

A Survey on Poverty and Public Perception

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Abstract

The main focus of this study is on the perception of general public about poverty from different aspects. On the basis of primary data which is collected for this study and discussion with respondents, we conclude that poverty is the most important issue in the economy of Pakistan and all other problems are linked with this issue directly and indirectly. In Pakistan, poverty is increasing due to government policies which are not pro-poor and data also shows the role of government is still poor. The need of the day is to take some initiatives for future and media can help in this process of new initiatives by government with advance system of check and balance. Government needs to take steps in the form of focusing on agriculture sector (agriculture marketing system), social safety nets, access to education, health financing, favorable policies for labour market, skill development, micro financing, provision of houses, and improvement in governance, investment in human capital and reforms in Pakistan Bait-ul-mal.

1. Introduction

Poverty is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon, which goes beyond the notion of income, and encompass social, economic and political deprivation. Lack of such opportunities limits the abilities of the poor to secure gainful employment and bring about an improvement in their lives. There is a growing realization that a world where a few live in comfort and plenty, while many survive in miserable poverty is neither just nor acceptable. At the backdrop of this growing realization leader of 149 states met at the Millennium Summit of the UN and take on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which set the mark of reducing poverty by on-half (13%) by the year 2015 in Pakistan. It will take commitment efforts by citizens, governments and international agencies to turn pledges in to reality.

Poverty in Pakistan is a growing concern. The declining trend in poverty as seen in the country during the era of 1970s and 1980s, it was reversed in the 1990s by poor federal policies and structural adjustment program of World Bank. This phenomenon has been referred to as the poverty bomb. According to estimates by UNO, 74% of Pakistan's population lives under \$2 a day, compared to 72% for Sub-Saharan Africa and some 15% people live below \$1 a day.

When we make a comparison of poverty in different time periods on the basis of Federal Bureau of Statistics surveys from 1963-64 to date, we find that poverty is all time an issue for the policy makers. On the basis of FBS data, poverty headcount had been rising throughout the 1990s and peaked in 2000-01, a bad drought year. It then fell sharply in 2004-05, a very good agricultural crop year. Under the CPI, poverty headcount dropped by 10.6 per cent, under the Survey Based Index (SBI) it dropped five per cent and this difference is only due to different estimates of same thing.

This study is not stressing on the issue of poverty statistics from different aspects but main focus is on the perception of public about poverty and its determinants. Every one has

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different ideas about poverty, its determinants, responsible authorities, and impact on society and its alleviation. This paper tries to explain the views of general public about poverty from different aspects.

Empirical studies show that there are many determinants of poverty available in literature, as Behrman (1993) and Psacharopoulos (1992) shows that population with no schooling have 56% chances of being the poorest 20% of the population, while population with university degree have only 4% probability of being poor. Human Development in South Asia (1998), shows that only about 1% of the population in the region of South Asia pays income tax. South Asia collects around 10% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in taxes, compared to the average tax revenue collection of 15-20 percent of GDP in developing countries. At most seventy percent of the region's total tax revenue is obtained through indirect taxes, which affect the poor groups of society, more than the rich. Dorosh and Valdes (1990) estimated that in Pakistan the absence of price interventions by government during the decade of 1980's shows that incomes from five major crops could be 40% higher and the effect of government intervention was to take 25% of GDP in agriculture sector. A World Bank study (1990) on Bangladesh showed a positive impact of rural infrastructure on poor population, there is also 34% increase in income of those villages which had provision of infrastructure than those villages without infrastructure facilities. Jamal (2004) explored income distribution and poverty in the context of rural and urban areas of Pakistan. Regarding rural and urban comparison he did come up with the relationship of poverty and income distribution taking into account the clear differences that appear either in the analysis of poverty or during the implementation of economic policies.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes data collection and methodology in this study. Section 3 explains primary data analysis related to poverty in the eyes of general public and final section concludes the paper.

2. Data Collection and Methodology

This study is based on primary data which is collected from people belongs to different fields of life as doctors, engineers, bankers, sociologist, agriculturists, manufacturers, students, shopkeepers, peons and security guards from different organizations of public and private sector of Pakistan. For this purpose 78 cases were selected from the universe as described by Neumann (1997). Data is collected via discussion and questionnaire on poverty and its aspects from each perspective which includes importance, kind, reason, role of government, media, economic system, link with social problems and purchasing power of the respondents.

3. Data Analysis

This study observes that overall issue of the Pakistan is poverty because it can lower the overall standard of living of the people and they attain less health and educational facilities. Data shows that 39% of the respondents are of the view that poverty is the most burning issue of Pakistan. While inflation, income distribution and unemployment are less important this is shown in Table1.

Table 1: Important Issue of Pakistan

	Frequency	Percent
Poverty	30	38.5
Income Distribution	14	17.9
Inflation	18	23.1
Unemployment	10	12.8
Other	6	7.7
Total	78	100.0

When we ask the question about kind of poverty then 51% of the overall respondents' answers that they are facing economic poverty or simply they face the problem of moneylessness but only 15% faces social and 21% progress poverty in different institutes and the detail is shown in Table2.

Table 2: Kind of Poverty

	Frequency	Percent
Economic Poverty	40	51.3
Social Poverty	12	15.4
Progress Poverty	16	20.5
Others	10	12.8
Total	78	100.0

When we ask the question about the responsible authority for this phenomenon of poverty then 74% of the respondents stress the whole responsibility on government policies which are not pro-poor, while illiteracy and over population has very minor contribution in this issue, as shown in Table3.

Table 3: Reason of Poverty

	Frequency	Percent
Illiteracy	12	15.4
Over Population	6	7.7
Govt. Policies	58	74.4
Agriculture Sector	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

When we ask that can government is playing any role in poverty alleviation in real sense then only 5% response is yes and 49% answers that the performance of government is very poor in this sector and government of Pakistan is still not taking any serious steps to alleviate poverty, while 31% answer that government is playing no role in this issue, all this is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Role of Govt. in Poverty Alleviation

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	4	5.1
No	24	30.8
To Some Extent	12	15.4
Poor Performance	38	48.7
Total	78	100.0

Table 5 explains that on the basis of data, media is able to alleviate poverty through creating awareness about new plans and new techniques but is playing only satisfactory role in this issue.

Table 5: Role of Media in Poverty Alleviation

	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	2	5.1
Very good	3	7.7
Satisfactory	20	51.3
Poor	14	35.9
Total	39	100.0

As everyone knows that Pakistan is facing social problems and 85% of the total respondents' answers that major social problems are due to poverty, when people have no money or less to fulfill basic requirements of life then there must be some social problems created by poor groups. In discussion they defend their position that if we overcome on the problem of poverty then our social problems may reduce. Detail about this is given in table 6.

Table 6: Role in Social Problems

	Frequency	Percent
Major	66	84.6
Minor	4	5.1
Normal	6	7.7
No Role	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

In the end we ask respondents that which economic system can alleviate poverty then 82% of the respondents answer that only Islamic Economic System is capable for poverty alleviation. In Islamic Economic System the concept of social security and zakat are the instruments which are helpful for poverty alleviation. The characteristics of this system are necessary for model state, and also free from all social problems, the detail on this is shown in table 7.

Table 7: Which Economic System Reduce Poverty

	Frequency	Percent
Socialism	4	5.1
Capitalism	2	2.6
Mixed	8	10.3
Islamic	64	82.1
Total	78	100.0

4. Conclusion

The main focus of this study is on the perception of general public about poverty from different aspects. On the basis of primary data which is collected for this study and discussion with respondents, we conclude the following.

Poverty is the most important issue in the economy of Pakistan and all other problems are linked with this issue directly and indirectly. When we look on the philosophy of vicious circle of poverty, it impacts on GDP, employment, standards of living, demand deficiencies and overall productivity, especially in developing countries.

In Pakistan, poverty is increasing due to government policies which are not pro-poor and data also shows the role of government is still poor. The need of the day is to take some initiatives for future and media can help in this process of new initiatives by government with advance system of check and balance. Government needs to take steps in the form of focusing on agriculture sector (agriculture marketing system), social safety nets, access to education, health financing, favorable policies for labour market, skill development, micro financing, provision of houses, and improvement in governance, investment in human capital and reforms in Pakistan Bait-ul-mal.

The main issue of developing nations is their social problems and public stress the whole responsibility on poverty. If we take care of poverty it can lower the problems faced by society. The majority of the respondents are of the view that if we apply Islamic rules and regulations, it can control on poverty and social problems as well.

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