An Overview of Multidimensional Child Poverty in Pakistan

Afra Kanwal[*], Sami Ullah[†]

Abstract

This study provides an overview for dimensions of multidimensional child poverty in Pakistan. Current situation of different dimension like health, education, child labor, child marriages and child abusing is discussed. Pakistan undergoes necessary household surveys but does not measure child poverty as policy measure. Government of Pakistan should measure child poverty as policy measure so that all other policies regarding children and their welfare could have effective and imperative outcomes.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Multidimensional Child Poverty, Child Welfare in Pakistan.

Introduction

Children are most important and sensitive part of every family. Future and sustainable growth of any economy is associated with welfare of children. Children living today a healthy and sound life and those growing in protected environment, would lead a successful household tomorrow (Makhalima, 2020). Child welfare is paramount indicator for welfare of any society. According to the convention on rights of the child, it is right of every child to have and lead a standard of living which is adequate for child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (Barkat et al., 2009; Garris et al., 2021; Biggeri & Cuesta, 2021).

Child rights can be broadly classified in four ways: right to survive, develop, be protected and to participate (Marguerit et al, 2018). It is a basic right of child to survive and live a healthy, well-nourished life. Every child deserves to be owned by some family, where family section is missing there emerges role of state (Agyire et al., 2021; Biggeri & Cuesta, 2021). Every child deserves to have a name and nationality. State is responsible from registering a child to providing him/her all basic facilities of health care and education (Wasswa, 2015). Education give children an opportunity to develop and explore their potentials. It is one of the basic rights of a child to have freedom to play and make friends without discrimination of race, color and religion in a protected environment (Bastos & Machado, 2009; Garris et al., 2021; Biggeri & Cuesta, 2021). Where a child is secured from being neglected, exploited or abused. Moreover, every child has right to have fair opportunities to express, to access and to practice his religion and his thoughts (Agyire et al., 2021). Exploitation of any of these rights would lead to child poverty (Wasswa, 2015). A child who is deprived for any of his/her basic rights is poor. Children, still growing, are more vulnerable than any adult to poor living conditions. They are more sensitive to inadequate health care, malnutrition, environmental pollution, inadequate water and sanitation (Hjelm et al., 2016; Agyire et al., 2021).

Child living in poverty today has more chances to live being a poor as an adult and would lead to a poor family as a father or a household head (Bastos & Machado, 2009). Growing up in poverty can be damaging for any child's physical, spiritual and emotional development (UNICEF, 2011). Child poverty is multidimensional in nature, researcher also considered and explored it in unidimensional form (Minujin and Delamonica 2012). Unidimensional child poverty is measured through income or consumption measures. Multidimensional child poverty incorporates almost all basic rights of child while analyzing if child is deprived (Minujin et al. 2012).

Realizing the importance and sensitivity of children, efforts are made internationally to encounter the vulnerability of children around the globe. Millennium development goals were launched in 2000 which provided eight different goals to be achieved till 2015. MDGs were most widely accepted yardstick, by Governments, to make efforts for development. Eight goals were provided to world from which following six, directly or indirectly, are related to children:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Reduce child morality

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[*] Afra Kanwal, PhD Scholar, Department of Economics, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan. afra.kanwal@uog.edu.pk
[†] Dr. Sami Ullah, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan.

- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

In 2015 these goals were replaced by Sustainable Development Goals, with a goal of inclusive world till 2030. Different aspects of child's life are analyzed with reference to poverty in Pakistan. Section 2 provides a brief review for dimensions of child poverty widely considered in Pakistan. Rest of the paper is structured as follow, section 3 explains role of SDGs and child poverty, section 4 provides multidimensionality of child poverty in Pakistan. Section 5 examines policy measures in Pakistan regarding child poverty and section 6 concludes the paper.

Literature Review

Researchers in Pakistan realize the importance of children and deprivations they face. In this regards many dimensions of child poverty are analyzed by researchers from time to time. Ahmed (1991) examined the magnitude, causes and effects of child labor in Lahore Pakistan by interviewing about 360 working children. study focused on the reasons of child labor, working hours of a child and their work environment. Children working reported maltreatment. Study further found that belonging to poor household, large household size, inadequate economic conditions were the main reasons of child labor.

National measures like high birth rate and extreme poverty had also positive association with child poverty. Khan et al, (2010) made a comparative analysis for determinants of child labor in rural and urban areas of Pakistan and found significant difference in them. Study found that characteristics of household were related to child labor. Employment status of household held determines the child education positively in urban areas while negatively in rural ones. Mothers employment complements child education in urban areas, while it's a substitute of child education in rural areas. Gender discrimination is also found as a significant measure of difference in child labor in rural and urban areas.

Iram and Fatima (2008), explored factors which determine demand and supply of child labor in Pakistan, study found that high adult wages, unemployment rate and nature of work are main factor which determine demand of child labor. Informal sector absorbs high level of child poverty. Where household factors, like education and household size are key supply factors. Landmann and Frölich (2015) examined child labor with health and accident insurance and found a significant impact on child labor. Gender discrimination is highlighted as boys were found to have more benefits of insurance. Ali (2001) analyzed child mortality and found that mothers age, mother's education and food poverty had significant impact on child mortality in Pakistan. Arif et al. (2012) estimated the determinants of child malnutrition. Study found that child malnutrition is determined by child own characteristic, malnourishment of mother and other factors associated to environment and society but not to poverty.

Many other studies are part of literature where other dimensions of child poverty like child health, child marriages, their education are key factors of research. Two studies focus on child poverty. Hameed (2012) measured and mapped child poverty in Balochistan, Pakistan. The study used MODA to measure child poverty using data from survey of MICS for 2010. The study undergoes five different dimensions of poverty, nutrition, health, education, housing and water and sanitation. Study found about 71 percent of children in Balochistan are poor in all these dimensions. Sher et al. (2012) estimated multidimensional child poverty in Panjab, Pakistan. Study provided district level analysis. Study used MICS data for 2007-08 and found Rawalpindi with highest number of deprived children and Gujranwala as least derived.

The existing literature in Pakistan deals with different aspects of life of a child and multidimensionality of child poverty in Pakistan. Child poverty measured gives analysis for two provinces of Pakistan. There exists a gap in literature for covering all aspects of child poverty. All the dimensions of child poverty are not discussed in any study for Pakistan. This study is an effort to fill this gap and discuss all aspects of multidimensionality of child poverty and its dimensions in Pakistan and provide an overview about it. This study is in effort to explore present situation, with facts and figure, regarding child poverty and deprivation in Pakistan.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Child Poverty

Sustainable development goals targets inclusiveness till 2030. SDGs were adopted by all UN member states in 2015. SDGs target welfare of all age and gender by ending poverty, reducing inequality and by building peaceful prosperous cities around the globe, leaving no one behind (Hjelm et al., 2016; Agyire et al., 2021). There are 17 goals of SDGs with 169 indicators, where 44 indicators target particularly children. Childhood is sensitive and critical period for development of any human. Therefore, there is decisive for sustainable and inclusive prosperous future of societies (Marguerit et al., 2018). SDGs explicitly target welfare of children and infants, through goals of poverty reduction (Goal 1), eradication of hunger (Goal 2), health and wellbeing (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5) and clean water and sanitation (Goal 6). SDGs focus on eradicating poverty in all its forms (Marguerit et al., 2018). It targets to reduce at least by half the number of men, women and children below their national poverty line till 2030. In Pakistan the prevailing poverty line is calories based. Children are most sensitive to this poverty line than other age groups. Hunger and malnourishment are of key concern in this regards. Taking in consideration poverty in its all forms, poverty measurement moves beyond the monetary analysis. Multidimensional nature of poverty is under focus.

SDGs target hunger, food security and improved nutrition for all aged persons. Particularly targeting to end all forms of malnutrition, by 2025. Setting standards on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age (Agyire et al., 2021). SDGs focus on addressing nutritional needs of adolescent girls and children along with pregnant women and old. Provision of basic services to every member of household is elementary (Marguerit et al., 2018). The basic services include access to clean drinking water, sanitation, hygiene facilities and others. Figure 1 shows the situation of proportion of population living in household with access to basic services in Pakistan. Only 19 percent of people have access to basic education and just 33 percent have basic hygiene facilities.

SDGs cover all the aspect necessary for good life of a child, that is healthy lives, equal and fair participation in all aspects of life. All the children have right to have equal opportunities without any distinction of age, gender and race. Equality in every aspect is provided to every child. Education is vital for growth of children, education shape their personality, their growth and their future. SDGs target inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promote lifelong learning opportunities. Gender equality and equity is focused not only as a separate goal, but also incorporated as a part of every goal so that inclusive results could be achieved.

Figure 1: Proportion of Population in Household

Source: Report of PSLM 2019-2020
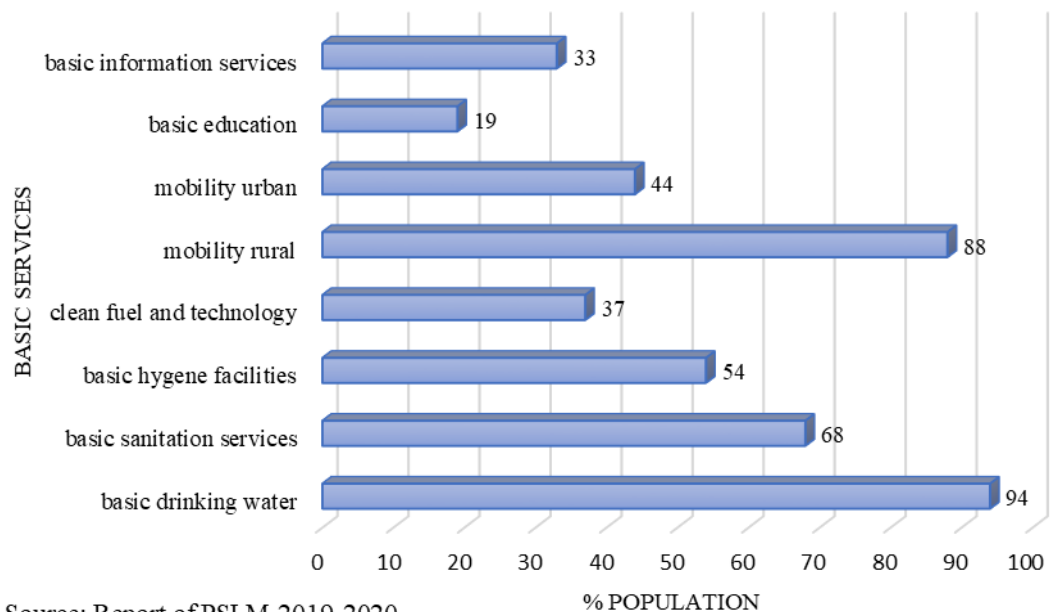
Access to clean and safe drinking water with better sanitation facilities is also an important aspect for welfare of a child (Bastos & Machado, 2009). SDGs analyze child wellbeing through children basic material needs, their dwelling conditions, their health and education with equality. If any child is depriving in any single aspect is considered as poor. Child poverty measured in monetary term could better explain the financial condition of his/her household head but cannot truly deliver child poverty (Chen, 2008). Any household could be non-poor in monetary term, because child belong to that household is working or they are earning being professional beggars. A better measure to analyze child poverty is multidimensional child poverty. Every constitutive right of a child gives dimension to multi-dimensional analysis of poverty.

Multidimensionality of Child Poverty in Pakistan

Pakistan is the home of 80 million children. Among which many are living in poverty and are vulnerable. Examining and monitoring child poverty demands measurement of child poverty on both traditional monetary measures and assessment of multidimensional aspects of child well-being and their deprivations (UNICEF, 2018). Form last fifteen years, poverty is a developed multidimensional concept preferred on unidimensional, monetary poverty, widely incorporating social and demographic aspects of living (OPHI, 2019). Since then, around the globe, a more focused attention is paid to measure extent and magnitude of deprivations at household level focusing on education, health and standards of living (OPHI, 2017). Measuring multidimensional poverty everyone in the household is counted, male, female, adults, children. Children are the most sensitive part of any household, so is the deprivation they face. Child poverty is one of the worst violation of their rights.

Child poverty has devastating and long lasting effects on children lives, influencing their health, education, living and surroundings in which they grow. Internationally child poverty and its eradication had given affirm importance through SDGs. As discussed above first goals of SDGs target direct or indirectly children and their welfare Growing up in poverty can be damaging for any child's physical, spiritual and emotional development (UNICEF, 2011). Poverty during childhood could have irreversible detrimental effects on a child's life leading to inter-generational cycle of poverty. Child living in poverty today has more chances to live being a poor as an adult and would lead to a poor family as a father or a household head (Bastos & Machado, 2009). Realizing the importance of better child life and its core value in family institute, all the measures of multidimensional poverty include different indicators which influence child life or highlight child achievement like school attendance, child nutrition, different demographic variables which shape children life and their survival, like sanitation facilities, safe drinking water etc. (OPHI, 2017). A brief discussion regarding few dimension of child poverty and their current situation in Pakistan is provided here.

Education

Sustainable economic development of any economy is associated with investment in education and skill development. Education is a fundamental human right necessary for human development. Educated people act as human capital and dividend by adopting advance technology and innovative ideas and leads to socio economic development of any nation (Economic Survey, 2019-20). An educated and skilled nation is productive enough to accelerate economic growth through expanded vision, creativity and, innovations in the country. Children are depriving in this vital dimension as Pakistan stands at second around the word for the highest number of out-of-school children (UNICEF, 2018). Out of School could be defined as number of children aged between 5 to 16 years' old who have never attended school in addition to those who left schools afterwards. About 22.9 million children for age between 5-16 are not attending school (Economic Survey, 2019-20). They represent 44 per cent of the total population in this age group. Five million children are not enrolled in school for the group of 5-9 years old. Where about 11.4 million adolescents are not receiving any kind of formal education, thus increases the number children out of school to almost double (UNICEF, 2018). This situation is worse for that of Balochistan, where 78 percent of girls are out of school. Where as in Sindh about 52% children are out of school and among them about 58 percent are girls (UNICEF, 2018).

Figure 2: Government Expenditures on Education
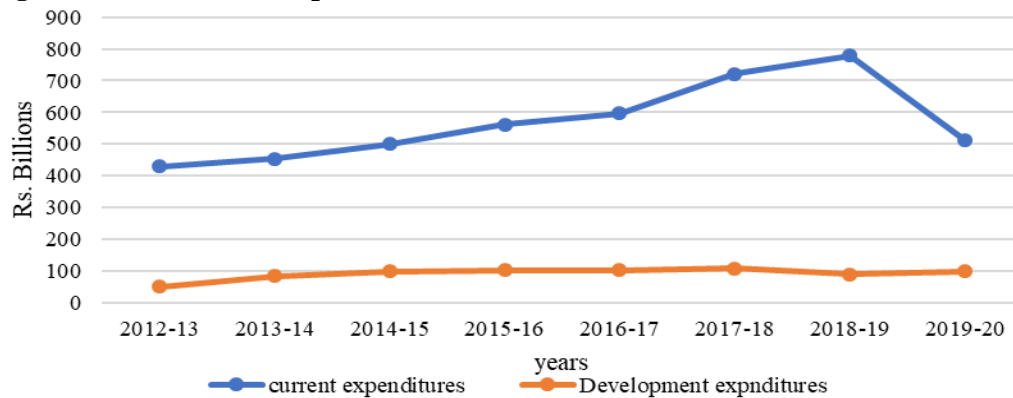
Source: Economic survey of Pakistan, 2019-20

Over all 23.6 million children were enrolled in primary education and this drops down to 7.6 million at middle level and further drops to 4 million for secondary education for 2018-19 (Economic Survey, 2019-20). Literacy rate is stagnant to 60 percent from 2014-15 to 2019-20 (Economic Survey, 2019-20). Government expenditures at education are always considered a key factor for this high number for out of school children and stagnant literacy rate. Government of Pakistan in every era is being criticized for having lower expenditures at education. Figure 2 shows Government expenditure, both current and development, at education while figure 3 shows Government expenditures on education as percentage of GDP. Government expenditure on education keeps on moving about 2 percent of GDP and had never experienced any increase.

Figure 3: Expenditures on Education as % of GDP
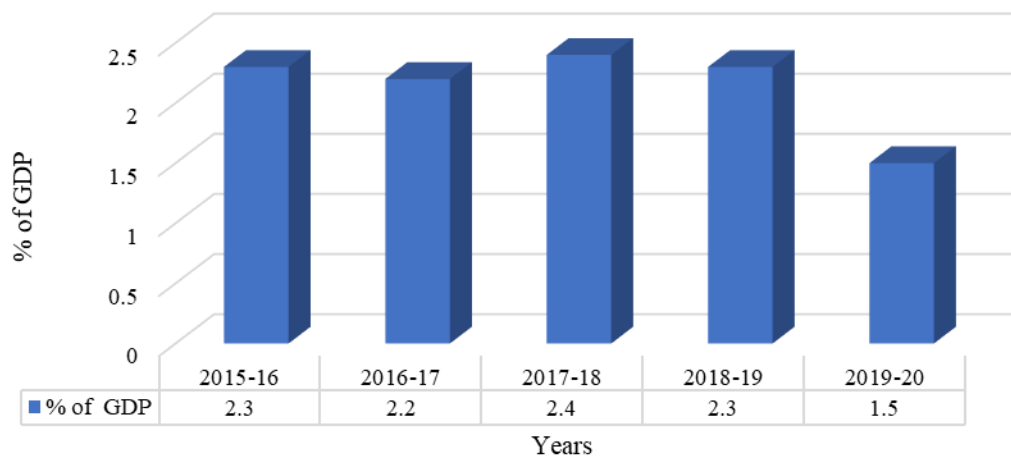
Source: Economic survey of Pakistan, 2019-20

Out of School Out of School consists of children aged 5 to 16 years who have never been to school and those reported in PSLM, district level survey show that 60 percent of total population of ten years and older have ever attended schools in 2019-20 as compared to 62 percent in 2014-15. Whereas, this figure also showed decline in regional basis, it declined to 73 percent in in 2019-20 as compared to 77 percent in 2014-15 for urban areas. And in rural areas it declined to 52 percent as compared to 53 percent in 2014-15. Covid-19 effected every sector of life including education. Unemployment increased due to Covid-19 deepened poverty and its effects. Due to severity of Covid-19 different phases of lock down were faced, which closed schools. Government of Pakistan though deal with matter very smartly by going for smart lock down and micro lock down to avoid worse economic conditions. But this lockdown effected education sector in a very different way.

Prolonged school closures due to COVID-19 has widen the gap of mathematical and literacy skills between the children from lower and high income families (McKinney, 2021). Though alternative of this lockdown was provided as E-learning and online classes. Government arranged classes on national television and radio. But widen the rural urban inequality. Children living in rural

areas, having no access to internet and smart phones are depriving in education. Economic survey 2020-21 share effects of covid-19 at education and report that for age of between 6 to 16, 84% were enrolled in school among them 16 percent were out of schools. 20% of these dropout students claimed that they dropped out due to Covid-19 and financial hardships during the phase of lockdowns. Where among enrolled students 79% were enrolled in Government schools and 21% were enrolled in private schools and madrasa (Economic survey, 2020-21). During lockdown due to Covid-19, 52% of children were not able to give time to their studies, they reported that they cannot study at least one hour a day. One third of others, who managed to give time to their studies, reported that they face difficulty in understanding Mathematics, Science and English. 27% reported that they used PTV's tele-school to study, 47% took family support while 13% took paid tuitions to continue studies. 16% reported that they used smart phones for learning, though the average time of learning was one hour (Economic Survey, 2020-21).

Using smart phones, TV, internet, Radio students might be able to learn little but one of the main learning of their life is continuously missing that is friendship. Children who go to school, explore behaviors, learn about their peers, learn about sharing, learn about possible disputes with their friends and how to resolve those dispute. They used to learn by playing. Children who are not experiencing these things in their life are also deprived, deprived of peer ship.

Health

Malnutrition and poor health are barriers for economic development. Healthy children would lead a healthy future. Good and sound health is a conventional right of every child. Good hygiene, balance diet and a good sleep contributes to healthy life of a child. Children are sensitive, infants need extra care and attention. Healthy children today will be a productive human capital for tomorrow and inclusive growth of country. Immunization is an important phase of any child. Immunization is process of injecting children to protect them from different diseases in life (Economic Survey, 2020-21). Complete course of immunization eradicates diseases like pertussis, diphtheria, polio, diarrhoea, tetanus, measles etc, within the first year of birth. Fully vaccinated child spends healthy life and contributes efficiently for growth of nation.

**Figure 4: Polio Cases in Pakistan**
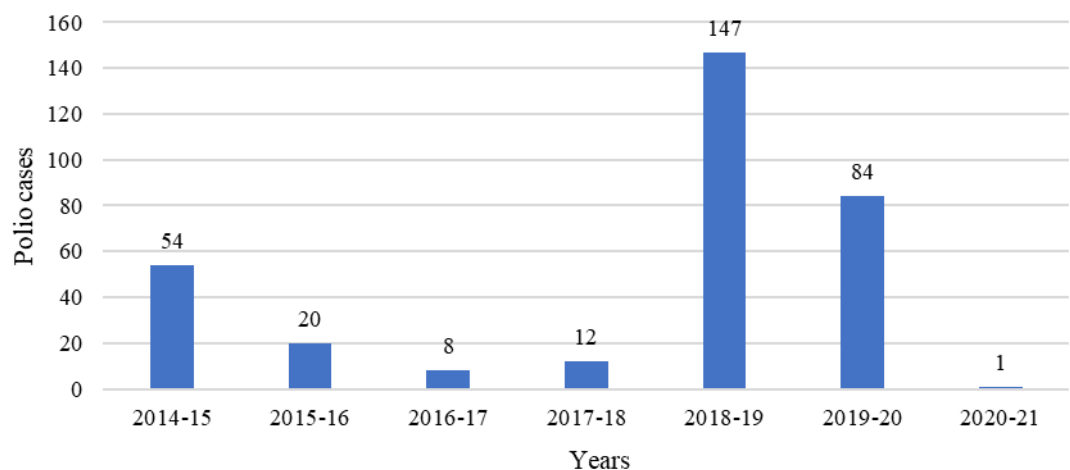
Source: Economic Survey of Pakistan 2020-21

But only 70 percent of children were immunized in 2019-20 (PSLM, 2019-20), Rahim Yar Khan reported lowest level of immunization with 65% of children vaccinated in 2019-20 as compared to 39% in 2014-15. Pakistan is the only country in world who is still fighting with polio. Figure 4 shows prevailing cases of polio in Pakistan. 2018-19 reported 147 cases of polio in Pakistan. It declines to 1 in 2020-21, but still prevailing in Pakistan, expectations are higher that one day Pakistan will be a polio free country. For the last eight years about 1.2 million children were unvaccinated in Pakistan (UNICEF, 2017). Every year about 91000 children in Pakistan die from pneumonia and 53300 from diarrhea (UNICEF, 2017). More over nearly 10 million Pakistani children suffer from stunting (UNICEF, 2017). According to UNICEF (2015) 110 children, under 5 years of age, die per day due to

water and sanitation related diseases, where 36 % population of Pakistan live with no access to clean water and sanitation facilities.

During Covid-19 pandemic, efficiency of health institutes tested and it is found that health infrastructure need special attention and more investment (Sinha et al., 2020). Number of ventilators in the country are not enough to counter pandemic. Health personals need training to deal with such pandemic and its continuous waves.
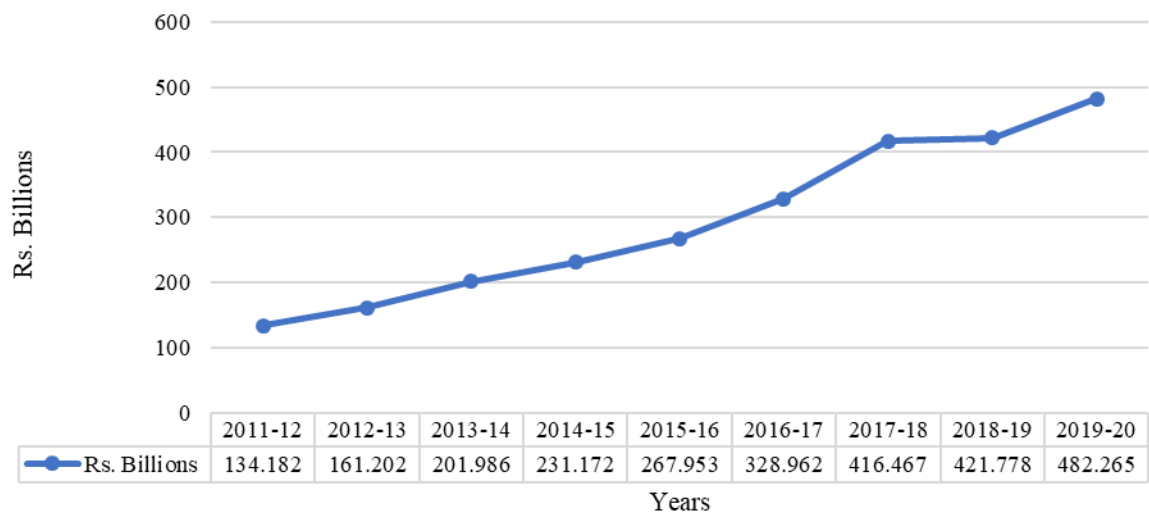
Figure 5: Government Expenditures on Health as % of GDP
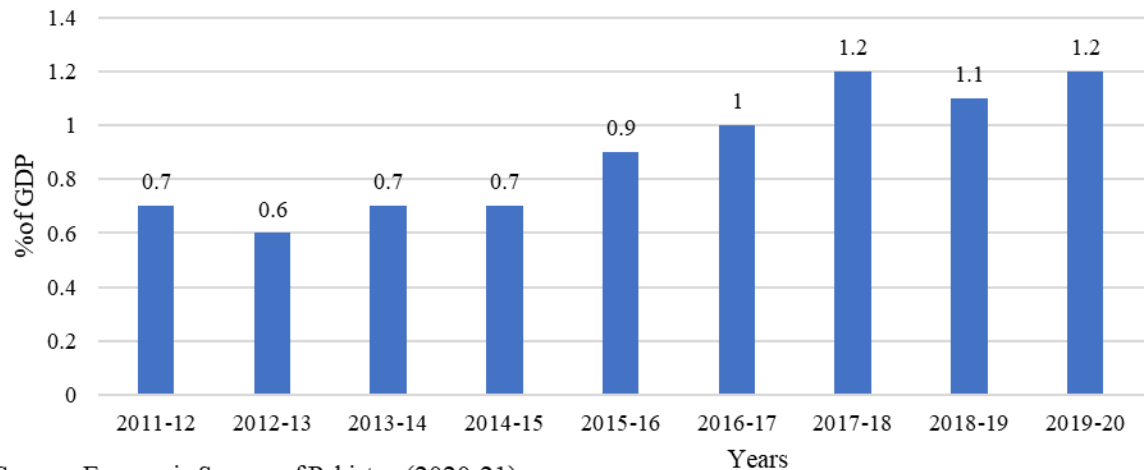
Source: Economic Survey of Pakistan (2020-21)

Diagnostic facilities, disease surveillance and its prevention need high investment in health sector. But government expenditure on health never increased even up to 1.5 percent of GDP. Figure 5 and 6 provides Government expenditure on health as percentage of GDP and total expenditures respectively.

Figure 6: Government Expenditures on Health

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Rs. Billions	134.182	161.202	201.986	231.172	267.953	328.962	416.467	421.778	482.265

Source: Economic Survey of Pakistan (2020-21)

Form 2011-12 to 2016 Government was spending less than 1 percent of GDP at health sector. Which slightly increased to 1 percent and 1.2 percent in 2019-20. Government of Pakistan is providing COVID-19 vaccination for free to every citizen of Pakistan. But still Pakistan needs to do a lot in health sector to overcome these pandemics and move to a new normal. Pakistan is in need of fully equipped intensive care units, isolation units and many other facilities to have a healthy future.
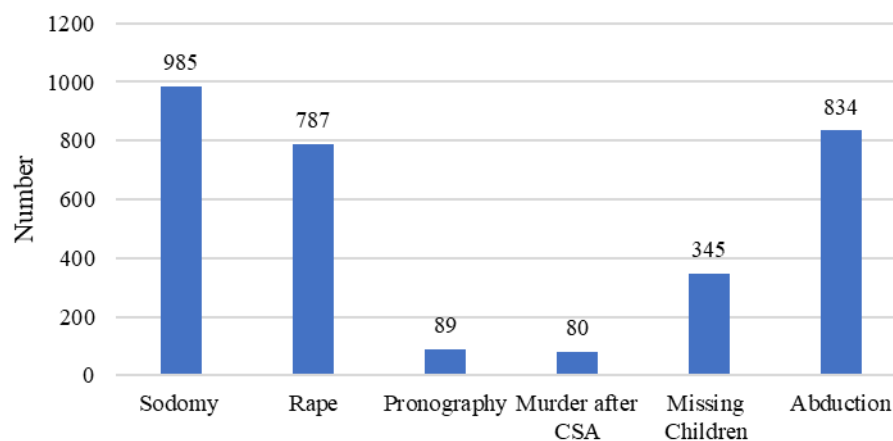
Child Abuse

For all other conventional rights of children, protection is most important. From last two years, media of Pakistan is reporting child abusing rapidly. Child abuse could be defined as wrong use of power or authority to treat children in offensive and harmful manner. Child abuse is observed in every society at all levels of socioeconomic progress, beyond the boundaries of culture and ethnicity. Even child sexual abuse is recorded with in all religions and at all levels of education. Child abusing

involves misconduct, abduction, sodomy, rape and murder. It is difficult to estimate prevalence and magnitude of child sexual abuse (CSA). Because most of the cases are not reported anywhere. Many case of CSA are not reported due to cultural norms and restriction, weak communication and difficult mechanism involved. Any child who is victim of CSA, needs to share that misconduct he/she faced with parents or guardians. Parents or guardian would report the case or not depends on their capacity to launch FIR, willingness of police officials to launch FIR. Then a complicated medical examination is required which is a kind of hurdle itself. Moreover, court procedures involve substantial time and money that victim family prefers to sort the issue out of courts.

An NGO "Sahil" is working for child protection since 1996, has launched a report about child abusing by collecting all the reported cases from print media of Pakistan. The report Cruel Number 2020, reported that in 2020 about 2960 children were sexually abused in Pakistan. Among them 51% of victims were girls and 49% were boys. Disaggregating the facts on basis of gender and age showed that boys and children of the age group 6-15 are more vulnerable. Report also claim that in 2020 every day almost 8 children become victim of child abusing in one form or other. Figure 7 shows number of cases of CSA reported in 2020 in different newspapers of Pakistan.

Figure 7: Child Abuse in Different forms in 2020

Source: Cruel Numbers 2020   Forms of Child abuse

Figure 7 shows drastic numbers in every form of child abuse. And it is believed that only few cases are reported many remained unreported. Experts agree that incidence of CSA is much greater than the reported one. It is further observed that accused of 1780 cases of child abuse were acquaintances, in 109 case service providers like teachers, drivers, molvi, shopkeeper ect. were involved. For 91 cases family members and relatives while in 92 cases neighbors were accused. In 468 case strangers were involved. Disaggregating the fact with reference to provinces show that 58% cases were reported in Punjab, 29% in Sindh, 7 % in KP while 3.1% in Islamabad and Balochistan. More over 65 % cases were reported from rural areas and remaining 35% from urban areas. After a little girl Zainab from Kausar become victim of CSA in 2018, Government of Pakistan introduced Zainab Alert, the Response and Recovery Agency (ZARRA) for missing and abducted children. Government also approved Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Ordinance, 2020 and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 to ensure speedy trial of rape and sexual assault cases.

With all these laws and ordinance, it is necessary to educate children about child abuse and its forms. Children need to feel protected and trusted. Children should be educated regarding how to response and safe themselves if they are stuck in such condition. Moreover, its obligatory for state to ensure protected environment for all.

Child Marriages

Child marriages are common around the world, according a report of UNICEF a child marriage take place every second around the world. In Pakistan children are deprived and are facing issues like child marriages. Age requirement for marriage in Pakistan is currently 16 years, except in southern province of Sindh where age requirement is 18. Child marriages are common in remote areas of Pakistan. The main reasons of child marriage are exchange marriages (watta-satta), to settle disputes,

to settle blood money, to settle property issues and in many cases to earn some money against that marriage. Child marriages have adverse impact at health of children. A child is at phase of development, he/she is supposed to grow at the time when they have to grow a family and work for it. It ends up to malnourished generation. Children victims of child marriages get stuck in viscous circle of poverty and life gets adverse. In 2020, 119 child marriages are recorded in Pakistan. To overcome this issue of child marriages, a bill has been presented in parliament for twice to ban marriages before the age of 18. Both times many sitting in parliament opposed this bill in the name of religion.

Child Poverty as a Policy Measure in Pakistan

Pakistan is home of 80 million children. Pakistan being member of UN, is signatory of SDGs. Realizing the importance of SDGs and in effort to achieve them, Government of Pakistan has created Poverty Alleviation Coordination Council, established Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division, scaled up BISP, Bait ul Mal and Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) activities to focus poverty alleviation (Economic Survey, 2019). Moreover, allocation of PSDP is re-prioritized to focus pro poor projects with $82.6 million funds to be distributed to beneficiaries of BISP and distribution of Sehat Insaf Card to 80 million people (Economic Survey, 2019). With all these kinds of efforts Pakistan has faced a persistent decline in poverty headcount, under Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach, at both national and regional level. Percentage of people living below poverty line has declined from 50.4 percent in 2005-06 to 24.3 percent in 2015-16 (Economic Survey 2018-19). Pakistan measure poverty by using PSLM survey. The poverty measured is household poverty and gives picture for household income and living standards of a child. But it can't analyze the dimensions in which a child is poor. A poor child can belong a non-poor household and a non-poor child can be living in a poor household. Measurement of child poverty will give a clear picture to Government for how many children are poor and which dimensions need immediate attention.

Around the globe about 59 percent of the countries measure child poverty, in which about half measure it on annual basis (UNICEF, 2017). UNICEF further claims that countries undergoing surveys like PSLM, MICS and DHS can easily measure child poverty in accordance to their nation poverty line. Pakistan is regularly undergoing these surveys but is not measuring child poverty. If Pakistan measure child poverty annually or even after every two years, it will be a policy measure to better every child life. All other public decisions that affect children like government expenditures on health and education, training of health officials for vaccination of children could be make in a better and effective way by taking child poverty measures in consideration.

Conclusion

This study is an effort to provide an overview for all the aspects and dimensions of multidimensional child poverty in Pakistan. In accordance to SDGs, Pakistan is trying its best to provide children all their basic needs and rights. But, Covid-19 has effected the pace of development in every sector. Education sector is effected most, though Government has tried to provide a possible alternative to E-learning, but this alternative is not inclusive. Children in rural areas can't attain such facilities. Covid-19 has influenced the employment and has deepened poverty. Pakistan is measuring poverty with calories based poverty line. Children are deprived to some extent for almost every dimension of child poverty. Child vaccination, children out of school, child marriages and above all child abusing need immediate attention. Pakistan is undergoing surveys like PSLM, MICS, DHS, etc. and by using these surveys Pakistan can easily measure child poverty. Pakistan is in dire need to measure child poverty as a policy measure. So that national facts and figures at child poverty can give a true picture about the intensity of child poverty and about the dimensions needs immediate attention. Policies regarding Government expenditures on health and education, regarding making a law for minimum age to marry, and implementation of laws regarding child protection could be imperative and effective if figures of multidimensional child poverty are considered.

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