

The Social Welfare Regime in Pakistan- A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract

The Social Welfare Regime in Pakistan is highly fragmented with several stand-alone programs and initiatives implemented through multiple institutional arrangements having overlapping mandates have not only given rise to serious gaps in provision of social protection but have also made impact analysis of the poor households extremely difficult. In addition, there are two parallel welfare streams for the government employees and the common men which are manifested in glaring inequalities and class-based discriminations to the detriment of a healthy egalitarian society.

This paper, through qualitative research methodology and data gathered from different sources, has tried to analyze the social welfare Regime in Pakistan with a view to explore the gaps in its targeting and availability to different classes of citizens. The research has concluded that the social welfare regimes in Pakistan are unscientifically designed with lack of proper and complete data, fragmented in nature, lack coherence and consistency without a holistic approach. The programs and initiatives are implemented through different organizations working in silos without any coordination thus resulting in duplication of efforts, wastage of resources and exclusion of many vulnerable from the National social welfare net.

It has been further concluded that the social welfare regime in Pakistan at the one hand lacks inbuilt graduation strategy to pull the vulnerable from the vicious circle of poverty and on the other is prone to the serious challenge of sustainability. To fulfill the dream of a social welfare state, this paper emphatically recommends integration of all social protection programs under a single institutional setup, scientific targeting, pooling of all resources and reducing the differential treatment of different classes of citizens.

The Social welfare regime in Pakistan and its various forms and manifestations are of prime significance and there is a need of greater research on the topic for guidance of the decision makers. This paper would, besides fulfilling the requirements of 29th Senior Management Course, provide some recommendations based on factual situation analysis for the consideration of policy makers and other researchers.

Introduction:

Government of Pakistan is under constitutional obligation to provide basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, basic health and primary education to all its

citizens. Under Principles of Policy vide Article 38 of the 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan stipulates that, “The state shall provide basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all such citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness or unemployment”¹

The inclusion of social protection in Objective Resolution and in all the three constitutions (1956, 1961 and 1973) as a goal for every government to achieve, and subsequently making it a substantive part of the 1973 constitution reflects the desire and aspirations of the founding fathers and leaders of this nation who wanted Pakistan, a welfare state based on Islamic principles. Despite several initiatives launched by successive governments such as Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM), Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and the Ehsaas program, the dream of Islamic welfare state could not be materialized. According to World Bank Report 2021, the socio-economic indicators reveal that 37% of Pakistanis are living below poverty line and more than 20 million homeless². This huge class is socially vulnerable with limited access to basic necessities of life and deprived from leading a dignified life.

Fragmented, non-inclusive and without any cohesion, the social welfare regime of the Federal Government consists of stand-alone programs, working independently, therefore, is neither targeted nor effective resulting in duplication, improper utilization of scarce resources and making impact analysis extremely difficult. These intrinsic fault lines glaringly reflect the gaps in the welfare regime which has resulted in widely used cliché of two Pakistans -one for the ‘Haves’ and the other for the ‘Have-nots’. The regime has two parallel streams: one for the government functionaries with very liberal and systematic instruments and the other for common citizens with restricted access and scarce resource allocations. This class-based welfare practices have serious consequences in terms of social equality, a foundation stone for creating a healthy egalitarian society.

Statement of the Problem

The efforts to realise the dream and desire to make Pakistan a true social welfare state has not been realised even with various initiatives by successive governments despite lapse of 74 years. With inclusion of Principles of Policy into substantive part of the constitution, the subject has come at the forefront of governance and public policy discourse. Keeping in view the currency and importance of the topic, this research paper, through the following questions, has explored the social welfare regime and its various manifestations with a comparative study of the social benefits provided to government servants and common citizens. The study has also identified the issues and gaps in the regime and has suggested some policy

recommendations:-

- i. Is the existing welfare regime in Pakistan integrated and coherent or their exist gaps in provision of social protection to the vulnerable population? and
- ii. Is the social welfare regime in Pakistan more liberal & favorable towards Government functionaries vis-à-vis common citizens?

Significance and Scope of the study

Firstly, the study is conducted to fulfil the requirements of 29th Senior Management Course at NIM, Islamabad, secondly the issue is at the fore front of public policy discourse and governance, therefore, current, ongoing and of immense importance. Thirdly, the researcher has studied comparative social policy during his studies in England as a chevening scholar and possessing a practical experience being associated with BISP, and being a government servant- a recipient of different benefits extended to government employees, hence, has personal interest in the critical appraisal of the subject. Furthermore, this paper, besides adding to the literature on the subject, is also an effort to further some implementable recommendations and course correction measure for the consideration of policy makers.

Social welfare, though interesting, is a very broad subject. In Pakistan, its manifestations, in addition to its class distribution, is diverse, multilayered, scattered and implemented in a fragmented and standalone manner both through government initiatives and private practices, making it complex than broad. To cover it comprehensively would need a lot of time and resources. Keeping in view the limitations of time, pandemic environment and resource limitations, the scope of this paper has been limited to social welfare regime constituted from various initiatives under different programs of the federal government and the social cover provided to government servants viz-a-viz ordinary citizens. The paper does not cover the parallel initiatives of provincial governments, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), private welfare organizations and individuals.

Review of the literature

Social Welfare has generated a vast literature in different languages and societies, especially during the last few decades, with the concept of social equality, basic human rights and equitable distribution of resources, to provide a reasonable opportunity to every human being to lead a dignified life. This literature has largely helped in defining the conceptual framework of the welfare states around the world. Although the subject of welfare has been approached from quite a diverse angle in different parts of the world and the knowledge so gathered has become a common

asset of humanity yet these theoretical concepts and models may not be universally applicable. However, it has guided states and nations around the world to shape their respective welfare regimes in accordance with their national contours, resources and requirements.

Harris Qazdar has analyzed the social protection practices in Pakistan in the Book titled as, “the Development and welfare policy in South Asia”³ and has presented BISP as a successful social safety program in the region. He has highlighted very pertinent factors in success or failure of social reforms in Pakistan’s context like, inter alia, the Government institutional capacity to implement reforms. It provides a very useful insight into the practices of social welfare in Pakistan. However, the work does not encompass the broader social welfare regime in Pakistan which has been functioning through various state policies/instruments. Similarly, review of Syeda Mehnaz Hassan, Paper on, “Making an impact? Analysis of social protection programs in

Pakistan”⁴ provided a useful insight into the social protection practices in Pakistan which helped the Researcher in appreciating the various factors that have caused gaps in Pakistan’s social welfare regime. In addition, the Researcher’s own previous work (2009-10) on “lessons from the experiences of western welfare states for welfare regimes in developing and transitional countries” submitted as an academic requirement during his studies in the University of Manchester, England, also refreshed his knowledge-base which greatly helped in analysing the subject from both- developed countries and transitional states perspective.

In addition, to further delve into the multi-faceted topic of the research, a wide variety of resources have been utilized. The works of respected national and international scholars have been consulted to explore the multiple factors and dynamics of the complex web of the social welfare Regime in Pakistan. Besides, different Evaluation Reports by acclaimed authors and Management consultancy firms on Pakistan social safety programs were also another important source to get insight into the social welfare practices in Pakistan.

Notwithstanding the merits of the available literature, this research work will contribute significantly by covering and approaching the subject from quite a different angle. By identifying the asymmetrical gaps in the practices and policies of welfare and then bringing into light the apartheid in the two parallel welfare regimes for the general public and Government employees, this study, will add a totally distinct angle to the social welfare discourse in Pakistan.

Method

To conduct research on topics purely related to social sciences, involving social complexities, political and economic processes, questions like “how, what, when

and why” require thorough review of the existing literature, extensive deliberations, continuous brain storming and understanding of true ground realities. The research methodology used for such topics is mostly qualitative. The topic of this research purely relates to the same sphere, therefore, qualitative method, with deductive and analytical approach involving interpretive and descriptive research philosophy has been used.

Both Primary and secondary data have been utilized to analyze the subject. Primary data is collected with the help of a web-based questionnaire distributed amongst the beneficiaries of various government programs including both government servants and general public, group discussions and interviews with key officials of various initiatives and private sector stakeholders and practitioners. Furthermore, the professional experience of the researcher being associated with the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) in different capacities and theoretical and comparative knowledge gained during academic pursuits and learning through the SMC has also been a key resource of the data. Secondary data has been collected from available literature, constitution of Pakistan, relevant laws, rules, official Notifications, Reports, Newspapers, web pages and other relevant documents. For the purpose, the researcher has visited the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, offices of Ehsaas including the BISP, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) and Panahgah established in G-8, Islamabad.

It deserves a mention here that due to on-line conduct of this training course and Covid-19 restrictions, the facility of library, which might be having a useful repository of reference material, could not be utilized.

Organization of the Paper

This paper is divided into five parts consisting of preliminaries, introduction, main body of the paper, conclusion and recommendations followed by notes and bibliography. The main body is further divided into three sections each containing sub-sections elaborating different aspects of the research. The first section provides theoretical framework of the welfare Regime to provide conceptual understanding of welfare Regime in Pakistan with a brief highlight of the various social safety/protections available to the citizens of Pakistan. Section-2 contains a critical appraisal of the Welfare landscape in Pakistan, gaps and asymmetrical pattern identified as per data analysis received from the respondents. While section-3 discusses issues and challenges and at the end, some policy recommendations, in light of this study, are suggested after drawing a conclusion from the research effort.

The Social Welfare Regime A Theoretical Framework

Understanding the Term

Theoretically, social welfare refers to a variety of services, programs and initiatives through government agencies, private organizations, charitable trusts and volunteers that provide assistance to vulnerable segment of society and those who cannot afford to meet essential necessities of life. The terms social welfare, social welfare regime, social safety nets, social protection, social security etc. are used interchangeably, although they have different shades in their context and usage. For the purpose of this research, social welfare or social welfare regime means all the set of initiatives taken by the national or sub-national governments through different instruments and programs or initiatives to provide support, whether in cash or in kind, to its citizens or vulnerable classes so that their basic necessities of life are fulfilled and are enabled to lead a dignified life.

Why Social Welfare

Social welfare is considered the reason-de-etate of modern nation states. From political philosophers like Plato and Aristotle to the modern public policy practitioners, social welfare has always been accorded centrality in statecraft. Aristotle equates the purpose and existence of statehood to provision of good life. In a welfare state, the relationship between the state and its citizens assumes the shape of a mother and her children. Social equality and egalitarianism become the hallmark of welfare states. The state comes to the rescue of its poor and vulnerable citizens and lift them up to enable them to lead a meaningful and dignified life. Welfare states create the necessary environment and system through which the citizens social security is ensured. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)⁵ defines social policy as public policies and institutions that aim to protect citizens from social contingencies and poverty, and ultimately to enable them to strive for their own life goals. The main thrust of social policy and welfare regime is human Security which according to Nelson Mandela is the simple opportunity to live a decent life, to have proper shelter and food to eat, to be able to care for their children and to live with dignity, to have good education for their charges, their health needs cared for and to have access to paid employment⁶. The concept of social security is also enshrined in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which specifies that every member of society is entitled to have social security⁷.

Social Welfare Regimes: Global Context

Social welfare, as a private practice is one of the core values of almost all religions but Islam introduced the concept of state-imposed social welfare concept, in addition to individual practices whether compulsory like zakat and usher or voluntary like sadqa, khairath etc. Riyasat- e-Madina, a pluralistic Islamic welfare state is a classic example of a social welfare state and practical manifestation of the concept for all times to come.

The concept of welfare states flourished in Europe due to various factors including the role of political thinkers, ideologists and movements of trade and other unions including interest groups. Looking at the degree of state provided social support to its citizens, most of the social policy experts label Scandinavian model as the most advanced and liberal welfare regime alongside Canada, while that of United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA) and other western European countries as conservative models. The systems in vogue in Asian and African countries are considered as mix of the two with varying proportions across countries 8 . Communism, directly or indirectly, also greatly contributed to some of the intrinsic components of welfare states and citizen's basic rights like social rights, workers' rights and legal rights etc.

Welfare Regime: The Case of South Asia

Most of the countries in South Asia were part of the British Empire and hence their governance structures and institutions carry the legacy of the systems introduced by their erstwhile colonial masters. These countries still display, though in milder form, the colonial thinking and policies in their statecraft. Under the British rule, the major beneficiaries of government resources were the ruling British officers, those locals who were in the service of the Majesty, either civilians or military personnel (government servants), influential who supported the rule and those who remained loyal to the masters. General public had little or no access to the state resources directly but were benefited indirectly from the development works carried out for the strengthening of the rule. This led to an adversarial relationship between the state and the citizens, where the citizens considered state authorities as exploitative and authoritarian.

Inheriting the same legacy of state-citizen relationship, trust deficit and unbalanced distribution of scarce resources, the politics of these newly independent states, from the very onset started revolving around a complex web of power play instead of appealing to the general public through welfare practices and policies to win their hearts and minds.

The concept of social welfare in these countries, therefore, never remained at the forefront of their politics and priorities. Power politics, coupled with neighborhood disputes and frequent internal strife have turned them into security states rather than

welfare states with huge resource allocation to their defense establishments and government structures.

The welfare initiatives and programs in these countries had mostly been guided by political interests, influence of those at the helm of the affairs, and pressure groups resulting into unbalanced distribution of resources, unintegrated approach without any scientific data, lack of a holistic and coherent strategy which can comprehensively and effectively cover the vulnerabilities of the vulnerable and wastage of resources due to duplication of efforts. The large vulnerable population and shortage of capacities and resources are another important factor that puts the policy makers on the weak footings while chalking out welfare programs.

It would not be out of context that with socio-political development, strengthening of democratic processes, better understanding of citizen's rights and serious consequences of social disparities, the people of these countries have made the successive governments to start practicing and embedding social welfare in their governance style and structures, though in bits and pieces.

The Genesis of Social Welfare in Pakistan

Like other South Asian countries, Pakistan also inherited all the ills of the colonial legacies along with a large enemy in the neighborhood that threatened the very existence of the new country which already had very meager resources to start with. Within a few years of independence, power politics, institutional mistrust and turf wars took over the rational growth of the new nation. Major part of the government's resources, besides debt servicing, remained diverted to defense requirements and non-development government expenditures, leaving little share for infrastructural and human resource development.

The speech of Quid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, before the first constituent assembly of Pakistan on 11th August, 1947 gave Pakistan a vision to evolve into an Islamic welfare state. The Objective Resolution of 1949, the Constitutions of 1956, 1962 and 1973 as "Principles of Policy" provides that;

"The state of Pakistan is required to make endeavors for educational and economic justice special care of backward classes, provide for free and compulsory primary education and wellbeing of the people by providing basic necessities of life to its citizens including food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief"⁹

Organized social welfare regime remained very low at the priorities of successive governments, therefore no proper mechanism or institutional set up could be provided for the ordinary citizens. On the other hand, government employees inherited a well-established and institutionalized mechanism of in-service and after-service perks and privileges.

Besides small investments in education and health sector, the first institutional step towards social welfare was the introduction of Zakat and Usher Ordinance 1980, under which the government established Zakat funds at federal, provincial and district levels, an informal mechanism for identification of the beneficiaries and procedure for utilization of the funds along with provisions of financial accountability through Auditor General have been provided. Although, it provided a good start, which is still continuing and providing some support to the needy and destitute, yet with meager resources, untargeted approach and non-scientific identification of beneficiaries, it cannot be called a comprehensive regime rather a solo and disjointed effort.

In 1988, a dedicated Social Welfare Ministry was established at the federal level with a Directorate General at the center and directorates at the provinces. With little financial provisions, the approach adopted by the Ministry was also untargeted and unscientific. Its approach to social welfare was a mixed one based on the concept of an Islamic welfare state and the contemporary concepts of social development¹⁰.

The principles of policy, through subsequent constitutional amendment, were made substantive part of the 1973 constitution which made its implementation a constitutional obligation on every government and all its organizations but its universal applicability and provisions to common citizens were tied with availability of resources with indemnity from being questioned in the courts of law.

Many subjects including social welfare were devolved to provinces through 18th constitutional amendment. All the four provinces inherited a Directorate of Social Welfare, which, traditionally, was responsible for the administration of social welfare services in the provinces. Having no experience or expertise in policy formulation the efforts so made resulted in a fragmented approach towards welfare in Pakistan.

In financial year 2008-09, BISP was designed at the Federal level, primarily as a social safety net, with the aim to provide cash cover to the most vulnerable and chronically poor segments of the society. Initially, the beneficiaries were identified through elected parliamentarians which again was a poor approach. With the promulgation of BISP Act 2010, the first ever poverty survey was conducted in a phased manner in 2011-12. A data base was developed as a result which is known as National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER). On the basis of this data and through Proxy Means Testing (PMT) score, poor and vulnerable households were identified in a scientific manner. Although, some areas were excluded due to reasons of accessibility and law and order situation and it also transpired that some vulnerable population in the covered area were also missed due to one reason or the other, yet the authenticity of the data was widely accepted.

Based on the PMT score to target chronically poor, BISP through technology-based

operations and provision of cash benefits to the female members of the household earned accolades from across all classes of society including international organizations. Besides the cash transfers, BISP also envisaged multiple poverty alleviation interventions including Waseela-e-Rozgar (to impart technical skills to the targeted households), Waseela-e-Haq (to provide interest free loans for establishing small business to those who gained the technical skills via Waseela-e-Rozgar and such other initiatives covering educational and health needs of the targeted households. However, with change in the governments, most of the initiatives of BISP except cash transfers were either discontinued or brought under the umbrella of Ehsaas Program.

NSER and the provision of social benefits to the most vulnerable household through a scientifically identified poorest of the poor households and technology-based implementation brought a fundamental shift in the provision of social safety programs in Pakistan. Keeping in view the shortcomings in the earlier survey, increasing population, unemployment and other factors affecting the size of vulnerable population, a need was felt to re-conduct the survey. Fresh survey has been initiated which is almost 60% complete¹¹. Once completed and commissioned, the new data will provide a much better scientific data-base.

The current government, sensing the need for a robust social welfare regime that can integrate all the existing programs and expand it to provide required universal coverage to the vulnerable classes of the society and alleviate poverty through different measures and schemes created the Ministry of poverty & social safety (Mo-PASS). Initiatives like PBM, BISP and Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) were brought under the ambit of the new Ministry. The ministry launched on 27th March 2019, yet another vibrant and multi-dimensional initiative with the umbrella name of Ehsaas Program, currently encompassing 37 12 policies and programs and the list may further grow.

Ehsaas Program is designed to integrate all the social welfare programs into a single ambit with an aim to provide a universal social welfare regime and initiatives to alleviate poverty from the country through new and existing targeted interventions. The program has also initiated a very elaborate and detailed survey of all the households and citizens of Pakistan to properly focus on its targeted citizens for different programs. “The Ehsaas Program of the Federal government, launched in March 2019, aims to provide social protection to 10 million families, which is the highest ever figure in country’s history.”¹³

Welfare Instruments for Government Employees

With roots in the erstwhile colonial system, the benefits provided to government servants, in Pakistan are always more generous in many ways. The case in point is the several in-service and after-retirement benefits which extend to the whole

family including dependent parents and children of the government servants. For instance, the previously announced Prime Minister’s Assistance Package for in-service death cases was in fact so overwhelmingly generous and attractive that many government servants themselves criticized the same for different reasons. It was widely held across sections of civil servants---though in a lighter vein---that ‘their spouses might get them killed for benefiting out of the disproportionately generous package’. The so-called compensation package was later on curtailed and rationalized to some extent.

Similarly, in addition to the inbuilt annual increment system for increasing pay (provided for compensating the inflation), the government servants are invariably given pay raises, allowances and other increases in almost every finance bill (Annual Budget) on the pretext of inflation. Besides financial benefits, government servants are also provided with different in-kind benefits. Being better placed, part of the system and well-organized through associations and unions, they have better chances to manipulate polices and governments in their favor to increase their perks and privileges.

The social welfare benefits available to government servants are provided through different legal instruments and well-defined policies which are in many ways more generous, methodical, and streamlined. In Pakistan, joining a government service automatically entitles a person to a comprehensive social welfare benefits. In common parlance these welfare benefits are labelled as perks and previliges which are both in-cash and in-kind. These welfare protections range from subsidised Government provided housing, preferential and free health care to the Government servant and his dependents and numerous provisions in every goverment launched schemes such as housing and even Hajj and Umrah. The availability of these welfare benefits is almost certain because these are seamlessly implemented through dedicated mechanisms. The various instruments and policies along with the methodical institutionalized arrangements are expressed in the table bellow:

Table-1

Instruments of Social Welfare in Respect of Government Servents

S#	Instrument s	Institution and framework Policy	Benefits	Targeted Beneficiaries
1.	4 tier Pension program and after retirement benefits	Ministry Finance/GOP of	Post-retirement benefits GP Fund	Retired Government employees andtheir families

S#	Instrument	Institution and framework Policy	Benefits	Targeted Beneficiaries
2.	PM Assistance package for in-service deaths	Establishment Division/Finance Division/GOP Executive notification of Establishment Division	Compensation package covering financial assistance, housing, employment and several other welfare components including a job to one of the legal heirs	Legal heirs of Government employees who die during service
3.	Federal Employees Benevolent Fund and Group Insurance	Establishment Division/GOP Federal Employees Benevolent Fund and Group Insurance Act, 1969.	The package includes farewell grants, children's educational stipends, daughter's marriage grant etc.	Government employees and their families/children
4.	Federal Government Employees Housing Foundation (FGEHF)	Ministry of Housing & Works/GOP Federal Government Employees Housing Foundation (1990)	Provision of subsidized housing and residential plots	Government employees with a special quota for deceased employees and a nominal/small category for general public irrespective of their socio-economic status
5.	Pakistan Housing Authority (PHA)	Ministry of Housing & Works/GOP Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FG EHA) Ordinance-2019	Provision of built-up housing units and flats	Federal Government employees with a special quota for deceased employees and a nominal/small category for general public irrespective of their socio-economic status

S#	Instrument	Institution and framework Policy	Benefits	Targeted Beneficiaries
6.	Other cash and in-kind benefits	Various ministries/departments Different laws, rules, policies and notifications	Various benefits including provision of vehicle, monetization in lieu of vehicle, official accommodation, house rents, medical charges, scholarships etc.	Federal Government employees and their families

Table-1: Author's own illustration

The absence of an integrated policy, based on scientific lines, governing the social welfare regime in Pakistan for ordinary citizens with a glaring divide in availability of benefits due to issues of access and awareness besides urban-rural divide and Government employees versus the rest of the citizens has resulted in an unjust manifestation in the society. The general public have started abhorring the luxurious liberal perks and privileges of the government servants. They view this enjoyment of perks as a continuation of the colonial era and exploitation of the state resources by the Nourshahi. On the other hand, the social welfare initiatives for the common citizens are marked with low budgetary allocations, thinly spread over a bigger universe and uncertain in its availability and continuity. The social welfare for the common citizens is inadequate, uncertain and lack coherence as compared to the social welfare instruments meant for the Government employees. The multiple institutional arrangements with overlapping mandate are illustrated in the following table:

Table-II

Social Welfare Benefits for Ordinary Citizens

S#	Instrument	Institution/Organization & Policy Framework	Benefits	Targeted citizens
1	Constitution of Pakistan	Government of Pakistan Different articles of the Constitution	Provision of basic needs, free education, health services and shelter	Needy citizens of Pakistan

S#	Instrument	Institution/Organization & Policy Framework	Benefits	Targeted citizens
2	The Ehsaas program	Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety No legal framework has yet been provided	Umbrella organization for numerous social welfare programs	social welfare interventions for the needy citizens of Pakistan
3	The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP)	Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety BISP Act 2010	Targeted cash transfers (both conditional & unconditional) through NSER	female members of the poorest household based on PMT score
4	The Panahgahs- (Shelter Homes Project)	Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal/ MO-PASS Under Ehsaas Program	Temporary/overnight stay with two-time meals to the needy individuals seeking bed and breakfast ¹⁴ .	<i>“Provision of regulated, rule-based and monitored “Pannah” as stop-gap arrangement, to daily wages, unemployed and shelterless persons”¹⁵.</i>
5	Koyee Bhookha Na Soye (No one should sleep hungry)	Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal/ MO-PASS Under Ehsaas program	To provide 2 times cooked meals to poorest of the poor people on selected routes through food vehicles	Needy poor people including daily wagers, travelers etc.
6	Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal	Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety Division/GOP PBM Act 1991	Financial assistance for residential accommodation, other necessary facilities or any other purpose approved by the Board having regard to the aims and objectives of the Bait-ul-Mal.	Destitute and needy widows, orphans, invalid, infirm and other needy and deserving citizens of Pakistan
08	Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund	Poverty Alleviation and social safety Division Registered under section 42 of the Companies ordinance 1984	Interest free micro-financing for productive self-	Poor and needy citizens, land-less and asset-less persons both in urban and

S#	Instrument	Institution/Organization & Policy Framework	Benefits	Targeted citizens
			employment, to undertake activities of income generation to	rural areas

Pakistan’s Welfare Landscape- Critical Appraisal

Questionnaire for Collection of Primary Data

The objective of the survey was to get primary data in shape of public perception to the social welfare initiatives and programs of the federal government for common citizens, its impact and acceptability and to compare the same with benefits provided to Government servants. For the purpose a google survey form was designed and distributed amongst a random sample of more than 300 individuals through social media. The questionnaire was primarily based on the two main research questions and further bifurcated into 14 sub-questions to get the perception of the citizens and corroborate the same with the primary data collected from other sources and with the secondary data collected for the purpose of this research. The size and type of sample who responded has a fair representation of gender distribution, concerned classes and age groups.

Analysis of Responses Received

In response to the first part of the survey, the responses, received reveals that the perception of the general public (88.4%) is that the welfare initiatives of the government are non-holistic and fragmented with low access of the vulnerable to these initiatives. 96.8% of the respondents are of the opinion that there is a need to integrate the fragmented initiatives for better coverage. Similarly, 54.7% respondents believe that unconditional cash transfers be discouraged, while 30.5% of the respondents think otherwise. In response to a query that policy interventions can help bridge the gaps in coverage of existing welfare regime, 92.6% believe that policy interventions can bridge the gap. Furthermore, 52.6% of the respondents believe that programs of social safety nets like BISP creates dependency syndrome in beneficiaries, while 40% think otherwise. 91.6% of the respondents have the perception that due to social exclusion of many poor results in serious social issues and evils like unrest, psychological problems and increasing crime rate in the country.

In respect of the second part of the survey, 47.4% believe that social welfare regime of Pakistan favors the government servants viz-a-viz the common citizens, however 36.8% think otherwise. Similarly, 48.4% of the respondents believe that the social

welfare regime is liberal and generous towards government employees at the cost of common citizens, whereas, 41.1% do not agree to this view. On the query of monetization of the in-kind perks and privileges of the government servants, 73.7% are in favor of monetization, while 16.8% think otherwise, 55.8% of the respondents think that after retirement benefits to government servants is a burden on national exchequer and need to be rationalized, while 40% do not concur with this perception. In response to the question regarding the generous nature of in-service death compensation package, 68.4% do not agree to its generous nature, while only 20% consider it generous.

The analysis of the responses to the first group of sub-questions establishes the fact that the social welfare regime in Pakistan is fragmented, non-integrated, implemented through different organizations working in silos without any coordination, resulting in duplication of efforts, wastage of resources and exclusion of many vulnerable from the ambit of the different social welfare programs implemented by the Federal Government. This perception also corroborates with the primary data collected through other sources including interviews and group discussions and dialogues with relevant persons, participatory observations and personal observations, besides secondary data collected through various sources for the purpose of this research.

The deductions made above could be corroborated perfectly with the examples illustrated in sub-section 1.6 & 1.7 and details provided in Section 1 (Tables-I & II). The different benefits to the general public as well as government officials are implemented through multiple institutional arrangements, functioning in silos with overlapping mandates resulting in duplication of efforts, wastage of resources and exclusion of many vulnerable from the ambit of social welfare regime making impact analysis a difficult task. Due to lack of proper impact analysis of different initiatives on one hand defeats the goals of the interventions, make course corrections an impossible task and on the other hand keep the policy makers in a state of confusion while designing new programs and initiatives.

The second part which focuses on the comparison of social welfare instruments in respect of government servants viz-a-viz ordinary citizens has interesting feedback. Although majority of the respondents think that the social welfare regime is more liberal and favorable to the government servants than the common citizens of the country but the difference in percentages from those who think otherwise is quite narrow. Similarly, majority of the respondents think that post-retirement benefits are a burden on national exchequer and needs to be rationalized but the difference in percentage terms with those with counter views is thin. The responses in this regard, though corroborates with both primary data collected through other sources and means and secondary data but not as decisively as evident for the first part.

Surprisingly, substantial majority has negated the generous nature of in-service death compensation package which is even against the primary data collected from other sources and collected secondary data. On account of monetization of in-kind perks and privileges, in accordance with collected data, vast majority is of the view that these need to be monetized.

Social Welfare Regime: A Critical Overview

In Pakistan, the setting up of multiple institutions for carrying out similar assignments with overlapping mandate is quite a frequent and usual phenomenon. The social welfare initiatives by various governments under different programs also reflect the same trend. Such stand-alone organization, running alike programs, have not only resulted in duplication of efforts but have also exacerbated the sustainability of these programs. With separate financial allocations to each organization manned by separate human resources and in most of the cases targeting the same class of citizens has greatly damaged the cause of social welfare. This neither allowed the social welfare regime to get institutionalized or flourish into a universal program over a period of time nor could the different interventions be properly analyzed for their impact on the society. That is why, in Pakistan, these fragmented approaches in provision of social welfare have resulted in duplication, wastage of resources and have led to development of dependency syndrome rather than getting the poor out from the vicious circle of poverty.

Comparative Analysis

The study of current instruments of social welfare regime, the literature available, discussions with relevant persons and the results of sample survey clearly identifies the glaring differences between the extent and availability of the social welfare benefits to the government servants and ordinary citizens. The government servants seem to be the “blue eyed” of the system in terms of the quantum of resources, its systematic availability and the certainty of provision. This generous provision of welfare, for instance, is evident from the annual expenditure incurred on account of Pension relating to the retired government employees of the federal Government which has increased from Rs 92.688 billion in 2010-11 to Rs 421 billion in 2019-2016 which drastically shrinks the fiscal space for government to allocate resources for provision of welfare to the vulnerable citizens as is evident from the total budget allocation in 2021-22 to ministry of poverty Alleviation & social safety which is a meagre Rs.255 Billion¹⁷. This is just one component of the overall package of welfare being provided in the garb of post- retirement benefits to the government servants besides the others in-service and after-retirements perks. On the other hand, due to meagre budgetary allocation, regional disparity, lack of access, capacity issues of the governance system, resource constraints and unsystematic provision of social welfare benefits has resulted in exclusion and deprivation of many deserving poor from the national welfare net. As a matter of fact, this state

largesse has an opportunity cost in terms of directing these resources for the welfare of the most marginalized citizens of this country.

Provision of social welfare benefits to the common citizens through different programs implemented independently and through loose structure of institutional arrangements without an integrated and scientifically collected data has resulted in duplication of efforts and provision of multiple benefits to the few who either have access to these benefits or are included in the NSER. The current government has started efforts to bring all these social safety programs under one umbrella by establishing the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety. The introduction of Ehsaas program with the aim to bring all the social welfare programs under one umbrella is an effort in the right direction. However, the arrangement is still restricted to the centralized supervision of the different programs rather than integrating them into a single program based on centralized data base of the beneficiaries.

Instead of unifying and integrating the existing social welfare regime and building on it, Ehsaas program has further introduced many additional and multi-layered social interventions across all segments of the society. These new initiatives are overlapping not only amongst themselves but with the existing programs as well which has further complicated the situation rather than improving it.

Due to fragmented approach, glaring difference between the two classes, duplication in provision of the benefits and social exclusion of the many deserving has started manifesting itself in multiple issues including social deprivation, unrest in the society, increased crime rate, erosion of writ of the government, trust deficit between the socially vulnerable and the state, besides wastage of limited resources.

Need for a Balance

The imbalance created by the existing social welfare regime needs a thorough revive and course correction. If it goes the same, the issues would increase in size and magnitude which may be detrimental to the stability of the state and social harmony in our society. Availability of social welfare in Pakistan is not just limited to its uniform and standardized social safety nets across all segments of society but its complete absence in many rural areas of Pakistan. There are millions of poor in Pakistan, mostly belonging to the far-flung areas of southern Punjab, Baluchistan, Gilgit Baltistan, Sindh and the newly merged tribal districts who do not even reflect in Government official documents/surveys as they do not even have their CNICs.

There is a dire need for bringing these excluded vulnerable population into the welfare net. This levelling of coverage will serve many purposes more so in the

context of Pakistan. It has been observed that some of these socially excluded individuals in parts of Baluchistan, Ex-FATA, South Punjab and interior Sindh are being exploited by certain vested groups either in the name of nationalism or religion and thus become part of these miscreants. By extending certain social benefits, these socially vulnerable persons will develop stakes in the state of Pakistan and will thus become useful and productive citizens.

Social welfare policies should be embedded and integrated into the over all operation of the governance structure. Pakistan needs to introduce drastic transformation in its welfare regime which has probably become more important and relevant in the context of the current covid -19 scenario as the so-called 'new normal' has created many 'new poors' which call for states and Government across the world to introduce more welfarism than ever before.

Issues and Challenges

This study has highlighted the procedural errors, quantum and gaps in the way these benefits are provided to the government servants and the ordinary people through different instruments and programs respectively. The implementation of these instruments and programs suffers from some common but conflicting issues and face certain challenges which are particular to a social welfare instrument or initiative extended to either of the two segments of citizens. Some of the important issues and challenges are enumerated as under: -

Fragmented Approach

The analysis of collected data clearly reveals that various initiatives and programs under the ambit of social welfare regime suffer from a fragmented approach and non-coherent in nature with multiple institutional arrangements implementing different programs with overlapping mandate. This segmented approach has resulted in duplicity of efforts with high administrative cost, uneven coverage, dual and in some cases multiple benefits to one beneficiary at the expense of others and wastage of the already scarce resources.

Gaps in Resource Allocation

The analysis clearly shows serious gaps in resource allocation for benefits provided to the government servants and ordinary citizens. In this case also the balance is highly tilted in favor of the government servants keeping in view the number of beneficiaries. The per person benefits received by government servants is at a much higher side when compared to that provided to each beneficiary amongst the ordinary citizen.

Social Exclusion

As described earlier, the social welfare regime in respect of government servants is universal in nature, where a certain kind of benefit is extended to one official is also

applicable to all the alike but the initiatives for ordinary citizens are asymmetrical in nature resulting in substantial social exclusion of vulnerable segments which is a serious issue in the social welfare landscape in Pakistan.

Lack of legal Framework

The study has pointed out that some of the initiatives in the field are without any legislative or legal framework both in case of government servants and ordinary citizens. The existing legal framework shows that BISP and Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal are functioning through Acts of Parliament while the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Funds operates as a company registered under the Company's Ordinance 1984 and Ehsaas and its various component initiatives are yet to be provided legal framework. This anomaly poses a formidable challenge to the continuity and consistency of such initiatives specially in case of change in governments.

Lack of Graduation Strategy

The study indicates that most of the social welfare initiatives are predominantly providing social safety nets instead of providing inbuilt graduation strategies to pull the vulnerable from the vicious circle of poverty. This is the main reason of increasing poverty in the context of Pakistan. This un-conditional cash driven interventions poses a serious challenge to the efficacy of these programs.

Integration and Sustainability

Due to fragmented social welfare regime implemented through different organizations with overlapping mandate. The fragmented approach has resulted in duplication, high administrative cost, and budgetary allocations to multiple organizations performing alike or overlapping tasks and social exclusion posing a serious challenge to the integration and sustainability of the social welfare regimes

Defined and Organized Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of social welfare regime, in case of government servants, are defined with proper data and details available with different relevant institutions and government organizations. This defined set of beneficiaries are better placed, well aware of the benefits provided to them and to what they are entitled. Furthermore, they are well-organized through different associations, unions and pressure groups. Being part of the system, they are in a better position to influence public policy in their favor.

On the other hand, the size of vulnerable class, due to various factors, either abruptly or over a certain period of time, can change drastically. It is ironic that no scientific data regarding the vulnerable population was available till the first NSER was carried out by BISP in 2011-12. Although the data is considered much reliable still there are many issues and shortcomings in it. It has surfaced that the NSER has

left behind many vulnerable population and certain areas due to issues of access, law and order situation, non-availability of the individual/household at the time of survey or lack of awareness amongst the general masses about the survey or its purpose. Efforts, through improved version of NSER, are, although, in hand to update the Registry to include the missing population.

Mode of Provision

The perks and privileges, especially financial, are extended to government servants through legal instruments, therefore, are universal in nature with a well-defined mechanism of disbursement. Due to legal backup, any discrimination can be challenged in the courts of law. In many cases the government servants either on the basis of equality or discrimination have knocked the doors of the courts including superior judiciary and the courts have provided relief to the employees.

In case of the ordinary citizens, the benefits, whether in kind or cash, under social welfare regime are provided through different programs and initiatives mostly under the development portfolio or from regular funds through executive orders and approvals. The constitutional obligations have also been negated in garb of availability of resources and provision of amenity from being challenged in the courts of law. Those provided through other legal enactments are voluntary or flexible in nature allowing room for inclusion and exclusion. The analysis of different programs shows that almost all initiatives have inbuilt provisions for discrimination based on one pretext or the other. Those excluded or discriminated have neither recourse to the courts of law nor have the coordination or unity to agitate.

Nature of the Benefits Provided

The welfare services provided to government servants are perpetual and universal in nature. Once a benefit is provided it is difficult to be withdrawn or even reduced except in individual cases that too in accordance with law, after adopting a defined procedure and subject to judicial scrutiny. Similarly, the nature of benefit provided to either a class of government servants or all classes has universal applicability. If a benefit is provided to even a single employee, the same is then claimed by all others who fulfill the criteria as a matter of right. The perpetuity and universality of benefits to government servants has been established through various decisions of the courts of law.

In case of ordinary citizens, some programs and initiatives are perpetual in nature yet their magnitude and target beneficiaries can vary depending upon the availability of resources and access to the initiative. Most of the initiatives are either time bound in itself or can be withdrawn at any time on one pretext or the other. Furthermore, the government has the discretionary powers to change the quantum and number of beneficiaries at any time.

Differential Treatment

The government servants and common citizens are treated differently in respect of identification of beneficiaries, quantum of support provided and the procedures adopted for provision of the support. The differential treatment is much more in favor of the government servants, who are also paid a regular salary with inbuilt mechanisms of regular increases. Furthermore, for government servants, the system of provision of these benefits is simple, well organized and properly defined. On the other hand, the social welfare regime for ordinary citizens is mostly targeted towards those who are very low on the poverty indicators, destitute and unable to afford even the basic necessities of life. For them the quantum of benefits is so low to the extent that it cannot cater for the expenses of their basic necessities with cumbersome process to access these benefits due to lack of proper data, series of required verifications and exploitation at the hands of middlemen and operators of the initiatives.

These differences, with increasing awareness is creating unrest in the general masses with almost every segment turning against the government servants who implement laws, government policies and writ of the state. These negative sentiments, in general public, is resulting in blatant violation of laws, poor implementation of government policies and weakening of writ of the state, besides damaging the social fabric of the society which are posing serious challenge to the welfare regime in Pakistan.

Conclusion

Provision of an integrated social welfare regime to enable the vulnerable to lead a dignified life is a constitutional obligation of the government. Although various efforts have been made by successive governments in the past yet the dream of Pakistan as a welfare state based on Islamic principles could not be achieved. The existing social welfare regimes in Pakistan; one for the government servants and the other for the ordinary citizens are largely characterised by differential treatment in terms of resource allocation, coverage and provision and methodology besides suffering from insufficient budgetary allocations, serious issues in coverage and lacking graduation strategies.

The study concluded that the social welfare regimes in Pakistan is unscientifically designed with lack of proper and complete data, fragmented in nature, lack coherence and consistency without a holistic approach. The programs and initiatives are implemented through different organizations working in silos without any coordination thus resulting in duplication of efforts, wastage of resources and exclusion of many vulnerable from the ambit of the social welfare programs implemented by the Federal Government.

It is further concluded that the social welfare regime implemented for government servants is perpetual and universal in nature, liberal and generous, consistent due to legal backup, with a greater degree of certainty, adequate allocation of resources and seamless in implementation due to defined and well-established procedures as compared to the one for ordinary citizens.

Lastly it is also concluded that the social welfare regime in Pakistan at the one hand lacks inbuilt graduation strategy to pull the vulnerable from the vicious circle of poverty and on the other is prone to the serious challenge of sustainability. To achieve sustainability and fulfill the dream of a social welfare state, it is without saying that all the programs are to be integrated under a single institutional setup, pooling of all resources and reduce the differential treatment of different classes of citizens.

Recommendations

- Integration of existing programs under single implementation strategy, is strongly recommended, to avoid duplication of efforts, reduce administrative costs and wastage of resources. The establishment of Mo-PASS is a step in the right direction. Ehsaas program should first integrate all the existing programs under a single implementation mechanism. The resources be pooled, vulnerable be identified scientifically and the benefits be distributed through a well-defined and transparent mechanism to reach the maximum.
- Dynamic and scientifically established database of all the vulnerable is a prerequisite for any social intervention. The NSER is being revised. There is a need to align the ongoing survey on scientific lines including proper verification procedures, synergized with Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, NADRA and other relevant databases. The NSER is static which need to be made dynamic with proper mechanism for exit and entry of the vulnerable in the data base after proper verification process. This will provide opportunities to those missed from initial survey, include those who experience sudden shocks and drop to the vulnerable class due to any reason and provide exit mechanism to those who graduate from the poverty.
- The integrated strategy should include a mechanism for periodic impact analysis to ascertain the effects of various programs, its efficacy and impact of socio-economic status of the targeted households. This will also help in identifying weaknesses for course correction in the social interventions.
- A single national social reform regime should be designed not only on provision of social safety nets but should also include programs for poverty alleviation through a systematic and time-bound graduation strategy inbuilt in the program.
- The social welfare regime for its graduation strategy should include provision of

skills, vocational trainings, opportunities of self-employment and other relevant inbuilt mechanisms enabling them to earn a reasonable livelihood and exit from the list of beneficiaries.

- The different approaches to the classes of society be done away with. The government servants be provided with actual and reasonable remuneration for their services, properly calculated perks and privileges, preferably in a monetized form for transparency and equity and to make these instruments more visible.
- Post- retirement benefits of the government servants need a thorough rationalization. The four-tier system totally sponsored through government resources be done away with for which the pension rules may be amended to curtail the long list of family pension beneficiaries and a simple direct contributory mechanism of post-retirement benefit system should be introduced. This will provide the much-needed fiscal space to the Government to allocate more budget for social welfare of the more deserving poor citizens.
- Adequate legal covers, preferably through national legislation, should be provided to the integrated and all-encompassing social welfare regime with a robust and well-defined implementation strategy for sustainability and consistency. This will also lend the required ownership to such welfare initiatives across the political spectrum.
- The process of inclusion and exit from the social welfare regime along with the processes of provision of benefits to all the identified citizens be made simple with well-defined mechanisms designed on the basis of ground realities and cultural sensitivities. The regime should have a higher degree of certainty, transparency and inbuilt provisions of awareness and dissemination of information, through different mode of media in local languages, to all concerned.
- The social welfare regime should be perpetual and universal in nature. Without any duplication, the regime should cover all the vulnerable below the approved PMT score. No one should be left due to any reason and a beneficiary once selected should be provided with the benefits unless he graduates out of the circle of poverty.
- The regime should have a robust complaint redressal mechanism, simple and user-friendly with a feedback mechanism.

- In a nut shell, the only successful, all-encompassing and equitable regime of social welfare can be one which is based on a scientific data, coherent, targeted, and proportionate and with a well-thought-out graduation mechanism. Fragmented initiatives by different institutions would only lead to duplication, social exclusion, differential treatment and ever- increasing burden on the national exchequer. In case of Pakistan, with a very fragmented social welfare initiatives, it is need of the hour to adopt corrective measures and integrate the various regimes under the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety.

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