

**Causes & Effects of Unbridled Population in Pakistan:  
Exploring the High Complexities and Controversial Issues  
Paving ways towards Awareness**

By

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**Abstract:**

*The present paper is an attempt to explore the causes of unbridled population in Pakistan by exploring the high complexities and controversial issues which hinder the economic development of the country. Unbridled population growth is one of the biggest challenges facing Pakistan. Increasing population has links with many social menaces like terrorism, low literacy rates, low per capita income, malnutrition, and stunted growth in kids including poor standard of living. Some major social evils like corruption, drug addiction and terrorism have roots in overpopulation. Pakistan was the 13th most populous country on its independence back in 1947 that also included the East Pakistan-Bangladesh now. However, it moved to 7th ranking in 1996 and as of today it is the 6th most populous country. Socio-religious beliefs, early marriages, drug addiction and corruption form the core causes of over- population in Pakistan. Besides, this paper concludes that advancement of autonomous media and liberal training in instructive establishments will in time likewise help by empowering a smaller family size ideal which would in turn contribute to the better economy of Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Unbridled population, Pakistan, Causes, Complexities, Controversial issues

**Introduction:**

Population Reference Bureau PRB PIP: George Morris has defined unbridled population as the state of the population "when there are more people than can live on the earth in comfort, happiness, and health and still leave the world a fit place for future generations". This definition can be interpreted in various ways. For instance, unawareness about the crises of higher population growth, ineffectiveness of failed family planning

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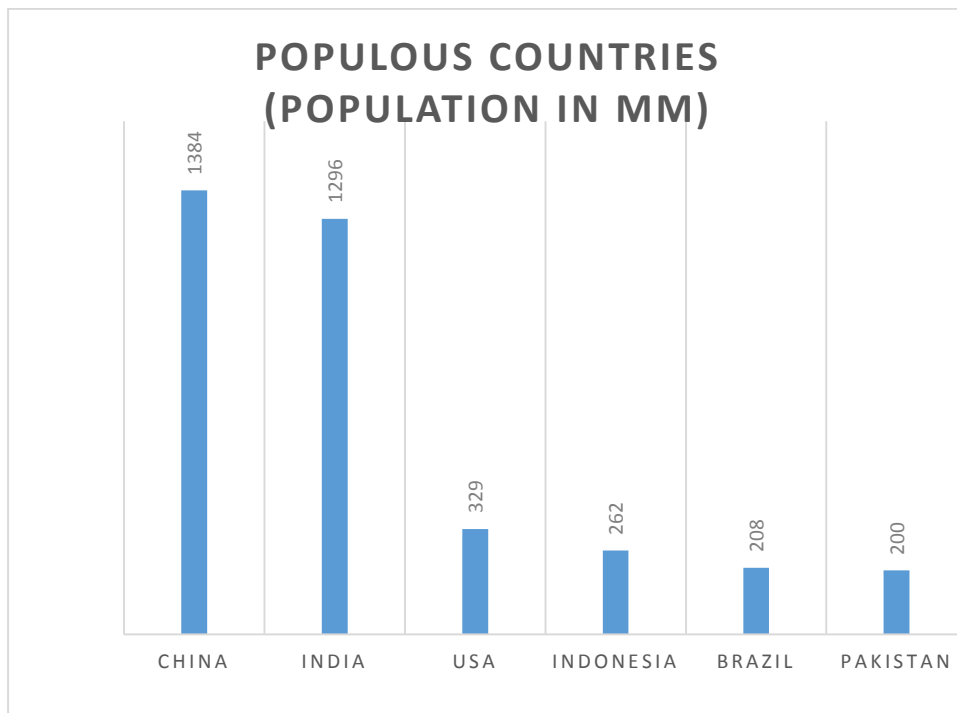
programs, early age marriages giving room to more childbirths, polygamy, feeling pride in a large family, lack of recreational facilities, decreasing death rates, self-made beliefs, and more immigration are some major causes of unbridled population (Ehrlich, 1968). Some other factors contributing to a higher population are declining mortality, son preferences, poverty, and lack of knowledge, polygamy, religious beliefs, customs, traditions, and cultural norms. Governments and policy makers have failed to address the causes of overpopulation. Resultantly Pakistan is one of the highest growth rate country and presently it stands at the 6th in the list of most populous countries. Pakistan was the 13th most populous country on its independence back in 1947 that also included the East Pakistan-Bangladesh now. It moved to 7th ranking in 1996 and as of today it is the 6th most populous country. Its population growth rate remained at 2.8% during 2018 which is the highest in this region.

Policymakers could not address the issue rather they have made family planning programs very controversial in Pakistan. People do not give much heed to the issue keeping in view its religious connotations. What they believe is: planning in family matters does not rest at their shoulders rather it is something very divine.

When we look at the role of government and policymakers to have a check on a sharp increase in population, a complete failure seems the result. We have reached the 6th ranking in the list of most populous countries from the rank of 13th back in the 1950s (Global Peace Index, 2018). This speaks itself that the country has failed to plan properly, execute their plans and everything remained unbridled. Indonesia Bangladesh are two good examples of running successful family programs. Pakistan failed to run any successful programs in the country. Government could not handle the pressures from religious elements which kept discouraging family planning. A few years back they propagated that Polio Vaccine is having the element of family planning. This resulted in a criticism of the polio vaccine. Polio vaccine workers got attached by fanatics (Shaista, 2017). Such kind of ignorance has almost no solution. Government fears and fails to deal with such elements in the society. Corrupt leadership who run the helm of affairs of this country are another cause. Since the governments & leadership remained for decades, they didn't plan to address the issue. Corrupt governments needed an ignorant mass to rule on. They continued ruling on them without bringing the masses out of the evils.

The table below explains the causes & the effects of the unbridled population in Pakistan.

Country Name	Population in Millions (2018)	Ranking	Remarks
China	1384	1	
India	1296	2	
USA	329	3	
Indonesia	262	4	
Brazil	208	5	
Pakistan	200	6	Pakistan is surpassing Indonesia in the next 20 years.

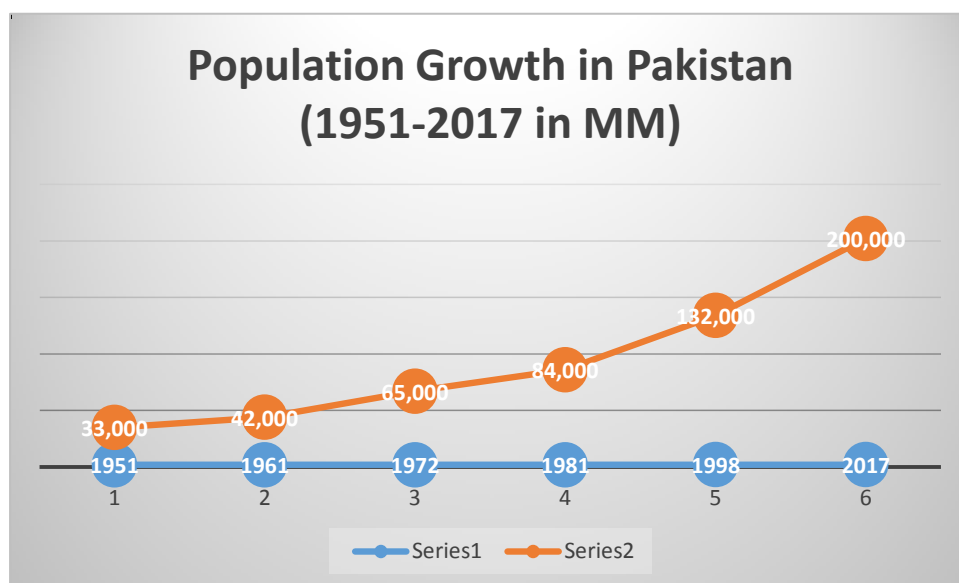


(Source- [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

The population of Pakistan has grown on a very rapid pace. The statistics below show the explosion of population since 1951 until the recently carried our senses 2017.

Year-	Population in 000
1951	33,000
1961	42,000
1972	65,000
1981	84,000
1998	132,000
2017	200,000

Source: ([www.pbs.gov.pk](http://www.pbs.gov.pk))



The statistics show that Pakistan has surged to 200 million-plus showing an increase of 75 million during the last 19 years. During this period, the average growth has remained 2.4 % which is the highest in South Asia. In the past there were some efforts to curb the rate of population growth that benefited a little, but the country is on the track of overpopulation. The population of Pakistan has grown at a rate of more than 3% per year from 1951 till the mid-80s. From the mid-80s until 2000 the rate of the population didn't increase at that pace rather it slowed down to 2.6% per year and from 2000 to 2012 about 2% per year. The reason for this slow rate was the effort made towards slowing down the population growth. However, the present paper explores the causes of rapid increase in population in Pakistan.

#### **Literature Review:**

The present section is based on the review of the past studies on over population. Mahmood (2018) asserts that Pakistan's population birth rate is 2.1%, while the per capita income of Pakistan is \$ 1254. The rate of unemployment is increasing because of overpopulation. He has suggested

or point out seven main causes of overpopulation which are summarized as; People of developing countries like Pakistan assume that if there are more children there will be more hands of earning for the family support. Due to unawareness of the family planning, population is increasing day by day. Polygamy is another cause due to which this problem is raised in Pakistan. Less recreational facilities and fewer sources of employment are also causing population explosion.

Early age marriages in Pakistan are a huge problem which leads to an increase in the period of re-productivity. Competition among the members of the family is also one of the main causes of this issue. Baus (2016) in a research paper focused on the issues of overpopulation. He also discussed the impact of this issue. He explained the origin of overpopulation from the prehistoric time and to the very present day. Due to urbanization, natural habitats are destroyed, and global inequality has led to water shortage, fewer job opportunities and malnutrition.

Khan (2014) explains the causes, effects and measures of overpopulation. He explains the following causes: Allah is raziq, unemployment, low per capita income, Afghan refugee, early marriages, etc. He also analyzed that overpopulation affects the low per capita, low growth of the agriculture sector, high rate of inflation, pollution (Ali, 2011). In another research, Ahsan (2018) discussed that overpopulation is the major cause of the decline in Pakistan's economy. The population of Pakistan was 46 million in 1960 however, due to population explosion there is a shortage of everything. While studying the global effects of over population, Mittal and Mittal (2013) asserted that the human population is increasing, and it has very drastic effect on our environment. The biggest effect of human population growth is global warming and scientists must fear that this problem will lead to extreme weather conditions and rising levels of sea in the upcoming days. Due to the unbridled population our forests are in danger. The increasing growth rate affects the already limited resources.

Hussain (2017) analyzed in his research that the population time bomb is now exploding since the population growth rate of Pakistan is increasing and the ratio of the growth rate of the underdeveloped countries has decreased. He asserted, "the latest population census has shown that Pakistan has moved up the ladder becoming the fifth most populous nation only behind India, China, The United states and Indonesia."

In a research on the population components, Lakhani (2015) explained how overpopulation affects economic development and environmental dilapidation. He used different techniques and the results of his study indicated that the temperature in almost all the cities is increasing which proves that global warming affects Pakistan. Urbanization is also one of the major causes of environmental dilapidation. The changes in rainfall also cause many changes in the surrounding. Both the population and environment affect each other. Khan (2018) asserts that overpopulation is a big cause of socio-economic problems in Pakistan. Many developed

countries focus on overpopulation, but some countries do not think about this issue. He explained that if a proper strategy is not followed, there could be deaths due to food, agriculture crises, conflict and violence since the production of food depends on the climate. If the climate is not reasonable then food cannot be cultivated.

Besides, low education and bad governance have a significant effect on socio-economic problems. Uniyal (et al., 2017) discussed that for many years' overpopulation is identified as a global environmental problem. This problem has many effects on the environment. They concluded that steps should be taken on the international and national levels to reduce this problem.

Afzal (2019) a Professor of Gomal University in his article has concluded that in the context of Pakistan there is a negative relationship between population growth and economic development. He refers to the data of Pakistan Economic Survey and International Financial Statistics and concludes that increasing population has negative effects on lower investment and saving rates in Pakistan. The increasing population has negative impacts on growth and development. Mr. Afzal recommends measures to curb the much higher population growth. He has recommended policymakers to invest in family planning programs so that the increasing population growth can be lowered. Besides, The World Bank's Country Director Mr. Illango has warned in his very recent statement that "Pakistan will remain a low-income country even after 30 years; when it turns 100 years it does not control the exploding population bomb. Pakistan's population will touch 400 million by 2047". Mr. Illango also explained that with the current economic growth and population growth rate, per capita income even after 30 years will not improve. Presently Pakistan's per capita income is around \$1629, and this will remain the same if there are no checks in place in the exploding population growth. A country with a per capita income of above \$12000 is considered a high-income country while Pakistan will remain far below from this landmark because of rapid population growth.

Ashraf (2017) while talking on the World Population Day commented that factors contributing to a higher population include high fertility rates, declining mortality, the custom of early marriages, son preferences, poverty, lack of knowledge, polygamy, religious beliefs, customs, traditions, and lack of recreational activities. He also explained that access to family planning is a human right. The effects of overpopulation are very alarming in our society. Overpopulation has resulted into a shortage of educational facilities, poor health services, living space, food, energy crises, pressure on transportation, electricity, sewage and sanitation issues, urbanization, environmental issues, increasing suicides, overcrowding, and congestion in housing, increase in number of social evils like crimes, lawlessness, corruption, drug addiction. In a nutshell, it has badly affected the economic development of our country, Dr. Ashraf asserted.

One of the major causes behind overpopulation in a Muslim society like Pakistan is the socio-religious belief thus making the issue of family planning very controversial. Hence the people feel reluctant to take measures for contraception and consider the use of contraceptive pills as Haram. Dr. Ashraf further added that the population welfare programs run by Pakistan remained unsuccessful in the past. The lack of trained staff and resources landed the programs in failure. As compared to Pakistan, the other Muslim countries like Bangladesh and Indonesia have run very successful family programs; that is the reason we are surpassing Indonesia in the coming 20 years. While discussing the population issue some researchers recommended that the dependency ratio requires to be reduced. This needs the creation of more jobs keeping in view the age structure on population (Ranis, Steward & Ramirez, 2000). The relationship between economic growth and human development stands in both the directions. A high level of human development may lead to higher growth and resultantly positive results and vice versa. Jorgon and Arne (2000) studied the relationship between income distribution, poverty and economic growth. They both failed to know any orderly pattern of changing the distribution of income. From some evidence they found the negative impact of inequality on growth and others believed that the level of initial income inequality is not a strong factor of growth. They concluded in their study that those countries that have been prosperous in the form of economic growth are very successful in minimizing poverty. Hence poverty can be reduced when there is enough economic growth and growth can be significant if the institutional environment and policy are good. In another research, Hamilton and Davis (1952) said that overpopulation is a very serious problem in Pakistan and India. They concluded that there is no early solution to overcome this problem in the near future.

#### **Discussion:**

For a country like Pakistan, increasing population is a huge challenge. The most critical part, in fact, is the socio-religious concepts where the exploding population is yet not recognized as a problem. It looks that the country is trapped in a vicious cycle of the exploding population. Around 3 million new borne are added to the population and the country has not enough resources to deal with such high ratio of population. Following are some of the major causes of unbridled population in Pakistan.

#### **Socio-Religious Beliefs:**

The basic issue relating to overpopulation is a set of socio-religious beliefs that every new borne has its own livelihood, predefined by the divine. Therefore, there is no question to cry over population growth. The religious scholars either fail to understand the true teachings of the religion or they fail to communicate the same. Hence women give birth to the children till menopause. This religious cum social belief puts a family into unending struggle to provide health, education and better standard of



living to the children. Another cause of overpopulation is the preference of son over daughter. A man is considered necessary to carry on the family tree. Therefore, the couples with daughters only are in desire to have a boy. This leads them to have 5 to 6 and sometimes 9 to 10 daughters which results in a large family size. The family then moves into crises as they fail to deal with the issues arising because of too many children.

#### **Early Marriages:**

A very common root cause of over- population is early marriages which is more common in the rural areas. Girls are preferred to go for marriages in a very early age. This is how parents fulfill their responsibility and lady lands into in-laws without complete maturity to deal with family life. Once married, the girls are asked to go for children at very early ages since the delay in children after marriage becomes a concern for the families. Keeping the social norm in her mind, a girl even with family planning awareness cannot follow such planning. Early marriages also give much space for the couple to produce kids. Normally a girl because of early marriages gets 25 to 30 years to have children. This increasing period gives the couple much room to have more kids as compared to the ladies in Urban who go for marriages after 25 or 30 years of age.

#### **Polygamy:**

Polygamy and feeling pride to have a large family are other major causes of overpopulation. In tribal societies, a large family size is appreciated. These cultures believe that a large family size is a huge support in any kind of crisis (Engelman et.al, 2016). Supporting each other in socio-cultural matters like disputes with other families, tribes, require a more ample family size.

#### **Better Medical Facilities:**

With the development in medical sciences, death rates have decreased substantially. This has also led to overpopulation. The people who get access to better medical facilities are less prone to diseases where medical science has invented preventive measures of treatment to diseases that are available. Measles, cholera, tuberculosis, malaria and typhoid are very much curable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hence better medical facilities have resulted in minimum death rates. This has benefited the middle class, lower middle class and the people who are living in the urban areas.

#### **Immigration Issue:**

Immigration is another issue that has led to a sharp surge in population. The western border of the country has remained open for decades and people from Afghanistan have settled along the areas of western border. This has very serious repercussions on our demographics. Social evils like increasing crime rates, kidnapping for ransom, terrorism and drugs are very much related to immigrants. Government has failed to deal with immigration issues. Recently the Baloch leaders have demanded to address the demographic issues of Balochistan province which is deranged because of the huge immigration into the country. Immigration into



Pakistan is much higher as compared to emigration from Pakistan. The government of Pakistan has not derived any policy to deal with immigration issues. Terrorism, one of the biggest menaces of the day has many roots in immigrants. Immigrants, once settled, inside Pakistan try to seek opportunism for the livelihood of their kids.

An environmental issue, which is faced by the country today, has also its roots in overpopulation. There are no effective plans to control pollution and environmental issues. According to the National Journal *We School "Knowledge Builder"* deforestation, water, and air pollution, depletion of the ozone layer, extinction of species, land/soil degradation, global warming, and climate change have roots in overpopulation. Overpopulation has been very rapidly causing huge destruction to the environment.

**Inflation:**

Inflation means the general rise in the prices of the products. In this situation, the value of paper money will decrease. Generally, it is calculated on a monthly or annual basis. Pakistan is suffering from severe inflation due to overpopulation. Inflation is the result of more people when chasing a few goods. An increase in inflation is natural when the population growth is much higher as compared to economic growth. Rapidly growing population creates economic and social problems such as housing issues, infrastructure for education, health, transport and water issues (Ali, et.al, 2017). The living standard in Pakistan is very poor because of the lack of resources. Hence, the country cannot provide proper housing to the masses due to over population. Poor live in shelters where basic facilities are not available.

Increase in population has resulted in poor economic indicators. The economy needs to import more as compared to exports. That results in a very unfavorable balance of payment. Overpopulation also results in a decrease in wage rates. A very unskilled working force is available in the country which is hardly productive for the economy. Overpopulation is the reason of a very high dependence ratio in the country (Ahmad, Iqbal, & Khan, 2013). The increasing population puts much pressure on the agricultural production of the country. Agriculture production gradually fails to fulfill the requirement of the ever-increasing population.

Unemployment is very natural at such a very high growth rate. The government and private sector, both, do not have the capacity to employ such a huge workforce in the economy. The situation of medical facilities available in the country seems very poor as compared to the developed nations. There is only 1 nurse available for every 3700 people and approximately 0.6 beds per thousand individuals living here. Due to overpopulation this number decreases day by day as the availability of trained staff, nurses, doctors and hospitals is not increasing incommensurate with population growth. According to the National Institute of Population Studies, in the year 1984 the life expectancy of a

Pakistani citizen was only 56.9 years compared to 62 years in 2002. This increase was due to the medical facility viable in the country. That has also resulted in an increase in population growth compared to professionals available.

Drug addiction, an increasing number of suicides are other challenges the country is facing. Both the evils are related to overpopulation. Unemployed and underemployed youth have a tendency towards these menaces as the economy is not capable to provide jobs to the educated youth.

Corruption also is linked with overpopulation; a high family size compels individuals to commit embezzlements, taking kickbacks to fulfill the needs of their families. The unemployed youth also tries to grease the palm of such an element to seek favor for them. This results in a corrupt society.

The workforce we have in our country is unskilled or semi-skilled. There is no or little for this workforce in the international market. The government is not providing enough facilities for technical education. Technical institutes are in scarcity across the country. This has an impact on our emigration as fewer people leave the country to go abroad for jobs. This has an impact on our balance of payment which is always unfavorable in the context of Pakistan. The government should take immediate steps to have technical institutes to have a much-skilled workforce.

As per the reports of the Federal Bureau of Statistics, Child Labor in Pakistan has surged. Around 19 million children are involved in child labor out of 40 million children in the country. This situation is very alarming as most of the kids do not have access to basic education. This is very unfortunate that these children are much prone to social evils when they grow. These kids remain involve in begging and street crimes.

**Conclusion:**

The term “unbridled population” is used to express the idea of more population for fewer resources. The major causes of unbridled population in Pakistan include socio-religious beliefs, unawareness, self-made beliefs, ineffective family planning programs, early age marriages, gender biasedness, son preferences, and higher birth and fertility rates, lack of recreational facilities, emigration, and polygamy. These have very serious repercussions in the lives of the masses living here. The country is facing huge challenges of terrorism, malnutrition, unemployment, poverty, corruption, inflation, poor infrastructures, poor living standards, etc. Keeping in view the causes and effects, it is concluded that Pakistan is in urgent need of quick measures to be taken towards family planning. A check on family planning can only save the country from the challenges the country is facing today. During the next 20 years we are surpassing Indonesia and landing into the 5th rank of populous country. Overpopulation will not improve the growth rate, per capita income and other economic indicators in the coming years.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

Effective birth planning should be introduced to control the menace of unbridled population. There should be 1 to 2 child policy and the government should support the families who opt for family planning. We are also in need to adopt policies on immigration favoring our country in the longer run. The government should invest in human development by investing a lot in providing basic education and health facilities. Around 20 million kids are out of schools and the government has no plan to bring them back into schools. This level of ignorance will add up the problem. Our social and economic indicators are matching with one of the poorest countries of Africa which is very alarming for the future generations.

Another very important role rests with the shoulders of religious scholars who have the knowledge and courage to interpret the true essence of religion. Religion has bestowed responsibilities on the shoulders of parents towards their kids. It is not easy to convert a biological man into a social man through proper upbringing. Producing offspring and leaving them at the mercy of others is not something wise.

Access to family planning is yet not ensured by the state. Family planning means should be free and available to every citizen. Proper awareness in this connection is also required. The role of social scientists has become very crucial.

Media, especially electronic and social media could play a better role in educating people and provide the required awareness. The government should provide attraction to media to spread the message across the country. The government should make it mandatory for every couple to attend family planning programs before and after marriages in order to understand the socio-economic issues linked with overpopulation. In some of the countries like china government sends alerts, makes announcements for ladies to have their contraceptive pills. This kind of awareness programs is the need of the day. Syllabus in schools, colleges and universities should have mandatory topics on causes and effects of unbridled population.

Another important step the country could take and benefit from a huge unemployed workforce is to involve them in the agriculture sector. Building water reservoirs and bringing barren land under cultivation is very much critical (Imran, 2019). Pakistan is rich in barren land and water resources are wasted because of the shortage of reservoirs. The Government should address population-related issues by investing in the reservoirs. The government can produce cheap energy i.e. hydropower energy, storage of water and bring uncultivated land under cultivation by building reservoirs. The unskilled manpower could be allotted lands for cultivation. In this way they could be independent, and the country can have a positive impact on GDP. Besides, three dams should be immediately built starting from Diamer Bhasha, Dasu and then KalaBagh. These three dams are the answer to the many crises we face today.

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