



RESEARCH PAPER

Evolution of Anti-poverty Efforts in Pakistan 1947-2020

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ABSTRACT

Initially, following independence, the country faced numerous challenges, including widespread poverty. Early anti-poverty policies focused on infrastructure development, agricultural reforms, and social welfare initiatives. However, the effectiveness of these policies was limited due to factors such as political turmoil, economic instability, and social inequality. Pakistan's government adopted more proactive measures to address poverty. The object of this paper is to analyse the economic development of Pakistan at different stages of its history and the changes in the specific manifestations of poverty, and to analyse the future direction of Pakistan's anti-poverty policies and coping strategies based on past experiences. The use of quantitative and qualitative data to assess the effectiveness and challenges of anti-poverty policies contributes to subsequent improvements. To combat poverty effectively, Pakistan needed comprehensive anti-poverty strategies that could address the root causes.

KEYWORDS Anti-Poverty Policies, Proactive Measures, Agricultural Reforms

Introduction

Since independence, Pakistan has undergone cultural, economic and political changes to adapt to the country's circumstances, which has led to serious challenges in the formulation of policies to reduce poverty, which persists in Pakistan due to untapped resources and uneven distribution of wealth, despite the country's richness in resources to meet the country's developmental needs. Widespread poverty, wide disparities and depth of poverty continue to plague the rural areas of Pakistan, where the majority of the population resides. These phenomena have attracted the attention of the Government and all sectors of society.

This study focuses on the evolution of anti-poverty policies in Pakistan, 1947-2020, 1947 as the starting point of the study can give the academic community in the early years of independence how the government to deal with the problem of poverty to provide clues, 1947-2020 Pakistan's economic level and the living conditions of the people have changed greatly, which is closely related to the implementation of anti-poverty policies, and then this time interval of the sufficient data, covering several key indicators and policy assessments, the richness of the literature is able and well-informed, which is conducive to an in-depth exploration.

Thus, it is possible to further explore the historical background, theoretical origin, and political basis of the formulation of anti-poverty policies, and to assess their effectiveness and shortcomings. The stage-by-stage adjustment and application of the policy. This will accumulate lessons for anti-poverty in Pakistan and provide an important reference for future policy formulation.

Literature Review

S. M. Naseem provides a comprehensive analysis of Pakistan's economic challenges, exploring the historical, structural, and policy dimensions that have shaped the country's development trajectory. The book is divided into several parts, each addressing key aspects of economic performance and development strategies (Naseem, 1982). S. M. Naseem in collaboration with A. R. Kamal has studied poverty in relation to structural adjustment. In the article "Structural Adjustment, Employment, Income Distribution and Poverty" the authors address the impact of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) on various economic and social factors. The authors analyze how SAPs, often imposed by international financial institutions as conditions for loans, affect employment, income distribution, and poverty (Kemal and Naseem, 1994). Taga explores the themes of dual educational system, social capital, and poverty. Taga argues that this dual system contributes significantly to social stratification and the persistence of poverty (Taga, 2012). Riaz argues that both individuals and states play crucial roles in fostering or hindering economic progress, emphasizing the need for effective governance and individual initiative in driving development (Riaz, 2017). Imtiaz Alam explores the complexity and multidimensional impacts of poverty in the South Asian region. The book gathers perspectives from various scholars to provide an in-depth analysis of poverty in South Asian countries, particularly India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka (Alam, 2006).

Material and Methods

The article uses a literature review to systematically summarise the anti-poverty policies formulated by the government of Pakistan since independence in 1947 to provide a theoretical basis and rationale for subsequent anti-poverty policy formulation. Primary literature has been drawn from yearbooks, government archives, newspapers, the press, World Bank statistics, and secondary literature, such as journals, dissertations, and books, has also been used.

The Causes of Poverty in Pakistan: 1947-2020

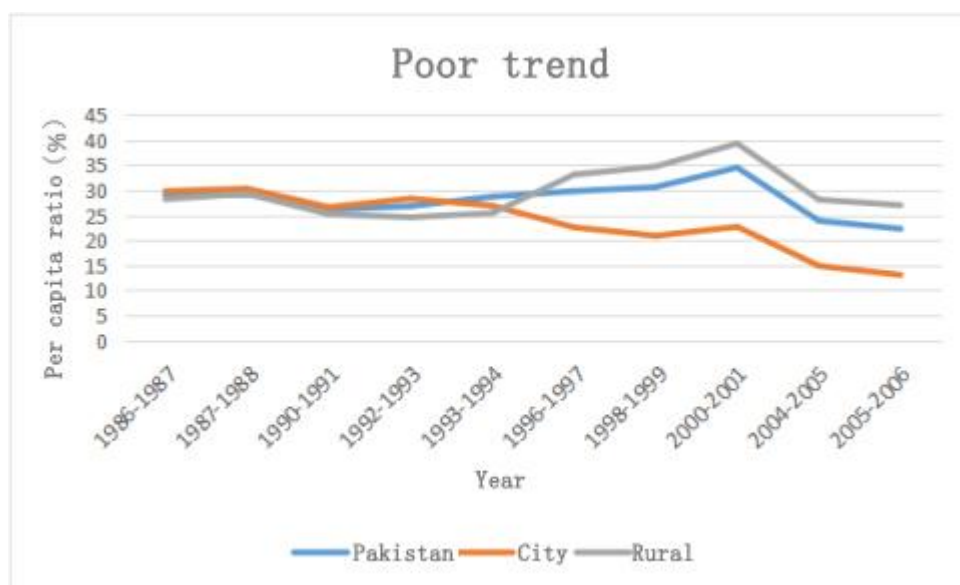
Poverty in Pakistan arises from a complex interplay of multiple factors. Over the past decade, efforts to boost economic growth and social services have led to a 50% reduction in the poverty rate. The country's strategy aimed to decrease poverty from 30% to 15% and has been implemented as follows: Poverty's root causes are diverse and encompass factors like population structure, societal norms, religion, historical context, culture, political influences, economic strategies, natural aspects, and traditional customs. In Pakistan, neglecting these underlying impoverishment factors can hinder successful poverty alleviation efforts (Qurat, 2019). To effectively reduce poverty, the Pakistani government should extend poverty reduction initiatives beyond just meeting basic food and clothing needs. The focus should be on elevating more impoverished individuals to the middle class, ensuring equal access to wealth distribution, education, and healthcare, and safeguarding their human rights. A comprehensive approach that considers human and moral elements is crucial for achieving the goal of poverty alleviation. Redefining the relationship between donors and recipients during poverty alleviation efforts is essential. Encouraging recipients to actively engage in labour and employment opportunities rather than passively relying on assistance is vital for sustainable poverty reduction (Ahmed, et. al. 2015; Malik, 1988). Voluntary philanthropy plays a critical role in Pakistan's poverty reduction strategy. By providing education, medical care, housing, and loans to the poor, these charitable activities significantly

contribute to poverty alleviation. Additionally, compulsory deductible religious donations amount to an estimated 9% of the country's GDP (Rs 6,670 crore in 2002 and 2003). Furthermore, people contribute approximately 2 billion hours of public welfare social services annually (Anis, 2013). Poverty varies across regions with diverse contributing factors. Pakistan's strategic plan accounts for these regional disparities and targets different groups accordingly.

In summary, a new perspective on poverty alleviation emphasises that addressing poverty goes beyond addressing hunger, illiteracy, diseases, and malnutrition. It involves equitable wealth distribution and safeguarding human rights. The impoverished should not be viewed merely as recipients of aid but should be empowered to participate actively in national development through their labour and initiatives.

The poverty trends in Pakistan show a rise in poverty during the 1960s, followed by a decline in the 1970s and early 1980s. However, there were some variations in the results of poverty studies in the late 1980s and 1990s, attributed to differences in research methods used.

Figure 1 shows poverty trends in Pakistan using the official poverty line from 1986-1987 to 2005-2006. (Imran, 2006)



Comparing the incidence of poverty in Pakistan during three consecutive periods, it can be observed that the poverty rate was 29.1% in 1986-1987, 29.2% in 1987-1988, and 26.1% in 1990-1991. The reference point for comparison is taken as 29.2% in 1987-1988, 29.1% in 1986-1987, and 26.1% in 1990-1991. The poverty rate declined in 1991, increased during the period from 1992 to 2001, and then continued to decline from 2004 to 2006.

The incidence of urban poverty has remained relatively stable at around 20-30% (30.3% in 1987-1988, 14.9% in 2004-2005, and 13.1% in 2005-2006). And rural poverty has seen minor fluctuations. The lowest rural poverty rate recorded was 24.6% in 1992-1993, while the highest was 39.3% in 2000-2001 (Talat, 1975). Using the official poverty line based on 2000-2001 prices (minimum intake of 2350 calories per day) per capita monthly consumption was Rs 673.54 at 1998-1999 prices and Rs 748.56 at 2000-2001 prices. The

poverty rate was 34.5% in 2000-2001, 23.9% in 2004-2005, and 22.3% in 2005-2006. Poverty in Pakistan is evident in various aspects, including the incidence of poverty, large wealth disparities, unequal wealth distribution, and poor social indicators. The level of poverty is closely related to economic growth with rural poverty being particularly influenced by agricultural performance (Talat, 1975). Poverty is more prevalent in rural areas compared to urban centers, and it varies significantly among provinces and regions.

Illiteracy rates are higher among poor families compared to wealthier ones. Additionally, unskilled workers experience higher levels of poverty, particularly as living costs rise and real wages decrease during the 1990s.

Ali, S., Mustafa, M. O., & Shahbazi, I. conducted a time sequence analysis on agricultural added value and income inequality in Pakistan. They summarized several reasons contributing to poverty in Pakistan. Firstly, improved healthcare and nutrition can enhance personal and family health and productivity, leading to significant economic impacts. Improving healthcare and nutrition can enhance the health and productivity of individuals and families, reducing healthcare expenditures and loss of labour force caused by disease and malnutrition. This helps alleviate the economic burden on the impoverished population, improving their quality of life and social status (Michael, 2009).

Health and Nutrition

The impact of disease and malnutrition on healthcare expenditure and loss of labour force has a significant effect on poverty in Pakistan. Impoverished individuals often cannot afford the high costs of medical care, which may result in them falling deeper into the cycle of poverty. Additionally, the loss of labour force due to disease and malnutrition reduces the income sources of households, further exacerbating poverty. These factors collectively increase the economic pressure on impoverished families, making it even more challenging for them to break out of the cycle of poverty (Youssef, 2017). Secondly, poor health often compels many children from impoverished families to drop out of school. Better healthcare services can help these children attend school more regularly and in better health. Lastly, investing in education plays a crucial role in poverty reduction. Individuals or families with education and skills tend to earn more than those without life skills or proper education (Riddell, 2018).

In Pakistan, the majority of the impoverished population is concentrated in rural areas. The unequal distribution of land exacerbates the poverty of some. Due to limited financial resources, farmers struggle to afford the high costs of cultivation, making it difficult for them to obtain the necessary seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and irrigation equipment, thereby affecting their crop production. This situation has persisted in Pakistan for a considerable period of time, including the period from 1947 to 2020 (Kemal, 1996).

Land Distribution

Land ownership mobility (Khan, 2002) is closely associated with transient poverty (Hossain and Abdul, 2009), so and families in remote areas with inadequate infrastructure are more prone to chronic or short-term poverty (Hossain and Abdul, 2009). Households with high asset inequality or no assets are also at a greater risk of falling into poverty during economic downturns (Hossain and Abdul, 2009). It means that in these households, there is a significant disparity in the distribution of assets

among family members, with some having substantial assets while others have relatively fewer almost none.

The distribution of land in Pakistan is even more uneven than income (Shigemochi and Abduland et. Al., 2009).Approximately 63 percent of rural households do not own land, while only 2 percent own 50 acres or more, amounting to 30 percent of the total land (Paul and Mona, et.al., 2007). In Pakistan, land distribution is even more unequal than income distribution. Approximately 63% of rural households do not own land, while only 2% of households own 50 acres or more,accounting for 30% of the total land. This phenomenon has persisted throughout the entire period in Pakistan, from 1947 to 2020 (Khan, 2009).

Population Structure

Family size also plays a significant role in poverty. Countries with larger populations and higher population growth rates, like Pakistan, face greater challenges in providing education, nutrition, and healthcare for each family member. Limited access to financial resources further complicates the situation, making it difficult for poor families to escape poverty (Meenakshi and Ray, 2009). Demographers suggest that larger family sizes and higher dependency ratios affect the asset and resource base of households contributing to chronic poverty (Meenakshi and Ray, 2009). Changes in household size and age structure, such as the presence of young adults and elderly members, are related to mobility in and out of poverty (Bloom and Canning,et. al., 2003).

Female-dominated households are more susceptible to chronic poverty (David, 2003). Chronic poverty refers to the prolonged and persistent state of poverty where individuals or households remain in poverty for an extended period, unable to easily escape poverty and improve their living standards. Transient poverty refers to a situation where an individual or a household falls into poverty for a period of time. but this poverty condition is temporary, often caused by sudden events or temporary economic difficulties. This poverty condition is likely to be temporary rather than long-term or permanent because, after a period of time, the individual or household may recover to a more stable economic situation. This type of poverty is typically associated with factors such as cyclical unemployment, illness, natural disasters among others (Hulme and Kanbur, 2009). Such family structures often include divorced or widowed women. making the family more vulnerable to poverty and promoting the intergenerational transmission of poverty, The traditional male-dominated inheritance system further disadvantages women's development, perpetuating family poverty such structures (Robert and Mary et,al., 2011). Inadequate dietary intake can trigger a chain reaction that leads to weight loss and impairs the physical development of children (Robert and Mary et, al., 2011). Households with permanent disabilities are more likely to face persistent poverty compared to households where all members are healthy (Krishna, 2012).

Natural Disasters

Various unpredictable risks and events, such as natural disasters, births illnesses, deaths, weddings, funerals, macroeconomic crises, and inflation, can drive a family into poverty (Bhatti and Malik, 2001). According to Krishna, the expenses associated with weddings and funerals can sometimes lead to long-term poverty for a family (Bhatti and Malik, 2001). regions heavily reliant on agricultural income, factors like severe soil erosion, natural disasters, and the absence of proper irrigation systems have also pushed families into poverty (Sen, 2003).

Land Reform Policies and Poverty Reduction

In the early years following Pakistan's independence in 1947, the primary focus was on establishing and strengthening the newly formed nation while addressing the challenges of nation-building. Despite aspirations for progress and development, poverty remained a pervasive issue. By the late 1970s, poverty in Pakistan, particularly in its rural areas, affected approximately one-third of the rural population. According to the standard of consuming 2350 calories per person per day, Pakistan's poverty rate decreased from 32.5% in 1980 to 15.1% in 2011. Similarly, based on the standard of consuming 3030 Pakistani Rupees per person per month, the poverty rate decreased from 63.4% in 1999 to 30.7% in 2016 (GOP, 2022).

From 1978 to 2017, rural poverty reduction strategies in Pakistan primarily included land reforms, agricultural growth, rural development programs, development of non-agricultural sectors and urbanization, human development, as well as net income or income transfer programs targeted at the poor. To address land distribution issues and improve the living standards of rural poor, Pakistan has undergone three significant land reforms in its history, implemented in 1959, 1972, and 1977, respectively. In these reforms, land ownership limits were set, and land exceeding the limits was reclaimed by the government. However, the reclaimed land was relatively small in area, and the impact of these reforms on land distribution was limited. Across these three reforms, only 2.542 million hectares of land were distributed to 600,000 beneficiaries. The reclaimed land accounted for only 6%, 2.5%, and 8% of the total cultivated land area in 1959, 1972, and 1977, respectively (Memon, 2016).

Although these reforms improved the Gini coefficient¹⁴³ of land ownership, their impact on the income of the rural population was minimal. The quality of the land allocated was not high, and not all beneficiaries were landless farmers. More importantly, landless agricultural workers were not included in any list of beneficiaries (Khan, 2008). There are also shortcomings in the follow-up system, including insufficient allocation of farm credit and agricultural inputs. Therefore, Pakistan's three major attempts at land redistribution have failed to correct the skewed land distribution (World Bank, 2007). In the past, the government has also allocated state-owned land to landless farmers. However, this had minimal impact on the rural poor population, as the amount of land allocated was too small compared to the number of landless farmers in need of land (Qureshi, 2001). Compared to China's land reform initiated in the 1980s, which benefited the entire rural population, Pakistan's land distribution has been limited in terms of beneficiaries, with landless farmers not included in the list of beneficiaries.

Agricultural Growth and Poverty Reduction

In addition to land reforms, agricultural growth has played a key role in reducing rural poverty in China. In contrast, in Pakistan, GDP and agricultural growth have not always exceeded annual population growth. Particularly in the years 1997-98, 2000-01, and 2008-09, during these three periods, annual population growth exceeded GDP and agricultural growth, thereby adversely affecting the welfare of the population (Memon, 2016). The geographical features of Pakistan play a vital role in its status as an agricultural country. The eastern part, characterized by an alluvial plain, is well-suited for machine farming and irrigation, enabling extensive crop cultivation. The northern region's steep terrain lends itself to forestry and animal husbandry. The western area, dominated by mountains and plateaus, holds significant potential for development. These diverse topographic structures form the basis for crop planning (Erica Downs, 2019).

In the late 1970s, the annual growth rate of agriculture was approximately 4%, maintaining this level until the early 1990s. During the 1990s, the agricultural sector performed poorly due to the influence of natural disasters, political instability, and economic imbalance, as well as weakened seed germination, and sharply rising production costs. Additionally, unprecedented levels of corruption in the 1990s also adversely affected economic growth and poverty. Moreover, during each five-year period from 1960 to 2000, the average growth rate of agriculture exceeded 3.2%, largely attributed to the high growth rates of the crop sector as a result of the Green Revolution in the 1970s and 80s (World Bank, 2007). In recent years, severe drought and environmental factors have been the primary reasons for the poor performance of the agricultural sector.

The agricultural growth rate fluctuates annually, with the benefits of this mainly accruing to large and medium-scale farmers rather than small holders or landless households. The additional increase in agricultural income during the 1980s exacerbated inequality. Data released by the World Bank in 2007 showed that medium to large landowners (those owning 12.5 acres or more) accounted for 10% of agricultural households and received approximately 32% of agricultural income (World Bank, 2007).

According to a World Bank study based on simulation results, the maximum benefits of a 10% increase in yield (wheat, basmati and IRRI rice, cotton, and sugar cane) primarily accrued to large and medium-scale landowners, whose income grew by 7.2%. The income of small holders and pure tenants also increased by approximately 4.6%. The average income of rural non-farm households increased by 3.4%. The poorest rural household group (agricultural labourers and rural non-farm poor, accounting for 29% of the rural population) only obtained 6.7% of the total income growth, with their income increasing by only 2.6-4.1% (World Bank, 2007).

Compared to the past, agricultural growth has a smaller impact on today's GDP (approximately \$143 billion) growth and the reduction of rural poverty. Although agricultural growth still positively affects the income of the rural poor, it is much smaller than it was thirty years ago (World Bank, 2007). In the past, the beneficiaries of almost all major agricultural policies appeared to be primarily large landowners and traditional landlords (Khan, 1998).

Merely agricultural growth is insufficient to achieve rapid reduction in rural poverty, as in the past its benefits have mainly accrued to land-owning households, whereas the majority of rural households do not own land. Therefore, in addition to the growth multiplier effects associated with increased agricultural income, the increase in rural non-agricultural income is crucial for achieving rapid reduction in rural poverty. The share of employment in the agricultural sector decreased from 72% in 1974-75 to 59% in 2014-15, reflecting a shift from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors. This shift is primarily towards the service, trade, and construction sectors. The share of rural manufacturing in total employment increased from 9.32% in 1974-75 to 10.60% in 2014-15. This transition also represents a shift in labour from goods production to service production. Due to changes in agricultural structure, the rural non-agricultural economy has become predominantly service-oriented. The transfer of agricultural labour force to other sectors in Pakistan is relatively significant, with the employment share in agriculture decreasing from 70% in 1978 to 27.7% in 2016 (Arif, 2000). In 1996-97, the vast majority of non-agricultural workers were either self-employed or wage earners. This situation remained unchanged in 2001-02 (World Bank, 2007).

Self-employed workers are mainly engaged in trade (53%), services (15.2%), manufacturing (13.2%), and transportation (12.4%) industries. Wage employees are primarily in the construction (31.7%), services (31.4%), and manufacturing (13.2%) industries (Arif, 2000). According to the World Bank's research based on the 2004-05 PSLM survey, there are approximately 3.8 million rural non-farm enterprises, of which 29% are owned by rural households (one shop and/or enterprise). On average, each rural enterprise employs 1.4 people. Most of these employees are family members. Therefore, they serve as sources of employment for family members (Arif, 2000). The majority of non-farm activities engaged in by rural poor households are unskilled and low-output, and their income comes from the construction sector, where nearly half of the population is underemployed. In the non-farm sector, better-income households derive their income from the service, manufacturing/mining, and trade sectors (Malik, 2005). Income from non-farm sources (through job opportunities) has significant potential in reducing rural poverty in Pakistan. However, these opportunities are restricted in most parts of the country.

Non-farm income and poverty reduction

The growth of the non-farm sector is closely linked to the growth of towns and cities, which provide employment opportunities for labour unable to find work in the rural economy. In Pakistan's rural sector, job opportunities, both in agriculture and non-agriculture, are limited. This opens the door for rural populations to migrate to towns and cities. Unlike China, Pakistan has adopted a laissez-faire policy towards internal migration. In 1951, when Pakistan's economy was primarily rural-based, the level of urbanization was only 18%. Over the past six decades, Pakistan's population has increased significantly, with varying population growth rates between urban and rural areas (Tahir, 2004). In Pakistan, the level of urbanization was approximately 39.22% in 2015, the highest population share in urban areas compared to other South Asian countries. By 2030, the urban population is projected to increase by 80 million, reaching 135 million, accounting for 50% of the total population (Memon, 2016). Urbanization contributes to reducing urban and rural poverty primarily by integrating rural populations into urban areas, providing education, potential skills training, and offering better employment opportunities. However, large variations in urbanization, across more than 100 districts of the country, which appears to be a major barrier to rural populations entering non-farm sectors in urban areas. The growth of small and medium-sized cities as centers of commerce and industry can greatly improve the living standards of impoverished rural populations, especially landless households. The growth strategy formulated by the Planning Commission aims to transform cities into commercial hubs by relaxing regional planning and building regulations, privatizing state-owned land, encouraging competition among developers, and focusing on research and development of low-cost, high-efficiency building technologies (GOP, 2011). The timely implementation of this strategy will undoubtedly contribute to improving the welfare of both urban and rural populations.

Since the first Five-Year Plan (1956-1960), successive governments have attempted to address poverty reduction and social development issues through rural development plans. These plans date back to the 1950s with the initiation of the "Village Aid" (1952-1961) program, aimed at: (i) increasing agricultural and village-based industrial production; (ii) establishing schools and health centers; (iii) providing basic amenities such as farm-to-market roads, water supply, and sanitation facilities. Various governments launched a series of consecutive rural development plans under different names, but with similar objectives: Rural Works Program (1963-1972), People's Works

Program (1972-1982), Integrated Rural Development Program(1972-1980), Five Point Program (1985-1988), Tameer-e-Watan Program (1991), and Khushal Pakistan Program (1991-2001) (Khan, 2003). Education expenditure increased from 1.4% in 1980 to 2.3% in 2015. Health expenditure increased from 0.6% in 1980 to 0.8% in 2015. Due to the country's poor performance in social sectors, particularly in health and education, resource allocation cannot be considered adequate. It is worth mentioning that the government launched the Social Action Program (SAP) in the mid-1980s, divided into two phases, with a focus on education health, water supply and sanitation, and population welfare. Out of the total budgetal allocation of over 600 billion rupees for SAP, only less than 60% (356 billion rupees) was utilised (Khan, 2003). The major shortfall occurred during the second phase of the program(1997-2002), during which only 45% of the allocation was utilised (ADB, 2002a). Similar to earlier development plans, the Social Action Programme (SAP) did not bring about any significant qualitative changes in the country, especially in rural areas. Even when services were provided, they neither truly benefited the communities nor were fully utilised (Qurat , 2019).

Conclusion

Although Pakistan has implemented a series of anti-poverty measures over the past few decades, poverty remains one of the formidable challenges facing the country. In the future, Pakistan needs to continue its commitment to implementing effective policies and plans to accelerate the poverty reduction process and ensure that all residents have equal access to development opportunities and living conditions.

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