



Population and Development under the Regime of COVID-19: A Less Understood and Mutilated Relation

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Abstract: The relationship between population, development and COVID-19 is a complex phenomenon. Population and development issues always depend on other factors. The current coronavirus pandemic resulted higher growth of population due to rise in unwanted pregnancy. The unwanted pregnancy is the result of obstacles in access to contraceptives due to continuous lockdown at the regional, national and global levels for this pandemic. COVID-19 pandemic could leave 47 million women in low and middle-income countries unable to use modern contraceptives, leading to seven million unintended pregnancies in the coming months, according to data released by the UN Population Fund. COVID-19 has also severely demobilized the global economy. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have indicated COVID-19 pandemic as the largest threat to global economy since the financial emergency of 2008–2009. The tourism sector alone faces an output decrease as high as 50% to 70%. The pandemic will directly affect the GDP of each country in the major economies. For each month there will be an approximate loss of 2% points in annual GDP growth.

Keywords: Population, Health, Development, Coronavirus, Economy

Introduction:

Relation or lack of it between population and development is not easily understood, because these are not stand-alone concepts. In fact, each of these concepts has several sub-concepts which affect each other in a circular manner with a complex network of linkages both within and across them. Further, each connection in this network is specially perceived from the background of interaction between both ends which, in turn, leads to less understanding of the relation. Thus, the picture of all possible mutual connections can be viewed as a spider net. Over and above, the crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic has resulted confused interaction between population and development. The countries, which are less industrialised, their growth rate will be less affected than those countries which are more industrialised. Industries are suffering a lot as many of these except those related to essential amenities, are closed for a long time in many countries. People belonging to the tourism and transportation industry are also facing utmost difficulties. Production level has gone very low. Economy of many so-called powerful countries are now facing the threat of high inflation and increasing unemployment as a result of lack of productivity and excessive expenditure for the treatment and rehabilitation of the COVID-19 victims and their families (OECD Interim Economic Assessment, 2 March, 2020).

Concepts and Sub-concepts of Population, Development and COVID-19:

The concept of population refers to the number of people inhabiting a geographical region or area and includes within itself sub-concepts like size, growth rate, age-sex structures, educational status, marital status, etc. So, population is a composite concept. Similarly, the concept of development can be defined as the process that creates growth and progress or positive change in the society. To be more precise, it in fact refers to a never-ending process and is based on a relative term. It has several sub-aspects like physical, psychological, economic, social, environmental, political or cultural developments in the spheres of life the ultimate goal of which is to improve the quality of life of the population. Therefore, development is also a composite concept. For ensuring such overall development, tremendous growth of both national and per capita income is necessary, bringing thereby the concept of economic development to the forefront of the debate on population-development relationship. Because of this economic/financial implication, the concept of development can therefore be suitably redefined as the growth of per capita income at a rate that would be biting the impacts of a regularly increasing population and ever-rising prices to ensure an improvement in the levels of living along with achievements in psychological, social, environmental, political and cultural aspects of life of the current generation of people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs too. But, the current

coronavirus pandemic has overpowered this process of development by creating obstacles and has unbelievably worsened the quality of life.

Further, the concept of CORONA virus is widely debated. Coronaviruses make up a large family of viruses that can infect birds and mammals, including humans, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). These viruses have been responsible for several outbreaks around the world, including the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) pandemic of 2002-2003 and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) outbreak in South Korea in 2015. Most recently, a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2, also known as COVID-19) triggered an outbreak in China in December, 2019 and spreading at world level.

The global COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the value of shared understanding for collective response, the negative impact of misinformation, and the importance of locally contextualised humanitarian action.

WHO periodically updates the Global Surveillance for human infection with coronavirus disease (COVID-19) document which includes case definitions (World Health Organization, 2020a). For easy reference, case definitions are included below.

Suspect case

A. A patient with acute respiratory illness (fever and at least one sign/symptom of respiratory disease (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), and with no other etiology that fully explains the clinical presentation and a history of travel to or residence in a country/area or territory reporting local transmission (See situation report) of COVID-19 disease during the 14 days prior to symptom onset.

OR

B. A patient with any acute respiratory illness AND having been in contact with a confirmed or probable COVID19 case (See definition of contact) in the last 14 days prior to onset of symptoms;

OR

C. A patient with severe acute respiratory infection (fever and at least one sign/symptom of respiratory disease (e.g., cough, shortness breath) AND requiring hospitalization AND with no other etiology that fully explains the clinical presentation.

Probable case

A suspect case for whom testing for COVID-19 is inconclusive.

- Inconclusive being the result of the test reported by the laboratory

Confirmed case

A person with laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 infection, irrespective of clinical signs and symptoms.

Changing Perspectives and Perceptions of Development during COVID-19:

There has been a paradigmical shift in the perspectives and perceptions of development the world over. As a result, strategies of development have undergone changes several times in different parts of the globe over the last 50-60 years. Conventionally, at the outset, the growth strategy was at the helm of affairs with its three different approaches such as growth-oriented, employment-oriented and anti-poverty approaches being pursued in that order during successive periods. The strategy in general assumed that growth of national or per capita income would automatically trickle down to the poor to improve human well-being among all the sections of the society and if that does not happen, governments shall undertake corrective measures. However, during several initial decades, in spite of the rapid growth of the income the gains in terms of physical well-being tended to flow unevenly in many countries. It was then realized that although, per capita GNP is the most important and widely acceptable measure of general economic performance, it is definitely not the sufficient indicator and so failed to reflect how outputs related to the quality of life is distributed among people and groups within countries.

These problems created by development, measured with the help of GNP or per capita GNP in bringing out desired objectives, necessitated the search for an alternative strategy of development and finally led to the successful formulation of basic-needs strategy. Unlike that of growth strategy which solely depended on the supply side of the problem, basic-needs strategy emphasized both supply and demand sides and concentrated on the fullest development of human personality through provisioning of various minimum needs of course only for those who cannot satisfy these needs on their own income. The strategy also urged the governments to educate the people and make them aware about their basic needs so that they can use the available facilities around them and efficiently as well. Although India was the first country to adopt this strategy in 1980 along with other developing countries later on, the policy not only failed to achieve its target but also made these countries financially weaker due to its faulty implementation.

Therefore, in early nineties, economic liberalization and market-oriented development plan was adopted in different countries including India the purpose of which is to offer people the choice to have access to income, not as an end in itself but as a means to acquire well-being in terms of long and healthy life, education and awareness, freedom, safety net and security, community participation,

and guaranteed human rights. Thus, the discussion centred around the thought that while growth in national production (GDP) is absolutely necessary to meet all essential human needs, what is more important is whether all societies achieve human well-being with the available income. In other words, there is the emergence of the notion of people-oriented development or development with a human face.

Similarly, people's perception of development has also undergone changes from time to time. In the place of wealth, people now substitute feel-goodness, leisure, comfort, etc., and bargain accordingly.

The all-round growth and development are restricted by Coronavirus pandemic. A clear view of the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic is only beginning to take shape, but experts estimate the human cost could be extraordinary. The economic and physical disruptions caused by the disease could have vast consequences for the rights and health of women and girls, a new analysis by UNFPA (The Hindu, 29 April, 2020). The prospects of estimation of development indicators are not feasible because of crisis arising due to Coronavirus pandemic.

The COVID 19 outbreak has placed unprecedented demands on our health system. Our public health facilities and workforce are currently inundated by a plethora of activities related to controlling the pandemic. In doing so, there is a risk that essential health services, which communities expect from the health system, would be compromised. It is likely that health seeking may be deferred because of social/physical distancing requirements or community reluctance owing to perceptions that health facilities may be infected. Focusing on COVID19 related activities, and continuing to provide essential services, is important not only to maintain people's trust in the health system to deliver essential health services (World Health Organization, 2020b). India has seen its first COVID-19 case in Kerala on 30th January, 2020. With cases rising steadily, all sections of our society must play a role if we are to stop the spread of this disease and the frontline health worker has the responsibility, the reach and the influence within the community (MoHFW, 2020). The role of frontline workers towards other development-oriented works declines due to management of this COVID pandemic.

Determinants of Population and Development:

Fertility, mortality and migration are the three basic determinants of population. So, any change in the size of a population can be identified by adding the numbers of births and in-migrants to

and by subtracting the numbers of deaths and out-migrants from it. Change in the size of the population leads to instant changes in its growth rate and age-sex structures.

Similarly, natural resources, human resources, capital resources and technology determine the level of development in a region. Besides, non-economic determinants like institutional (political: type and stability of government, social: type of family and caste system, and religious: rigidity and conservatism) and behavioural (willpower, perception and attitude of individuals) structures of the society play a major role in shaping the process and rate of development.

Channels of Mutual Relationship:

Population affects and is also affected by development. But, the relationship between the two is not a straight one, that is, the two-way relationship operates through two different lengthy channels. Population affects development by exerting its impact on the economic determinants of development such as natural resources, human resources, capital resources and technology, while development affects population because of its influence on the basic determinants of population, viz. fertility, mortality and migration. Thus, the mutual relationship is to be perceived in an indirect manner. Nonetheless, the present time has been witnessing an alarming situation that less developed regions are caught in the vicious circle of population growth and poverty. In order to have effective policies to attack both the aspects, it is essential to know more about the relationship between population and development and to identify the specific linkages.

The Relation:

Population and development can have both positive and negative impacts on each other. They are so closely related that without population development is not at all possible and without development population has no existence. They are like the only two poles, issues or objectives around which the world revolves. It can thus be said that development is of the people, by the people and for the people, while survival of population on earth is made possible only by development.

Impact of Population on Development: The impact of population on development can be measured by the equation,

$$\text{IPD} = \text{Producing Capacity} - \text{Consuming Capacity}$$

If the product is positive, population is supposed to promote development because of the following reasons.

1. Large and rapidly growing population has a larger labour force which is an asset for development.
2. Large and rapidly growing population means a bigger domestic market which is conducive to development.
3. A large population is an asset from military point of view.
4. Population pressure can lead to scientific innovations since necessity is the mother of invention.
5. Rapidly growing population has a young age-structure which leads to new ideas and fresh thinking needed for development.

If the product is negative, population is considered an obstacle to development because of the following reasons.

1. Adverse consequences of rapid population growth on the growth of per capita income.
2. Adverse consequences in terms of savings and investment.
3. Adverse consequences of rapid population growth for industrialization.
4. Adverse consequences in terms of availability of resources like land, water, forest and minerals and their quality.

Impact of Development on Population: Development can promote the cause of population by reducing fertility, mortality and unwanted migration and enhance the quality of living as a result of the following conditions.

1. Improved technology.
2. Skilled manpower.
3. Adequate infrastructure.

On the contrary, development because of its lopsidedness may also destroy the cause of population by adversely affecting fertility, mortality and migration due to its role in enhancing the chances of artificial loss of wealth and life, crime, etc.

However, the mutual relationship should be examined in the context of population and its characteristics as being related to resources, stage of development, generation of technology and socio-cultural scenarios. Historical experience shows that the distribution of world population between less and more developed economies has changed due to industrial revolution and economic transformation. During 1650-1900, countries in Europe, America and Oceania experienced development and rapid population growth and their share in the world population increased from 21% to 32%. Later on after 1950, countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America realized development as well as population explosion and as a result of which their share in the world population increased from 68% to 71% during 1900-1971.

The present picture of the world shows that poor countries with a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of \$ 745 or less are the countries with an annual population growth rate of around or above 2 per cent. About 41 per cent of the world population is concentrated in these poor countries. On the other hand, middle-income countries with a GNI per capita in the range of \$ 746 and \$ 9205 are the countries with an annual population growth rate of around 1.2 per cent, whereas the high income countries with GNI per capita of \$9206 or more have annual exponential growth rate of less than one percent and constituting about 16 per cent of the world population.

The future prospects indicate that this disparity between rich and poor countries is likely to increase further, because during the period 1990-2025, population of more developed countries will increase by only 12% while that of less developed countries will increase by 75%. During 2020-25, out of the total yearly addition to the world population, 97% will be in LDCs.

Impact of COVID-19 on Population: The pandemic is deepening inequalities, and millions more women and girls now risk losing the ability to plan their families and protect their bodies and health."Ongoing lockdowns and major disruptions to health services during the COVID-19 pandemic could leave 47 million women in low and middle-income countries unable to use modern contraceptives, leading to seven million unintended pregnancies in the coming months, according to data released by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA, 2020). Additionally, supply chain disruptions are limiting the availability of contraceptives in many places. Over the next six months, stock-outs are anticipated in more than a dozen of the lowest-income countries. On top of all that, the UNFPA anticipates significant delays in planned efforts to scale-up access to family planning for the most vulnerable and marginalised populations.

The pandemic is also expected to cause significant delays in programmes to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, these delayed programmes, on top of growing economic hardships globally, could result in an estimated 13 million more child marriages over 10 years. There will be 31 million additional cases of gender-based violence during the same period, with a further 15 million more cases expected for every three months the lockdowns continue.

Impact of COVID-19 on Development: The United Nations has called the COVID-19 pandemic “the greatest test that we have faced since the formation of the United Nations,” making it clear that it is more than a health emergency, it is a systemic crisis that is already affecting economies and societies in unprecedented ways. The managing director of the International Monetary Fund has anticipated “the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression (UNDP, 2020).

Loss of lives due to any pandemic causes definite irretrievable damage to the society (Chakraborty and Maity, 2020). But apart from this, COVID-19 has severely demobilized the global economy. In order to restrict further transmission of the disease in the community, many of the affected countries have decided to undergo complete lockdown. Major international flights and also all types of business transports have been deferred amid different countries. Due to lockdown all domestic flights, railway service (except goods trains), bus, truck, and vehicle transports are suspended with special exemption to those associated with essential commodities. In almost all the COVID-19 stricken countries, entire educational, commercial, sports and spiritual institutions are closed.

Lockdown will directly affect the GDP of each country in the major economies. For each month, there will be an approximate loss of 2% points in annual GDP growth. The tourism sector alone faces an output decrease as high as 50% to 70%. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have indicated COVID-19 pandemic as the largest threat to global economy since the financial emergency of 2008–2009. Some of the experts are even saying that human civilization has not faced such an unprecedented emergency after the World War-II. So, COVID-19 has undoubtedly put forth a remarkably bad effect on the day to day life of the entire human society and also on the world economy.

Conclusion:

The COVID-19 pandemic is unleashing a human development crisis. The normal growth of population and the process of development is controlled by the current coronavirus pandemic,

particularly due to continuous lockdown. Ongoing lockdowns and major disruptions to health services during the COVID-19 pandemic could leave 47 million women in low and middle-income countries unable to use modern contraceptives, leading to seven million unintended pregnancies. In almost all the COVID-19-stricken countries, entire educational, commercial, sports and spiritual institutions are closed. This will directly affect GDP of all countries and it is estimated that around 2% points loss of annual GDP growth of each country. Thus, the population-development relationship, which could be less understood earlier because of the complexity of issues involved with the two concepts, has become more intricate due to their mutilation by the coronavirus pandemic. Worst damage has already been caused to humanity, society and the economy across the globe. Still our vulnerability never seems to end, rather looks to be exposed further.

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