

Government Media Statistics and Causes of Rise and Downfall of Covid-19 Infection in Pakistan - A Review

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan is developing country situated in Asia and sharing borders from three sides with high corona infected countries China, Iran and India. First coronavirus infected case reported in Pakistan on February 26, 2020. After that infected statistics went high rapidly. Current study represents the government media statistics since first recorded positive case to till now. Furthermore study express rise and downfall of Covid-19 infection cases in Pakistan. The study recorded the circumstances which Pakistan facing since February 2020 to till now. The study found that circumstances and realities showing positive outcomes but ignorance of government policies regarding covid-19 and non-serious attitude of public may give invitation to arise infection in the country in future. The only hope to rescue own self is to ensure social distance, use face mask when go outside, wash hand for twenty seconds when come from outside and don't visit places having crowded.

Keywords: Government Media Statistics, Causes of Covid-19 in Pakistan, Rise and Downfall of Covid-19.

Introduction

At the end of 2019, newly identified virus found in city of Wuhan China when bunch of patients with pneumonia of anonymous cause admitted in hospital. (Wang *et al.*, 2020a; Ahmed *et al.*, 2020; Shuja *et al.*, 2020). This virus was recognized as causative pathogen provisionally named as (2019-nCov) later on Covid-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO). The virus found transmittable not only through touching but also through air (WHO, 2020). Death rate of Covid-19 found 2.3% higher than that of influenza (Yang *et al.*, 2020; Bouey 2020). Up to July 19, 2020, 13,876,441 confirmed cases with 953,087 deaths found in 216 countries (WHO July 19, 2020).

Now this disease has not become the major issue of China but also all the states of the globe (Phelan *et al.*, 2020). The outbreak of Covid-19 has constituted public health emergency of global concern (Mahase, 2020). Epidemiological research findings revealed that outbreak of Covid-19 started transmission to animal-to-human sustained human-to-human onward (Del Rio & Malani, 2020; Chan *et al.*, 2020). According to the Chinese Preventive Medicine Association, interpersonal transmission of Covid-19 occurs via respiratory droplets and through contact (The Chinese Preventive Medicine Association, 2020).

The main person-to-person transmission of coronavirus caused sneezing or coughing, touching and contaminated surface (CDC, 2020). Identical symptoms of Covid-19 are fever, cough, pneumonia, fatigue and shortness of breathing (Wang *et al.*, 2020b; Chen *et al.*, 2020). This disease has no treatment or vaccine so far (CDC, 2020). Hence preventive measures and hygiene practice are the only way of protection from this disease (Wang *et al.*, 2020b).

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Covid-19 in Pakistan

Ministry of Health Government of Pakistan confirmed first case of Covid-19 on February 26, 2020. On the same day, the Pakistan Federal Ministry of Health in Islamabad reported another case (Ali, 2020; Geo News, 2020). These two cases had recently travelled from Iran (WHO, 2020). This calculation reached twenty (21) out of 472 suspected cases within fifteen days in Sindh Province of Pakistan followed by Gilgit Baltistan (NIH, 2020).

Till March 14, 2020 the statistics of positive cases in Pakistan reached 31 when government of Pakistan imposed lock down in the country (Ilyas *et al.*, 2020). By March 24, 990 cases with 6 deaths (WHO, March 24, 2020) and till April 15, 2020, 6200 positive cases reported with more than 111 deaths (Ilyas *et al.*, 2020) and later one this calculation increased rapidly in the country.

Figure 1: Government Media Statistics

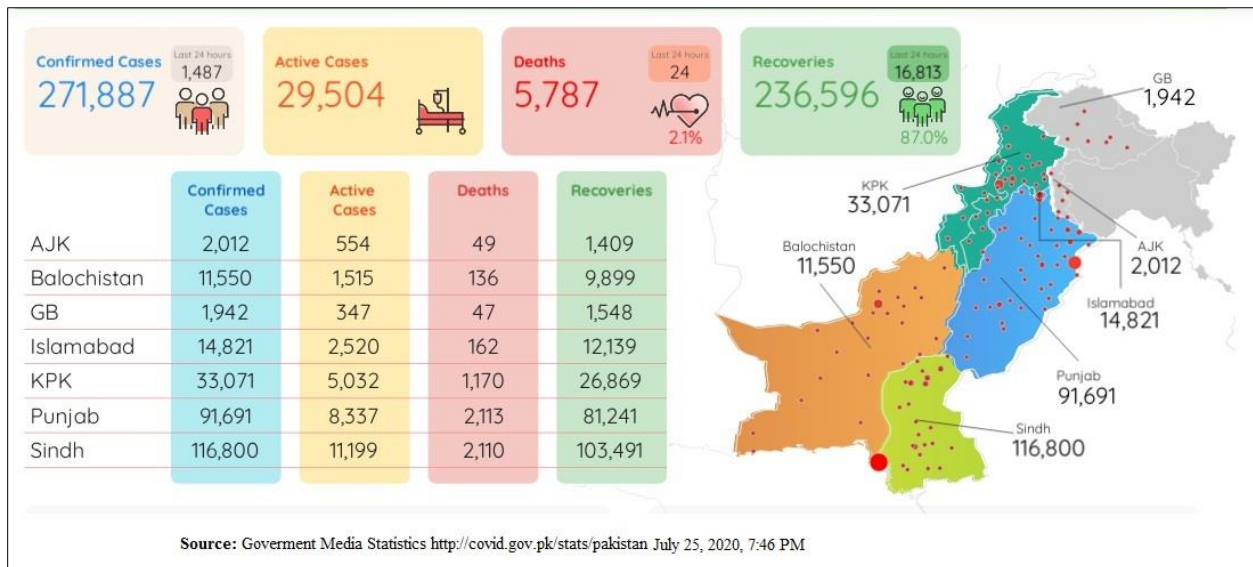


Figure 2: Cumulative Statistics

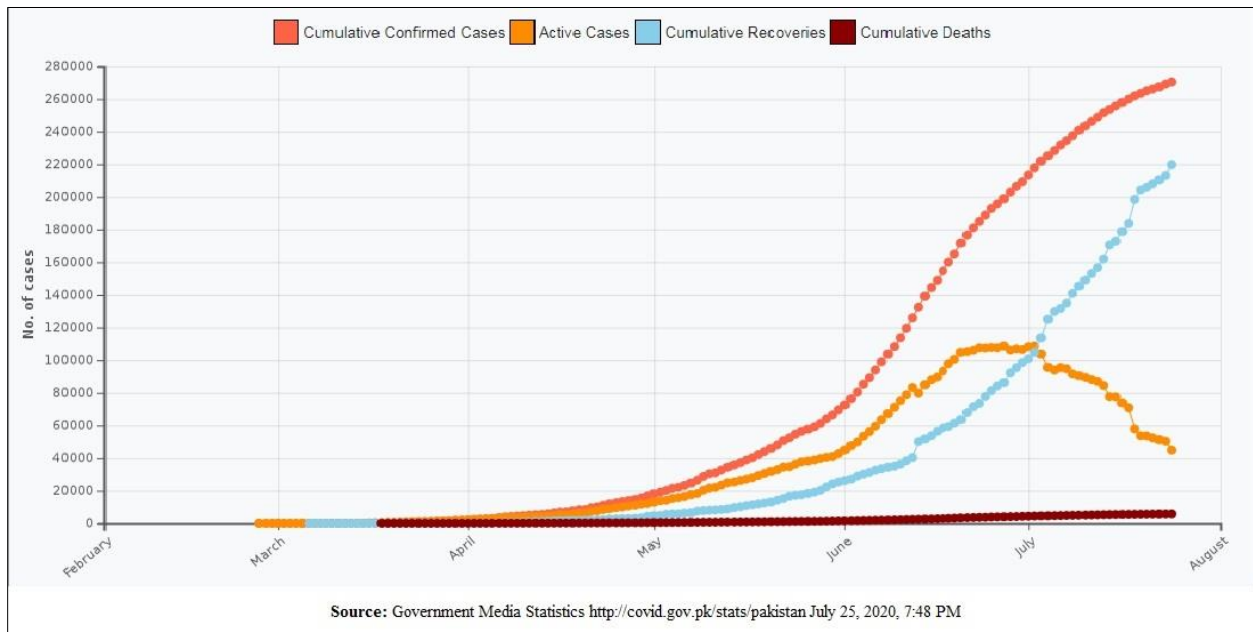
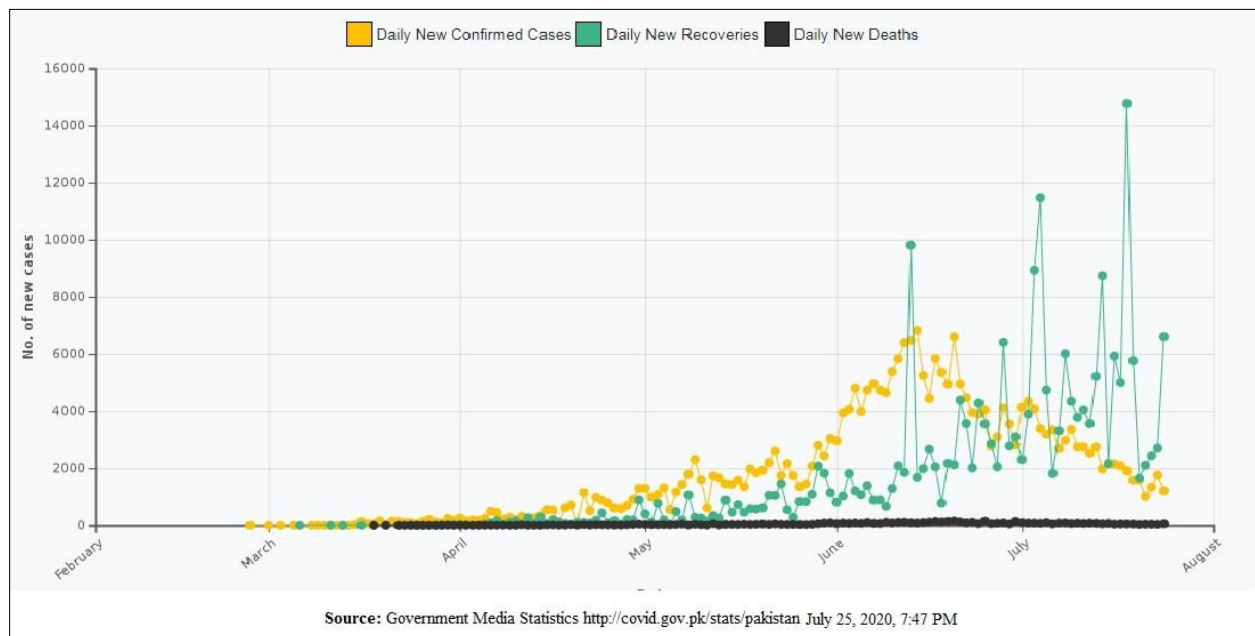


Figure 3: *Daily Statistics*



Major Causes of Rise of Covid-19 in Pakistan

Geographically Pakistan is surrounded by highly corona infected states i.e. China and Iran. Porous borders with weak health infrastructure, Pakistan easily captured by epidemic. Travelling back from Arab counties especially Saudi Arabia also caused Covid-19 outbreak in Pakistan. Furthermore, large number of Pakistanis working and studying in European countries also contributed in spread of coronavirus in the country. On March 13, 2020, government of Pakistan took aggressively action to close its western border with Iran and Afghanistan (Madiha, March 27, 2020). Recently, Pakistan has strengthening preparedness against Covid-19 pandemic by formulating of health policies and implantation of national emergency preparedness. Furthermore, government applying thermal screenings at all the entry points of the country and inspecting through data collection (Mughal, 2020).

Entrance of Infected People from Iran

Iran is neighbor country that sharing border with Pakistan. Religious tourism has big contribution of its revenue generation as world community has already imposed economic sanctions over it due to allegation of nuclear programme (Takian *et al.*, 2020). It is estimated that approximately 0.7 million people from Pakistan visit Iran for pilgrimage to various shrines each year. From all over the world, it is estimated that around 8 million people visit Iran each year to visit shrines of Karbala, Najaf, Kufa, Samara and Baghdad. In the month of February and March 2020 thousands Pakistani visited Iran and travelled back to country.

Initially, Pakistani government did not stop people returned from Iran. Due to lack of information and unclear statistics of positive cases in Iran caused entrance of Covid-19 disease from Pak-Iran Taftan border. When first two cases found Pakistan positive and discovered that they had travelled to Iran, after that Pakistani government started taking precautionary measures at the Pak-Iran Taftan border. But now, it was late and around 8000 pilgrims returned back to different cities of Pakistan.

After going through the water, Pakistani government started taking initial precautionary measures and started thermal scanning at the Taftan border of returning pilgrims. Later on government established quarantine camps at Taftan border and imposed restriction to pilgrims to stay in camps for 10 days

(WHO, March 24, 2020). Government estimated that among infected patients, 60% were pilgrims who travelled to Iran.

Entrance of Infected People from Saudi Arabia

Pak-Saudi relations are deep rooted due to religious affiliations with Makah and Madina. Each year, millions of people visit Saudi Arabia for religious pilgrimage. Only from Pakistan, more than 1 million people visit Saudi Arabia each year for performing Hajj and Umrah. As a hub of Muslim countries and frequently visit Saudi Arabia from all over the world also increased the chance of infection among people. Hence people returned from Saudi Arabia in the month of February and March 2020 caused spread of infection due to non-check and balance at entry points of the country. At the end of February 2020, Saudi government banned travelling from any other country to Saudi Arabia (Ahmad, March 20, 2020).

Entrance of People from Europe

Large number of Pakistani community is living in Europe for educational and business purpose. Europe is hub of tourism and each year millions of people around the world visit Europe. In this way the spread of Covid-19 found higher in European countries. Italy, Spain, Germany United Kingdom more affected by coronavirus (Nafees & Khan, 2020). A large number Pakistani community started to travelled back Pakistan when high number of Covid-19 cases started to reported in Europe. Thousands of daily reported cases created fear among foreigners who were living there. So, people started to go back to their home towns countries including Pakistani too. Initially, due to lack of resources and precautionary measures, government did not take attention on people who came from Europe. This slackness proved hazardous and caused spread of Covid19 virus in the country.

Entrance of People from China

From east-north side Pakistan sharing its borders with China. Being alliance, investment in long terms projects and educational attraction, Pak-China friendship is not hidden. Thousands of Pakistani students are living in China to get higher education. Wuhan outbreak and later on spread in whole China created restless among foreigners. Meanwhile Pakistani citizens also started to come back Pakistan due to serious condition of Covid-19 in China. Initially there were no hindrances on entry level and people as people go in their home towns and infection started spread among other people. Later on government of Pakistan banned flight operation among China and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) started screening on major international airports including Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar for all passengers incoming from China (Gulf News, January 24, 2020).

Downfall of Covid-19 in Pakistan

Lock-Down in Pakistan

On March 13, 2020, government of Pakistan imposed lockdown in the country. On that time there were 26 confirmed cases in Pakistan. President Dr. Arif Alvi in tweet advised the public for taking precautionary measures avoid handshaking and participation in mass gathering (Dawn News, March 13, 2020; Arif Avli, March 13, 2020). Prime Minister Imran Khan chaired National Security Council Meeting and announced lockdown for two weeks in the country and decided to close all public gathering places, marriage halls, markets, schools and universities till April 5, 2020 (Geo TV, March 14, 2020; Daily Times, March 13, 2020). Scheduled Pakistan Day Parade also cancelled (145). Pakistan suspended international flights except Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore on that day (SAMAA, March 13, 2020). Later on March 21, all international flights suspended for weeks from March 16 till April 4 (The Guardian, March 21, 2020; Khaleejtimes, March 21, 2020).

Pakistan closed its borders form Afghanistan until March 21, 2020 (Geo TV, March 21, 2020). Later one Pak-Afghan Chaman Border reopened on March 21, just for transportation of food items (RadioPk, March 23, 2020). Pak-Iran border at the Taftan border sealed from March 16, to onwards for two weeks and Durand Line border also sealed (Geo, March 14, 2020; The Guardian, March, 4, 2020; DunyaNews,

March 20, 2020; The News International, March 12, 2020) also Pak-China border closed (Skift, March 13, 2020). President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan urged the nation demonstrate discipline, passion and unity in fighting against covid-19 pandemic (Geo TV, March 23, 2020).

Gentleness in Lock-Down

Imposing lockdown on March 13, 2020 for two weeks and after that extended for two weeks more, putted negative effects on country economy. Millions of daily wages workers unemployed and economy crashed. According to the Ministry of Planning and Development report 29.5% people live below the poverty line that are 55 million (MP&D, 2016; Nations encyclopedia, 2020).

Keeping the situation in front, government decided to gentleness in lockdown and Prime Minister Imran Khan said “despite rising infections and deaths, the country would need to learn to live with the virus to avert pushing tens of millions living on daily wages into destitution (Farooq, June 5, 2020).” Government decided to reopen business and industries stepwise with SOP’s with limited hours (Khan, 2020).

Rise of Covid-19 in Pakistan (Second Wave)

Gentleness in lock where created hope for daily wages workers, businessmen and industrialists, there also increased the chance of infection among the people due to EID shopping. People step out for shopping and the risk of infection increased (Reuters, May 24, 2020). People ignored social distancing and mask wearing in EID holidays that enforced to help curb the spread of the coronavirus (Janjua, May 22, 2020).

In the start of June 2020, once again positive cases started to incase rapidly. On daily basis thousands of cases started to report with hundreds of deaths. This spike again putted the government into worry. The capacity of hospitals filled with patients. Government allowed people to self-isolation in their houses.

Smart Lock-Down

By experiencing strict lockdown and economy condition of the country, government decided to adopt smart lockdown in the country. Now government started to identified hotspots and lock only those areas for two weeks where positive cases were recorded mostly. Resulted government identified 500 coronavirus hotspots across the country (Hashim, June 23, 2020). Soon government claimed this procedure more effective and claimed 60% control to spread virus.

Government Preventive Measure and Public Interest

After second spike of coronavirus government announced strict preventive measures. People asked to wear face mask on public places otherwise they will have to go to jail or fine will imposed. Asked to shopkeepers to follow SOP’s otherwise they will have to pay fine and their shops will seal. Furthermore asked to shopkeepers not allow entering customers in shop without wearing face mask. The use of sanitizer make compulsory for shopkeepers and in offices. Government asked businessmen and public to ensure Social distance while shopping in markets.

Public started to follow government policies after experiencing big financial and life losses. Government strict policies and public interested resulted stated decrease coronavirus infected cases in Pakistan.

Conclusion

Pakistan is developing country and has limited resources and cannot afford further economy and life losses. The eradication of coronavirus is only possible with strictly adaptation of preventive measures. In this way the role of public is very important. Ignorance of government policies regarding covid-19 and non-serious attitude of public may give invitation to arise infection in the country in future. The only hope to rescue own self is to ensure social distance, use face mask when go outside, wash hand for twenty seconds when come from outside and don’t visit places having crowded.

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Conflict of Interest

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