



## Public administration in imprecating crises: In light of COVID-19 in Pakistan

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Available online at: [www.isca.in](http://www.isca.in), [www.isca.me](http://www.isca.me)

Received 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021, revised 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021, accepted 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021

### Abstract

*The emergence of pandemic has validated that natural calamities and unexpected threat to beat effortlessly the present political and administrative system around the world. This study reveals the pandemic to delineate how it is responded by the public institutions during the emergency and demonstrated outmatched threats and difficulties to be faced by administrative system particularly in Pakistan. Observing the crises in the field of public administration under the current natural calamity the scholars' contribution to chart out the administrative deterrence and crisis management must be valued to calculate the tackling implications of the pandemic on the administrative process and diffusion of the public service delivery. At the foremost edge of public administration research and practice to serve the stakeholders, and citizens is based on the assessment of the quick governance to compete and execute the agenda of the public policy in the country. This research also highlights the issues faced by government in the context of the COVID-19 and the Federal instructions to provincial governments to encounter the dilemma by implementing the designed policy making in the way to achieve the best interest of nation. In a crisis of extreme emergency and uncertainty during the pandemic outbreak the regulatory policy was based on temporary and expedited procedures. We focus on regulatory policy of the government, implications of the pandemic on the public officials service delivery and produce the key measures under crisis condition based on temporary and fast tracking procedures to meet confronts of the natural calamity and ensure the governance capacity and participate with future projection and its developments.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Administration burden, pressures on public officers, challenges, Red tape, Governance capacity.

### Introduction

The outbreak of the Covid-19 encircled its impacts across the globe quickly which vitiated security concerning health and results with chaos as WHO declared the it as a Pandemic officially whereas Pakistan remained one of the affected community with the natural misfortune<sup>1</sup>. The global natural calamity obstructed the administrative system across the world to meet the public objectives and execute the government policy making in a practical means and to hamper the good governance to meet the envisaged targets<sup>2</sup>. The creeping crisis during the outbreak of the pandemic each type government institution has been gripped with challenges and difficulties to be faced in the way to operationalize their activities and implement the public policy and mobilize administrative activities in an appropriate means<sup>3-4</sup>. It becomes a serious challenge to a country's representatives to measure preparedness and policy making to deal such sort of crises except due experience in which prevailing political system must be capable to meet the pros and cons and effect of policy to be relied on the observation and deep enlightenment to response the crisis management during the Pandemic outbreak in Pakistan. Pandemic preparedness encompasses the isolated hospitalized care centers, testing capacity, tracing capabilities, and ensuring the provision of protective equipment is based on the government initiatives to

derive the experience of other world communities and it is also compulsives' disorder to implement the designed policy to encounter the COVID-19 to cease its mobility<sup>5</sup>.

Emerging pandemic outbreak exposes that not only public sector to face the problems of simple and complex nature but also meet the turbulent problems considered through the surprising occurrence of uncertain, inconsistent, and unpredictable natural catastrophe<sup>2</sup>. The government initiatives at some extent fail to meet the complications in the way of administrative reforms to match the emerging circumstance and dynamic governance issues. Robust governance feedback is the dire need of time to encounter the disruptions and confusion via drawing to invest the public administration and leadership role to produce good governance. In a response with courage by numerous communities across the globe, public servants adopted the speedy and quick initiatives to adjust to ensure the service delivery and reduce the negative implications of the pandemic on an individual and collective life. For instance, diverse efforts applied in which various educational institutions as universities, colleges, and schools stopped the activities and suddenly closed during the lockdowns at a nationwide where educational professionals and teachers sided with to prefer the home based learning and adopted the innovative system of learning to materialize the online learning process and e-

material provided to learners via digital oriented infrastructure to encourage such approach and the government enterprises also supported deeply to maintain and meet the set goal<sup>1-6</sup>. Likely, in the diverse spheres medical facilities and its innovativeness improved to be provided to numerous patients affected with the pandemic and digital tools were used in order to deliver telehealth have been stimulated and progressed to give medical services on emergency basis to control the disruption of health services regarding to ailment to people<sup>1-7</sup>.

Societies across the globe have been affected with the Covid-19 pandemic which not only has erupted the volcano of difficulties and challenges in the health sector but it also impact the public administration systems in general and the natural calamity remained the burdensome administrative procedures<sup>2</sup>. An effective and efficient public policy making to cop the covid-19 remained the dire need of each government around the world and the pandemic remained an era of policy making and challenge<sup>8</sup>. The role of public policy and administration community can play an inevitable service to contribute to cop the pandemic and related crises via diffusion of service delivery and investment of an intellectual approach. In a perspective of policy articulation the analytical theme represents the COVID-19 challenges by policy strategy and instruments, learning of policy, public service, organizational capacity, administrative traditions, and public sector reforms. Public administration approach to pandemic is to highlight the attention of bureau at the multiple levels across the government sectors and the public administration covers the implementation of public policies and process.

Public administration is an executive side of government which ensures the mobility of government service and implements the public policies in order to deliver service at gross root level and sustains network governance in order to drive an effective outcome for a successful governing in the county. It has been characterized of public service delivery disruption and confusion during the outbreak of the covid-19 touched a prime principle of public service to sustain its continuity and implementation<sup>9</sup>. In the prevailing scenario, public servants also remained a psychological fear be caused of pandemic due to lack of expertise in health science that requires versatility in service delivery mechanism to be most benefitted to people and health service delivery during the emergency requires recommendations to adopt the training to public servants and encouraging the online health culture<sup>7-10</sup>. Digital system was used in the courts hear and judge the cases by means of video based conferencing, while virtual marriages were legalized at some places and versatile role of public servants was applied to ensure in service delivery to produce more outcome in the country. The distribution and allocation of resource and accountability remained a critical role of public servants during the outbreak of the pandemic that had a degree of the reliability of government, critical service delivery, diminishing the unfairness and endurance to save lives. The pandemic halts the administrative mobility due to rise of fear, stress, anxiety, and

psychological disturbance in the public sector and affected remained in the form of frontline worker, public officials, teachers and social welfare officers to be alarmed under life threatening<sup>1-9</sup>.

## An approach to Pandemic challenges

Government's attenuated implications cannot be confined to the rise of natural calamity but it also indicates the public administration failures and poor governance to sound policy making and execution. The outbreak of the covid-19 gripped the each institution of life with diverse challenges in which service mobility, allocation, and distribution of resources also became a hard task<sup>1</sup>. Abruptly emerging crises because of the covid-19 impact the government's budget and resources and exploded the volcano of the challenges to be faced by the public servants to implement the public policy and bad governance surpassed to regulate the responsibility and accountability<sup>9</sup>. COVID-19 becomes a serious challenging for all section of people along with the public employers and employees they require to halt its further spread as WHO advises and ensure the provision of update how workers in offices apply effective measures to protect themselves. In an advice to public health and administrators in the response of the pandemic outbreak, investing additional service delivery and needs a determined public administration to address the prevailing challenges natural calamity where it is the something new to deployed administration with its long historical flaws to meet the set target of the society. The themes of major issues of policy and administration under the pandemic outbreak brought in attention and focus to be paid to its difficulties –

**Gap in political interpretation to situation:** The politicization on the current dilemma became a negative antecedent to encounter the covid-19 where different school of thought and political goals in Pakistan remained a challenging to cop the situation. Pakistan's covid-19 political divide and consultation breach the national consensus on the pandemic response in Pakistan that indicated the failure of political goal to encounter the pandemic and dethrone the domestic political disputes on the situation<sup>11</sup>. Political approach to materialize the central decision remained in confusion to affect the course of matter to be solved on the basis of a paralleled in policy making and implementation across the country. Pakistan's COVID-19 Political Divide results the crisis administration and the delayed response also extinguished the masses confidence the government to tackle the situation and ineffective response to pandemic<sup>11</sup>. The key factor is to improve the policy competency depends on the effective networking of center and province whereas negligent attitude of the political and administrative institution deeply impact administrative operations and competency to result the spread of the pandemic in the country<sup>12</sup>.

**Policy strategy and tools:** The deployed policy strategy by governments to response the pandemic must occupy

significance via adopting stages as calculating the effectiveness of diverse policy design whereas it is argued that assessment of various policy designs is obliged to succeed the policy of government<sup>13</sup>. The role of tools in policy in the way of policy causal dynamics and mechanism to connection with selection, setting and execution of the outcomes of policy. The policy tool selection relating to pandemic must be studied at a global policy convergence and explore the wider government responses<sup>8</sup>.

**Policy interpretation and assessment:** policy learning is a broad field and its analysis can assist the policy makers objectives and ambition and it ensures a practical advice to policy designers whether the continuity to be focused on the scientific attitude and practical take outs during the covid-19<sup>8-14</sup>. The policymakers learning lesson from others experience as the countries belong to East Asian and direct experience connecting to prior outbreaks of contagious pathogens MERS and SARS which was mediated their responses to COVID-19 pandemic and global pandemic and mortality in Europe in 1918-1919 struggled to achieved the learning lessons for policy making. Policy learning must not be stagnated on the ashes of the outdated misunderstandings and knowledge that lead to policy failures whereas other aspects are ignored and the prevailing pandemic requires an opportunity at large investigation fortified pathological policy responses.

**Public service delivery:** Public servants are the key workers of government to play their role at frontline to carry out their task in hand to response the COVID-19 and set life at risk which remained a cause of the policy implementation<sup>8</sup>. Ensuring the provision of service delivery in the public sector, working of business, and materialize the continuity of the curriculum activities can be considered a powerful tool to cop the circumstances. The performance measurement approach within public sector response the delivery of service to pandemic in the context of the COVID-19 recognition of decision making execution advocate the public administration how to public service respond to COVID-19. Crucially administrative bureaucracy's pays attention to all communities can ensure the feedback of an effective profile of society to meet the long term impacts of the pandemic and administrative bureau must be committed to the public interest. Problems of administrative evil and public sector ethics occur when administrative roles and duties remained unquestioned regarding their harms and implications. Likely research Dunlop, et al. argues that the widespread of COVID-19 through different demographic and social groups were treated by the decisions of public officials differently to impact on different section<sup>8</sup>.

**Public policy and governance:** Analysis to be focused on the organization capacity by relationship of policy and governance performance as it impregates the success and failure of the covid-19 policy highlight the government capacity. The health care system faces the numerous flaws due to poor governance, dearth of medical infrastructure, administrative corruption, embezzlement of funds, planning and coordination dilemma,

and scarcity of monitoring implementation system in the public health policies<sup>15</sup>. The policy failures depend on the organizational incapacities in the bureau and a strong administrative capacity is important to meet the political outcomes in the country. Measuring and comparing the countries policies experience and outcomes on the pandemic can provide an insights to meet and stimulate the governance performance.

**Traditional administration:** Policy responses in the context of government response to COVID-19 designed on the basis of the administrative traditions speak and decide the success and failure to achieve objectives. Governance and administrative system are closely linked and privileged traditional approach ceases the administrative dynamic decisions and a confused administrative tradition or traits of bureaucracy effect the administrative action. An accelerating implementation of the public policy in the way to handle the Covid-19, the bureaucracy gives a significant role and it is considered an implementer of a policy which requires the institution stable and effective to deliver the service deliver in an emergency situation<sup>16</sup>. For handling Covid-19 bureaucratic alertness is the dire need of the time and the challenges of bureaucracy must be brought on surface in order to sustain societal stability in which provision of effective delivery of service, administrative agility, appropriate policy making and adoption of wireless technology is very important for the bureaucracy to continue to provide public services quickly during the outbreak Covid-19 pandemic.

The architecture of policy impact the multilevel economic and social consolidation and stability in a society and administrative reforms appreciate governance. The influence of the covid-19 policy requires national, and sub national interconnectivity in Asia particularly in Pakistan as relationship between federal and provinces. However resources allocation always became a center of attention and focus of political debate in the country as the fate of the people of provincial government is based on to determines the systems capability to indicate its institutional practicability and arrangements designed in the way of protection of societies from such sort of the pandemic, will work and whether it becomes operational or not. Bureaucratic flaws since the inception of Pakistan remained a chief antecedent to halt the social balance in the society and administrative ethics. Moreover, it encompasses the bureaucratic aggrandizement, and administrative corruption as a report of international transparency Pakistan surpassed the corruption during the pandemic from the previous governments which fails the PM Imran's administration to meet the promises to middle class. In a report of transparency international opportunities for corruption undermines the campaign to encounter and undermine the spread of the pandemic and deprived the health care system.

## **Pandemic stress and Pressures on Public Officers**

The public servants to deliver their health initiatives and it was argued by a research that pandemic impact the workplace and become a factor to implications for employees<sup>1-6</sup>. Public administration plays its significant role under the critical situation and a successful administrative system can apply its effective initiatives to improve the crisis and natural calamity and impact the public officials' psyche<sup>17</sup>. Frontline workers and public officials face the dangerous particular during times of severe crises of the Covid-19 pandemic and give their service under life-threatening circumstances.

The key purpose of public administration is to support and advance the community interest and it should be attentive to public official to become an integrating part of community. Public administration suffered a devastating setback during the outbreak and public officers remained in stress and psychological anxiety in to deliver the public objectives<sup>9-19</sup>. Moreover, economic, health and other pressures affected public offices is the beyond of edge to be underestimated. Pressure, stress, and drastically changed circumstances can lead people to act in ways that are not normally expected of them, including inappropriate behavior. At emergency public officers involved in risks and faced the uncertainty, and anxiety in their workplace and assigned staff with mistreatment and poor appreciation become the victim of irrationalities and misconduct.

The wellbeing of staff should be a priority to minimize the risks of reduced trust, morale, loyalty, as well as absenteeism and misconduct in the workplace. The priority to employees' welfare should be given priority and minimized confidence hampers the trust, morality, and encourages the absenteeism and motivates the misconduct behavior at workplace. The outbreak of the COVID-19 has affected the administrative system and disruption by pandemic public servants and the role of public service and public servants in the light to cope the situation summed up as below.

**Ensuring continuity of service:** public service continuity escape the disruption of service delivery during the pandemic outbreak. Adoption of innovative tools to facilitate the public health sector via promoting training and technology can support the campaign to deliver the service to people.

**Adoption of Courage and introduce the motivational approach:** public servants motivation and ensuring the priority of appreciation to serve under the risk can energize them to fight against the COVI-19. Moreover, performance assessment should be valued via monetary and non-monetary incentives to all public servants and symptomatic workers should be given deep importance and weightage in the society regarding his/her sacrifice that can attract others courage to multiply their role in the best interest of society at time of dilemma.

**Innovation and creativity:** people work under the COVID-19 circumstances should adopt the quick thinking, creativity and

innovation in order to counter the situation under the pandemic to ensure their service delivery. Addition of technological use in the public health and other government sectors require the technical expertise in which employees training and development can support them to use innovative system to carry out the task in hand.

**Information reliability:** during the pandemic accurate and reliable information relating to virus measures as spread, prevention, symptoms and misinformation is the dire need in the way to make capable public servant to meet the situation. An inadequate information and awareness add the spread of the virus and penetrate the communities hence government authorities should be realized the scope of seriousness and giving information proved to be vital to fight against the spread of the pandemic. In addition, misinformation increases the falsification and conspiracy theory to impact the people's psyche and mobility of service delivery.

**Planning and strategic thinking:** Adoption of strategic thinking and planning can beat the pandemic to save lives and make sure social protection, and sustain economic progress. Public service coordination and collective efforts to fight the expansion of the virus control its obstruction whereas whole government machinery planning to deal the situation should be based on the experts and scientific approach to ensure integration, coordination, effectiveness, and coherence of strategy plans.

**Sustaining an effective public service response:** Public service feedback should be based on an effectiveness and responsiveness to encounter the challenges relating to Covid-19 and all opportunities to be invested to ensure service delivery in times to come. Every government strategy should follow the intuitional arrangement, plans, infrastructure, and policies to anticipate and ensure a speedy respond and identify the crisis.

**Credibility and legitimacy of government and people:** A responsive and equitable service delivery of public servants assists to enhance the government's credibility and people trust of the state machinery. Workers service under the sever condition and determination of public servants become a consequence of good governance and elevate the government trust.

Collaborative leadership comes to deal the multifaceted challenges and circumstances and birth of trust of people on government highlight a credible leadership which result to successful outcomes in the interest of state and ideology of nation. Networked leadership is essential ingredient of triumph a political battle and success of an administrative system and the Covid-19 provided an opportunities across the globe governments to assess their administrative effectiveness and learn experience from others success and failure. In this perspective a networked public servants facilitate to share co-learning at national and international degree. Considering the

role of public servants at in effectively crisis encompass the self-sacrificing service and encircle the profile of trustworthy, adventure, accountable, national heroism, knowledgeable, transparent, competent, innovative, and versatile and role and service should integrated as a role model in the guide in training public.

### **COVID-19 and research agenda of public administration**

The keeping perspective of challenging factors corruption, maladministration and misconduct remained major issues relating to public administration and public administration that effects administrative process. In public administration codes of conduct were formulated to ensure the guidance of public officers in their professional and ethical responsibilities obligations and obligations.

The current research agenda is confined to public administrations obstruction in the days of the COVID-19 to meet the objectives of society via implementing the public policies. Scholars can play significant role in public administration to guide the principles, produce innovative techniques and apply divers' experiences to encounter situation. Maintaining staff guided and adoption of ethical expectations an effective leadership and principled leadership is the dire need to sustain public administration in the line of welfare state.

### **Implications for public administration and key recommendations**

Challenging scenario across the globe check the public administration and leadership capacity via spread the Covid-19 as a wider global natural disaster and risk. World governments' capability to design and execute the governance strategies remained a hard task and reforms in administration became an ultimate anticipation of each community. It is overbearing the public institutions to become more flexible and responsive in order to make it more transformable and adjust with problem solving initiatives adjust themselves in response to turbulence and scale their problem-solving efforts up and down<sup>20</sup>. An effective administration can encounter the emerging Covid-19 pandemic in Pakistan to make a crucial role to an effective national antivirus strategy<sup>5</sup>. The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has severely affected the each institution of life and present study assesses the impact of Covid-19 outbreak on public administration and role of Pakistan public administrative system in the crisis.

An integrative organization can easily tend to adopt innovative changes and emerging demands and neologism relating to organization and employees create. Moreover, new mind set allows employees to transform the standard, innovative creativity and solutions to vigor the governance and importing of ideas, thinking with a new design can benefit to transform the public administration culture<sup>21</sup>. Public administration gives a

significant service in a critical situation, and a successful administrative system relies on the use of its effective initiatives to meet with crises and natural disasters<sup>18</sup>. In the country administrative flaws create serious dilemma in the way to common goal of public sector it becomes a serious to administrative performance and poor governance. During the reporting first case, psychological and administrative stress created uneasiness, fear and difficulty to administer the country under pandemic lockdown<sup>1</sup>. It is the matter of great importance to concrete the role public administration in the development and stability of a society as it can improve the circumstance by means of the implementation of the public policies in the interest of state.

Public sectors should sustain their strong ties and collaborative relation with affected organizations<sup>21</sup>. The development of robust strategy of governance can be based on the condition of the multi actor collaboration to help to make flexible and relevant resources to develop knowledge coordination and innovation. The long administrative delays also approved the economic and social challenges to deliver service to people at gross root level timely where attached responsible authority fail to reach to encounter the situation in which administrative procedures face the constraints on the rapid socio-economic implementation to ensure feedback during the outbreak of the COVID-19 in which public administration in Pakistan more regulations, and reforms are needed to enhance the chances of greater implementation and halt the administrative and bureaucratic flaws whereas public administration activities must be considered to run under an active working arrangement.

### **Conclusion**

The pandemic outbreak's implications assessed the public administration at global level in the way to evaluate the service delivery and adopt the innovative system in order to meet the set goal of societies across the world communities. The measurement and evaluation of the public administration in the context of this study is to interpret the performance of public administration during the pandemic outbreak in Pakistan where public organization attention and determine strategy to be pursued in the best interest of the society which depends on the degree of the reliability of the citizen relating to service delivery by each public sector at national wide. The reputability of public administration based on the competitiveness and progress in rapid wide implementation of public policy during the time of severe natural catastrophe and transformation of public agenda into productivity. The existing crisis of the pandemic creates a gape to create and learn skills by world governments meet the dilemma and unexpected miserable conditions and integrate the globalization and world expertise as a process to transform the traditional administration into digital one in order to fortify the public administration capacities and efficiency to deliver the service in an appropriate means in future. In this perspective, an efficient performance of public administration lead the public services delivery and secure the

citizens' trust, save their time and health through emergence of the natural pandemic outbreak and maintain an easier access and integration between people and government. The initiatives applied in Pakistan can be matched to unsatisfactory due to scarcity of health infrastructure, rampant illiteracy to enlighten people, and poor administrative and political structure and leadership gap. In this way, timely precautions can be preferred via innovative administration, leadership oneness, encouraging advance biomedical research, collect international experience and national integration to meet rising pandemic and its implications.

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