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POPULATION - POVERTY CONNECTION IN PAKISTAN: IS IT REALLY A PROBLEM?

Pakistan is one of the most populous but least developed countries in the world. The population of Pakistan quadrupled on the verge of 21st century. The age-sex structure of Pakistan is expanding towards middle age groups, a healthy sign. Fertility, over past decades, showed a considerable decline. Crude Birth Rate and Crude Death Rates are also showing declining trends. However, at the same time, population as a whole is increasing. On the other hand, half of the population still lives in absolute poverty, majority in rural areas, which have more severe and absolute poverty as compared to the urban area. Wealth distribution is extremely uneven in Pakistan. In neo-Malthusian analysis, poverty in Pakistan is due only to the rising population growth. For the people of the country, however, poverty is due only, as asserted by Boserup, to the inequality in income and wealth distribution. In a typical village of Pakistan, three-fourth of the land is owned by only one-tenth of the people. The rest works on the farms of the elite class as a tenant. A lion's share of produce goes to the elites and a very small amount is given to the tenants who, in no case, can pay off for their annual expenses—not to speak of expenses on marriage and other contingencies. This paper, as a theoretical-empirical discourse, critically takes into account population and poverty phenomena. It starts with a brief introduction and comprehensively addresses the population-poverty links with a key focus on Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Most of the under-developed countries are facing the difficult challenge of economic development and poverty reduction. Inflation, rising prices, increasing unemployment, low rate of literacy, absolute poverty, hunger, food shortage, low standard of living, low per capita income, and the like are the key problems of less developed world. For past few centuries, it has been believed that population explosion is one of the stimuli behind these problems. It is still believed by many that rapid population growth is one of the root causes of poverty and low rate of economic development in the third world.

Pakistan, like all other less developed parts of the world, is facing the formidable challenge of poverty reduction, economic growth and [much exposed] rapid increase in population. During last 60 years Pakistan's population increased almost five times i.e., from 34 million in 1951 to 173.5 in 2010.¹ At the moment Pakistan is the sixth most populous nation of the world. Combating poverty remained top priority in almost all national plans of Pakistan. Out of the seven MDGs eradicating extreme poverty and hunger has been set as the first goal.² Despite giving highest priority to poverty eradication no serious thought has been given to find out any logical relationship between rising poverty and population explosion at policy level. It is very common for the ministers and high public officials to show their deep concerns regarding population growth in the country on 11th July every year, the world population day. Any well-researched serious thought to the issue, both from public sector and the academia, is still to be given.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

According to census carried out in 1998 Pakistan had a population of 132.35 million.³ Today, Pakistan stood the 6th most populous country in the world after China, India, USA, Indonesia, and Brazil in the rating.⁴ Even with the stringent measures to check growth rate of Pakistan from 2.2% in 1998 to 1.7% by this year; its population will touch an estimated figure of 194 million in 2020. About 37% population of Pakistan is below poverty line according to World Bank report. The

Bucharest conference urged the developing countries to maintain development as the best contraceptive.⁵ With unchecked population growth, rising poverty, which means going short materially, socially and emotionally, is nightmare for the policy makers.⁶

This study is aims to find as to whether accelerated population growth is contributing towards rise in poverty, hampering policy formulators, or human resources can be exploited as demographic dividend for mankind. It also analyzes with comparative case study of countries facing similar challenges and how best they turned the table on their side by making use of tremendous human resource potential to curtail poverty.⁷ The researcher took the perspective that poverty is a problem that is not solved by eliminating the people. Poverty has always been a problem, even when there were scarcely any people on the entire planet. People are the only proven way out of poverty. Removing them will only keep the poor right where they started.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Today, there are hundreds of organizations working on population issue, globally and nationally. Majority of the researches initiated by any of the international or national organization (e.g. UNFPA & WPF, MoPW) took the pessimist perspective of the population-a perspective which predicts disastrous consequences for the world [or a country] if the population growth is not restricted today. Population, in most of the researches, has always been seen as a major threat to the global survival, creating poverty and giving birth to other social evils, and responsible for almost all the development problems of the poor countries, including Pakistan. This biasness in researchers has led all the policies to focus on curbing the population (through fertility control), minimizing it through soft and/or harsh means.

For decades Pakistan spent millions of dollars to reduce fertility through family planning programmes, encouraging family planning through the media and giving incentives for

using contraceptives and having smaller families. Similar initiatives have been introduced by other poor countries of the region as well, viz, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Indonesia and China. Despite the efforts of the national and international bodies the poverty in the poor countries has never been eradicated in reality nor desired development results been achieved.

The question arises, why population is still increasing and why poverty is still on the rampage in Pakistan? Whether all our poverty eradication and population policies are directed in the wrong way? If yes, to what extent, and which area needs to be focused in order to halt the population from growing any further and at the same time eradicate poverty and achieve similar level of development as that of the wealthy countries? This paper takes into account the unprecedented phenomena of population growth and rising poverty in Pakistan. Contrary to the traditional beliefs this paper critically analyzes population growth and poverty in both perspectives-the *doomsters* who consider population as a bomb about to explode, and the *boomsters* who believe population is not as threatening as it seems to be.⁸ Similar to Jullian Simon, the researcher also sees the population to be the *ultimate resource*.

1.4. Methodology

The source of data used in this research were numerous reports of Economic Survey of Pakistan, Pakistan Social and Demographic Surveys, numerous reports and statistics of the Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan, Population Census Organization (PCO), US online Census Database (which can generate population estimates for the past and the future alike), and besides other UN reports, especially various UNDP's Human Development Reports.

For the purpose of this research archival (documentary method) and qualitative methods of research were selected. Further, Kingsley Davis technique of policy formulation is used which says that the formulation of a population policy requires an assessment of current trends (requiring an understanding of the causes of population change) and an evaluation of the

expected consequences of current trends. If the expected consequences differ from the desired result, then a policy may be implemented to alter the course of demographic events.⁹

2. POPULATION-POVERTY: A THEORETICAL DEBATE

Population-poverty debate has taken shape of two extreme today. On the one hand, population is considered as an impediment to development, giving rise to poverty. On the other hand, having larger populations is considered a desirable situation by many. Similar to the global debate, the rising population, in Pakistan, is considered by the public authorities to be one of the root causes of poverty, unemployment, inflation, and even illiteracy. As mentioned by the Minister of Population Welfare, Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan, in her interview in a documentary on GEO TV, *“the poor economic conditions, poverty, ignorance, food crisis, unemployment, inflation, and poor law and order, all these undesirable situations are due to the population.”*¹⁰ Similarly, the preamble of Draft National Population Policy 2010 starts with the statement that *“right from 1950s high population growth in Pakistan was recognized as a major impediment to its socioeconomic development process.”*¹¹

Contrary to this perception, having more children is considered as having more sources of income in the poor families and communities of Pakistan. Larger family is generally considered an asset. In a documentary of Geo TV, directed by Sabeen Inam, almost every poor person interviewed wanted more than ten children for his family. One teenager, who was to be married in near future, aspired to have at least fifteen/sixteen children, who will share a hand in bringing bread and living for him and the family, and in this way survival will be easier.¹² This behaviour worth a pause. Is family a consumer, as posed by many, or a producer as well, as considered by the poor? For the poor, the family is a producer of income and more family members mean more hands to work, but for a few it is only a consumer adding nothing to the national wealth but more mouths to feed.

Considering this sharp difference in the approach to the population phenomena and observing the fact that everywhere in the world, in every kind of culture, the poorest people has the most children, Donella Meadows (2010) asked a question, “Does having many children make people poor? Or does being poor make people have many children?”¹³

This is a hot question to be considered before putting all the garbage on *the poor* [emphasis added] to be too many in number. Finding an answer to this question will give a right direction to the foreign aid and government spending on the population phenomena.

Those who think population causing poverty advocates programmes in family planning and population education. Those who take poverty causing population growth advocate direct economic aid, jobs, capital investment. Their slogan is, “Take care of development and the birth rate will take care of itself.” In this section, we analyse the logical links between population growth and poverty.

2.1. Is There Any Link between Population Growth and Economic Development (poverty)?

The researchers agree that there is nearly undisputable but complex statistical association between population growth and economic development, when population change, economic development tends to change and vice versa.¹⁴ An Indian economist Thirwall (1994) said that “*the relation between population growth and economic development is a complex one, and the historical evidence is ambiguous, particularly concerning what is ‘cause’ and what is ‘effect’.*”¹⁵

When we look at the global pattern of per person income, it is easy to observe that the poorest countries are in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, whereas the richest countries are the European and “overseas” European countries (USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) as well as Japan. The geographical and demographic patterns show that those places in the world where incomes are highest also tend to have the lowest levels of

fertility, the lowest mortality levels, the lowest overall rates of population growth, and the highest levels of urbanization. Conversely, those places where incomes are lowest tend to have highest levels of fertility and mortality, highest level of population growth and a very low level of urbanization.

These facts clearly show some logical relationship between population growth and development but the puzzle remains the same, what causes what? On this issue the researchers also seem to standing at two separate poles; one tending to accept the fact that population growth is a stimulus to economic development thereby reducing poverty. The others hold the position that population growth eats up resources and the economic growth and thereby further leading to poverty. The arguments of these two groups of researchers have been presented below.

2.1-a. Population Growth means More Poverty and Under-Development

Since the mid of the last century, population growth, as termed by Paul Ehrlich, is put forth as a Bomb, about to explode. In addition to Malthus's suggestion of population control through moral restraints, the neo-Malthusian of the 20th century turned toward harsher means of population control in order to achieve economic development. They, not only believe in Malthus's thesis—too many people, not enough resources—but also add up that population growth is detrimental to economic development as a whole.

The contemporary neo-Malthusian view about the negative impact of population growth on development is very much associated with American writers Lester Brown and Paul Ehrlich, who, in a series of influential books and articles from the 1970s, argued the case for the necessity of preventive population checks. These views were important for the growth and prominence of the family planning movement, and the implementation of family limitation programmes—such as in Pakistan and India—and often with considerable coercion.¹⁶

Today, there is enough evidence to believe that much of the global population agenda, and the 3rd world's population programmes (including Pakistan), are completely influenced by the decree of neo-Malthusian regarding population growth. It is clear from the fact that three of the eight MDGs of the United Nations, to be achieved by 2015, explicitly deal with a major population concern:

- Reducing infant and child mortality (MDG 4);
- Empowering women (MDG 3); &
- Ensuring environmental stability (MDG 7).¹⁷

2.1.a.(i). Empirical Evidence

The idea of neo-Malthusian is very simple: economic growth will not be translated into development unless the population is growing slower than an economy. In an illustration, John Weeks¹⁸ quoted the case of Nigeria. Between 1980 and 2000, the population of Nigeria increased from 71 million to 123 million people, representing an average annual rate of population growth of 2.7% per year. The economy was also growing, in fact, at the rate of 2.3% annually. However, that was not fast enough to keep up with population growth; as a consequence, the per capita GNP in Nigeria in 2000 was less than it had been in 1980. Despite a growing economy, the average person was worse off. So, if populations are growing more slowly, then economic development can take place more easily. From this, neo-Malthusian conclude that population growth is detrimental to economic development.¹⁹

Contrary to the neo-Malthusian belief, however, the researchers on the other end of the thread promote the reverse idea. As mentioned by Gould (2009) that it is difficult for the 3rd World countries to accept a neo-Malthusian perspective to their population and poverty phenomena. The poor country realizes that the problem is poverty and income distribution, not population.

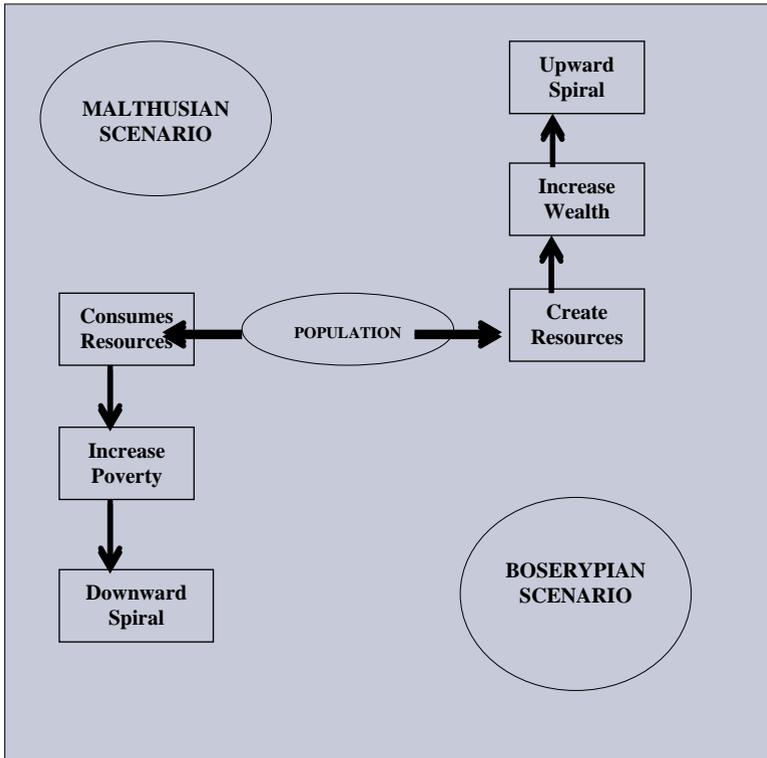
2.1-b. Population Growth Means Reduction in Poverty

Many critical economists believe that population growth leads to economic development and thereby reducing poverty.

One of the most contemporary proponents of this idea was the Danish economist, Ester Boserup. She is the most prominent advocate of the view that population growth can act in some circumstances as a stimulus rather than an impediment to economic change. For her, as for Malthus, population growth can be a critical factor in food supply. However, for Malthus, population growth imposed additional pressures on available resources and resulted in falling per capita outputs; for Boserup, population growth is seen to have the possibility of being a stimulus to agricultural output, raising output per unit of land, labour and technology. For Malthus, population growth initiated a downward spiral, a pessimistic scenario of increasing poverty as a result of additional consumption; for Boserup, it could release an upward spiral of development as a result of increasing per capita resource productivity (See Fig2.1-a.).²⁰ She wrote, "*in the long run, a growing population is more likely than either a non-growing or declining population to lead to economic development.*"²¹ Her ideas are fully supported by the history of European countries and Industrial Revolution.

A similar idea is also advanced by the British Agricultural economist Colin Clark. His thesis is that, "*[population growth] is the only force powerful enough to make such [poor] communities change their methods, and in the long run transforms them into much more advanced and productive societies.*"²² In 1980s, Julian Simon, came forward with the idea that *a growing population is the ultimate resource in search of economic improvement.*²³

A most contemporary accompanying idea has been presented by the editor of Spiked London, Brendan O'Neill, on July 3rd 2009. In one of his address he argued that "*there should be absolutely no limits on population growth and no attempt whatsoever to cajole, coerce or convince people into having fewer children.*" Dismissing the Doomsters idea of shortage of resources, O'Neill argues that there is nothing fixed about a resources. He summarizes his thesis in the following words;

Fig2.1-a.: Malthusian and Boserupian Scenario

Source: W T Gould. (2009). *Population and Development*. London: Routledge Publishers. P. 65.

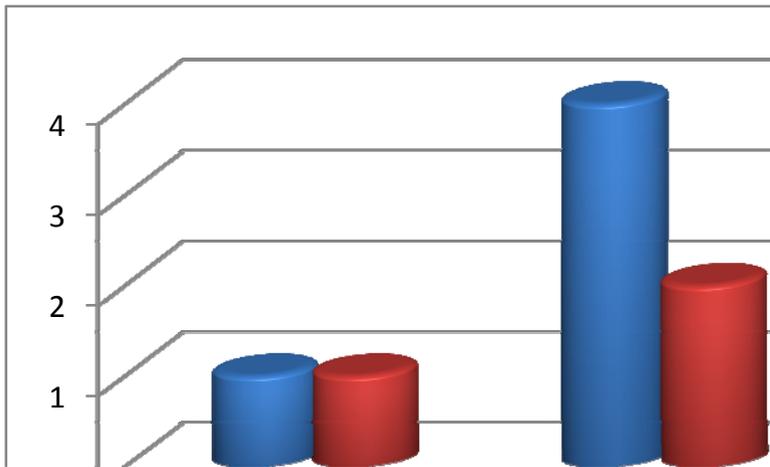
“Resources are not some numerically measurable thing; they have a history and a future. For example, for much of human history the oceans were considered a terrible obstacle. People looked at them as barriers, as the unpredictable destroyers of human communities; the most they dared to do was live on the coastlines of seas and oceans. But when humans reached a higher level of technological and social development, really from the sixteenth century onwards, the oceans came to be seen as a means of travel and a deep well of resources.

Today we travel across the oceans and fish and mine within them for food and oil. Resources are not in any serious sense fixed; their discovery and usage depends on the nature of society itself. Who knows what we will consider to be a resource in the future? Who knows how much further we can push our use of uranium or when we will discover that other elements, too, might transform human existence?"²⁴

2.1.b.(i). Empirical Evidence

In 2006 Dr. Amirzada Asad, a Pakistani professor of Social Work from the University of Peshawar, stated in his essay, *Population Growth: A Gloom or Bloom for Pakistan*, that in case of Pakistan Malthusian reality is in reverse. When our own population was less, we were least developed and when population grew, we are developing.²⁵ The empirical evidence also goes against Malthusian predictions. The population of Pakistan grew from 85.09 million in 1981 to 173.5 million in 2010, i.e. almost two times increase. However, while the population increased two times the GDP at constant price grew four (4) times during the same period, i.e. from 1427.96 billion rupees to 5859.58 billion within the same specified time period (See Figure 2.1 b for graphical illustration).²⁶

Considering all these theoretical arguments and empirical evidences, a growing population seems to be helpful for reducing poverty and achieving more development, at least true in Pakistan, rather than a hindrance. History of European countries is a valid premise for this conclusion. Population growth surely is an essential condition for an economy to grow. However, the limits of growth depends on the nature of the society itself. The West experienced an Industrial Revolution and population growth simultaneously. The situation for the LDCs like Pakistan is much different. Despite the increasing number of people, the economic growth in the third world including Pakistan, is rather below or hardly equal to the population growth.

Fig 2.1 b-: GDP vs Population Growth in Pakistan-1981-2009

Source: IMF, www.tradingeconomics.com

In case of Pakistan, fertility control programme started in early 60s. For the last fifty (50) years, Pakistan has been trying to curb its population from growing any further. The sole purpose of this population control is to achieve the level of economic development similar to that of the developed world. Neither of the objectives has been achieved by today. The effectiveness of population control programmes, even today, is a question mark. Rather, fertility control programme, as mentioned by Prof. Sirageldin, has been ineffective.²⁷ In the same analysis, Pakistan is still in the lower Human Development category in the UN reports.

3. POPULATION AND POVERTY IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan is a country which can be placed in LDCs; a country where population and poverty (inequality), has been and, are rising simultaneously. Considering almost five times increase in the population since 50s and estimated population of 194 million in 2020,²⁸ the National Population Policy 2002 holds that such a large population undermines efforts being undertaken to reduce poverty and to improve the standards of living of the

populace. Along with this large number of populace, Economic Survey of Pakistan 2008-09 reports that about one quarter of the population lives below poverty line. Pakistan still stands in the lower ends of medium ranking. This year, Pakistan stands at 125th in latest Human Development Index (HDI) ranking of the UNDP.²⁹ Last year, Pakistan was ranked at 141. India has always been slightly above Pakistan in HDI ranking while Bangladesh slightly below Pakistan. India has been placed at number 119 this year while last year India was at number 134. Bangladesh, however, was at 146 in 2009 and improved to 129 this year.³⁰

According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2009, the number of people living on less than 2\$ a day, in Pakistan, is 60.3% of the total population, which is lower than the neighbouring India 75.6% and Bangladesh 81.3%.³¹ Similarly, population living on less than a single dollar a day is 22.6% lower than India 41.6% and Bangladesh 49.6%.³² Further, the rural areas of the country (Pakistan) have more severe and absolute poverty as compared to the urban area. These figures show that the much claimed rising per capita income of Pakistan is a mis-leading figure. The fruits of increasing GNP are going to the pockets of the rich. In fact, the poor are increasing in numbers due to extreme uneven distribution of wealth.

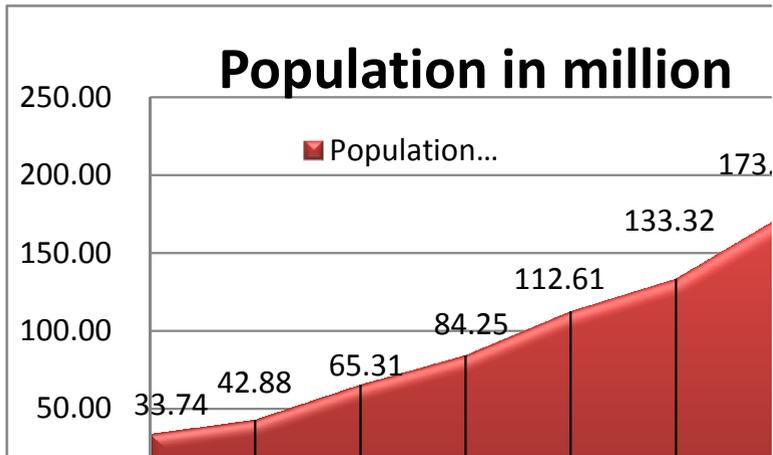
In neo-Malthusian analysis, poverty in Pakistan is due only to the rising population growth. For the people of the country, however, poverty is due only, as asserted by Boserup, to the inequality in income and wealth distribution. In a typical village of Pakistan, 80% of the land is owned by only 2% of the people. The rest works on the farms of the elite class as a tenant. A lion's share of produce goes to the house of Chaudhry, Vadera, or Khan, and a very small amount is given to the tenants who, in no case, can pay off for their annual expenses—not to speak of expenses on marriage and other contingencies.

3.1. Overview of Pakistan's Population

With a population of 173.51 and a population density of 217.3 person per sq.km,^{33,34} Pakistan is the 6th most populous country in the world today—first five being China, India, USA,

Indonesia, and Brazil respectively. It is estimated that Pakistan will move on to the 4th most populous country by 2050 with a population of more than 348 million.³⁵ These estimates, along with most researchers and the doomsday believers, are seen as alarming by the Ministry of Population Welfare.

Fig 3.1-a: Population of Pakistan since 1951



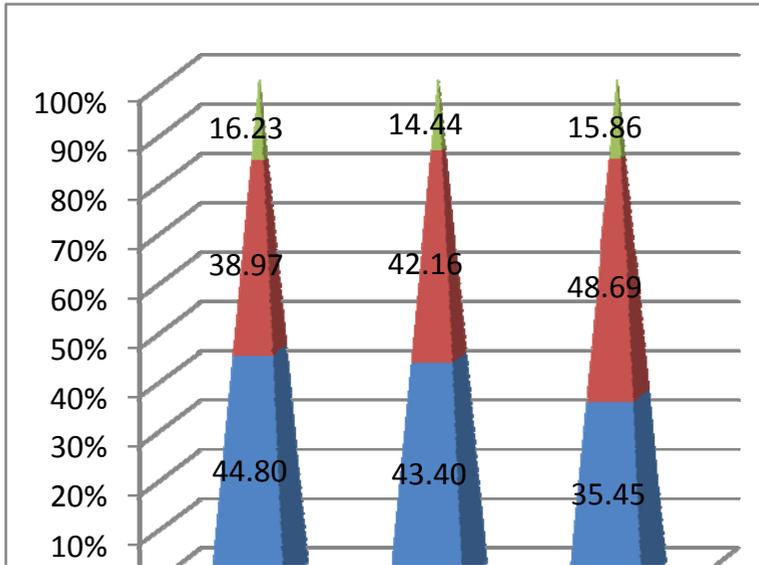
Source: Population Census Organization; Ministry of Population Welfare, Govt of Pakistan.

Figure 3.1-a. shows the history of population of Pakistan since 1951 and predicted for 2020. The figure shows that our population has been consistently increasing since the start of the 2nd half of the last century. It increased almost five times since 1951. However, growth rate is showing a consistent decline since 1980s (See Table 3.1-a & Fig 3.1-e).

a. Age-Sex Structure of Pakistan

The age structure in the country has change over past few decades. In 1981 the population of the cohort 0-14 years was 44.8% of the total population. It dropped slightly to 43.4% in the next 17 years--till the next census, 1998 but dropped drastically to 35.4% in the first decade of 21st century, i.e. 2010 (See Fig 3.1-b).

Fig 3.1-b: Comparative Age Structure of Pakistan-1981-98-2010

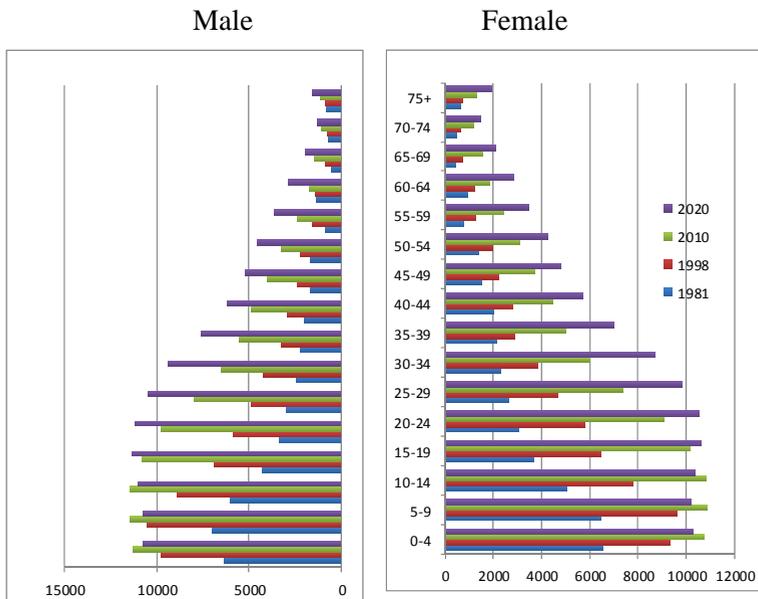


Similarly, according to 1981 census, the population of the age group 15-45 years was almost 39% of the total population. It increased slightly to 42% in 1998 and sharply to 48.7% in 2010. It shows that the middle age population is increasing in Pakistan, which implies more workers for the economy, more population in productive and reproductive age group, and decrease in dependency ratio.

In another comparison, the age-sex structure of Pakistan (Figure 3.1-c) is showing a transitional trend. The age-sex pyramid expanded slightly during 1981-98 but a very clear expansion can be noticed in the pyramid during past ten years. The expansion is moving upward, towards the middle of the pyramid. It indicates that the youthful population between 10-30 years is on the increase. It should be kept in mind that it is the population which is mostly in productive and reproductive age. This is the age group who are workers, teachers, plumbers, mechanics, masons, telephone operators, managers, clerks, and

other types of labourers. In other words, this age group is a nation's wealth producer, while the other two groups are only consumers, the dependents. This expansion in the middle of the pyramid further implies that the dependency ratio in the country is gradually on the decline—a desirable indicator for the economic prosperity.

Fig 3.1-c: Comparative Age Structure of Pakistan-1981-98-2010-2020



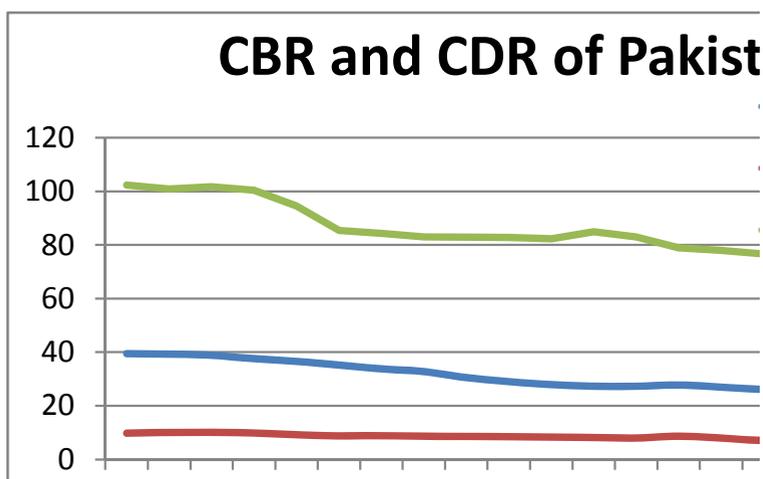
Source: Data for 1981-1998 is obtained from the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2009-10; Data for 2010 and 2020 is obtained from the US Census Bureau, International Data Base.

b. CBR and CDR

The primary factors which contribute to demographic change are fertility (births), mortality (deaths), and migration. In order to indicate population trends in a country Crude Birth Rate (CBR) and Crude Death Rate (CDR) are the simplest and the most comprehensive population dynamics. CBR is the number of live births per 1,000 people in a given population over a period

of one year. Both CBR and CDR in Pakistan are showing a declining trend. The CBR decreased significantly since the last census conducted in 1998, i.e. from 39.5 in 1998 to 25.0 in 2008. Similarly, CDR has also decreased by from 8.7 in 1998 to 7.7 in 2008. This declining trend in CBR and CDR is clearly visible from the Figure 3.1.d.

Figure 3.1-d: CBR and CDR of Pakistan



Source: *Economic Survey of Pakistan 2008-09*. Table 12.1. P. 194

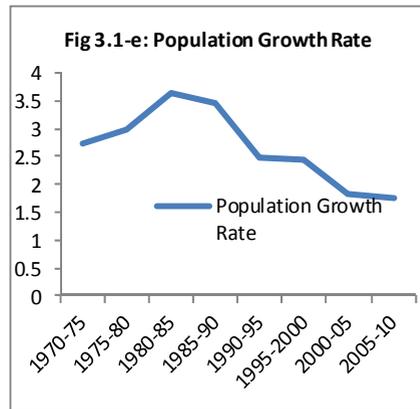
It is obvious that there has been no dramatic shift in the curve shown in Figure 3.1-d. The curves of CBR and CDR are constantly moving downward to the right side of the graph without showing any remarkable fluctuation. This is also an indicator of stable policies, no extraordinary measures to tackle the phenomena of population. Our infant mortality rate is also showing an improving trend. It was 83 deaths per 1,000 infants in 1998 which dropped to 70 in 2008.³⁶ Growth rate has started to decline gradually in 80s (See Table 3.1-a).

Fertility [and population growth rate] showed gradual decline over the years, noted Naushin Mehmood in 2009, a researcher from PIDE. She further mentioned in her report that “the level of fertility in Pakistan apparently remained constant at

6.8 children per woman from 1961 through 1987, making this finding consistent with the rising rate of population growth during the same period. The fertility decline started around 1988 with a reduction of approximately 2 children per woman in each decade through 2000 and later years, and so did the population growth rate.”³⁷ Today, our fertility keeps on decreasing every year. As for yesterday, total fertility per woman was 6.3 in 1970s which decreased to 4.8 in 90s and to 3 per woman today in 2010.

Table 3.1-a. Population Growth Rate in Pakistan since 1970

Population Growth Rates In Pakistan	
Period	Growth Rate
1970-75	2.74
1975-80	2.97
1980-85	3.63
1985-90	3.47
1990-95	2.46
1995-2000	2.44
2000-05	1.82
2005-10	1.76

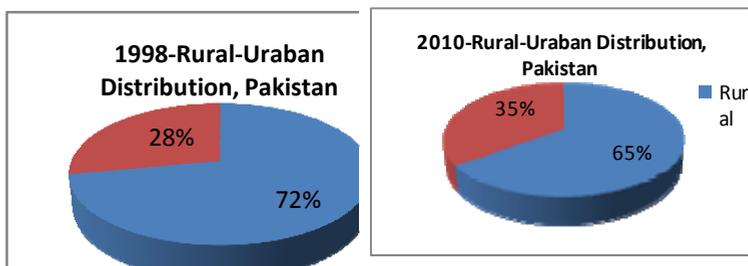


Source: Shahzad Hussain, Shahnawaz Malik, Muhammad Khizar Hayat. (2009). *Demographic Transition and Economic Growth in Pakistan*. *European Journal of Scientific Research*. © EuroJournals Publishing, Inc. 2009. Retrieved on November 03, 2010 from <http://www.eurojournals.com/ejsr.htm>

It implies that our population is showing a decreasing growth rate and somewhere in future the population level will be stabilized. This also implies that Pakistan is shifting from Stage-2 to Stage-3 in its demographic transition.

When we look at the other side of the picture, our total population is increasing consistently. Figure-3 shows that in the last twenty (20) years the population kept on moving upward to right side of the graph. While our population was only 112.61 million in 1991, it jumped to 173.51 million in 2010 i.e., 35% increase during last twenty years. Our population growth rate, although decreasing constantly, is still the highest in the region i.e., 1.76%,³⁸ while in comparison to Pakistan population growth rate of China, India and Bangladesh is 0.49%, 1.38% and 1.27% respectively.³⁹ With the current growth rate being stable for the next 15 years the MoPW estimated that population of Pakistan will be 210.13 million in 2025. Life expectancy at birth for both sexes is 64.5 years (63.6 years for male and 65.4 for female).

Fig 3.1-f: Comparative Rural-Urban Distribution-1998-2010



Urbanization is showing a consistent upward movement. The 7% increase in urban population, during 1998-2010, implies that rural urban migration is on the rise in Pakistan. This internal migration, although possess no serious threat in the long run, but does increase pressure on the urban resources, facilities etc.

Population of Pakistan is increasing, although with a declining rate but consistently. Further, as mentioned above, more than 60% population is poor where both fertility and mortality levels are high and per capita income is very low. On the other hand, only a small percentage is considered to be having all the amenities of modernization, with a lower level of fertility and mortality. This again raises the question whether

large numbers of poor mean that it is their being too many in number that they remained poor?

3.2. Poverty Profile of Pakistan

According to IMF World Countries Outlook Database 2010, Pakistan ranks at 144 out of 190 countries in the world, in respect of GDP (nominal) Per Capita. World Bank's list rank Pakistan s 132nd and according to CIA World Fact Book 2009, Pakistan ranks 150th with respect to its GDP (nominal) per capita. India, on the other hand, has been placed slightly above Pakistan in all these figures.

Poverty in Pakistan experienced a decline during 2000-01 to 2004-05 from 34.5% to 23.9%. however, as reported by the Annual Plan 2010-11 it seems to have increased in the recent years due to slow economic growth, high rate of inflation, scarcity of power and the war on terror resulting in diversion of public expenditure from development to security.⁴⁰ Poverty line was Rs. 948-/ during 2005-06. It still is somewhere around a thousand rupees a month. Economic Survey of Pakistan 2008-09 reported that 36.1% of Pakistani population lives below poverty line. Per capita income (GDP nominal) of the country is around a thousand US dollars a year (1088\$ latest). Inflation is on a steep rise and it seems almost un-manageable to the authorities. Pakistan is the 10th largest country in the world according to the size of the labour force. On the basis of a participation rate of

32.8 percent, as per the latest Labour Force Survey 2008-09, the

labour force is estimated at 53.72 million. Of the total labour force, 50.79 million are employed while 2.93 million persons are unemployed; resulting in an unemployment rate of 5.5 percent. It indicates a poor economic situation in the country.⁴¹

3.3. Empirical Findings on Population-Poverty Links in Pakistan

Shahzad Hussain, Shahnawaz, & M. Khizar Hayat (2006) conducted an empirical study titled *Demographic Transition and Economic Growth in Pakistan*, in order to find out the relationship of demographic variables with the national economy. After a thorough description of Pakistan's Infant Mortality Rate, Total Fertility Rate, Population Growth Rate, and GDP Growth rate during 1972 and 2006, they tried to find out the relationship between GDP growth rate and demographic variables.

Their findings were as following;

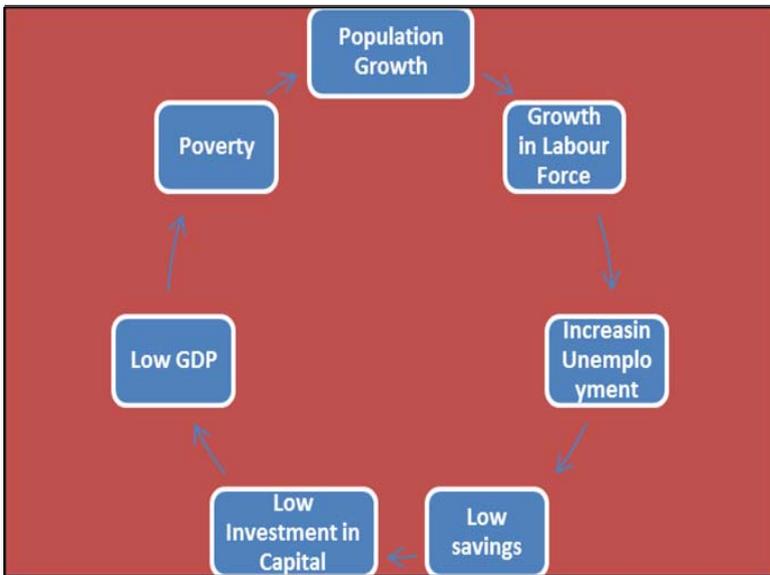
1. GL-Growth in Labour Force-is negatively related with GDP. It may be due to the fact that the economy is not absorbing the working age population into productive employment.
2. PG-Population Growth-is positively related with GDP and significant at 5% level.

The most astonishing result is the relationship between labour force growth rate and GDP growth rate. According to the findings of the research, a growing labour force has a negative impact on GDP. The economy seems to lack the ability to absorb the new growing number of workers. It suggests that the increasing growth in labour force mean the increase in the unemployed labour force. More the labour force, in the contemporary economic conditions of Pakistan, the more unemployment there will be. It is obvious that increasing unemployment means more poverty in the country. The diagram presents a much better picture of the relationship between population growth and poverty.

It implies, on the one hand, to reduce the working force through fertility control. On the other hand, it implies that more investment in capital is essential in order to absorb the growing number of work force because overall population growth fosters economic growth in Pakistan. Further, they conclude that rapid

population growth and increasing population density stimulate technical change and institutional innovations. Larger populations are also able to enjoy greater economies of scale. Education and health of the people are given top priority by the authors of the study⁴².

Fig 4.2.: Population Growth and Poverty Links



Similarly, more than four-fold increase in GDP during last 40 years coupled with only a double increase in population indicates a positive relationship between population and development.⁴³

Recently Imran Ahmad Sajid conducted a study (still unpublished) on two villages in Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa in order to observe the impacts of population growth on these communities. He observed that in the village Garhi Baloch, Peshawar, a typical family consists of 8-10 members. Almost 100% of the poor, who were landless workers on the farms,

considered uneven land distribution to be the only reason for their poverty. Almost 100% respondents considered large family a blessing from the nature. Larger a family size in Garhi Baloch is, the greater the respect that family gains in the community and a great say in village affairs.

The second village was GharKhoi, district Upper Dir. A typical family size in Ghar Khoi consists of about 10-12 members. The people in GharKhoi, and other villages of the entire Dir (both Lower and Upper), has turned the highest of mountains into green agricultural fields. Potato, onion, wheat, and corn are the major crops cultivated on these Chinese like mountainous fields. Similar to most African countries, farms are cultivated through collective family labour. In this scenario, having larger number of family members mean having more workers to share a helping hand in agriculture. In terms of income, families in Ghar Khoi are much wealthy than families in Garhi Baloch and there is a lower uneven distribution of wealth/income in Ghar Khoi. However, the people of the village considers them self poorer than people in any village near Peshawar city—a plan and most densely populated area. For them, people in the city have access to higher education, hospitals, schools, colleges, markets, and even communication with the entire world—through availability and accessibility of internet and other sorts of media in Peshawar. This leads to conclude that poverty in Ghar Khoi is measured in terms of access to resources, which off course Ghar Khoi lack. It leads to conclusion that larger families are considered an asset in rural Pakistan.

Conclusion

Based on the empirical findings and theoretical debate, it is concluded thus, poverty, on one hand, is due to uneven distribution of land holdings, and, on the other hand, due to scattered population units in rural Pakistan. Large family, in no rural area, ever caused problems of poverty and hunger, rather uneven distribution of wealth causes it. Further, birth control in any case is neither desirable nor a first option to reduce pressure on family food supply in Pakistan.

Keywords: Pakistan, Population, Poverty, Policy, Environment,

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