



Public Administration: A Challenge Under COVID-19

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VIA Zoom

Guest Speaker: Abdul Wasay
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The presentation will look at how the functioning of public offices in an administrative tehsil in Pakistan was impacted by the COVID-19 Crisis. Thereby, tehsil offices (a local administrative tier) of Renala Khurd and Sargodha will be presented as comparative cases to understand how administrative machinery ensured services delivery. The pandemic has hit under-developed, developing and the developed countries alike in ways more than one. But of course, it has been disastrous for the developing countries, as they already had poor health facilities, governance issues and high rate of unemployment.

In the case of Pakistan, it has greatly disturbed the social, economic and political fabric, particularly at the most local tier of the government, which is the Tehsil. The idea of social distancing has indeed badly shaken the entire functioning of the state institutions, by forcefully isolating the public from the government offices. Nevertheless, despite multifarious conditions due to Covid 19, the pertinence of keeping the state machinery running was desideratum. Therefore, an attempt has been made to look into the ways a Tehsil administration has ensured governance and service delivery at the most local level even during the pandemic, and has yet performed well in controlling the spread of COVID-19. As a Tehsil is the lowest tier in the administrative hierarchy in Pakistan, ascended by district, divisional and provincial administration, it has been burdened the most in terms of implementation of government policies. Hence, it is significant to study how a Tehsil administrative machinery, has functioned during the pandemic, ensuring social distancing, partially isolating the offices from general public and yet delivering the services through the minimal contact possible.

The research has been conducted through primary sources, comprising of interviews of the tehsil level administration, government letters, and documents from tehsil offices. While secondary sources at hand were mainly newspapers, placards and articles. Snowball sampling was used to collect the data. Finally, comparative methodology has been employed to look into Renala Khurd and Sargodha tehsil for the study of administrative working.

Hailing from Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan, I graduated from Heidelberg University (Germany), with an MA in South Asian Studies in 2018. I did BA (Hons.) from Forman Christian College in 2015, majoring in History and Political Science. So far, I have lectured at Ghazi University in Dera Ghazi Khan, and University of Management and Technology in Lahore. Presently, I am a Research Fellow for the Centre for Governance and Policy at Information Technology University, Lahore. My research interests lie in topics related to child protection, blasphemy, social and cultural landscape of Pakistan, discourse on nuclear armament in South Asia, terrorism and counter-terrorism, policy making, policy analysis, medical anthropology, public administration and governance.