

## Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on Socio-economic practices in Pakistan

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**Abstract (English):** The content analysis has been used to explore the impact of lockdown on Socioeconomic practices in Pakistan. It has been analyzed that the Covid-19 crises have radically changed the way of human life. From business to employment, education to playgrounds, household to shopping in markets; almost, every sphere of life has been affected by it. The socio-economic side of the pandemic depicts an awful picture as thriving unemployment, economic insecurity, food shortage & insecurity, a ban on migration and travel restrictions, closure of educational institutions, feeble health care system, digital divide, and limited movement of the people altered the entire orientation of life during the COVID-19 lockdown. The impact has weakened the economy and brought chaos in the social life of the people of Pakistan.

**Keywords (English):** COVID-19, Lockdown, Socio-economic, Pakistan

### 新冠疫情封锁对巴基斯坦社会经济实践的影响

**摘要：**内容分析被用来探讨封锁对巴基斯坦社会经济实践的影响。研究表明，新冠疫情危机从根本上改变了人类的生活方式。从商业到就业、教育到运动场、家庭到市场购物，几乎生活的每个领域都受到了影响。疫情的社会经济方面呈现出令人担忧的画面，包括高企的失业率、经济不安全、粮食短缺与不安全、移民禁令与旅行限制、教育机构关闭、脆弱的医疗体系、数字鸿沟以及人们活动的限制，这些因素在封锁期间完全改变了生活的方向。其影响削弱了经济，并扰乱了巴基斯坦人民的社会生活。

**关键词：**新冠疫情、封锁、社会经济、巴基斯坦



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## Introduction

The social construction of the pandemic brought disruption in normal life with changes in life-styles. The health seeking behavior was centered on building immunization. The socio-economic side of the pandemic depict an awful picture as thriving unemployment, economic insecurity, food shortage & insecurity, ban on migration and travel restrictions, closure of educational institutions, feeble health care system, digital divide, and limited movement of the people altered the entire orientation of life during the COVID-19 lockdown.

In late December 2019, in the city of Wuhan, the Hubei province of China, COVID-19 virus was diagnosed initially in few patients who had high fever symptoms. Initially this virus was linked to the seafood and animal market in Wuhan (Fizza Farooq, Khan, & Khan, 2020). On January 30, 2020, WHO (World Health Organization) confirmed it as Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Later, on March 11, 2020, WHO declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic (Cascella, Rajnik, Aleem, Dulebohn, & Di Napoli, 2021).

In Pakistan, the first two cases of COVID-19 were registered on February 26, 2020 while both diagnosed patients had a travel history of Iran. However, in two weeks' time the cases went up to 20 with all patients having travel history of London, Syria, China and Iran (Waris et al., 2020).

In March 2020, the vaccine of COVID-19 was not available and the outbreak was becoming ruthless with exponential rate of COVID-19 cases and deaths. The countries were left with one option to stop COVID-19 spread by imposing full or partial lockdown to contain this pandemic. This option – full or partial lockdown – has left its impact on socio-economic practices in Pakistan. With increasing cases and strict conditions have created void in social and economic realm as country's economy is under great deterioration with threat of fatal disease. They country cannot afford to extend full or partial lockdown by keeping in view the weak economic condition with rising social problem (Abid, Bari, Younas, Tahir Javaid, & Imran, 2020).

According to the latest figure from SME (Small and Medium Enterprise) sector that 1.42 million SMEs out of 3.8 million have faced 50% decline in their revenue. Keeping in view these

statistics, it is assumed that 0.76 million SMEs cannot survive in one-month lockdown, however, 2.43 million SMEs in Pakistan need financial support to survive (Javed & Ayaz, 2020).

The objective of this study is to highlight the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on socio-economic practices in Pakistan. The government of Pakistan imposed lockdown gradually instead abruptly. The timeline of lockdown can be divided into three categories -i.e., Phase A is pre-lockdown, Phase B is full lockdown, and Phase C is smart lockdown (Fizza Farooq et al., 2020).

## Methodology

Text-based content analysis is used to undertake this research. According to Krippendorff (2009) "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contents of their use" (Krippendorff, 2009). However, twenty (20) relevant research articles have been selected to explore the impact of lockdown on socio-economic practices in Pakistan. These articles are published during the year 2020 to the mid of 2021. The role of content analysis in social science research is becoming more prominent as it entails practical assessment of the impact (Stemler & evaluation, 2000).

## Literature review

It is very difficult to assess the full impact of lockdown, however, different studies have shown in recent time the worst consequences of lockdown from socio-economic perspective. The social impact can be seen from the mental health of adolescents (Fegert et al., 2020). The decision of lockdown has effected the social norms and life style of children and adolescents around the world (Xiang, Zhang, & Kuwahara, 2020). Similarly, other social and economic aspects have badly effected due to lockdown in Pakistan. The government of Pakistan imposed lockdown gradually instead abruptly. The timeline of lockdown in the year 2020 can be divided into three categories -i.e., Phase A is pre-lockdown, Phase B is full lockdown, and Phase C is smart lockdown (Fizza Farooq et al., 2020).

The available literature on COVID-19 lockdown categorizes following factors as a socio-economic concept -i.e., Health Care, Education, Food, Social Distancing, Digital Infrastructure, and Businesses. The following

elements represents the social side like Health Care, Education, Food, Social Distancing. However, following elements are related to economic side like Digital infrastructure and Businesses. The combination of these elements called socio-economic practices.

### **Health Care**

The health sector is run by governments all over the world. Developed countries provide free health care services to their people, while people in the developing and third world countries lack basic health care services. Private investors also invest in the health sector. Due to limited government resources, private investors establish their monopolies in the health sector. This monopoly is sometimes seen in the form of expensive treatments and sometimes in the form of drug holding and selling at exorbitant prices. Both the public and private sectors have been exposed during the Covid-19 crisis (Blumenthal, Fowler, Abrams, & Collins, 2020). Now there are good business opportunities for new entrepreneurs so that they can plan their future investments in this situation.

The trend of online consultation with doctors and telemedicine to deal with Covid-19 has been seen all over the world (Zhou et al., 2020). Undoubtedly this is a creative use of technology. Future entrepreneurs can create online hospitals and medical networking sites like social networking to provide uninterrupted medical services beyond geographical boundaries. Health care will improve and accelerate with such initiatives and the most advantageous thing is that people in rural areas will benefit from good health facilities. The cheapest treatment as well as 24-hour online mentoring services will surely revolutionize the health sector (Yao, Chen, & Xu, 2020).

The investment of new entrepreneurs in the health sector, the establishment of online hospitals, the creative use of telehealth services will undoubtedly create a competition in the field of health which will make affordable treatment available to the people (Chandir, Siddiqi, Setayesh, & Khan, 2020). Various devices and medicines related to the health sector can also be invested. Therefore, this sector can be a good sector for new entrepreneurs in the coming days.

### **Education**

Due to Covid-19, educational institutions around the world have been closed in Pakistan since February-March around the beginning of this year, and they are focusing on online education (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). Different countries had some structure of online education but many countries were ignorant of online education. The establishment of a Tele-school in Pakistan can also be seen on television through some educational programs. The future of the whole world depends on online education. Some serious challenges related to online education during lockdown have been observed (Fareeha Farooq, Rathore, & Mansoor, 2020). Therefore, future entrepreneurs would like to invest in this sector in order to address all prevailing challenges.

The use of technology is a key element in this sector. New creative business models will have to be created in this domain. Of course, creative learning management systems (LMS), software, and educational applications will be the lifeblood of such creative business models. In the current situation, Zoom and Google Meet, and many such applications have proved that there is a lot of potential in online education. Creative technology in education has become the need of the day (Shehzadi et al., 2020).

New creative business models and more investment in the sector will create a competitive educational environment. This competitiveness will allow people to get a quality education at an affordable cost (Mumtaz, Saqulain, & Mumtaz, 2021). This quality and affordable education will be an important milestone in the advancement of humanity. Therefore, the education sector is also a potential business opportunity for future entrepreneurs.

### **Food**

In a pandemic, if there is a shortage of food, people start dying of starvation. People break law and order when they see their children or family members dying (Benker, 2021). An atmosphere of anarchy is created in the country which spreads chaos all over the country and many countries do not get rid of this turmoil for many years (Snuggs, McGregor, & preference, 2021).

So the importance of food comes to us in famine or a pandemic as we have carefully observed the food crisis in Covid-19. The

shortage of food has led to panic buying in many countries and profiteers have raised prices illegally by holding and causing panic.

With the help of modern technology, innovation can be brought in the field of agriculture, food processing, and manufacturing. The use of modern technology in the food sector and the increased investment of new entrepreneurs will be an important step towards meeting basic human needs (Galanakis et al., 2021). This investment would be a highly profitable social initiative.

### **Social Distancing**

Social distance is a new phenomenon introduced in the wake of Covid-19. It means that a person should keep a distance of six feet from another person so that the virus is not transmitted from one person to another (Thunström, Newbold, Finnoff, Ashworth, & Shogren, 2020).

Social distance is a new thing in human history and it will take time for people to get used to this social distancing (Venkatesh & Edirappuli, 2020). However, there is a great business opportunity for entrepreneurs to introduce some creative and unique solutions to fill the gap created by social distancing. Creative businesses like Netflix or more sophisticated than this can be introduced (Eden, Johnson, Reinecke, & Grady, 2020). Now let's see how entrepreneurs take advantage of this opportunity. However, this is a potential opportunity for future entrepreneurs.

### **Digital Infrastructure**

Now it has become compulsory for the nation, region, city, and organizations to build holistic digital infrastructure to leverage the fruit of digital disruption (Faraj, Renno, Bhardwaj, & Organization, 2021). If the digital infrastructure is ignored at the local or city level, then its impact may be seen globally, and the mantra of (*local plus global*) Glocal will be compromised in the hands of dis-connectivity. On a broader scale, the notion of AUTOMATION in industries (Agriculture, Healthcare, Education, Manufacturing, etc.) can only be achieved through digital infrastructure (Almeida, Santos, & Monteiro, 2020).

Automation in the supply chain has become mandatory. The supply chain is called the breath of e-commerce. Digital infrastructure

will play a huge role in the automation of the supply chain (Medhora & Owen, 2020). The efficient use of emerging digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) supported Robots, drones and vehicles will play their pivotal role in the automation of the supply chain industry. Moreover, automation in the supply chain is both cost-effective and leads to higher profitability (Arner et al., 2020).

### **Economic Practices**

Covid-19 crises have radically changed the way of human life. From business to employment, education to playgrounds, household to shopping in markets; almost, every sphere of life has been affected by it. Of course, this crisis has brought challenges as well as various opportunities for businesses around the globe (Sharma & Jhamb, 2020). Customers from developing and third world countries who previously avoided online shopping or were stagnant when it comes to online shopping have also been seen shopping online during this crisis (Kim, 2020).

This trend of consumers around the world (towards online shopping) is certainly proving to be an important step for different companies to redesign their marketing strategies (Arora et al., 2020). Many companies in developing countries may be moving towards digital transformation late, but now this transformation has become inevitable. Pakistan, like other developing countries, has seen a trend of online shopping (Bhatti et al., 2020). Many new customers have joined the online shopping population. Many e-commerce companies are taking advantage of this consumer trend (Zwanka & Buff, 2021).

Many businesses around the world have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, one of which is the tourism business, which has been severely affected. Lockdown in different countries, travel restrictions, and strict travel conditions have affected the tourism industry an estimated 87% over one year-i.e., 2020-2021 (McCartney, 2020).

According to the latest article, titled "How virtual tourism can rebuild travel for a post-pandemic world" on the World Economic Forum's website, tourism companies have started promoting virtual tourism (Anu Pillai S, 2021). These companies are using cutting-edge technologies such as augmented, virtual or mixed reality (AR, VR, MR) could be game-changer. AR, VR, and MR can enable a seamless,

uninterrupted interactive experience for viewers from their own private space. Virtual tourism is gaining popularity all over the world these days (Lew, Cheer, Haywood, Brouder, & Salazar, 2020). Tourism companies in Pakistan can also introduce virtual tourism businesses. Existing tourism companies and new companies can make a good profit in the global tourism market by adopting the business model of virtual tourism. There are many tourist destinations in Pakistan such as the lush valleys, lakes, and glaciers of the northern regions on one side and the historical, cultural, and religious sites on the other side. Pakistani companies can take full advantage of these places.

## Conclusion

It is evident from the content analysis of available literature that the impact of lockdown in Pakistan is severe in terms of socio-economic perspective. Undoubtedly, the only solution to counter or restrict Pandemic like COVID-19 is lockdown; whether it is a full, partial, or smart lockdown. However, this study has analyzed that every lockdown – full or partial – is always accompanied by socio-economic implications in any country, but a country like Pakistan which is already carrying a weak economy has been burdened with the cost of the pandemic has incurred in terms of lockdown decision.

The shutting of all businesses and factories had left many people unemployed which caused an exponential increase in poverty in the country. Despite the Government had released many packages for the small businesses but they were less enough to level the loss they confronted. The socio-economic are the backbone of any country but in Pakistan, the socio-economic structure of the country had badly been affected by the lockdown.

The Health care system of Pakistan was badly exposed as the limited number of ventilators with limited resources for general health facilities were available for the population during the lockdown. However, later on, the Government set a fund to buy ventilator and vaccines along with important health devices from china and other countries. The education system of Pakistan has entirely developed on a traditional physical setting environment, and in Pandemic it was very difficult to transform to digital-i.e., Online learning. The unavailability of digital infrastructure in the country had left worst

impact on education during the lockdown. The loss of education has left a negative impact of youth as depression and anxiety was found in youth during lockdown (Fernandes, Biswas, Mansukhani, Casarín, & Essau, 2020).

The shortage of Food items and exploitation from the stockholders brought panic in people. The hostile buying with high prices has been seen during the lockdown.

To conclude, in the light of content analysis, it can be argued that the impact of lockdown on the socio-economic practices of Pakistan has been seen. The constituting factors of socio-economic practices have been severely affected and its consequences can be seen by looking at economic indicators of the country as well as the social factors of the country-both have faced a catastrophic situation during the lockdown.

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