

RESEARCH REPORT - GLOBAL INNOVATION IN BIOTECHNOLOGY



FUTURE OF MEDICINE

# The Awkward Middle: A Comprehensive Socio-Economic and Filial Analysis of the Pakistani Experience in 2025

The year 2025 has functioned as a watershed period for Pakistan, characterized by a profound divergence between macroeconomic stabilization and the microeconomic reality of its citizenry. For the individual navigating this landscape, the past twelve months have been defined by a complex interplay of systemic accomplishments and deep-seated structural

regrets. To understand this period requires a multi-lens analysis that views the state through the eyes of the citizen, the entrepreneur, the patriarch, and the descendant. While the state celebrates the restoration of fiscal discipline and the successful execution of global sporting events, the private sphere remains haunted by a shrinking middle class, an unprecedented exodus of skilled human capital, and a fraying social contract that challenges traditional family obligations. This report examines these dynamics, synthesizing data from political, economic, and sociological domains to provide a nuanced portrait of a nation in transition.

## **The National Narrative: Accomplishments and Regrets as a Pakistani**

From the perspective of a Pakistani citizen, 2025 began with a fragile hope anchored in political stability and judicial progress. The Islamabad High Court's successful resolution of over 15,800 cases, led by Chief Justice Sarfraz Dogar, signaled a significant attempt to restore public trust in the rule of law through technological integration and infrastructure enhancement.<sup>1</sup> This accomplishment, however, was frequently overshadowed by the persistent friction between the populist surge and the state's establishment. The incarceration of Imran Khan, who received a 17-year sentence for the Toshakhana-II case in December 2025, alongside the 14-year sentence handed to former ISI chief Lt. Gen. Faiz Hameed, created a "tinderbox" domestic political landscape.<sup>2</sup> While the state points to these as triumphs of accountability, a significant portion of the populace views them through the lens of political engineering, leading to recurrent clashes between supporters and security forces in the capital.<sup>2</sup>

### **National Security and Regional Tensions**

The most significant military challenge of the year arrived in May 2025, following the Pahalgam terror attack that resulted in 26 fatalities. India's subsequent "Operation Sindoor"—a series of coordinated missile and drone strikes targeting infrastructure in Pakistan—pushed the region to the brink of full-scale war.<sup>2</sup> This military escalation resulted in the destruction of approximately a dozen Pakistani military aircraft, including F-16 jets, and forced the nation to confront its nuclear doctrine under the pressure of "preemptive" Indian strikes.<sup>2</sup> The accomplishment of averting total war through DGMO-level talks on May 10 was tempered by the regret of exposed vulnerabilities and the continued surge in domestic terrorism.

<b>Security Indicators 2025</b>	<b>Region: KP</b>	<b>Region: Balochistan</b>	<b>National Trend</b>
Terrorist Incidents	1,500+	510+	25% Increase YoY

Fatalities (Civilian/Security)	502	202 (Security only)	Rising
Counter-Terrorism (Terrorists Neutralized)	348	N/A	High Intensity
Casualties in Military Escalation (May)	Significant aircraft loss	N/A	State Secret

Sources: <sup>2</sup>

Despite these tensions, Pakistan's diplomatic landscape flourished in certain sectors. The country's role in president-elect Trump's consultation on the Gaza situation and its potential contribution to an international stabilization force reflected a growing recognition of Pakistan's regional utility.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the successful launch of multiple satellites and the initiation of astronaut programs marked Pakistan's emergence as a player in space technology, focusing on climate monitoring and lunar exploration.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Pride and Paradox of the Champions Trophy**

A crowning achievement for the Pakistani identity in 2025 was the hosting of the ICC Champions Trophy, the first major global cricket tournament in the country since 1996.<sup>4</sup> The PCB's investment of Rs 3.5 billion into upgrading the National Stadium in Karachi and Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore represented a major infrastructural triumph.<sup>4</sup> For fans, the event symbolized the definitive end of "cricketing exile".<sup>4</sup>

<b>ICC Champions Trophy 2025: Group A Performance (Venues: Pakistan &amp; UAE)</b>	
<b>Team</b>	
India	
New Zealand	
Bangladesh	
Pakistan	

Sources: <sup>6</sup>

However, the "hybrid model," necessitated by India's refusal to travel to Pakistan, remained a profound regret. While the rest of the world played in Karachi and Lahore, the most anticipated match—Pakistan versus India—was held in Dubai, as was the final.<sup>4</sup> This diplomatic deadlock served as a reminder that even in the realm of sports, regional animosity continues to limit Pakistan's ability to fully capitalize on its hosting rights.

## **The Industrial Pulse: Accomplishments and Regrets as a Businessman**

For the Pakistani businessman, particularly those in the export hubs like Sialkot, 2025 was a year of defending global market share against a tide of rising domestic costs. Sialkot remains the engine of the "Golden Triangle," generating over \$2.25 billion in annual foreign exchange through its diverse manufacturing base.<sup>8</sup> The surgical instrument industry maintained its global dominance, supplying 85% of the world's demand for tools such as precision scissors, forceps, and scalpels.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Taxation Quagmire: FTR to NTR**

The primary professional regret of 2025 for the entrepreneurial class was the shift in the taxation regime under the Finance Act 2025. The transition from the "Final Tax Regime" (FTR), which featured a simple 0.5% to 1% tax on export proceeds, to the "Normal Tax Regime" (NTR) has introduced unprecedented complexity and financial strain.<sup>10</sup> This shift included a 2% deduction at source—a 100% increase from previous years—which trade bodies argue undermines the viability of value-added exports.<sup>10</sup>

<b>Taxation Comparison: Sialkot Export Sector</b>	<b>Previous (FTR Model)</b>	<b>New (Finance Act 2025 - NTR)</b>
<b>Tax on Export Proceeds</b>	1% (Fixed/Final)	2% (Deduction at source)
<b>Corporate Income Tax</b>	N/A (Covered by FTR)	29% (Post-assessment)
<b>Individual/AOP Tax Rate</b>	N/A	Up to 45%
<b>Super Tax (High Earners)</b>	Limited	1% - 10% (Income > Rs 150M)

<b>Administrative Burden</b>	Minimal	Complex Audits/Refunds
------------------------------	---------	------------------------

Sources: <sup>10</sup>

The business community has expressed concerns that the NTR will incentivize under-invoicing and the parking of funds abroad to avoid high domestic liabilities.<sup>10</sup> This policy shift is viewed as a significant strategic regret, as it risks reversing the growth trajectory of the very industries the state seeks to promote.

## **Energy Costs and Infrastructure Delays**

The "accomplishment" of infrastructure development in 2025 has been a mixed bag for the logistics of business. While the Punjab government utilized Rs 283 billion to complete 1,402 road schemes, the critical M-12 Sialkot-Kharian Motorway project has become a case study in mismanagement.<sup>12</sup> The project's cost surged by 264%, from Rs 22.5 billion to nearly Rs 82 billion, due to years of inaction and frequent design changes, such as the expansion from four to six lanes.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, the surge in electricity tariffs—which reached nearly Rs 65 per unit in some slabs during September 2025—forced many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to scale back operations or face closure.<sup>15</sup> While the government provided a temporary "relief" unit price of Rs 22 in December 2025, industrial associations like the PHMA argue that this is insufficient and that the persistent "free electricity" provided to government elites remains a discriminatory burden on the manufacturing sector.<sup>16</sup>

## **The Domestic Struggle: Accomplishments and Regrets as a Family Man**

For the family man, the year 2025 was defined by the "Awkward Middle"—a state where the macro-economy appeared stable on paper, but the kitchen table remained in a state of crisis.<sup>18</sup> The primary accomplishment cited by the state was "sharp disinflation," with the CPI inflation rate dropping to single digits by mid-2025 after peaking at 38% in 2023.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Disinflation Paradox**

Despite official data showing a 4.7% average inflation rate for FY 2024-25, middle-class families faced persistent cost pressures in essential "non-food" categories.<sup>20</sup> The cost of health and education remained significantly high, with health inflation at 14.5% and education inflation at 11.6%.<sup>20</sup>

Middle-Class Family Expenses 2025	2021/22 Average (Rs)	2025 Average (Rs)	Percentage Change
Monthly Grocery (Basic)	15,000	30,000	100%
Electricity (300 Units)	7,500	18,000	140%
Education (Private/Monthly)	12,000	22,000	83%
Fuel (Petrol per Liter)	120	270+	125%

Sources: <sup>15</sup>

The case of the Effendi family in Karachi serves as a poignant narrative of these times. Once a family that enjoyed annual trips to the northern areas, they now struggle to afford basic groceries like cheese or chocolate spread, focusing solely on staples like rice and lentils.<sup>19</sup> The regret for the family man in 2025 is the erosion of the middle-class dream. The "financial storm" has forced mothers to let go of domestic help and take on all household chores while fathers work multiple roles to cover rising utility bills that have outpaced stagnant incomes.<sup>19</sup>

## The Great Exodus: Brain Drain

Perhaps the deepest regret for the Pakistani family man in 2025 is the realization that his children may have no future within the country. The "brain drain" reached crisis levels this year, with 687,246 people emigrating by November.<sup>21</sup> This exodus included over 5,000 doctors and 11,000 engineers who left due to "worsening economic conditions and political instability".<sup>21</sup> While the military establishment termed this "brain gain," the loss of intellectual capital represents a long-term developmental risk for the nation.<sup>21</sup> For a father, seeing his children move abroad is an accomplishment of their merit, but a profound personal and national regret.

## The Filial Bond: Accomplishments and Regrets as a Son

As a son in 2025, the year has brought the harsh reality of "intergenerational

ambivalence"—the conflict between a deep-seated desire to care for elderly parents and the logistical impossibility of doing so within a crumbling joint family system.<sup>23</sup> Pakistan's elderly population is growing rapidly, with 17 million people currently over 60, yet the traditional support structures are "swiftly transforming into nuclear family systems".<sup>24</sup>

## The Isolation of the Elderly

The primary accomplishment for many sons has been maintaining some form of intergenerational solidarity, with 81% of survey participants noting that their parents still influence family matters.<sup>26</sup> However, the shift toward nuclear families has left many elderly individuals feeling "deprived" of authority and companionship.<sup>25</sup> Research shows that 22.9% of Pakistan's elderly face depression, often caused by the loneliness of being "left behind" as their children migrate for work.<sup>23</sup>

<b>Socio-Emotional Metrics: The Elderly in 2025</b>	<b>Joint Family System</b>	<b>Nuclear Family System</b>
<b>Authority</b>	High (Consulted on all matters)	Low (Authority shifts to youth)
<b>Mental Health</b>	19.8% Depression Rate	4.3x Higher Risk of Depression
<b>Care Motivation</b>	Sociocultural/Religious Norms	Kinship Obligation vs. Ambivalence
<b>Economic Status</b>	Shared Resources	Dependent on Remittances/Pensions

Sources: <sup>24</sup>

The son's regret is often the "silence" of his caregiving responsibilities. In the absence of state-sponsored geriatric care, the burden falls entirely on the family, particularly women.<sup>24</sup> For sons residing abroad, the regret is manifested as guilt; they attempt to compensate with "extensive medical checkups" during vacations, which often deal more with their own insecurities than the actual needs of the elderly.<sup>28</sup>

## The Healthcare Burden

The rising cost of chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension (which affect the majority of the old-age population) has created a "vulnerable consequence".<sup>25</sup> Many elderly individuals

in 2025 have been found to hide their symptoms to avoid increasing the financial burden on their children, prioritizing "more important and urgent needs" of the family over their own health.<sup>28</sup> The accomplishment of a son in providing for his parents' basic needs is often tempered by the regret of knowing he cannot provide the high-quality, specialized care they truly require.

## Synthesis: A Nation of Survival and Grind

The comprehensive analysis of 2025 reveals a Pakistan that has transitioned from the fear of collapse to the exhaustion of "the grind".<sup>18</sup> The accomplishments of the year—macroeconomic stabilization, space milestones, and hosting the Champions Trophy—represent a state that is attempting to project strength and modernity. However, these are "fragile gains" that have not yet trickled down to the individual.<sup>29</sup>

The businessman's accomplishment of global resilience is shadowed by the regret of an increasingly hostile taxation and energy landscape. The family man's accomplishment of weathering the "economic storm" is marred by the regret of seeing his children depart for better prospects. The son's accomplishment of upholding traditional filial duties is strained by the regret of an ageing population that remains "invisible to systems designed for a younger population".<sup>24</sup>

Ultimately, the past year has been a period where "going out and enjoying life is out of the question," and having "two meals a day at home has become a blessing".<sup>19</sup> For the nation to move forward from this "awkward middle," it must address the structural disconnect between its policies and its people. Stabilization without prosperity is merely delayed crisis, and the accomplishments of 2025 will only be meaningful if they can provide the dignity, opportunity, and hope that the citizens of Pakistan so desperately seek.

### Works cited

1. Pakistan's 2025: A Year of Political Stability, Economic Growth, and Global Reforms, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://na.eventscloud.com/ehome/280843/617327/?s-news-23626412-2025-12-28-pakistans-2025-a-year-of-political-stability-economic-growth-and-global-reforms601883>
2. 2025: Pakistan's biggest military escalation with India in decades ..., accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://m.economictimes.com/news/defence/2025-pakistans-biggest-military-escalation-with-india-in-decades/articleshow/126266084.cms>
3. Pakistan's Political and Socioeconomic Landscape in 2025: Key Events and Their Impacts - ALM Media, accessed December 31, 2025,  
[https://www.alm.com/press\\_release/alm-intelligence-updates-verdictsearch/?s-news-23451598-2025-12-25-pakistan-s-political-and-socioeconomic-landscape-in-2025-key-events-and-their-impacts](https://www.alm.com/press_release/alm-intelligence-updates-verdictsearch/?s-news-23451598-2025-12-25-pakistan-s-political-and-socioeconomic-landscape-in-2025-key-events-and-their-impacts)

4. Here's everything you need to know about the Champions Trophy 2025 - TRT World, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://www.trtworld.com/article/18266581>
5. Champions Trophy 2025: A landmark event set to revive Pakistan's cricketing glory, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2590781/sport>
6. 2025 ICC Champions Trophy - Wikipedia, accessed December 31, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025\\_ICC\\_Champions\\_Trophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_ICC_Champions_Trophy)
7. ICC Champions Trophy 2025: All scores, results, points table, standings and NRR, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://www.olympics.com/en/news/icc-champions-trophy-2025-cricket-scores-results-standings-points-table-nrr>
8. Sialkot country's hub for export-oriented industries: SCCI - The Nation, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://www.nation.com.pk/10-Feb-2025/sialkot-country-s-hub-for-export-oriented-industries-scci>
9. Top 10 Surgical Instruments Exported from Pakistan in 2025, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://wranglersurgical.com/top-surgical-instruments-exported-from-pakistan-2025/>
10. Trade bodies advocate restoration of final tax regime | The Express Tribune, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2557155/trade-bodies-advocate-restoration-of-final-tax-regime>
11. finance act 2025 - Riaz Ahmad, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://www.racopk.com/FINANCE-ACT-2025.pdf>
12. Historic journey of two years — infrastructural progress in Punjab - Daily Times, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1426342/historic-journey-of-two-years-infrastructural-progress-in-punjab/>
13. M-12 Sialkot-Kharian motorway faces major delays, cost rises by 264% - Daily Times, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1304009/m-12-sialkot-kharian-motorway-faces-major-delays-cost-rises-by-264/>
14. M-12 Sialkot-Kharian Motorway project delayed, cost surges by 264% - Dunya News, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/885009-m12-sialkotkharian-motorway-project-delayed-cost-surges-by-264>
15. Electricity Prices Set to Rise Again: What the New Tariff Plan Means for You - PSDI, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://psdi.org.pk/electricity-prices-set-to-rise-again/>
16. Industry decries proposed power tariff hike amid growing shutdowns - Daily Lead Pakistan, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://leadpakistan.com.pk/news/industry-decries-proposed-power-tariff-hike-amid-growing-shutdowns/>
17. Electricity Unit Price Reduced to Rs. 22 – Relief for Consumers in December 2025

Bills, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://silverlining.org.pk/electricity-unit-price-reduced-to-rs-22/>

18. Pakistan's Middle Class in 2025: Breathing Room or Just Another Squeeze? - Medium, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://medium.com/@e.edge/pakistans-middle-class-in-2025-breathing-room-or-just-another-squeeze-e87071fb7f57>

19. As 2025 dawns, Karachi family recalls a year of financial struggles in Pakistan's economic storm | Arab News, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2584914/pakistan>

20. 4.9% 30.2% 2.2% 22.4% 4.7% 26.0% 5.7% 26.3 ... - Finance Division, accessed December 31, 2025, [https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter\\_25/7\\_Inflation.pdf](https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter_25/7_Inflation.pdf)

21. Pakistan sees exodus of 5,000 doctors, 11,000 engineers, internet mocks Asim Munir's 'brain gain' remarks | World News - Hindustan Times, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/pakistan-sees-exodus-of-5-000-doctors-11-000-engineers-internet-mocks-asim-munir-s-brain-gain-remarks-101766844426672.html>

22. Brain drain: A national crisis in slow motion - GIDS, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://www.gids.org.pk/brain-drain-a-national-crisis-in-slow-motion/>

23. Understanding intergenerational dynamics and social support's impact on health and well-being of older adults in South Asia: a scoping review - PubMed Central, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://PMC11987332/>

24. Economic impact of an ageing population | Political Economy ..., accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/1332748-economic-impact-of-an-ageing-population>

25. The Elderly in the Digital Age | Pakistan Today, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/10/19/the-elderly-in-the-digital-age/>

26. Influence of Elderly parent on family dynamics: results of a survey from Karachi, Pakistan, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<http://www.mejfm.com/Feb2017/Elderly.pdf>

27. Depression in the elderly: Does family system play a role? A cross-sectional study - PMC, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://PMC2194680/>

28. CARE OF ELDERLY IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY: A PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE - Journal of Postgraduate Medical Institute, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://jpmi.org.pk/index.php/jpmi/article/view/3051/3222>

29. Pakistan | World Bank Group, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/country/pakistan>

30. Fragile Gains, Enduring Challenges: Charting Pakistan's Path Out of Poverty - World Bank, accessed December 31, 2025,  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2025/10/17/fragile-gains-enduring-challenges-charting-pakistan-s-path-out-of-poverty>