

SOCIAL IMPACT OF NEO-LIBERALISM AND PAKISTANI BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE POLICIES IT OFFERS

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the impact of neoliberalism on Pakistani society, particularly through the perspectives of business administration students. Neoliberalism, characterized by its emphasis on free-market principles and minimal government intervention, has profoundly shaped Pakistan's socio-economic landscape since the late 1980s. Through surveys and literature reviews, the study explores how neoliberal policies have influenced societal welfare, economic inequality, and overall well-being. Despite limited awareness of neoliberalism among students, the research reveals a predominant support for policies aligned with neoliberal principles, such as free trade and reduced state intervention. However, concerns about increasing poverty, inflation, and economic vulnerability are also evident, highlighting the complexities of neoliberal policies. The study underscores the importance of civil society in advocating for policies that prioritize the interests of the masses and address socio-economic disparities. It calls for informed policy discussions and educational reforms to tackle the challenges posed by neoliberalism and promote a more equitable socio-economic framework in Pakistan". Neo-liberalism originates from the theories that emerged in 1870 to challenge state intervention in business activities. It gained roots under the notion of democracy and received a warm welcome from the developed countries. Today, its policies are still in power in the form of globalization and under the label of free trade. No doubt its impact is heavily felt by the underdeveloped countries, but the countries which have financial power are promoted and supported in the name of freedom and democracy. The study highlights the issues neo-liberalism engenders and also raises the voice for the role of civil society in this regard. Moreover, it also gauges Pakistani students' perception of the policies that neo-liberalism offers or which are compatible with its very essence. The result shows that most of the students indirectly appreciate the policies which fall under neo-liberalism. Interestingly, they rank very high to globalization, free trade, and less government intervention in business or trade. Based on the results it may be deduced that a wave of materialism has struck our nation which has blinded our sense of ethics, morality, and apathy badly. The study will give direction to the researchers, socialists, educationists, government, and civil society to conduct large-scale research that may help the nation form better economic and educational policy.

Key Words: Impact, Social, Neo-Liberalism, Administration, Perception, Offer, Perception.

INTRODUCTION

Country like Pakistan, which is facing challenging like weak economy, terrorism, and novice democracy, heavily relies on the role of civil society to highlight the policies that engender poverty, wealth accumulation, and the thought which fosters nothing but unethical approaches to satiate the boundless materialistic desires. Unfortunately, since past decade the civil society has limited its role

to protect women rights, curb terrorism, and support shapeless democracy. But, the issues like poverty, unemployment, inflation, and widening gap between the haves and have nots are buried under the attractive advertisements of NGOs, USAID, and lawyers' movement. (Bashir,2016) Today, we need to take drastic steps to inculcate ethical, moral and welfare-oriented thought among the nation to lay the

foundations that promote harmony among people of Pakistan. The civil society needs to educate people and the government to think and adopt policies that safeguard the interest of masses rather than some billionaires (investors) and multinational companies.

The essence of humanity lies in welfare and willingness to help others. Pakistani society was once deep-rooted in valuing humans and welfare. But today ethics, morality, honesty, patriotism, and dedication seem far-fetched notions for the nation is inclined toward neo-liberalism. It may sound a tall claim but the answer lies in the very decline of our inclination to value ethics and morals as a nation and the role civil society needs to play to inculcate ethics in the nation.

Neo-liberalism is a paradigm of this century that defines political economy-it safeguards the policies and aims of a group that controls and regulates the social life of the masses in our country. The policies it encumbers guard the interest of affluent investors and large corporations which are not more than a thousand. It allows people blessed with money to maximize their profit as it is they who have a right to protect their freedom to control others' life.

What we need to understand are the economic outcomes such policies offer. They engender economic disparity, poverty, deprivation and a widening gap between having and have not, and a windfall for the affluent. Its defenders argue that it aids development and progression and eventually its benefits reach the masses as well. But they forget that for the masses to be benefited, from the progression it offers, requires nothing but the mentality that supports the survival of the fittest. Moreover, its defenders' squabble that the essence of neoliberalism lies in a true democracy, so no other system is better than this, and even if it has some demerits, we have no better alternative. True democracy is not only about personal freedom it requires harmony and respect for each other or in short it allows people to stay connected to each other. (Bashir, S., Khan, J., Danish, M., & Bashir,2023). This very quality appears void in neo-liberalism. How something which divides people can at the same time unite them? The base it is grounded on is that the best one would rule the world. The elite would rule the masses. Humanity, ethics and morality are buried under the attraction of progression that neo-liberalism claims. The notion of a responsible and good citizen has been engulfed by avaricious

consumer. Neo-liberal democracy safeguarding the idea of free economy offers progression in terms of building, roads, and shopping malls but at the cost of healthy social society where norms are based on human welfare and peace.

Neo-liberalism messages that no alternative to the status quo can be sought as it is the utmost system has taken the humanity at its apex. The claim that no better option than status quo(neoliberalism) prevail has no standing today as new impressive technologies are emerging to reform human condition. If efforts are exerted to establish a system that offers policies that will protect core traits of humanity without disparity like morality and ethics. Such a system may seem utopian, but apparently the ideas which were considered utopian in history proved to be a reality in coming days. From ending slavery and establishing democracy to ending formal colonialism we have seen utopian notions becoming realities of the day. Chomsky is of the view that human political activity can turn the world we reside more humane. There is a need to establish political economy founded in the principles like cooperation, just, self-regulation, ethics and welfare.

Objective of the study:

The objective of this study is to critically assess the societal repercussions of neoliberalism on Pakistani society, specifically examining the viewpoints of Pakistani business administration students regarding neoliberal policies. The research seeks to explore how neoliberal ideals, such as free-market principles, deregulation, privatization, and minimal government involvement in the economy, have shaped the socio-economic landscape in Pakistan and how these policies are perceived by the younger generation.

Problem of the Statement:

Neoliberalism, as an economic doctrine, has sparked extensive debates regarding its impact on social welfare, economic disparity, and overall societal well-being. In the Pakistani context, where neoliberal reforms have been in effect since the late 1980s, understanding the social consequences of these policies is imperative. Moreover, delving into the perspectives of Pakistani business administration students on neoliberalism can offer insights into the future economic and social trajectory of the nation.

Research Question:

Q. What are the societal ramifications of neoliberal policies in Pakistan, and what are the perceptions of Pakistani business administration students regarding these policies?

Scope of the Study:

This research will delve into analyzing the historical evolution of neoliberalism, its fundamental tenets, and its influence on Pakistani society. It will scrutinize the socio-economic effects of neoliberal policies in Pakistan, such as disparities in wealth, poverty, and societal divisions. Furthermore, the study will explore the attitudes of Pakistani business administration students toward neoliberalism, encompassing their views on free-market principles, deregulation, privatization, and limited governmental intervention in the economy. Employing surveys, interviews, and literature reviews, the research aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Examining neoliberalism and its impact on Pakistani society holds considerable significance as it addresses pertinent socio-economic challenges confronting the nation. By analyzing the perspectives of Pakistani business administration students, who represent the forthcoming leaders and policymakers, this research can contribute to informed decision-making and policy formulation. Additionally, comprehending the societal implications of neoliberal policies can foster dialogues on alternative economic models prioritizing social welfare and equity.

Research limitations:

The study may encounter limitations in terms of sample representation, focusing solely on Pakistani business administration students and potentially excluding other demographic cohorts.

Obtaining comprehensive data on the perceptions of Pakistani business administration students toward neoliberalism might pose challenges, given the sensitive nature of the topic and potential biases in responses.

Time and resource constraints may constrain the research scope, affecting the depth and breadth of analysis.

Review of Literature

Neo-Liberalism and Civil Society:

Country like Pakistan, which is facing challenging like weak economy, terrorism, and novice democracy, heavily relies on the role of civil society to highlight the policies that engender poverty, wealth accumulation, and the thought which fosters nothing but unethical approaches to satiate the boundless materialistic desires. Unfortunately, since past decade the civil society has limited its role to protect women rights, curb terrorism, and support shapeless democracy. But, the issues like poverty, unemployment, inflation, and widening gap between the haves and have nots are buried under the attractive advertisements of NGOs, USAID, and lawyers' movement. Today, we need to take drastic steps to inculcate ethical, moral and welfare-oriented thought among the nation to lay the foundations that promote harmony among people of Pakistan. The civil society needs to educate people and the government to think and adopt policies that safeguard the interest of masses rather than some billionaires (investors) and multinational companies.

Introduction to Neo-liberalism and its Social Impact:

Neo-liberalism is an economic ideology that emphasizes free-market capitalism, deregulation, privatization, and reduced government intervention in the economy. Its social impact has been widely debated, with proponents arguing that it leads to economic growth and individual freedom, while critics argue that it exacerbates inequality and social disparities (Harvey, 2005).

Neo-liberal Policies in Pakistan:

Pakistan has adopted various neo-liberal policies over the years, including privatization, deregulation, and trade liberalization. These policies have had significant implications for the country's economy and society. (Burki, S. J. (2006). Pakistan: Fifty Years of Nationhood. Westview Press)

Social Impact of Neo-liberalism in Pakistan:

The social impact of neo-liberalism in Pakistan can be observed in various aspects such as income inequality, access to education and healthcare, labor rights, and poverty alleviation efforts. (Haq, 2013).

Perception of Pakistani Business Administration Students:

Understanding how Pakistani business administration students perceive the policies of neo-liberalism is crucial in assessing the effectiveness and implications of these policies on future business leaders and policymakers.⁴ Khan, S. R., & Iqbal, N. (2018). Attitude of University Students Towards Neoliberal Policies and Their Impact on Developing World: A Case Study of Pakistan.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Analyzing the challenges and opportunities that neo-liberalism presents for Pakistani business administration students can provide insights into the potential outcomes and areas for improvement in policy formulation and implementation.⁵ Khan, M. M., & Iqbal, Z. (2017).

Neoliberalism, as an economic ideology, has garnered significant attention due to its profound impact on societies worldwide. This review explores the social implications of neoliberal policies and examines how Pakistani business administration students perceive these policies.

Neoliberalism advocates for free-market principles, deregulation, privatization, and limited government intervention in the economy. While proponents argue that it fosters economic growth and prosperity, critics highlight its adverse social consequences, including inequality, poverty, and social polarization.

A study by Harvey (2005) emphasizes neoliberalism's role in exacerbating social disparities by concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few elites while marginalizing the majority. Furthermore, scholars like Stiglitz (2002) and Klein (2007) argue that neoliberal policies often lead to the erosion of social safety nets, thereby exacerbating vulnerability among the poor and marginalized communities.

In the context of Pakistan, neoliberal reforms have been implemented since the late 1980s, following structural adjustment programs imposed by international financial institutions. Siddiqui and Mahmood (2018) discuss how these policies have influenced various sectors of the economy, leading to mixed outcomes in terms of economic growth and social development.

However, the perceptions of neoliberalism among Pakistani business administration students

remain underexplored. A study by Khan and Raza (2020) investigates Pakistani students' attitudes towards neoliberal economic policies, highlighting a nuanced understanding influenced by socio-cultural factors and educational backgrounds.

Moreover, Butt and Malik (2019) explore the role of business education in shaping students' perceptions of neoliberalism, emphasizing the need for critical engagement with economic theories and ideologies.

So therefore! while neoliberalism has been a dominant force in shaping global economic policies, its social impact remains contentious. Pakistani business administration students' perceptions of neoliberal policies reflect a complex interplay of economic theory, cultural values, and educational experiences. Further research is needed to elucidate these dynamics and inform policy debates aimed at addressing socio-economic challenges in Pakistan.

History of Neo-liberalism:

David Harvey explores the disposition and the inception of neo-liberalism as a shape of political economy through an inspection of its current history. He starts narrating about the reformation of the state structure and about the international relations after the World War 2. We learn from his book that the economic depression compelled governments to look for a system. To address the depression Corporatist strategies were used till the period of mid 1970s, but neoliberalism eventually received the preference. Harvey elucidates neo-liberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (Harvey, 2005, 2).

Historian Elizabeth Shermer argued that the term gained popularity largely among left-leaning academics in the 1970s to "describe and decry a late twentieth-century effort by policy makers, think-tank experts, and industrialists to condemn social-democratic reforms and unapologetically implement free-market policies";^[52] economic historian Phillip W. Magness notes its reemergence in academic literature in the mid-1980s, after French philosopher [Michel Foucault](#) brought attention to it.^[53] (Magness, Phillip W.2019).

He identifies neo-liberalism in two ways:

1. as a utopian (theoretical) project
2. as a political project.

The first concerns the progress of individual freedom and human dignity, the founding figures of neoliberal thought. The second concerns elite class power restoration through new processes of class formation. In the UK and the USA Neo liberalism came into existence through democratic procedures. Political consent of sufficient scale had to be constructed to reach that point.

Moreover, He also identifies varied channels to generate sufficient popular consent to legitimize neo-liberalism, with a focus on ideological movements within corporations and the media. He then goes ahead and elucidates the unfolding of legitimization in the USA and the UK which are two traditional neoliberal states.

Institutional arrangement is the main thought behind neo-liberalism, which aspire to make sure individual freedoms. It is the market freedom that neo-liberal state tends to safeguard. To protect market freedom, the state employs particular tools like right of property, market competition rules, deregulation, privatization, free capital mobility and taking up an apprehensive attitude for employing democracy in activities pertaining to economic. Making sure the dignity of the financial system and a good cultivation of business climate are considered indispensable for the smooth operation of the neoliberal state. On contrary, the neoliberal state contradicting the values for which it stands for falls into the trap of its own policy. For example, when it comes to the problem power of monopoly and exploitation, and market failures, the neo liberal state contradicts the very essence of this philosophy. Another intricacy it contains is the crookedness of power and information and also the theoretical disagreement between a “seductive but alienating possessive individualism and the desire for a meaningful collective life” (Harvey, 2005, 69). It then becomes clear that the current neoliberal theory shows lucid branching out from neoliberal theory as it was intended to be when in 1949 the Mont Pellarin society was established, earlier than the neo-liberalism acquired impetus. Some demonstration of this branching out from the original neoliberal theory includes: current finance capital and financial procedures, for instance, employing state influence for bailing out banks and companies.

Neoliberal state's abusive treatment to labor markets, and the main switch in social policy ascribed to modification in governance's nature like the increasing dependency on public private partnerships is one of the problematic areas.

A new current of neo-liberalism aspiring to support the revival of class power emerged in 1980. Intensified financialization and increased geographical mobility of capital are the key features of this latest current. The Wall Street-IMF-US Treasury trio puts a strong influence through global dispersal of the neo liberal orthodoxy and new monetarist. Harvey presents the case studies of Sweden, Argentina, South Korea and Mexico to prove that the usual consequence of neoliberalism's extension has been the elimination of the state and the mounting disparity. Among these cases, the least calamitous effects appear in Sweden's version of "circumscribed neoliberalism". He then goes to elucidate particularly the case of China, which outset from the 1978 reforms, decided to invite foreign investments. It had kept, on contrary, state control. This sequential policy inspired by neo-liberalism with Chinese characteristics were coined “red capitalism”. It led to huge economic growth in China, but at the cost of markedly mounting disparity.

Today, the rebounding financial crises, disparities that are extreme, and the mounting confrontation imply that neo-liberalism has reached its apex. Harvey suggests having different movements containing policies from within and outside neoliberal sphere. He focuses particular attention to neo-conservatism, which has ethically impressionable aspects. But neo-conservatism's patriotic view and the advancement of military ways of administration offers a peril. Consequently, he rebukes neo-conservatism. To him, the solution does not lie in going back to the previous era, but exploring new approaches of maintaining the balance basing on broader theoretical and practical research.

Neo-liberalism and World Politics:

Neo-liberalism originated from the liberal world pattern of the time 1870-1913 (Hayek, 1944). They were willing to form financial globalization that cannot be controlled. Such a globalization was seen between 1870 and 1913. London was a significant a financial hub and for the financial transactions pound sterling was used. It was the early stage of the growth of global financial institution. For

their own interest, Western powers took charge of countries which had weak military power. The occupied countries were economically subordinated for the interest of the western power. Moreover, in 1870, there was a series of banking crises due to speculation and excessive lending (Kotz, 2008).

Today, Neoliberal order has laid out political and economic crises in Central Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America causing decline in the quality of life of masses in these regions. How neo-liberalism affects the lives of people in this region is an interesting case. Neo-liberalism is based on the rule of the market. It means no imposition by the state on trade and business irrespective of how much detrimental it may be for the citizen of the country. For example, most of the developing countries cannot ban the import of items despite the fact that their own economy would reach at the stage of devastation. This is because they signed treaties with the organizations like WTO and IMF. 26th September 2000 was the day when thousands of people in Prague objected over the policies and institutional framework of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The demonstration was the outcome of the detrimental effects over the lives of masses in Czech Republic. It was a response to the undue freedom of economically robust developed countries that exert their powers to suppress the economy of underdeveloped countries.

Methodology:

A survey was conducted comprised of 80 respondents studying business administration at the university level. The sample included 30 females and 50 male students. There were ten items on the survey form to gauge students' perception about neo-liberalism. These ten items covered important features of neo-liberalism and most of the questions the survey form contained investigate participants' perception implicitly, without naming neo-liberalism to obtain their neutral opinions. The questionnaire was tested on a small group before being used on the entire sample. The questionnaire contained agree or disagree survey questions. The study was carried out at one of the reputed business administration universities in Karachi.

Methodology for Studying Students' Perception:

Discussing the methodology used to study the perception of Pakistani business administration students towards neo-liberal policies is essential for understanding the reliability and validity of the findings. This could include survey methods, interviews, or focus groups.

Analysis of Students' Perception:

Presenting the analysis of the data collected from Pakistani business administration students regarding their perception of neo-liberal policies. This could include their attitudes towards privatization, deregulation, globalization, and their perceived impact on the economy and society.

Comparison with Global Trends:

Comparing the perception of Pakistani business administration students with global trends in attitudes towards neo-liberalism can provide insights into the unique socio-economic context of Pakistan and its implications for policy formulation.

Implications for Business Education and Policy:

Discussing the implications of students' perceptions of neo-liberal policies for business education curriculum, as well as for future policy formulation in Pakistan. This could include recommendations for integrating critical perspectives on neo-liberalism into business administration programs.

Findings and Recommendation:

The key findings of the study and suggesting avenues for future research, policy development, and educational reforms in light of the perceptions of Pakistani business administration students towards neo-liberal policies.

The results show that most of the students prefer policies fall under neo-liberalism. Even though very few of them are aware of what neo-liberalism is. Majority agrees that poverty is increasing day by day. But few respondents agree that globalization is not good for Pakistani Economy. Most of the students think that there should not be any intervention of the state in setting up the market prices for the goods. Majority favored not banning of Luxuries goods. Moreover, very few students claim to know what neo-liberalism is.

Not only this, a great majority among students think that free trade is in the interest of Pakistan. The result of this research portrays how our young generation has fallen into trap of

Neoliberalism. Ironically without knowing what is it. The results for each item show in the following table:

Result of the Survey of Students’ Perception about Neo-liberalism and its Economic Policies

Items	Agree	Disagree
1.The poverty in Pakistan is increasing by day	70%	30%
2. Globalization is not good for Pakistani Economy.	20%	80%
3. Inflation in Pakistan is increasing because of globalization	10%	90%
4. I know about Neo liberalism	20%	80%
5. Pakistani government should encourage open or free market.	90%	10%
6. The interest of the investors should be protected.	80%	20%
7. Free trade with foreign countries is in the interest of Pakistan	90%	10%
8. Pakistan should ban import of luxury items.	30%	70%
9. I think everybody should be given a right to protect his or her interest of making profit if he or she engaged in any business.	90%	10%
10. State should not intervene in the market prices as this is violation of one’s right to run business freely.	85%	15%

An analysis of responses received on all the items covered in the survey depicts that policies pertaining to neo- liberalism have penetrated into our lives to the extent that perhaps we feel no negative impact of such policies. In fact, associate them to progression and development. Responses on items 2,5,7,8,9,10 direct us that the students studying at the Bachelor level support free trade, globalization, import of luxuries items besides the fact that Pakistan is a developing country and cannot compete the challenges engendered by globalization, import, and free trade.

Conclusion:

New-liberalism was founded on the ground of people’s right to have freedom to do business, but this very thought towards democracy itself contradicts the notions of freedom as it protects rights of few investors. Pakistan being an underdeveloped country cannot cope with the challenges imposed by the policies based on neo-liberalism. The role of civil society can influence government to adopt economic policy that benefit the masses and reduce the widening gap between haves and have not. The perception of Business Administration students’ drawn from this research alarms us about the materialistic oriented

youth who support the policies that widen the differences among rich and poor and may lead to anarchy in the long run.

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