

Only a healthy population can be an asset for a country.

## OUTLINE:

### 1) Introduction

Thesis Statement:

Only a healthy population can serve as an asset for a country. A population suffering from health issues is nothing more than a liability. Healthy population can serve as a vital instrument for the social, political and economic well-being of ~~the~~ a state. Maintaining a healthy population can be a difficult task but it can be achieved easily through meticulous and concerted efforts.

- 2) Relation between health of a state and its population's health
- 3) Factors defining health status of a population (according to WHO)
- 4) Healthy population boosts social health of the country
  - a) Healthy population creates a society

with solidarity and cohesion.

- b) Crime rate in healthier populations is lower than unhealthy populations.
- c) Healthier populations have low suicide rates.
- d) Such populations have lower chances of developing extremist or violent tendencies.
- e) Healthy populations fare better in the realm of education and research.

### 5) Healthy population is crucial for the economic growth

- a) Healthy diaspora is a huge source of remittances
- b) Healthy population puts less burden on health sector
- c) Healthy female population contributes greatly for the economic growth while also creating gender parity in job market.
- d) Healthy population is innovative.
- e) Healthy population is resilient to diseases and pandemics

### 6) Healthy population can boost political outlook of a state

- a) Healthy populations are more likely to stand up against tyranny and oppression
- b) Such population is more interested in political process and democratic growth

## 7) How to turn a population from a liability to an asset?

- a) Social protection programs
- b) Ensuring food security
- c) Health awareness and disease prevention measures
- d) Investing more on maternal and child nutrition and health

## 8) Conclusion

It was the year 2020 when the governments around the world were hit with the reality that no matter how much wealth they possess, it is actually the health of their people that matters the most. And so, in the aftermath of Covid-19, people have realized that the real resource which determines the success of the countries is their human resource. In the recent years, we have seen a surge in the debate about population and its influence on the success (or failure) of states. Two main factors that have led to this debate are rise in infectious diseases and an unprecedented rise in the population of

Third world countries. A closer look at the impact of healthy population on a country tells us that it greatly boosts the society in general. There is a rise in social solidarity and a decrease in crime rate, suicide rate and extremist tendencies. On the economic front, a healthy diaspora means high remittances for the home country. Moreover, there is a rise in female participation in job market. The health system is faced with less burden. As far as political stability is concerned, a healthy population ensures that democratic values are promoted and is more likely to stand up against tyranny and corrupt practices. Only a healthy population can serve as an asset for a country. A population suffering from health issues is nothing more than a liability. Healthy population can serve as a vital instrument for the social, political and economic well-being of a state. Maintaining a healthy population can be a difficult task but it can be achieved easily through meticulous and concerted efforts.

The idea that the success of a country and its government's policies are determined by its people's health and well-being was first presented by Scottish economist Adam Smith in his scholarly work, "The Theory of Moral Sentiments". Building on this economic model, several countries like Scotland, New Zealand and Iceland were already working on Health-based ~~economic~~ economic programs. However, after Covid-19 this economic model has gained significant attention. Countries have realized that health of their population is the ultimate factor that can either make or break their social, political and economic systems. Contrastly, a population with poor health retards these systems and negatively impacts the growth of that country.

We generally view health in terms of individuals but what does it mean by a healthy population? Several different models have been developed by international welfare organisations and healthcare institutes. The one developed by World Health

Organisation (WHO) is the most accredited one. According to this model, a healthy population is not just the one with good healthcare indicators like life expectancy, maternal and child mortality rates. Population health is so much more than physical health. It emphasizes a population in which people enjoy healthy lives and well-being, live in safe, supportive and healthy environment as members of an inclusive society. WHO's healthier population model is based on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Triple Billion Targets that lay the basis of population health.

To get an understanding of how a healthy population defines the success of a state, let us take a look at several social, political and economic factors. Firstly, such a population creates social cohesion and solidarity. When all citizens are provided with equal opportunities for their well-being, the cause for any sort of conflict, disagreement regarding resource division is diminished. Take the example of top ranking

countries in The World Peace Index.

In this list, countries like Finland, New Zealand and Scotland are the ones with world's highest score. Interestingly these states are also among top ten among world's healthiest states. This highlights that healthy populations contribute to social solidarity and cohesion.

Another interesting fact about the social impacts of having a healthy population is that such populations have lower crime rate. This effect is explained by Biological Determinism Theory of criminology. Proponents of this theory believe that criminality is determined by the physical and mental health of an individual.

Seen in this context, one can conclude that healthy populations with relatively lower physical and mental health issues have lower crime rate.

This trend is actually observable in first world countries where equal socio-economic status and high human development index leads to a lower crime rate.

Healthy populations also tend to have lower suicide rates. This mainly relates to their overall mental well-being. Having equitable access to basic amenities of food, shelter, education etc. creates positive impact on the mental well-being of individuals, thus lowering their chances of committing suicide. Research has proven the fact that Human Development Index and some health-related factors can increase or decrease suicide rates in different populations. In most cases better health has been related to low suicide ratios (Salman Khazaei et al, Suicide rate in relation to HDI and other health related factors, 2017).

Study of social impacts of healthy population reveals that good mental and physical health protects the masses from developing exhaust and violent tendencies. It is often the people from low-income household with poor access to basic health facilities that have more chances



of adopting violent extremism. Having a healthy population means that all people have equal access to health care facilities and chances of growth. This roots out marginalization thus lowering chance for the development of violent tendencies.

It is for this reason that many countries prioritize health and food security when they devise their security policies. <sup>Counter</sup> Violent Extremism policy of Pakistan recognises this link and so it calls for paying special attention to the health and well-being of marginalized communities of Pakistan.

Healthy populations also fare better in the realm of education and research. This nexus can be understood easily by comparing the educational indicators of first-world and third-world nations. In the year 2018-19, the school dropout rate was merely 0.59%. In contrast, South Sudan, which is facing severe food insecurity and social crisis, has a school drop out rate of around seventy percent for the past decade (Unicef, South Sudan). Countries with healthy populations tend

to fare much better in terms of scientific research. A population with so many health issues never pays much attention to scientific research nor does its government have much incentive to do so.

The relation between population health and economic outcomes may not seem clear but indices like Human Capital Index (HCI) and measurement of Gender parity reveal an awful lot about their nexus. A diaspora working abroad can be huge source of remittances only if its healthy and fit. Out of a diversity of workers available, the employers hire the ones that fare better in terms of health. This criteria is often used during hiring for construction or factory workers. World Bank's Human Capital Index measures the relative productivity of populations based on their health and education. Countries lying in Sub-Saharan Africa have the lowest HCI meaning that their contribution towards the growth and development

is the poorest across the world. This is primarily due to their deplorable health and educational levels. First world countries have a high HCI which means that their citizens effectively contribute to the economic development of the country whether working in the country or abroad.

Healthy population means that the health sector is burdened less. This bodes well for the national budget as well because then the government has to allocate less resources to the health sector. Instead this budget is directed towards other struggling sectors of the economy. But one must keep in mind that this process works in a feedback loop. Countries that initially allocate more towards the health and nutrition of their people get healthy masses. They can then divert their health budget towards other sectors of development. A country that already has unhealthy population cannot risk lowering health budget. Actions like these can backfire by creating an even greater burden of undernourished and unhealthy masses.

Another economic benefit of having a healthy population is that its female population can contribute effectively towards growth and productivity. This helps to close the gender gap in job market. According to World Bank, gender parity has an exponential effect on GDP. This is interesting because women often contribute less in the job market due to their reproductive health issues. However, if governments incentivise female inclusion in different sectors and devise plans for promoting their general health, women can become an essential component of economy.

Healthy population is also a great source of innovation. Every entrepreneurship model places human creativity at its core which means that innovation is only possible contribute in it. But innovation is only possible when humans have a healthy mind in a healthy body. We cannot expect innovation from people whose mental and physical health is not upto the mark.

Here again Human Capital Index is used as a measure. According to the Human Capital Review (2023) by World Bank, Pakistan has an HCI of 0.41. In terms of creativity and productivity, this means that a child born in Pakistan is only 41% as productive as he could be if he enjoyed full nutrition and health. In contrast, countries that have better health and education facilities have higher HCI and so their citizens fare better in terms of innovativeness.

Healthy populations are resilient against both communicable and non-communicable diseases NCD. This is because such populations have better health and stronger immune systems. Also, these populations perform better against epidemics and pandemics. A plethora of research in epidemiology proves this fact. A recent example is the response of countries to the Corona-virus. Populations that had resilient immune systems showed low infection rates and mild symptoms in the infected ones. On the contrary, populations

with compromised immune systems had high infection rates and mortality count. This ultimately led to overburdened healthcare systems and their governments had to spend so much on quarantine facilities and hospitals.

As far as the relation between population health and politics is concerned, studies in public policy have revealed interesting data. It has been shown that a healthy population is more likely to stand up against tyranny and oppression. This effect can be explained through evolutionary model of social institutions. This model suggest that individual health comes before all other social institutions and functions. Only the healthy and wellminded individuals are able to think of political associations. They are more attentive towards the political evolution of their country and more responsive against political oppression.

A healthy population is more interested in its country's political progress. Again, this is because the population is

composed of individuals who know that their health and well-being is dependent on the policymaking that the politicians directly control. Research suggests that countries with social democratic regimes, higher public spending have populations with better health. This is because the public is highly responsive towards its democratic institutions and the policymakers are aware about the needs and demands of the public (Gerry McCartney, Impacts of Political Economy on Population Health, 2019).

It is important to understand that not just population but 'healthy' population is the key to a country's success - Many countries with poor human development indicators brag their population numbers but such populations are nothing more than a liability of their states. To ensure health and well-being of its citizens, governments can use social protection programs. These programs ensure that even the poorest of the citizens are able to afford basic healthcare facilities and are able to achieve highest standards of physical and mental well-being.

Food security is another important factor that can play a huge role in maintaining population health. Food security includes ensuring continuous and sustainable supply of food supplies, ensuring their quality and regulating their prices. Countries facing food insecurity have poor population health. This is often evident in the form of high maternal and child mortality rates. Children also show high rates of stunting and wasting. Maintaining food security can effectively deal with all of these issues and lead to a well-fed, healthy population.

Focusing on health awareness and disease prevention initiatives is yet another way to promote health of a population. Initiatives like these ensure that communicable diseases are controlled from affecting the masses. They also ensure that non-communicable diseases like Cardiovascular Disorders (CVDs) and Diabetes do not become endemic to a community. Unfortunately, in Pakistan most of the budget for health sector is allocated for treatment and cure of



healthcare issues - However, stats show that disease awareness and prevention initiatives cost much less than that spent on treatment - Therefore, it is beneficial if more budget is spent on disease prevention and awareness than on its treatment after it has spread among the masses.

Maternal and Child health and nutrition status are important for determining health status of a population. It is for this reason that they should be a priority in healthcare programs. Maternal health facilities should focus on their reproductive health and nutritional status both during and after child delivery. Special healthcare programs should also be available for women in disaster-struck areas. As for child health, different strategies need to be employed for children in different age brackets. Lowering child mortality rate should be the first focus. From then on, stunting, malnutrition and undernutrition are the areas that need special attention on the government's part. A little attention in these areas of health can greatly improve the health status of a country.

It is a shame that the economic models all over the world structure their goals around cumulative productivity when in fact they should understand that their ultimate focus should be human development and well-being. In this regard population health should be the first priority of every government. A healthy population can be the best asset for its country. Several social ills can be kept in check simply by investing in population health. Economic burden on the health sector can also be lowered if the population health is good. Moreover, a healthy population is crucial to ensure that political institutions of their country continue working smoothly. Steps like ensuring food security and paying special attention to health awareness and maternal and child health can greatly improve health of a population thus transforming it into an asset for its country.