

ABSTRACT

Policies centered to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic have created recessionary economic impacts. Adverse income shocks have caused malnutrition and food insecurity and have increased the need for food assistance. The present study examines the impact of Covid-19 on food security and income level of households in Lahore City, Punjab, Pakistan. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews from the 384 respondents. Results show that more than two-thirds of the respondents experienced income shocks due to the Covid-19 crisis. Food security worsened, as measured by the food insecurity experience scale. The proportion of food insecure respondents increased by 44.8% and 67.7% in Lahore city, Punjab respectively, during the Covid-19 pandemic, compared to a normal period (before the pandemic). Results from Binary logistic regressions show that the low-income households and those dependent on income were more vulnerable to income shock, and had poorer food consumption during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to other respondent categories. As such, they were more likely to employ food-based coping strategies compared to those pursuing alternative livelihoods, who generally relied on savings. High-income households were less likely to experience worsened food security compared to low income group. Government national social security schemes was less likely to mitigate respondents' income shock during the Covid-19 period. The results suggest that ongoing and future government responses should focus on structural changes in social security by developing responsive packages to cushion members pushed into poverty by such pandemics while building strong financial institutions to support the recovery of businesses in the medium term, and ensuring the resilience of food supply chains particularly those making available nutrient-dense foods. Furthermore, policymakers should strengthen social safety nets and aid programs such as the Ehsaas income program in the province of the country.

Keywords: Covid-19, coping strategies, Income Level, Food security, Social Security program, FIES-Scale