



SOCIO- POLITICAL IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES OF URBANIZATION ON PAKISTAN

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Abstract:

Urbanization refers to the increasing trend of people moving from rural areas to urban areas. This is a global phenomenon accelerated in recent decades due to unequal economic development, and difference of provision of basic infrastructure in rural and urban areas. People also migrate to escape war torn areas, political or ethnic conflicts and easy access to justice. People also move from rural areas to urban centers to avoid the impacts of climatic changes as well. Pakistan is also affecting due to increasing trends of urbanization. Currently, one third of the total population lives in rural areas but it is expected that nearly half of the population will be urbanized till the end of this decade. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics estimated that the rate of urbanization in Pakistan is almost 3%, fastest in all South Asian Countries. This rate of urbanization is causing drastic transition in demographic dynamics of the country. The process of urbanization is socially and economically driven. It has social and political implications but discourse on urbanization in Pakistan is restricted to economic, environmental and demographic understanding only. This study focused on the impacts of rapid urbanization on social and political transformation in the society.

Keywords: Urbanization, social disharmony, political chaos

1. Introduction:

Currently, one third of the total population in Pakistan lives in rural areas but it is expected that nearly half of the population will be urbanized till the end of this decade. World Bank, United Nations Population Division and Pakistan Bureau of Statistics estimated that the rate of urbanization in Pakistan is almost 3%, fastest in all South Asian Countries. The discourse of these organizations suggested drastic transition in demographic dynamics of the country. This process of urbanization is socially and economically driven. It has social, economic, ecological and

particularly political implications. It is directly affecting the political affiliations and voting turn out among rural and urban based political parties. This is causing political chaos particularly in urbanized areas.

Main Argument: The rapid urbanization is transforming the social and political dynamics of Pakistan.

Hypothesis: Rapid urbanization is transforming and intensifying Pakistan's social outlook and its political dynamics.

Research Question 1: How urbanization is transforming the societal and political dynamics?

Research Question 2: How urbanization is challenging Pakistan's societal outlook and intensifying its politics?

Independent Variables:

- Economic aspect: Indicators like GDP, per capita income, unemployment , poverty
- Social aspect: disharmony, instability, housing facilities, basic Infrastructure,
- Political aspect: Political instability, political chaos
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Dependent Variables: Urbanization, Cities, State, Individuals

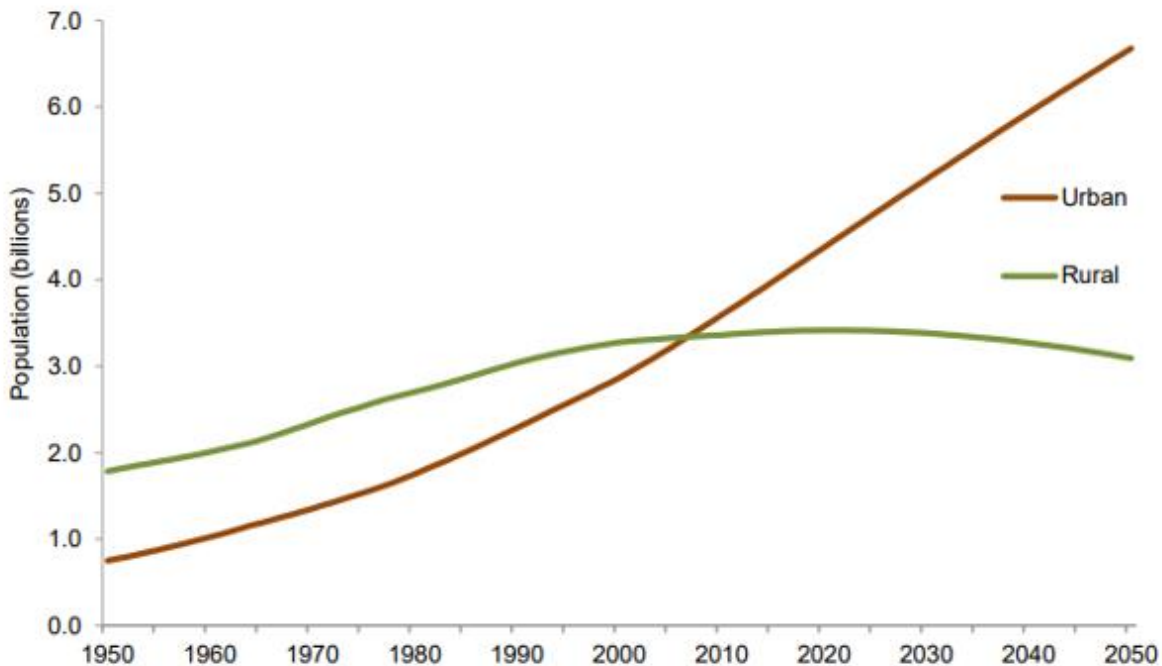
The study of urban communities and urbanization has invited scholarly attention in both humanities, and sciences. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the emergence of industrial revolution transformed the societies and way of living particularly across the Europe, hence modern theories of urbanization emerged in Europe. One predominant pattern in less or under develop states is the development of huge urban communities or primate urban centers that are disproportionately huge as far as population size is concerned as compare to other urban communities in a given area of a country. Many scholars have tried to explain it in different ways.

Kevin Fox Gotham and Arrianna J. King mentioned that ‘urbanization refers to the physical, demographic, and economic growth of cities’. (Kevin Fox Gotham, 2019). Another eminent sociologist Louis Wirth in his work ‘Urbanism as a Way of Life’ has defined Urbanization as a process by which a greater number of people prefer to settle in urban communities and the related changes in social, economic, and cultural sphere of life. (Wirth, 1938) He underscored that urbanization includes the settlement of individuals as well as the significant change of social interaction and the manner in which people experience their lives in densely populated and heterogeneous urban centers. In this way, urbanization is not a simple term that only refers to the increasing trend of people moving from rural areas to urban areas. It also refers to the expansion of the urban centers along with the advancement of basic infrastructure that includes roads, buildings and housing, and other utilities, as well as the rise of an economic, social, and cultural ambience. There are two major issues while studying urbanization. First there is no universally accepted criteria for classifying urban centers among states. Second is the absence of latest data or statistics on recent trends of urbanization as its data collection is mainly based on census that is

usually conducted once in a decade. Thus lack of scrutinize data is major issue in urbanization studies. Latest global data available on urbanization is the report produced by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in 2018.

According to the report ‘‘The 2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects’’ (2018) the share of the urban population reached 50% of the global population in 2010, which was about 50% of the population of that time while it reached to 55% in 2017 that is about 4.1 billion population of the entire world. Today more than 55% of global population is living in urban areas. It is expected that 68% of the global population will be living in urban areas by the end of 2050. With the gradual recent urbanization trends, more than 2.5 billion people are also expected to be added to this trend due to overall growth rate in global population. The same report also indicated that 54% of the global urban population is living in Asia, followed by Europe and Africa 13% each. Currently North America is the highly urbanized region where 82% of its population is residing in urban regions in 2018. In Latin America and Caribbean region more than 81% people are living in urban centers each whereas 74% and 68% population is urbanized in Europe and Oceania. Degree of urbanization in Asia is approaching to 50% while Africa is predominantly rural in societal outlook where 43% of its people are settled in urban region. (See Figure. 1 Global Prospect of Rural and Urban population)

Global Prospect of Rural and Urban population



Source: Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Report: 'The 2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects 2018''

Urbanization can be either due to natural increase of population or migration. According to a report of BBC, first cause of rapid trend of urbanization is the natural increase or decrease of population in a given area. It actually means the difference of number of births or deaths in a given area whereas migration means the movement and settlement of people in a given area. It can be due to the push and pull factors. Push factors are the causes that led people abandon rural areas whereas pull factors are the causes that captivate people to move to an urban center. (BBC, 2024) (See figure: 2 for push and pull factors)

Pull and Push Factors of Urbanization



According to the pioneer scholar of study on urbanization Kingsly Davis, there are three stages of urbanization. First is the initial stage where the feature of society's economic structure is agrarian in nature. Only 20-30% population is living in urban centers or near urban hubs. Second is acceleration stage. This is the stage of transformation where economy is in the stage of transition from agrarian to industry. The rapid rise in number of jobs in industrial and service structure can be observe. About 25-75% people of total population is living in or near urban hubs. Third stage is the final stage. At this stage more than 75% people of a given population is living in urban hubs. (Davis, 1955) (See figure: 3 for stages of Urbanization)

According to a report by the World Bank on Urbanization (2023), urban centers are responsible to generate almost 80% of the global GDP. Managing challenges of urbanization can foster sustainable development by catalyzing productivity and innovation. However, the brisk and

immense nature of urbanization may cause unprecedented challenges. These include addressing the increasing demand for provision of affordable housing and transportation. Easy access to basic infrastructure to ensure services like health, education and employment opportunities. The report indicated that almost 1 billion urban poor residing in slums near economic hubs. Escalating conflicts are further straining cities, as more than 50% of forcibly displaced individuals are inhabitant of urban areas. Its matter of concern that whenever a city is developed, its strategies to develop it physically may remain unchanged for generations, this may lead to unsustainable urban challenges. The current trends of urbanizing are causing pressure on land and natural resources in terms of consumption. Ecological degradation is also a matter of concern in this regard. Asia and Africa have emerged as the most affected sites of the world. Pakistan is also one of the Asiatic nation having grave concerns on socio-political impacts of urbanization.

Kingsly Stages of Urbanization

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<p>Initial Stage</p> <p>.Economic structure is agrarian in nature. .Only 20-30% population is living in urban centers or near urban hubs</p>	<p>Acceleration Stage</p> <p>. Economy is in the stage of transition from agrarian to industry.</p> <p>.The rapid rise in number of jobs in industrial and service structure can be observe. .About 25-75% people of total population is living in or near urban hubs.</p>	<p>Final Stage</p> <p>.At this stage more than 75% people of a given population is living in urban hubs</p>

2. Literature Review

Urbanization is a multifaceted and global phenomenon. It is directly affecting states in terms of governance and law and order. It is generating scarcity or competition for economic resources. Rapid urbanization is causing ecological degradation also mainly due to mismanagement and absence of proper planning. It has impacts on political sphere of the states also. Asia is drastically effected due to this phenomenon. Pakistan is also increasingly implicated due to rapid urbanization with regard to social, economic, ecological and political sphere. Urbanization is directly affecting the voting affiliations of the individuals and voting turn out among rural and urban based political parties. This phenomenon is intensifying politics and causing political chaos.

Existing body of literature on the process of urbanization in Pakistan mainly focus on economic and social impacts. It is mainly due to their interconnectedness. Despite of existing body of literature on the said subject, not very much literature is available on ecological and political implications. Scholarly work is available on how urbanization is causing violence and intensifying politics in Karachi but not much work is available on its impacts on Lahore and other big cities of Pakistan. Urbanization is causing undue pressure on the larger cities. It is imperative to see this phenomenon with the political lens along with its social, economic and ecological bearings.

Syed Hasan has produced a paper on'' The Sustainable Urbanization in Pakistan and Lahore: Challenges and Way Forward''. This paper was commissioned by the Asia-Europe Foundation's Education Department and the Hanns Seidel Foundation as part of the 23rd ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU23) on 'Livable Cities for a Sustainable Future', an international Hackathon to tackle urban challenges in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan which took place between September and November 2021. This Background Paper is linked to the Hackathon challenge in Pakistan – Creating Accessible Cities: Enhancing Urban Mobility' – which was tackled by the young ASEFSU23 participants coming from 39 ASEM countries in Asia and Europe. (Hasan, 2021). In this paper author has emphasized the need of realization of true dividends of the urbanization and major issues of governance due to this phenomenon in big cities. Due to the absence of the real facts and figures, the true picture of the pressure being exerted on big cities due to urbanization is understated. The author has mentioned the rate of urbanization in Pakistan that is 2.7% the fastest in South Asian nations. He has categorically mentioned the root causes of this rate of urbanization including natural and manmade catastrophizes. He criticized the political authorities for not taking in to account of the social and economic issues of ten big and most contributing cities of Pakistan in terms of GDP in national economy. He has proposed the human based security measures to enhance the sustainable urbanization. Later part of the paper focused on the same lines on impacts of urbanization and its challenges on Lahore. The author has used quantitative approach to analyze his results. As the aim of the paper was to propose suggestions for sustainable urbanization in Pakistan and Lahore, thus it has analyzed social, economic and even ecological aftereffects of urbanization but doesn't take into account the political considerations in this regard. In addition to this, the author has also ignored how to address the unequal allocation and distribution of resources among rural and urban areas which is the major contributing cause of the phenomenon under discussion. Thus this gap requires the efforts to bring the limelight on the changed political dynamics of particularly urbanized areas.

Sher Khan and Muhammad Tariq Majeed, in their scientifically organized research, under the title "Toward Economic Growth without Emission: The Role of Urbanization & Industrialization in Pakistan'' give a deep insight on the interconnectedness of urbanization, economic growth, and environmental balance. (Sher Khan, 2022) They have discussed the allied relationship of economic activity with its ecological impacts for Pakistan particularly from 1980 to 2018. Authors have chosen era of 1980s because globally, experts are making efforts to bring the ecological balance of 1990s back to the world with the same pace of economic activities. They have discussed the

decoupling drivers in detail. According to them the main drivers of decoupling are urbanization and CO₂ emission. They have elaborated that Pakistan is also experiencing a higher urbanization growth rate. According to United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2019), 32.5% of the total population lived in an urban area in 1998; however, this figure reached to 36.4% in 2017. They have also mentioned the decoupling rate of the under study period. Though this research article is a great contribution in terms of scientific studies to highlight the correlation of economic growth, ecological impacts and urbanization but it doesn't establish the relationship between social, economic and ecological equilibrium. Though they have criticized the government policies in this regard and mentioned that lack of interest of the political authorities is contributing to the absence of above stated equilibrium yet they have not raised the grave concerns in this regard.

Michael Kugelman in his article "Urbanization in Pakistan: Causes and Consequences" have given detailed pictures of causes of urbanization from 1947 to 2013. (Kugelman, 2013) He has discussed various aspect of urbanization in Pakistan. According to him, urbanization in Pakistan is socially and economically driven. He has successfully developed the relationship of social, economic and political impacts of urbanization. His main focus is the impacts of urbanization on intensifying the political aspect of the Pakistan. While discussing the political chaos, he has mentioned that urbanization has strengthen the electoral bank of urban based political parties but it has also intensified the political space between various political parties. . Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is a rural based party in Sindh whereas MQM and Awami National Party (ANP) representing Pushtoons living in Karachi are urban based parties. Delaying tactics in census and allocation of resources with consensus among political elites of Sindh has caused grave challenges. PMLN has a strong roots in urban sides of the cities in Punjab. It has boosted the electoral prospects for the party. By making adjustments with other political parties PMLN is in the position to utmost electoral gains in coming election. PTI draws its electoral strength from urban areas of Punjab. Presence of its vote bank in major cities of Punjab has brought a major drawback for PMLN. While rural areas are in the iron grip of PPP particularly in Sindh but with increasing trends of urbanization electoral gains will rise for PMLN and PTI. Rural based parties have to reconsider their strategies. His work is a great contribution in social sciences in this regard but this work has been published in 2013. Since then, Pakistan as a society went through huge transition particularly its political dynamics. Much of the work has produced on the causes of intensifying politics in Pakistan but it is imperative to see the role of urbanization in this regard. This research work will contribute not only on the recent trends of urbanization in Pakistan but it will also look into the social and political impacts of urbanization on Pakistan.

3. Theoretical Framework:

Contemporary debates in urbanization is how to address the challenges of extensive population growth rate, sustainable development, and the implications of technological advancements and how to mitigate the struggle for competition for resources. All this indicates the evolving dynamics of urbanization. The research in urbanization continues to be a vibrant and growing discipline. Theories are adapting to comprehend the intricacies of modern urban life. Ranging from traditional

perspectives that underscore economic progress to critical viewpoints that spotlight social disparities, urbanization theories offer valuable frameworks for comprehending the historical, current, and future aspects of our progressively urbanized global landscape. As cities expand and undergo transformations, the continuous evolution of these theories remains crucial for navigating the complexities, challenges, and possibilities posed by urbanization.

Currently no single theory can mitigate the challenges of urbanization. States are adopting new ways and means for urban planning. Human Ecology Theory suggests that urbanization is ecological construct with particular zones and spatial disposition that lead to conflict over resources and the role of it in forming metropolis structure. (Garcia, 2019) Urbanization as a Natural Evolution view urbanization as a natural result of cultural and economic advancement. Urbanization is an unavoidable outcome of industrialization and technological progressions. Urban communities, in this view, act as center of development and economic hub, attracting people to look for better life. Capitalism and the geopolitics of globalization has played vital role in this regard. (Pumain, 2018)

In case of Pakistan, in this research paper Karl Marx's Conflict or Struggle Theory of Social Change helps to understand the varying nature of urbanization that led to disharmonious social change, class conflict and chaotic politics. According to Karl Marx there is a perpetual struggle or conflict among various classes of the society. This class struggle lead to the social change in the society. This theory is applicable to the social struggle among the various groups in the society divided due to ethnicity, religion, races and economic classes. Structural-Functional Perspective is another perspective of urbanization, basically influenced by the functionalism is also helpful to understand the expansion of megacities in Pakistan. This perspective is commonly associated to Talcott Parsons. He indicates that societies perform certain specialized functions. Urbanization facilitates those functions. Urban centers are instrumental for the stability and smooth function of a given society by serving as a hub for the social, economic and cultural projection. Furthermore this research work focused to understand the delicate social outlook and its dividends influenced by the urbanization. Rapid urbanization has transformed our social culture. Joint family system is on its decline. This transformation has political aspect as well. This paper focused on the political chaos as well.

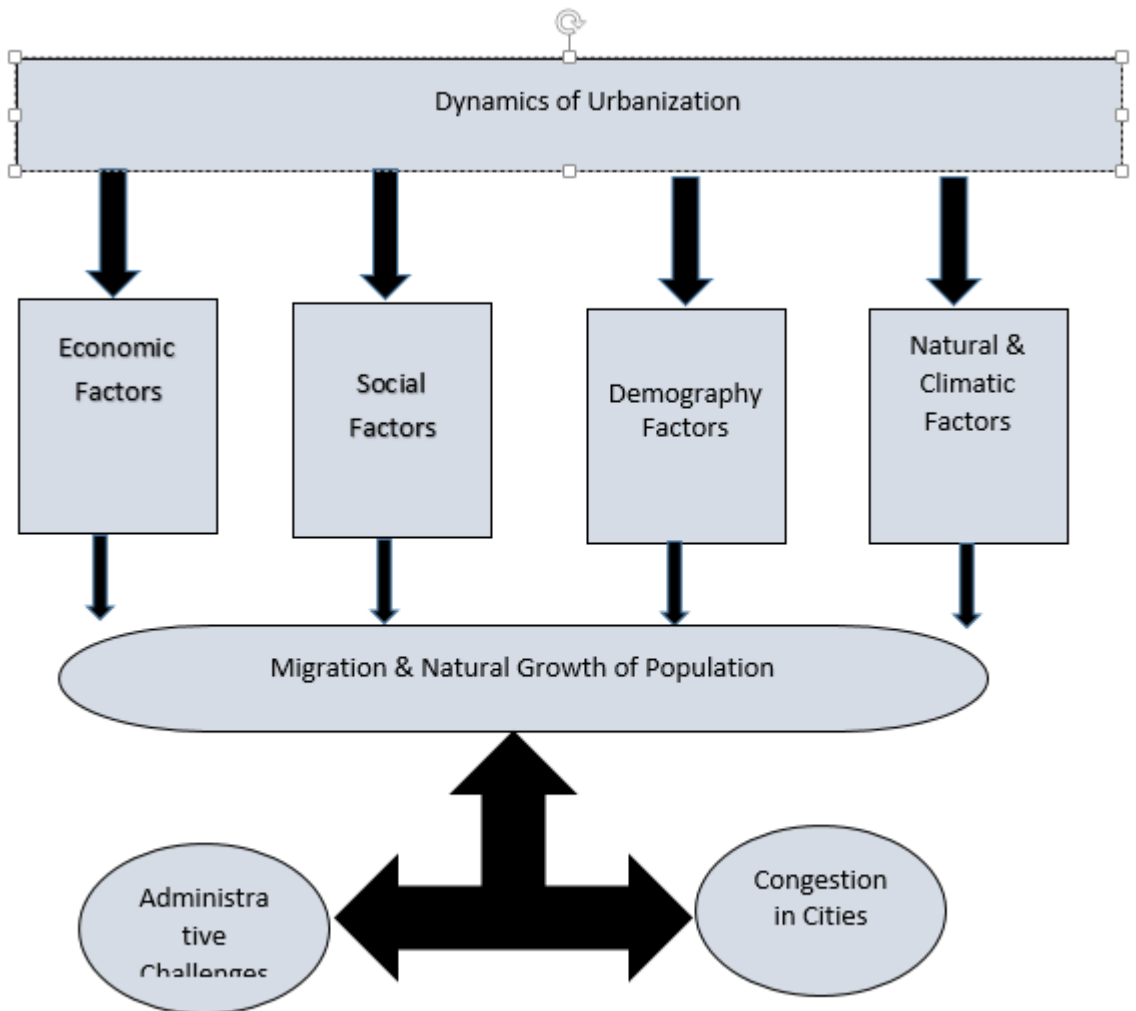
4. Research Methodology:

This article analyses the impact of urbanization on Pakistan's politics and its social outlook. Secondary data is taken from books, journals, online journals, online research articles and data produced by the governmental and nongovernmental bodies and organizations in the form of reports. It is a qualitative research along with descriptive and analytical approach is used. On the base of data obtained from various governmental and nongovernmental organizations, analysis is drawn.

5. Contribution of the Research:

The discourse on urbanization has attracted scholarly attention both at global and national level. A lot of scholarly material has been produced on dynamics of urbanization and its impacts on economic and ecological sphere in Pakistan. Nonetheless, there is a need to focus on the impacts of urbanization in Pakistan in terms of social transformation and political chaos. This is the need of hour to see the relationship between urbanization and ethnography and issues of class struggle. This research work will help common Pakistani to understand the theoretical perspective of the subject. Lastly this studies will assist policy makers in incorporating the administration in formulation of policy and innovative solutions to deal the current challenges of urbanization in Pakistan particularly in social and political domain.

Dynamics of Urbanization



Contemporary Trends of Urbanization in Pakistan:

Urbanization in Pakistan is socially and economically driven but it has a historical background too. Post partition Pakistan witnessed arrival of millions of refugees across the border in 1947. These refugees settled themselves in urban areas of Punjab and Sindh mostly. During and after periods of wars of 1965 and 1971 between Pakistan and India also resulted in massive urbanization in Pakistan. The settlers of urban areas of Karachi gave rise to Muhidda Qoumi Movement later on that represented the Muhajjirs who were the dominating ethnic group of the metropolis of Karachi. Next wave of migrants in the country was due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. This invasion caused a huge number of Afghan Refugee settlers in Quetta and Peshawar due to limited economic opportunities in refugee camps.

In addition to this, recent wave of terrorism and war against terrorism has caused huge internal displacement towards urban areas in quest of security, self-preservation and economic opportunities. Sectarian violence and poor law and order in some parts of the country particularly in Karachi and Quetta is also one of the root cause to internal displacement and urbanization. Urbanization is also accelerating due to unavailability of basic needs like water shortage, education and earning livelihood in rural areas. Climatic changes has also contributed a lot in urbanization. People living in flood hit areas are relocating to urban areas in search of self-preservation. Last but not least, there is a rapid increase in population of Pakistan in general with the rate of 2% and that is also a factor of increasing trends of urbanization.

According to recent Census 2023 held in Pakistan from 1st March 2023 estimated that the total population of the country reached to 241.49 million with the growth rate of 2.55%. These census indicated that 36.44% of total population was living in urban regions in 2017 whereas it reached to 38.82% in 2023. (PBS, 2023)

Statistics of Population across the Country and Provinces

ADMN UNIT	POPULATION (mill)			ANNUAL GROWTH RATE %		
	1998	2017	2023	1998	2017	2023
PAKISTAN	132.35	207.68	241.49	2.69	2.40	2.55
KP	20.92	35.50	40.85	2.72	2.82	2.38
PUNJAB	73.62	109.98	127.68	2.64	2.13	2.53
SINDH	30.44	47.85	55.69	2.80	2.41	2.57
BALUCHISTAN	6.57	12.34	14.89	2.47	3.37	3.20
ISLAMABAD	0.81	2.01	2.36	5.19	4.91	2.81

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

Rural Urban Distribution of Population

ADMN UNIT	RURAL POPULATION %			URBAN POPULATION %		
	1998	2017	2023	1998	2017	2023
PAKISTAN	67.5	63.56	61.18	32.5	36.44	38.82
KP	83.1	83.45	84.99	16.9	16.55	15.01
PUNJAB	68.7	63.14	59.30	31.3	36.86	40.70
SINDH	51.1	48.11	46.27	48.9	51.89	53.73
BALUCHISTAN	76.7	72.38	69.04	23.3	27.62	30.96
ISLAMABAD	34.4	49.63	53.10	65.6	50.37	46.90

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

The data taken from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics suggested that rate of urbanization in 1951 was 17.7% whereas in 2023 it remained 38.82. The absolute value of urbanization remained double during the period. Population growth rate from 1998 to 2017 in ten most populace cities of Pakistan suggested that rural areas have more population growth rate than in urban. This indicates that mega cities are expanding outside their municipality limits. More and more semi-urban areas are emerging and causing issues of mismanage urbanization.

Urban regions have emerged as the hub for socio-economic opportunities. Cities provide more inclusive infrastructure for transportation, education, health, recreation and global exposure. They offer business opportunities that can play part in uplifting the lives of the people living in. Better per capita income and higher literacy rate can be observed in cities. Social and material welfare is expected to be better in megacities. Hence urbanization is rational choice of survival and better living. In case of Pakistan rapid trends of urbanization are caused due to lack of provision of basic infrastructure, poverty and of course due to population growth. There are pull factors more responsible for the rapid urbanization. These pull factors are hopes for higher wages, better education and job opportunities, better quality health care, and availability of other various services. (Nuzmuz, 2021)

6. Social Implications of Urbanization on Pakistan

Urbanization and social change are directly related. Rural and urban life has different social structure and social values. Karl Marx’s conflict theory is helpful in understanding the transformation of social structure and conflict among various groups between rural and urban centers. Rapid modernization and industrial revolution has transformed the very basis of the society from agrarian to industrialized society. The idea of individualism is responsible to bring more and more consciousness that gave rise to unions, associations, NGOs weakened baradriem,

and cast and race based dividends. The idea of empowered women and educated youth has played a vital role in changing the dynamics of society. (Saweel Hameed Rathore, 2023)

Modernization is kind of catalyst for urbanization but on the other hand it is worth mentioning that Pakistan's society and economy is designed by the tiny number of feudal lords who always obstruct land reforms that is resulting social rifts in the society. As per Marxist Approach, it is the capitalist elite who determine the role people hold in their lives. Tactics of land Mafias and land grabbers are shrinking the capacity of the common man for housing despite of huge unplanned housing industry. According to an estimate of UN, Pakistan is going through the shortage of 10 million houses till the year 2019. (UNDP, 2019) The increasing competition among citizens of urban areas for basic services like clean drinking water, sanitation, electricity, natural gas, education, health is causing an intolerant society.

According to some media sources cities are contributing 78% of the national GDP. (Amin, 2015) That covers for 60% of the employed labor force of the country. Poverty rate in urban areas is almost one half of that the rural areas. Per capita income levels and growth rates have also been relatively better in the urban areas. (Safdar, 2018) Despite of the potential contribution, the rapid urbanization is a grave concern in terms of governance. Provision of essential services like supply of water, waste management, housing and other basic infrastructure is being out of the capacity of the cities. Urban hubs are facing grave challenges in provision of education, health and mismanagement regarding land use. Take an example of Karachi, according to a World Bank report (2018) "spatially unsustainable, inefficient, and unlivable city". This is just not the story of one city. Mismanaged urbanization is causing to the emergence of slum areas (katchi abadies) surrounded by the megacities due to high priced housing. Even these slums are not enough to meet the housing needs, eventually causing poverty, social unrest by inviting more and more inclusion of humans for job hunting and economic wellbeing. This requires provision of services like clean drinking water and waste management etc. Insufficient provision of these services expose individuals to unhygienic and substandard of living. This implicate the productivity and the ability to produce sufficient income. Deprived of their 'right to the city', these residents are stuck in cyclical poverty traps. (Arif Hassan, 2017) Karachi has stood at 169th position by the Global Livability Index. (EIU, 2023) Lahore, Faisalabad, Sialkot and other major cities are facing the same issues. This inability of megacities to meet the required facilities to provide its inhabitants marked that cities are unable to perform structural functions as per Structural-Functional Perspective.

Pakistan Planning Commission has categorically indicated that urbanization and climate change has direct relation. Unplanned urbanization is causing floods, unexpected heat waves, disturbing the equilibrium of rain fall and also causing sea level rise. Another impact of rapid urbanization is the demining social capital that cause connectedness among the people. It is diminishing due to lack of recreational places like playgrounds, parks and cinemas etc.

Water scarcity is a major issue. Pakistan’s per capita water availability has already reduced from 5300 m3 in 1947 to less than 1000 m3 in 2016. Approximately, 120 million people in Pakistan face severe water scarcity during last couple of years. (Latif Abdul, 2020) Maintaining law and order and security and safety is also been an impact of rapid urbanization. Here is the state of crime and safety index in four megacities of Pakistan till the mid of January 2024 produced by a private organization, Numbeo Doo serving in Serbia. (2024)

Rank	City	Crime Index	Safety Index
1	Karachi	56.1	43.9
2	Rawalpindi	50.5	49.5
3	Lahore	36.7	63.3
4	Islamabad	31.3	68.7

These states indicate that megacities are unable to meet the required facilities to provide its inhabitants in terms of safety and preservation also.

Political Implications of Urbanization on Pakistan

State, society and politics go together. Transformation in society has direct bearing on the political culture. As urbanization has transformed the demographics of the society in Pakistan. It is related to political culture as well. Urbanization has transformed social outlook and social values that is catalyzing the change of traditional political dynamics. Pakistan’s culture is essentially parochial in nature particularly in rural areas. People prefer to vote on the name of Baradriesm, caste system and tribal lines. (Ahmed, 2009) Political parties and political elites are more inclined to local politics than national politics in rural areas.

On the other hand, the focus of political elites and political parties in urban regions are the national level politics. People in urban centers reflects diverse nature of the society hence they tend to vote on service delivery and performance. Voting pattern varies in rural and urban regions. Rapid urbanization is giving rise to middle class with class conflict that is changing the voting behavior of people also.

Urbanization has strengthen the voting or electoral bank of urban based political parties but it also served as a catalyst for political violence. Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) is a rural based party in Sindh whereas MQM and Awami National Party (ANP) representing Pushtoons living in Karachi are urban based parties. Delaying tactics in census and allocation of resources with consensus among political elites of Sindh has caused grave challenges. PMLN has a strong roots in urban sides of the cities in Punjab. It has boosted the electoral prospects for the party. By making adjustments with other political parties PMLN is in the position to utmost electoral gains in coming election. PTI draws its electoral strength from urban areas of Punjab. Presence of its vote bank in major cities of Punjab has brought a major drawback for PMLN. While rural areas are in the iron

grip of PPP particularly in Sindh but with increasing trends of urbanization electoral gains will rise for PMLN and PTI. Rural based parties has to reconsider their strategies.

Other than the impact of urbanization on electoral process is rise of political violence. Rapid increase in urbanization in Karachi alone has intensified the competition for electoral prospects and resource allocation between MQM and ANP. This intense competition has gave rise to deadliest violence. In 2012 only, 1900 citizens were killed in Karachi alone due to political violence which is the highest number after 1994. (Suntana, 2012). Due to this political violence even the new settlers in urban sides of Karachi supporting PPP. Other ethnicities settled after military operations in other parts of the country are being implicated. Another face of this crisis is the sectarian violence between Shia minority and Sunni majority. Penetration of religious but extremist outfits like Defai e Pakistan and Tehkhr e Labaik Pakistan (TLP) is also another way to explain how Pakistan's politics is transforming. Maintaining law and order has been a headache particularly in the cities that are center to urbanization due to increasing competition for employment and it has gave rise to crime rate over all and intolerance for diversity on the other hand. Increase in the share of manufacturing units from 8% to 27% until the year 2018 has revolutionized the very basis of politics and economy both. (Khan, 2018). As Pakistani polity is defined as the troika of feudal, bureaucratic and military establishment. The transition in demographic facts of the country directly implicated country's politics (Mustafa, 2013) Taking example of Lahore alone, rapid urbanization has altered electoral scenarios for urban-based political parties, including hard-liner actors, presenting a risk of political violence. (Muhammad, 2023)

Urbanization is a multifaceted phenomenon. Its impacts on social, economic and political aspects of the society are long lasting. A sustainable strategy is required to deal the challenges in this regard.

7. Challenges of Urbanization:

There are numerous challenges regarding urbanization

Firstly of all there is a growing knowledge gap between rural and urban areas due to access to technological advancements of those living in urban areas. (Iqbal, 2014)

Secondly rapid urbanization is causing challenges to the national integration by enhancing the urban and rural dividends.

Thirdly there is a need of ideas exchange between the youth of rural and urban both to tackle the issues of diversity and culture collapse.

Fourthly unplanned urbanization is causing much of the social and economic challenges.

8. A way forward:

Rapid urbanization is a dynamic process. The challenges of urbanization was given due recognition in the Vision 2030 by the Pakistan that provided a due outline for socio-economic development (Nasira Jabeen, 2017) yet issue is consistency and devotion.



Emergence of middle class is an indicator of economic development. It also guarantees social harmony but for sustainable development it is essential to concentrate on rural areas as well in terms of basic infrastructure and service delivery. Poverty needs to be managed both at urban and rural areas.

There is a need of sustainability in urban regions too. Mismanagement regarding use of land is causing much of the issues. The archaic approach of completely segregating land use between residential and commercial uses needs to be revisited. Adopting mixed land use has been found more inclusive and beneficial. More infrastructure investments are also needed, such as in mass transit systems. The growth of the IT industry within cities can also help generate employment opportunities without causing the noise and pollution associated with manufacturing. It can also help to reduce crime rate.

The urban focus in policies needs to be institutionalized. All decisions taken at the federal or provincial levels need to involve the city's local governments. Infrastructure development, industrial incentives, land-use rules, etc. should ensure sustainable urban growth.

Pakistan should devise its urban policy to deal the challenges of unplanned urbanization. A strong local government system with decentralization of powers can deal the challenges of urbanization. Pakistan also needs to restrict the process of urbanization in those areas where there is immense pressure of population already. In this regard pre-urbanized areas should be developed. Last but not least provision of basic infrastructure in rural areas can prompt national integration and social harmony.

9. Conclusion

Rapid urbanization is a massive challenge for Pakistan. It is changing the social structure of the society and intensifying politics. Pakistan needs to devise its urbanization policy that can deal socio-political and economic issues. A strong local governance system and decentralization of power can help ensure stable urbanization. Finally, there is a need to restrict urbanization in areas with immense population pressures and investment in infrastructural development.



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