

Research in Pakistan during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Novel corona virus termed COVID-19 is an infectious disease outbreak in recent century with enormous economic and public health impacts. Influenza pandemics in 1957 and September 1968, due to Avian virus (H3N2 influenza A) were the last of these outbreaks, killing millions of people around the globe¹. World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19, a pandemic on 11th March, because cases escalated worldwide - affecting more than 2.5 million people in 185 countries, with over 187,000 deaths at that time². World is still witnessing its spread and most countries are experiencing direct and indirect effects of varying degrees on their society and economy. Lives of the people in Pakistan continue to be affected by the current outbreak of novel corona virus (COVID-19). The country has witnessed significant increase in its confirmed cases from the initial two cases on 26th February 2020 to approximately 296146 as of 1st September 2020 and 6298 deaths, although there is sharp decline in last 2 weeks. There is an imminent risk to the social and economic lives of the people, addition to the threat imposed by the virus to the human lives. Pakistan is vulnerable due to its geography, as it shares border with Iran and China, and both countries have reported large outbreaks. There is an increasing travel trends because of trade, education, tourism, religious pilgrimage, and remittance movements between Pakistan and its high-risk neighbors. Another factor which has further exacerbated the situation is frequent travel of people to & from Saudi Arabia and European countries.

The public health system of Pakistan is quite fragile and already under stress because of alarming ratios as 963 people enjoys a single doctor and one hospital bed to 1,608 people. There is shortage of more than 200,000 doctors and 1.4 million nurses in Pakistan. The absence of any type of Health Coverage further exacerbates the flimsy situation of the country's population to the health, economic and social fallouts of this pandemic.

There are lots of hiccups in dealing with the corona pandemic as far as Pakistan is concerned. It is evident that the entire country does not lock down all of its intellect over a single problem and we must continue to evolve in all aspects of life to move ahead. Knowledge and research has become the cornerstone and the most important aspect of any organization. The question of producing high impact research has never been as profound as we must face such a munificent disease. About 54 academic papers in English language and 23 in Chinese-language have been published about COVID-19 by 30th January 2020 and by 3rd February 2020, according to international reports. Such looming figures of developed nations can predict far from adequate response of Pakistan and South Asian countries. For changing global paradigm there is dire need for focused research to inculcate effective, critical, and analytical approach and communication skills. The current issue has placed new constraints on all sectors that must now evolve to overcome the barriers to effective mitigation. There is evolution of job sectors with traditional jobs giving way to new and non-traditional forms of business. The manager-subordinate paragon is also under cynicism with more direct forms of ladder being placed. Consequently, many employee may find himself or herself directly reporting to the top slot without any intermediaries³. The significance and seriousness of being able to carry out work independently or to improve credibility of the work has never been greater. Presently, Pakistan is undergoing the second resurgence of its education and research sector. The first intrusion of researchers from far and wide has contributed to a secondary, yet meaningful second inflow of local researchers. This second puddle of researchers shall form the next diversified base for the local proliferation of the research activities in the country. This is the time when this bunch of researchers shall be tested for their caliber and endowment. The impact of research on government policies is of utmost importance and has never been greater as it formulates the broad base of policy. The 177 universities of Pakistan have more than 12,000 faculty members with higher and PhD degrees⁴. Annually about 1500 higher and PhD scholars are added to the research brook. However, the need for external skills, proficiency and knowledge and its sharing is pivotal towards removing insular adaptations to obtain, consolidate and share knowledge⁵.

Unfortunately our top brass medical researchers and scientists have used this pandemic as a mean to glorify individually. The research stuff produced is very ordinary and to gain attention of media and masses for self-glory rather than national interest and beneficence of commoners. The concerned authorities must now increase capacity and competence through the art of war and implicit knowledge. The triumph of today's academicians shall be evaluated on how well they have transformed to the changing era. The mediation shall be required at the, process, development, utilization, conduct, and to substantiate the research and knowledge. Blended teaching shall be new pennant and the academia shall have to change without fail forever in this new paragon. While the research archetype has to switch from quantity to quality and from self-glory to actual ministration towards humanity.

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