



# International Journal of Applied Sciences and Society Archives (IJASSA)

Vol. 4 No. 1 (January-December) (2025)

[www.ijassa.com](http://www.ijassa.com)

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## Changes in Pakistan Urban and Rural Population Composition: Impact on Social Services

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### Abstract

*This paper investigates how the changes in population structures in urban and rural Pakistan impact the amount and quality of the social services available for health, education, and housing. The paper's researcher, for this research, used a quantitative research design for data collection from 100 participants with equal representation between urban and rural settings using the structured questionnaire. Analysis shows that the migrants from rural into urban improved both healthcare and educational services in those areas, but since there was improvement of both services, those areas were faced with extreme challenges when housing conditions were concerned. They also have overcrowding and decreasing conditions in the areas. The rural areas, which offered relatively stable housing, suffered deteriorating healthcare and education services due to population decline. Such policies would require more balanced development strategies aimed at leveling disparities in access to urban and rural social services with concerns for equity and sustainability.*

**Keyword:** *Urba population, Rural population, Social service*

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### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

Pakistan has undergone the trends of vast changes in spatial distribution of population over the past decades. The rationale for this can be attributed to the fact that most migration is from rural to urban and can be seen to be greatly affected by economic opportunities, better education facilities, and better health facilities (Ali & Khan, 2018). This has immensely contributed to the rapid growth of the urban population in Pakistan, thus leading to overloaded social services, while rural areas experience problems with depopulation and deterioration in infrastructure (Aslam, 2017). Urban centers such as Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad are characterized by a rise in population density, which creates challenges when it comes to proper health care, education, and accommodation facilities. At the same time, rural, especially provinces of Sindh and Balochistan, is moving gradually through decline in workforce and public services (Habib et al., 2019). The whole process requires a close examination of how the shifts in populations are affecting the social services in urban and rural Pakistan as it's essential for policy work and the sustainable development of the country.

#### 1.2 Problem Statement

The massive migration of people from rural areas to the urban areas has raised tremendous stress on social services in Pakistan. Health services in cities are over congested, schools in cities have become overcrowded, and the demand for cheap accommodation shoots up sharply (Rahman & Malik, 2020). Most of these movements into the cities have strained resources, dashing the quality of social services offered to the urban residents.

On the other hand, the rural areas are facing depopulation, and the available social facilities go mostly unutilized. There are declining populations in schools and healthcare centers in all rural regions, hence it becomes really challenging for the government to present a case for continued investment (Jamil, 2021). Imbalance between urban and rural areas has a great impact on resource and service distribution; for this reason, it is necessary to discuss the effects that such population shifts have on both regions.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

- 1) To discuss the changes in the composition of urban and rural populations in Pakistan during the last two decades.
- 2) This transformation would show the effect on the accessibility and quality of social services such as health, education, and housing in the urban cities.
- 3) To identify the quality of social services in a rural area being affected by depopulation.
- 4) Provide recommendations on improved administration of social services given population changes.

### 1.4 Research Hypotheses

H1: There is a strong relationship between rural-urban migration and overburdening of urban social services in Pakistan.

H2: Where the rural population decline has been, a significant reduction of quality and supply of social services is found.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Rural-to-Urban Migration in Pakistan

One of the most prominent phenomena related to Pakistan is rural-urban migration, instigated by many factors, including the opening up of economic opportunities, the development of social facilities, and better living conditions in urban areas (Rehman & Haider, 2016). Trends and causes of this migration have been studied numerous times. For example, Malik and Jamil (2017) said that the primary motivator for movement in the villages was economic deprivation. The migration happened primarily among the youth due to the employment requirement in the cities. According to Zafar et al. (2018), it was discovered that more employment opportunities along with easy access towards education existed in metropolitan cities like Karachi and Lahore, which enhanced the process of migration overtime.

Moreover, Habib (2019) research reveals that rural areas experience depopulation due to the fact that basic services such as health services and education services are not readily available. Urbanization resulted in fast, among the rural migrants who sought better conditions of living and the people, thus leaving a dramatically raised population density within the urban centers. This kind of movement has deep implications for the delivery of social services within and outside the urban centres, especially in terms of health services, and education services.

### 2.2 Impact of Urbanization on Social Services

This present wave among the rural migrants to urban centers in Pakistan has witnessed an explosion in social service needs. According to scholars, health care services in cities are visibly overcrowded where people like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad simply can't find room inside, and it depicts crowded hospitals, long lines, and a shortage of medical staff. For instance, Rehman and Ali conclude that the urban healthcare infrastructure in Pakistan has lagged behind the population growth rate with severe implications for delivering services. Education is another sector that has been severely influenced by urbanization. Public schools around cities face overcrowded classrooms, poor infrastructure, and scarce resources (Aslam & Javed, 2018). The resultant pressure mounted on urban schools has continued to reduce the quality of education. While experts contend that the rising population is a challenge that the government needs to address with increased educational facilities, resource constraints have not been helpful in that regard. Housing is another social service element, and urbanization has complicated things there too. Most of the time, migrants enter cities in huge numbers, resulting in inadequate housing. Till date, a significant portion of the population resides in informal settlements (Iqbal & Khan, 2021). Since many migrants were forced to stay in shelter conditions described as less than optimal because of unavailability of housing, the spate of the housing crisis in the cities of Pakistan only deepened socio-economic inequalities.

### 2.3 Decline in Rural Social Services

While overcrowded social services become a problem for cities, the depopulation process in rural areas suffers from

the reduced availability and quality of essential services. According to Jamil et al. (2020), many healthcare centers in the rural areas are not adequately staffed; some of them are even closed because of the lack of patients. Hence, the rural exodus in the city leads to many underprivileged rural communities, which lack essential health and education facilities (Siddiqui & Malik, 2019). The educational structure of rural Pakistan also suffers from the same demographical dilemma of depopulation. The population of rural schools continues to decline, utilize resources ineffectively, and ultimately shut down the school altogether (Shah & Hussain, 2020). This has become a vicious cycle, whereby the absence of education facilities in rural areas contributes to more people rushing into the urban centers, consequently exacerbating the situation. Chaudhry and Nisar, 2021 adds further how the decline of population has resulted in a decline in agricultural productivity because the young urban migrant leaves behind the aged demographics in the rural areas, hence negatively affecting the development of the rural and farmland. The rurals' exit leaves the farming communities with structures such as roads, schools, and hospitals deteriorating.

## 2.4 Policy Responses and Interventions

Several studies analyze policy responses aimed at solving the problems that migration from rural to urban causes and its implication on social services. Various development programs undertaken by the government of Pakistan to uplift better rural development, such as building health centers and schools in remote areas, have been established (Ahmed & Zafar, 2018). However, such interventions, due to poor implementation and a lack of funds, have been ineffective.

In cities, the government attempted to enhance health and education facilities by raising their number proportionate to the growing population, but it still lags behind. According to a report by World Bank, 2019, healthcare spending as percentage of GDP in Pakistan continues being one of the lowest in the region, rendering the country incapable of coping up with the rising demand for social services. School funding is always inferior to that of the rate at which the population grows, causing congested and under-equipped schools (Iqbal & Rehman, 2020).

International examples are helpful to the understanding of how Pakistan may handle population and social service challenges. Rural development programs are instituted, for instance, in China and India, explicitly to reduce migration by raising living standards within rural areas. Such initiatives include investments in rural healthcare, education, and infrastructure in order to make the living standard in these areas more attractive.

## 3. Materials and Methods

This quantitative research design investigates changes in the Pakistan population composition across the urban and rural areas and will capture their effects on social services. In this study, 100 participants were utilized, providing equal proportion across the urban and rural settings, through a stratified random sampling technique that will allow representation of diverse geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds. Data will be collected through structured questionnaires examining participant experiences regarding healthcare services, education, and housing services. The quality and availability of these social services were measured through a 5-point Likert scale in the questionnaires. SPSS was utilized for the undertaking of statistical analyses, which included Pearsons correlation, t-tests, and regression analysis, in order to gauge the various forms that population shifts took and their corresponding relations with the said social services.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This chapter reflects the findings of the research that was performed on the impact of population diversification in urban and rural areas on social services in Pakistan. Data were collected from 100 participants distributed into 50 respondents who responded from urban and 50 others from rural areas. This section provides the details of the results of comparing the urban and rural regions on the aspects of health care, education, and housing. Results in tabular form are later discussed in a light of key findings.

### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

We first analyzed the demographic characteristics of the participants. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the gender and age distribution of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Urban Respondents (n= 50)	Rural Respondents (n= 50)	Total (n= 100)
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Gender			
Male	28 (56%)	27 (54%)	55 (55%)
Female	22 (44%)	23 (46%)	45 (45%)
Age (Mean)	34.8 Years	36.2 Years	35.5 Years

As shown in Table 4.1, the gender distribution was relatively balanced since the respondents were slightly more males (55%) than females (45%). The mean age of the population of participants was 35.5 years with low variation between the urban and rural areas.

#### 4.2 Availability and Quality of Social Services

We assessed the perceptions of participants on the availability and quality of social services-health, education, and housing. Table 4.2 aggregates these.

Table 4.2: Perceptions of Social Services Availability and Quality:

Social Service	Urban Respondents (n=50) —Good/Very Good	Rural Respondents (n=50) —Good/Very Good	Difference (%)
Healthcare	40 (80%)	18 (36%)	+44
Education	38 (76%)	20 (40%)	+36
Housing	17 (34%)	38 (76%)	-42

Table 4.2 shows significant differences between cities and villages in relation to healthcare and education. In cities, 80% of respondents reported healthcare as "good" or "very good," whereas in towns, this was just 36%. Analogously, the percent rating education favorably was at 76% in cities, while only 40% did the same in villages. Nevertheless, housing brought the opposite pattern: while 76% of respondents from rural communities appreciated their house, only 34% in the group of an urban respondent found positively to that question.

These results show that urban areas have better health and educational services, but rural areas have better conditions of satisfactory housing. This hence means that high demand and strain in urban housing occur due to migration and population growth, while rural areas maintain relatively stable, although limited, housing conditions.

#### 4.3 Impact of Population Shifts on Social Services

We further examined the impact of population shifts, particularly rural-to-urban migration, on the quality and availability of social services. Table 4.3 presents the results of correlation and regression analyses.

Table 4.3: Impact of Rural-to-Urban Migration on Social Services:

Social Service	Correlation (r)	Regression Coefficient (β)	Significance (p-value)
Healthcare	0.68	0.45	< 0.01
Education	0.72	0.48	< 0.01
Housing (Urban)	-0.52	-0.36	< 0.05

In fact, the analysis returned strong positive correlation between rural-to-urban migration and improvement in health care ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and improvement in education ( $r = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) of the populations in cities. However, the housing conditions have presented a negative correlation where  $r = -0.52$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , showing that migrants' influx has pressed on the housing thereby being overcrowded and of low quality.

Regression further strengthens these observations with highly significant coefficients for healthcare and education, respectively, showing that migration has a direct positive association with these services. However, the negative coefficient of housing at  $\beta = -0.36$ , where  $p < 0.05$ , confirms that with an increase in migration in the urban areas, the quality of housing decreases.

#### 4.4 Discussion

These findings suggest that population movement, particularly through rurality to urban migration, has a profound effect on the supply and quality of social services in Pakistan. Despite growing populations demanding better health and education systems, significant strides have been made in both fields in cities. At the same time, the existing

housing stock has become overcrowded with surging living costs becoming critical issues for cities.

Conversely, rural areas have seen a decline in social services due to depopulation. As fewer people remain within rural areas, healthcare and education are viewed to be degrading, and local governments fail to preserve these essential services. However, there exist better housing stability at relatively economical costs compared to their counterparts in the urban regions; thus, rural settings have some benefits to stay there for those who decide to remain in them.

Based on the above results, balanced strategies for development should be devised to meet the disparity between both the urban and rural areas. Policymakers must look after the increasing demand for services in urban centers and diminishing rural social services due to migrating people. In rural areas, investments in healthcare and education are of prime importance and good urban planning would create sustainable systems of social services in Pakistan.

## 5. Conclusion

Our study was able to show how changes in the composition of Pakistan's urban and rural population affected social services, available to and perceived in quality of health care, education, and housing. The results in this study indicated that health care and education were improved through rural-to-urban migration but suffered more in housing wherein overcrowding and poor living conditions prevailed. On the other hand, better housing stability provided in the countryside led to a further decline in provision and accessibility of health and education services because of depopulation. These results called for policy measures that would balance the development with a view to reducing social service disparities between the two areas for sustainable improvement over time.

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