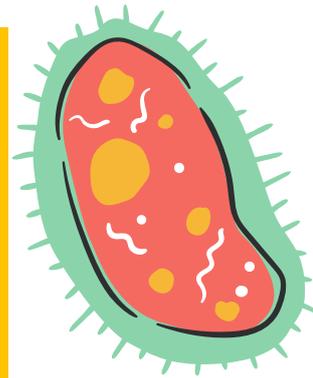
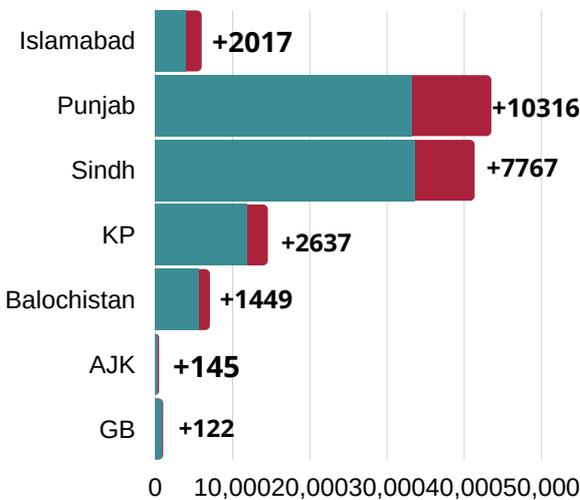


Situations like the coronavirus pandemic can quickly become a catalyst for social conflict due to misinformation, rumors and fake news, as we've seen in the past. Every day we continue to see more false information shared throughout communities, confusing citizens and leaving them unsure as to who can answer their questions.



Confirmed Cases



The **Pakistan Coronavirus CivicActs Campaign (CCC)** captures rumors and perceptions among communities to eliminate information gaps between the government, media, humanitarian agencies and citizens. By providing the public with facts, these coronavirus bulletins aim to create a better understanding of needs regarding coronavirus and to debunk rumors before they can do more harm.

Protect Yourself!

Follow these steps to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) if soap and water aren't available.
- Cover your nose and mouth (with your elbow or a tissue) when sneezing.
- Avoid crowded places and practice social distancing. If you think you have been exposed to someone with coronavirus, quarantine yourself for a minimum of 14 days and monitor any symptoms.
- Do not stockpile supplies.



Conversation with an Expert

**Prof. Dr. Asif Ali
Vice Chancellor
MNS University of Agriculture, Multan**

To learn about the best practises of universities during the pandemic we chatted with **Prof. Dr. Asif Ali Vice Chancellor** of **Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture Multan**, an avid educationist and a professor of Genomics and plant breeding.

He shared that in his lifetime he has seen many calamities but coronavirus pandemic is the most difficult situation that the world is facing. He also appreciated the efforts of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) for securing the academic year of all students by keeping universities open virtually. University of Agriculture Multan adapted to the current pandemic by conducting classes online and keeping the university open for faculty and security staff following strict social distancing guidelines. They have installed a disinfectant tunnel at the entrance of the university. All the faculty members and security persons are provided with masks, sanitizers and hand washing units installed around the boundaries of the university.

While talking about different modes of virtual education delivery, he stressed upon continuity of education and maintaining the routine. Chiefly they are using google classrooms to deliver their curriculum. They are incentivising the students by offering to pay internet subscription for needy students if they show 60% attendance in the online lectures. The students who are unable to attend the virtual sessions or continue the online education, are recommended by the university to freeze their semester securing their academic year and finances.

On talking about live classrooms and virtual classrooms, he shared that during live settings content delivery might take more time than virtual sessions. This was seen as an opportunity by the faculty members to develop more enriching sessions for the students. This has also made the checking process easy for faculty.

Discussing the post pandemic scenario, Prof. Dr. Asif mentioned that whenever in the past we were encountered with such tragedy we have made precautionary protocols e.g, during terrorism we installed security check-up points. Similarly, to combat this pandemic we will have to adopt cleanliness and public health protocols. The vice-chancellor informed us that in collaboration with Nishtar Medical College, MNS-University of Agriculture Multan is going to introduce a public health degree.

Lastly, he advised the students to not fear the current situation rather take necessary precautions to keep their family and the community safe. He further advised to serve humanity and to utilize the time effectively.

How COVID-19 is affecting Students?

What challenges are students facing during the pandemic?

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing more than 1.6 billion children and youth to be out of school in 161 countries. This is close to 80% of the world's enrolled students. There are many challenges that the students are facing during this pandemic. One of the biggest challenges is online learning. Most of the universities have directed to complete the courses within a certain timeline and also have decided for online examination, but some students do not have laptops or money to buy all day internet bundles. Some students live in far-flung areas and do not have access to the internet and it has affected them badly. Another key concern is for the science students as they need proper labs and equipment to carry their research work, but online learning has created complications for them and led them unable to find any possible solution for this. While coping with online learning mechanisms, some other challenges for the students are the lack of a proper instructor, the temptation for procrastinating, and easily being distracted.

What initiatives is HEC taking for resolving issues faced by students and education institutes amid the pandemic?

As we all are trying to cope with the pandemic, the education sector remains the most drastically impacted sector to be affected. Educational institutions all across the world are struggling to cope with this "new normal" as research experts highlight that the coronavirus tends to remain intact for approximately two more years. Although many efforts are being made to transition the conventional learning method (in-person) towards online learning, many challenges and ambiguity among students, teachers and the management is developing as to whether this is the best way forward.

Recently, students from different institutes gathered in front of [HEC](#) Secretariat Islamabad to raise their concerns regarding internet connectivity and quality of lectures in their online classes, and subsequent examinations. HEC officials assured students that their issues would be resolved as HEC is in contact with Vice Chancellors to reach consensus on examinations policy, admissions policy, academic quality, and the academic calendar during the virus pandemic. They were categorically informed that promoting students without examination was out of question as the purpose of the whole activity is to save their semester, avoid disruption in the academic calendar, and let the learning process continue. Also, efforts are afoot to address some connectivity issues faced by students through collaboration with [PTA](#) and the [Telecoms](#). Regarding their concern for fees being charged by the universities, students were told to inform HEC about any specific issue that will be taken up with the respective university.

The meeting emphasized that HEC and universities will circulate prudential guidelines on exams as well as admissions in order to ensure that the students' concerns are not ignored and every attempt is made to ensure quality of education. Chairman HEC, Tariq Banuri said: "Examinations and assessments are an integral part of the teaching process. Attempts to eliminate exams will have severe repercussions for educational quality and student achievement", he added, "Only fake degree mills issue degrees and certificates without verification". HEC is also taking measures to tackle problems faced by graduating students and has shared guidelines with the universities about thesis defense, allowing it to be online.

The Chairman also urged the Vice Chancellors to supervise and assist their faculty to streamline the labour intensive work, helping them render the online learning management system a success. "All the complaints need to be taken seriously." He informed the VCs that an appellate procedure will soon be set up to look into the complaints.

How is COVID-19 affecting students?

How is the post pandemic education being perceived for Pakistan?

Education these days—like most aspects of human life on the planet—is undergoing a period of critical transition. The traditional classroom has been replaced with a virtual one and writing assignments no more require pen and paper.

As Professor [Dr. Imdad Hussain of FC College](#), points out, that education should be a catalyst in bringing about social change and instilling a sense of social responsibility in individuals. The coronavirus pandemic is prime time to take decisive action and move towards an education system that carries the social aspect of the educative process as a significant pillar of the institution. Education must adapt to the needs of the time and become the common denominator of intellectual connection.

The pandemic has made us realize that education is no longer limited to traditional education systems relied on for years. In fact it favors an inclusive model that takes into account concepts like distant learning and e-classrooms with a focus on sustaining education through all adversities. More so than ever, the present situation is asking for nurturing social sensibilities regarding emotional intelligence, and respecting the creative abilities of both students and teachers who find themselves in a highly unconventional situation.

Another change, COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that there is a critical need to build resilience within the Pakistani education system. The current situation is a clear indication of how the country is unprepared to continue a seamless delivery of education during a crisis. Building resilience within the education system is a multi-part process, which should begin with an overhaul of the syllabi. The curriculum should be redesigned to sensitize the upcoming generations towards crises, conflict, climate change, health catastrophes. Then there is the issue of training teachers and faculty members to incorporate technology in their teaching practices. If we truly want our education to move online, we must start with making teachers of all cadres comfortable and well versed with technology and how it can be used effectively in the delivery of education.

One would not be mistaken to say that Pakistan is lagging far behind when it comes to traditional education, and we really should not be even talking about online education. The COVID crisis is another event that reminds us to be worried about our education system. It is an opportunity to examine where we have gotten to in the past few decades and weed out the mistakes we have made along the way.

Resources and Readings

[Can resilience fix mental health of students?](#)

[Adjusting study habits](#)

[Universities and post Covid-19 world](#)

[Post pandemic education](#)



What do I do if I think I have coronavirus?

Do you have any symptoms?

- **Fever**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Dry cough**
- **Tiredness**



If so, contact your doctor or the coronavirus helpline at 1166.

Where can I get tested?

Karachi

Aga Khan University Hospital

Stadium Road, Karachi

Civil Hospital

DOW University Campus
Mission Road, Karachi

Dow Medical Hospital

Ojha Campus
Suparco Road, Karachi

Indus Hospital

Opposite Darussalam Society, Korangi
Crossing, Karachi

Lahore

Punjab AIDS Lab

PACP Complex
6 - Birdwood Road, Lahore

Shaukat Khanum Memorial Hospital

7A Block R-3 M.A. Johar Town, Lahore

Islamabad

National Institute of Health

Park Road
Chak Shahzad, Islamabad

Rawalpindi

Armed Forces Institute of Pathology

Range Road
CMH Complex, Rawalpindi

Multan

Nishtar Hospital

Nishtar Road,
Justice Hamid Colony, Multan

**For more cities visit the
[COVID-19 Health Advisory Platform](#)**



Coronavirus CivActs Campaign is brought to you by
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