report published by The World Bank on October 7, 2020, coronavirus to add as many as 150 people extreme poor by 2021 (World Bank, 2020). As far as the case of Pakistan is discussed, many people have been jobless due to widespread lockdown. Many private teachers have been jobless due to the closures of schools. Many vendors and daily wage earners are out of jobs. All the businesses are closed, so it has created havoc in the country. Poverty rate which was 31.3% in 2018 has jumped to 40% in 2021. Poverty, joblessness and insecurity have created fear and depression among the people of Pakistan. It has also exacerbated psychological unrest and anxiety among the already marginalized people of Pakistan. Researches also indicate that there has been a massive increase in mental problems in the masses. This soaring poverty and unemployment has led people towards suicidal tendencies.

Albeit, every section of Pakistani society have fallen prey to Covid-19, but women of Pakistan have severely trapped between the coronavirus and domestic violence. Pakistan has a patriarchal family system. According to PUCARS (Pakistan Unified Corporate Action Reporting System), there has been 15% increase in the domestic violence in Punjab (ANI, 2021a). There are multiple reasons for surge in domestic violence in Pakistan. Firstly, due to the lockdown, all the offices and other business activities are close in Pakistan; so, male members have to stay at homes. During long stay of men at home, many cases of violence have been witnessed. Secondly, due to unemployment and poverty also, there has been a surge in domestic violence. Thirdly, due to the lack of recreational activities in grounds and public parks, there has been increase in domestic violence. It is due to the domestic violence that there have been seen a skyrocketed increase in cases of women seeking 'KHULA'. As compared to the year 2019, there has been 722 per cent increase in women seeking 'KHULA' in Punjab Province. According to the statistics of Dawn Newspaper, 632 family suits were instituted by women in Punjab to seek 'KHULA', but this number increased to 5198 as compared to the preceding year (Sahoutara, 2021).

The lockdown restrictions have accelerated drug trafficking all over the world. According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's World Drug Report-2021, "access to drugs has also become simpler than ever with online sales, and major drug markets on the dark web are now worth some \$315 million annually. Contactless transactions, such as through the mail, are also on the rise, a trend possibly accelerated by the pandemic" (Pandey, 2021). Same is the case with Pakistan. Due to the lockdown restrictions, mode of shopping in Pakistan has been changed to online which has facilitated the drug trafficking. According to National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC) Pakistan, very next month when lockdown was imposed all over the country, Anti-Narcotics Force confiscated huge amount of

hashish, morphine, opium, heroin and crystal meth. Along with drug trafficking, there has also been a surge in cyber-crimes in Pakistan. Online traffic has heightened the threat of cyber-crimes. There has been 40% increase in internet use with the outbreak of Covid-19 which has enhanced the threat of cyber-crimes, whereas FIA claimed that cyber-crime has decreased during the pandemic (Tennant & Jakovljevic, 2020).

### Economic Impacts of Covid-19

The Covid-19 spread all over the world in no time and it has severely affected every sector of human life. It has grave implications for the world economy. In the times of globalization, world economies are connected with each other, so this virus has far-reaching impacts on global economy (Szmigiera, 2021). The Global Economic Prospects highlights that this novel virus has affected global economies in short run as well as in long run. It has affected world economies in multiple ways. Unemployment rate has increased even in the developed economies of the world (see table 3 below). Apart from unemployment, this disease has devastating impacts on trade industry, alarming decline in foreign direct investment and has disturbed agricultural value chains.

**Table 3**  
**Yearly Unemployment Rate Change, 2019 and 2020 Compared**

Country	2019	2020	% Change
Brazil	11.9%	13.4%	1.5%
Italy	9.9%	11%	1.1%
Canada	5.7%	9.7%	4%
United States	3.7%	8.9%	5.2%
France	8.5%	8.9%	0.4%
United Kingdom	3.8%	5.4%	1.6%
Germany	3.1%	4.3%	1.2%
Japan	2.4%	3.3%	0.9%

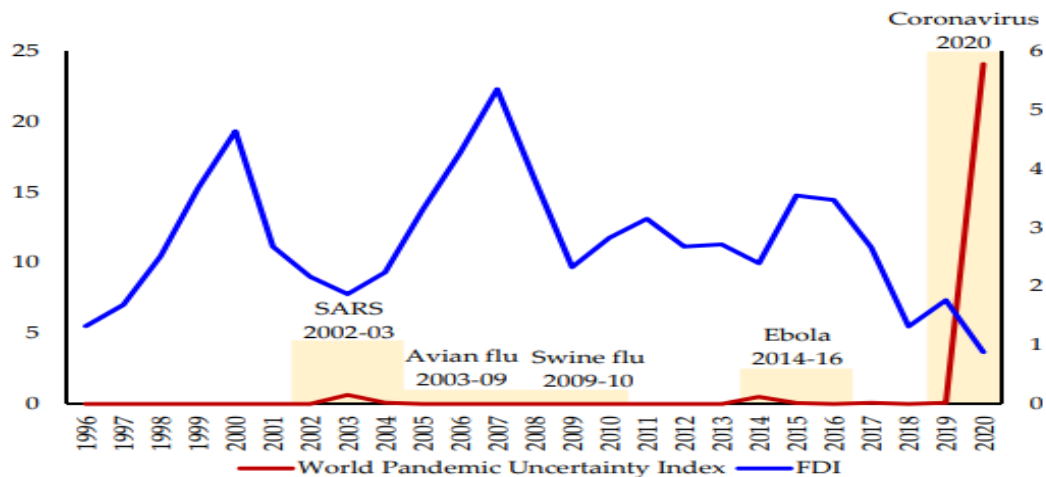
Source: Developed by the Researcher, data collected from BBC News,

Like many other countries of the world, Covid-19 has severely affected the economy of Pakistan. According to very careful estimates, Pakistan has to bear 10% (1.1 trillion PKR) economic loss in the financial year 2021 (Rasheed, Rizwan, Javed, Sharif, & Zaidi, 2021). No doubt, Covid-19 affected several channels of economy of Pakistan. Agriculture sector of Pakistan also fall prey to this novel pandemic. Pakistan is one of the top producers of cotton, rice, wheat, mango, orange and sugarcane in the world. So, due to Covid-19, if these productions were not exported to foreign countries, poor farmers will have to bear huge loss. Apart from that, travel ban in Pakistan during the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of Covid-19 has created many hurdles for the merchants due to not availability of labour force (Jamal, 2020). In the start of the pandemic, due depressed demand of perishable products, farmers bore huge losses. Value of rupee had fallen against US dollar and there was price hike for machinery, pesticides, fertilizers, fuel and seeds which make agriculture a non-profit venture (CGSS, 2021). Moreover, Pakistan has faced severe challenges of supply chain management, food security, restrictions on agricultural trade and the encounters of import restrictions.

Covid-19 created havoc across the globe. Whole the world has fallen prey to this pandemic (see figure 1 below). The environment of uncertainty compelled foreign investors to hold back new investment plans in Pakistan. According to The

News, foreign direct investment drops 32.5% in the first ten month of financial year 2020-2021 (The News, 2021). Foreign investors are always reluctant to invest at a place where there is rampant uncertainty. Covid-19 has brought uncertainty in the minds of foreign investors regarding investing there. After the initiation of CPEC, China is the biggest investor in Pakistan. Experts are of the view that Covid-19 proved to be a biggest blow of CPEC and all other BRI projects. So, in the context of CPEC too, FDI was downturn in Pakistan. Moreover, due to pandemic on both the sides (China & Pakistan), SEZs faced huge delay. It is not only with Pakistan, but other projects under BRI also have faced the same delays (Haider, 2020).

Figure 1: World Pandemic Uncertainty Index



Source: Journal of Risk and Financial Management,

Tourism and foreign direct investment are closely linked with each other. If there will increase tourism in Pakistan, foreign direct investment will also flourish with the same pace. Pakistan is a spot of popular attractions for tourists such as Hunza Valley, Kalash Valley, Swat Vaalley, Naltar Valley, Gorakh Hills, Hingol National Park, Himalyas, Rohtas Fort, Khunjerab Pass, Badshahi Mosque and Katpana Desert etc. have great sceneries. It is due to Pakistan's natural beauty that US based human rights advocate, Danielle Hyams praised Pakistan by saying that, "once thought of as one of the world's most dangerous countries, Pakistan is back in the spotlight, but this time as a budding tourist destination. The government – led by former cricket star Imran Khan – has an amazing opportunity to leverage this interest into economic development, but in a country prized for its natural beauty, sustainable growth must be a priority" (Hyams, Jan 30, & Am, 2020). Prince William and Kate Meddleton arrived in Pakistan for 5-day tour in October 2019. Following the trip, International Magazine Forbes declared Pakistan top tourist destination in 2020 (Siddiqui, 2020). All the things were going in the right direction and PTI Government was vigorously promoting the northern areas of Pakistan but the outbreak of virus brought all activities to a standstill. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, international as well as national tourists were banned to visit northern areas of Pakistan. In previous one year, country economy has suffered a lot due to restrictions on tourism.

Global trade has undergone some melodramatic fluctuations as a direct result of Covid-19. In Pakistan, there has been witnessed a downturn in imports and exports amidst the pandemic. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, there was drastic decline in sea

and air cargo which affected trade of Pakistan severely. In spite of these restrictions, Pakistan managed the medical supplies. In the initial months of Covid-19, there was severe setback to Pakistan's economy (see table 4 below). It is worth mentioning here that Pakistan's major trade partners are China, UAE, USA, UK and India. All these countries were severely affected due to novel pandemic (Khan, n.d.). As the table 4 indicates that there was decline in imports and exports and this magnitude increased in the preceding months.

**Table 4**  
**Percentage Change in Pakistan's Imports and Exports Amidst Covid-19**

December19		January20		February20		March20		April20		May20	
Exp orts	Im por ts	E x p o r t s	Im por ts	Ex por ts	Im por ts	Ex por ts	Im por ts	Exp orts	Im por ts	E x p o r t s	Imp orts
3.4 %	7.2 %	- 3 %	0.6 %	- 3.8 %	- 3.6 %	- 7. 4 %	- 1 0. 9 %	- 20.3 %	- 5.2 %	- 8 . 0 %	- 12.6 %

Source: Developed by the Researcher, date collected for SBP website

Remittance plays a significant role in attaining foreign reserves. Pakistanis have presence in each corner of the world. They have migrated to foreign countries to earn the livelihood. They are engaged in different jobs and labour force. They sent back money to Pakistan on monthly basis. This remittance plays an important role in Pakistan's GDP. According to the statistics, remittance share in Pakistan's GDP is 8%, while the global average for remittance is less than 1% (Khan, n.d.). After the disease, a report was published by the Asian Development Bank which concluded that this novel pandemic will have lasting impacts on remittance and Pakistan would be among the top most countries badly affected by this disease. In these times, firstly, new Pakistanis were not able to move foreign countries. Secondly, due to lockdowns, Pakistanis outside Pakistan were not able to do work. ADB has reported 27% decline in remittance (Takenaka, Gaspar, Villafuerte, & Narayanan, 2020). Another World Bank Report has forecasted 23% decline in Pakistani remittance in 2020 (Ratha et al., 2020).

Covid-19 further deteriorated the tax evasion culture in Pakistan. It was due to the environment of uncertainty that people were reluctant in paying direct and indirect taxes. Government of Pakistan under Imran Khan is fully committed to punish the tax defaulters. According to a report of Federal Board of Revenue, there was positive growth trend in revenue collection, but with the outbreak of pandemic this growth trend reversed. FBR further asserted that due to Covid-19 restrictions, FY2019-2020 was very crucial for the economy of Pakistan (Akhtar, 2021). Decline in manufacturing industry is also linked with revenue of Pakistan. Due to country-wide lockdown and other restrictions, manufacturing industries of Pakistan could not work properly. Revenue from automobile sector rapidly fell due to the decay in production and sale of automobiles. Moreover, rupees depreciation against US dollar has added fuel to injury.

After health, poverty and unemployment is the biggest challenge which Pakistan is suffering from due to pandemic outbreak. Covid-19 made many Pakistanis jobless and halted the process of new recruitments in Pakistan. Due to Covid-19 SOPs, FPSC, PPSC, KPSC, SPSC, BPSC and all other service commissions were banned for conducting written exams and interviews. The researcher himself has applied for many jobs under PPSC which are pending due to novel coronavirus (see table 5 below). This is not only with PPSC; other service commissions have also delayed their exams with the same pace. Pandemic also made unemployed to the people who were doing jobs in pre-pandemic times. Many private school teachers became jobless due to the closure of schools. According to Business Recorder, poverty rate in 2019 in Pakistan was 24.3%; has risen 5.4% in 2020 (ANI, 2021b).

**Table 5**  
**PPSC Papers Delayed due to Covid-19**

Name of Post	Advt. Month	Exam	Interview	Recommendation
Data Entry Operator	Feb 2019	Oct 2020	Pending	Pending
Inspector Legal	June 2020	Pending	Pending	Pending
Stenographer	June 2020	Sep 2020	Pending	Pending
Service Center Official	July 2020	Sep 2020	Pending	Pending
Assistant	Aug 2020	Pending	Pending	Pending
Lecturer Islamiat	Aug 2020	Pending	Pending	Pending
Lecturer Urdu	Aug 2020	Pending	Pending	Pending
Lecturer Biology	Aug 2020	Dec 2020	Pending	Pending
Tehsildar	Oct 2020	Pending	Pending	Pending
Naib Tehsildar	Oct 2020	Pending	Pending	Pending
Municipal Officer	Dec 2020	Pending	Pending	Pending
Sub-Inspector	Oct 2020	Pending	Pending	Pending
Assistant Sub-Inspector	Oct 2020	Pending	Pending	Pending

Source: Developed by researcher, data collected from PPSC website

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic undermined the real estate and housing sector throughout the world. Due to uncertainty in overall environment, people seemed reluctant to invest in real estate and housing sector. The pandemic has multifaceted impacts on Pakistan's housing sector such as impacts on housing market, buyers, builders, mall developers and warehousing. There were no customers to purchase the properties, no builders to construct new houses and buildings, no dealers to play the role of mediator. That is the reason property rates were also lessened in initial months of 2020. Government of Pakistan under Imran Khan nominated special package for the housing sector and again this sector is on smooth way.

### Political Impacts of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic put governments all over the world under severe pressure to react quickly and decisively. The policy responses of different government varied in different countries. Some countries adopted very strict policies and imposed lockdowns in no time, while some countries showed flexibility in imposing lockdowns. So, the intensity of Covid-19 varies from one country to another. Government of Pakistan showed reluctance as the first cabinet meeting was held on March 13, 2020, 15 days after the detection of first Covid-19 patient in Karachi. As far as the political impacts of Covid-19 are concerned, it has suspended fundamental human rights. In the initial days of this novel coronavirus, focus of media, civil and military authorities was only on this disease. Article 11 of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, gives every citizen the right form lawful assembly and association (Ahmed, 2021), but SOPs of pandemic have restricted people to assemble



anywhere. In the light of Article 13 of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, everyone has the right to move anywhere in Pakistan without any restriction, but the Covid-19 has restricted people to stay at homes. Even intra-provincial and inter-province public transport was also banned. In the same manner, Article 18 of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 highlights that everyone has the freedom trade or profession etc., but standard operating procedures have restricted citizens to do trade or business. As the focus of all the civil and military authorities was on the Covid-19, there a subsequent increase in domestic violence, gender inequality and the violence against religious minorities (Shah, 2021).

Since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, provinces of Pakistan keep on claiming that they have not been given sue share and autonomy which was promised by Quaid-e-Azam. Eastern part (now Bangladesh) of Pakistan separated on the issue of provincial autonomy (Arshad & Khan, 2019). Although, there has always been the issue of centre-province relationships, but with the outbreak of Covid-19, their relationship has further deteriorated. Under the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, provinces were given authorization over health, education and policing. This pandemic has enhanced differences between the abilities of province to manage the needs and requirements of people amidst the pandemic. Critics emphasized that on one hand, federal government claimed that 18<sup>th</sup> amendment has limited its authority to develop a national level strategy to fight with pandemic. On the other hand, federal government is sponsoring its favourite provinces to deal with the pandemic. Critics consider it an undemocratic act on the part of federal government (Sen, 2020).

The confrontation between PTI & PPP and PTI & PML-N has paved the way for further domestic disputes among the major political parties of Pakistan. There has been a mudslinging campaign by PPP and PML-N against the federal government over the issue Covid-19 (Batool, 2020). History is the witness that there has been more political instability in the times of crisis. It is pertinent to mention here that economic growth and political instability are closely linked with each other. In the times of Covid-19, economic slowdown has deepened political instability in Pakistan. It was the time of 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of Covid-19 in Pakistan when an alliance (Pakistan Democratic Movement) of 11 political parties of Pakistan was formed. This alliance was headed by Moulana Fazal-ur-Rehman and predominately supported by PPP and PML-N. This mega alliance started country-wide processions on October 16, 2020 despite the objections of large gatherings by the health experts. Many FIRs were registered by the government against the activists of PDM for violating the standard operating procedures (ANI News, 2020).

Domestic policy can only defeat us; foreign policy can kill us. – John F Kennedy. The above assertion indicates the importance of foreign policy in the life of a state. Since its inception, Pakistan's foreign policy has been shaky when it comes to its bilateral ties with immediate neighbours such as India, Iran and Afghanistan and its role amidst major powers such as Russia, China and United States (Wazir, 2020). Like many other countries in the world, Pakistan is also facing many foreign policy challenges amidst the outbreak of Covid-19. Country has to face many domestic and economic challenges which are directly linked with the foreign policy. Firstly, some countries such as China, Russia, United States and India have developed their vaccines for Covid-19. Now it is a big challenge for the Government of Pakistan that which country's vaccine should be injected to its people. Secondly, countries like United States and Saudi Arabia are not welcoming the Pakistanis who have injected with Chinese-made 'Sinopharm'. Thirdly, Indian Government has enhanced

repression and brutalities in Indian Occupied Kashmir upon Muslims which itself is a big challenge for Pakistan to deal with. Fourthly, Government of Pakistan is facing foreign policy challenges with respect to Gulf States as many Pakistanis are facing challenges in maintaining their jobs and visa extensions. Lastly, some officials have blamed Iran for the spread of disease in Pakistan as many pilgrims were sent back to Pakistan in the initial days of this pandemic (Siddiq, 2020).

Health experts have criticized both government and opposition for politicizing the Covid-19 pandemic and some critics have blamed federal government for the politicization of Covid-19 relief fund (Ali, 2020). Due to the invitations for rallies and processions by the political leaders, many people believe that the disease even does not exist. Professor of epidemiology at the University of Nebraska, Dr. Jawad Asghar claimed that only public is not responsible for the spread of disease but political leaders too. He asserted that, "I cannot blame the public alone. When they see their leaders inviting the public to the rallies, not wearing masks, and blaming each other for the spread of the disease, why would they listen to the health experts?" He further said that they should not use the disease for their political point scoring (Latif, 2020). There is no comprehensive mechanism for assessing and distributing the funds to vulnerable segments of the society. Though, there exists BISP and EHSAS Program, but there are huge inefficiencies with respect to the distribution of funds. Recently, funds have been distributed among the favourite persons instead to the families need assistance (Malik, 2020). Therefore, it is worth mentioning that funds should be distributed through the local authorities.

As, it already been discussed that Covid-19 has created fear and anxiety among the people. It is due to this fear that some parliamentary sessions have been adjourned due to the lack of quorum. Sindh Assembly was adjourned by the speaker due to the lack of quorum (The Express Tribune, 2019) and later on Sindh Assembly amended its rules of procedures and allowed many members to participate in parliamentary sessions while sitting at home (Samar, 2020). Along with the parliamentary adjournments, many developmental projects have also been stagnant in the country. Whole the administrative machinery was struggling to mitigate the pandemic on the cost of piling of developmental works. Budget fixed for infrastructure development was also spent on healthcare facilities. In this way, Covid-19 has severe impacts on the developmental projects in Pakistan. Along with opposition parties, masses of Pakistan also seem unhappy with the performance of sitting government during the coronavirus pandemic.

Experts indicate that terrorist groups and extremist elements may penetrate in the societies during the crisis like Covid-19. Albeit, so far, global frequency of attacks have not changed in last couple of months. Militant organizations such as SI Group and Al Qaeda are pronouncing this disease a punishment from Allah and they also claimed that it will hurt only the non-believers (Rana, 2020). Under the umbrella of crisis like Covid-19, some militant groups seek assistance from public as charity and use it for their nasty objectives (Akram, Nasar, & Rehman, 2021). Pakistan has witnessed a slight surge in the terrorist activities in last two months. It cannot be directly linked with the Covid-19, but the pandemic has facilitated them in multiple ways. Moreover, international security assistance missions have also been halted or reduced during this novel outbreak. So, militants have the chance to fulfil their dreadful aims. Furthermore, the use of internet has increased manifold, so militant groups also have the chance to recruit new members by using online forums (UNITAR, n.d.).

## **Suggested Policy and Mitigation Measures to Deal Covid-19**

Albeit, Covid-19 has created havoc all over the world, but its affects can be mitigated by adopting the short-term and long-term measure. It is worth mentioning here that Government of Pakistan can lessen the effects of this novel disease by following the below mentioned measures.

### **Short-Term Measures**

- People should follow all the coronavirus-related health guidelines.
- Government of Pakistan should expand the coverage of Benazir Income Support Program to vulnerable people of the country instead of donating funds to reference-based people.
- With the outbreak of Covid-19, Prime Minister Imran Khan has launched Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program. This program is basically for the daily wagers and other poor people, so they may buy ration for their families and do not go hungry. Government should ensure the transparency in cash transfers to such people.
- Social protection must also be provided to home-based people. There are many families in Pakistan which are living in rented houses. So, government should facilitate in this hard time.
- There is dire need that political parties should stop leg-pulling and make collective efforts to tackle this disease.
- Although, Covid-19 has made many people jobless, but they can initiate pandemic-friendly businesses such as app developer, online reseller, home improvement contractor, box-subscription companies, accounting services, team event coordinator, graphic design firm, virtual tutoring agency, social media services, digital marketing agency, fitness and wellness programs, consulting business, delivery service, commercial cleaning services and culinary classes.
- There is need to initiate community mobilization through rural support program.
- Media and non-governmental organizations should play their positive role in mitigating coronavirus.
- People should get themselves vaccinated as early as possible.

### **Long-Term Measures**

- Government should make efforts to inculcate self-control and discipline among the people.
- There is dire need to strengthen the health sector through administrative and financial support.
- Government should invigorate the disaster management apparatus of the country.

- Serious efforts should be made to educate and inculcate awareness among the masses.
- Special efforts should be made to launch effective poverty alleviation program.
- Population control and urban planning should also be in priority list of government.

### **Conclusion**

The Covid-19 pandemic has stressed social, economic and political sectors across the globe in an unprecedented way. Presently, more or less each country of the world has affected due to this pandemic. It was due to the phenomenon of globalization that coronavirus spread worldwide in no time. That is the reason sceptics consider it an end of globalization in numerous ways such as disruption in global food supply, alarming decline in global stock market, ban on immigrations and foreign travels, disruption in international students exchange and increasing gap between developed and developing countries. On the other hand, there also exists a group of optimists who believe that Covid-19 has accelerated globalization in various ways such as enhanced cooperation with respect to scientific community, global technological advancements, boost in sale of hand sanitizers and masks, online shopping, freelancing and acceleration in video games industry.

In this article, by using the systematic review approach, an attempt has been made to examine the potential social, economic and political impacts on Pakistan. Like many other countries of the world, Covid-19 spread very rapidly in Pakistan. There are multiple reasons for the spread of pandemic in Pakistan, such as absence of self-control and discipline among the masses, delay in making bold decisions by the government at federal and provincial levels, peculiar social culture of Pakistan, masses' defy ban on religious gatherings, capacity issues with the health sector, overpopulation, poverty and irresistible nature of the disease. As, it already been discussed that each sector of Pakistan has fallen prey to this novel coronavirus. It has gigantic impacts on the social sector of Pakistan such as healthcare crisis, disruption of education system, suspension of social gatherings and events, mounting poverty and unemployment, domestic violence, drug-trafficking, escalating street and cyber-crimes. Moreover, pandemic has also paralyzed already shattered economy in multiple ways such as disruption in agricultural value chains, food insecurity, price crash in petroleum and oil, decline in manufacturing industries, decline in stock market, unprecedented challenges for healthcare and pharmaceutical industry, devastating impacts on travel industry, uncertainty in real estate and housing sector, alarming decline in foreign direct investment, downturn imports and exports, unsustainable debt burden, and increased risk of tax evasion. Adding more to it, political sector of Pakistan has been troubled in various patterns such as suspension of fundamental human rights, deterioration of centre-province relationships, mudslinging campaign against federal government, deepening political instability, stagnation of developmental projects, penetration of extremist elements, adjournment of parliamentary sessions and foreign policy challenges. Albeit, Covid-19 has created havoc across Pakistan, but its consequences may be minimized by adopting some short-term and long-term mitigation measures such as expanding BISP coverage to vulnerable people, social protection of home-based and daily wagers, adopting collective efforts, initiation of pandemic-friendly businesses, community mobilization through rural support program, following of virus-related

health guidelines, ensuring food security, positive role of media and NGOs, inculcation of self-control and discipline, strengthening of health sector through administrative and financial support, invigorating disaster management apparatus, spread of education and awareness, launching effective poverty alleviation programs and special measures population control and urban planning.

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