

Youth Engagement in Pakistan

Baseline Evaluation and Way Forward



PAK INSTITUTE FOR PEACE STUDIES (PIPS)

*Youth Engagement in
Pakistan: Baseline
Evaluation and Way
Forward*



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Summary of Key Findings

- The *current programs for youth are lagging in both quantity and quality*. While the youth of Pakistan wants to get engaged for positive activities, very few engagements exist especially when compared with the bulk that resides there. The existing ones are insufficient, too, in terms of their quality to bring some considerable positive change en masse. Left with no avenue to vent out their inner self, the youth are frustrated.
- The *two key channels to engage youth early on are student unions and local governments*. Both are missing or inefficient in Pakistan. Student unions are banned on the pretext of violence in campuses, and local governments are not invested in.

When it comes to student unions, efforts should be made to delink them from factors of violence, rather than outrightly banning them. Properly-functioning student unions, accompanied with guidelines, can rather help in preventing radicalism among the youth. Similarly, provincial government should devolve powers to the local governments, which can cater to the need of youth in their areas.

- *Career remains foremost priority*. Pakistan's youth are enormously concerned about their education and professional careers. Most showed keen interest in programs linked to career development and education. As if responding to this demand, most programs on youth's economic empowerment and development are initiatives of capacity building, skills training and career/professional guidance and counseling.

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Social enterprise programs are also gaining grounds in parts of the country mainly Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi.

- Besides career, youth ***in different parts of the country have different needs, reflective of their realities***. For the youth of conflict-affected and underdeveloped areas such as erstwhile FATA and Balochistan, peace and security have been the major issue. Some common concerns and challenges highlighted by youth from all four provincial capitals and the federal capital were: social and economic insecurity; drugs on campuses and lack of counseling; identity and cultural conflict, intolerant and extremist tendencies; growing estrangement from state and society; diminishing belief in politics and democracy; and low quality of education.
- ***Non-career platforms, which are critical for personal growth, are direly needed***. Lack of non-career platforms – sporting, cultural, recreational activities – sow the seeds of disorientation among youth.

Extracurricular activities in universities and colleges are dwindling compared to the need of the students. Social and community-level engagement in Pakistan is quite diverse and is largely meant to promote critical consciousness as well as peace, harmony, religious tolerance, CVE/PVE and counter-ideological responses. Some programs also strive to promote volunteerism or social work among youth.

These engagements have severe constraints in terms of outreach. For one, these are usually limited to only like-minded people, who want to vent their thoughts out. Most such activities are self-funded, made up from money donated by the youngsters. They do not want to go to donors, so as to have their own independence. But in the long-run, this restricts their scope and scale.

- ***The youth of today cannot escape the horrors of terrorism and extremism, and overcoming that should be at core of any activity.***

One, the growing intolerance, extremism, and ideological radicalism at educational campuses is one of the serious challenges facing Pakistani youth, which not only hinder their personal growth and development, but also affect, in one way or another, the country's sociocultural, economic and political outlook. Not a single factor, but a multitude of varying educational, political, socio-economic, and religious-ideological factors put the youth at risk of adopting extreme views and consequently radical tendencies.

And secondly, terrorism and war against terrorism have also impacted on youth's psychology as well as engagement in healthy activities.

As far as thematic focus of youth engagement programs on peace and harmony is concerned, a multi-level engagement is needed that should address the diverse factors that contribute in the current state of affairs. This means that the engagement for peace and harmony will be manifold and diverse like the contributing factors leading to extremism and conflict in the country.

- There is also a ***mental health crisis at educational campuses*** including growing use of drugs. But sadly there is no state-led comprehensive counseling or awareness program for students in that regard. Only few educational institutions, however, have arranged programs such as sessions on how to deal with trauma and depression.
- More physical activities like sports should also be included in youth engagement programs. For the moment, the role of

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sports is very much limited in the youth development discourse.

- ***Cyberspace offers a great deal of opportunities and risks for youth.*** While on the one hand, it is deemed a dangerous space where online radicalisation happens and youth are recruited by extremist and militant groups, on the other hand, it offers platforms of connectivity and networking, business and governance, education and learning, social media and city journalism, awareness and policy campaigning, and digital volunteerism and entrepreneurship, among others.
- ***The youth is also drawn to religious organization and madrassahs*** because of the resources at their disposal. Religious organizations are the main beneficiaries of charity and donations in Pakistan, which has helped them to develop adequate resources and infrastructure. They have, thus, more appeal to students and youth, irrespective of whether they borrow the organization's thinking. To some, it meant, ideology is overrated, and that youth are more much more attracted towards spaces and opportunities, no matter who provides that.
- At present, ***there is no coherent source of data or reference on the work the state and civil society organizations*** have been doing in this regard in Pakistan. There is need to create an ecosystem to connect the youth engagement programs.

NGOs, the key proponents of youth engagement, have to struggle for their own survival besides overcoming the negative perception around them.

Among challenges to youth engagement programs, one is linked to wrong perception about NGOs and civil society organizations. According to one observer, how effective

could be your engagement with the students who were told by their teachers to not take NGOs-led seminar seriously for they promoted Western agenda. The state has also been demonizing NGOs and INGOs, thus adding to their deficit of social credibility across the country.

The effectiveness and impact of youth engagement programs vary from project to project, also depending on who is implementing them. There are also structural factors that negatively affect the impact of these programs. For one, education is fundamental to youth development and without correcting structural fault-lines that persist in Pakistan's education system, short-term training and awareness programs would not be of much help.

- ***Left to their own devices, youth engagement programs are unable to tap in diversity in the country.*** Those who participate are among the most active, which usually happen to be those from the mainstream areas of the country.

Religious groups and other marginalized people are not much seen in youth engagement, unless conscious effort on part of organizers is made. Organizations working on youth engagement try to ensure participation of members of minority and marginalized communities. But lack of confidence as well as an element of fear hinders the latter from becoming active and effective participants of these discourses and activities.

Similarly, both governmental and nongovernmental youth engagement programs focus more on major cities and the educated youth thus leaving out most of the rural and uneducated youth.

In the absence of a state-led normative engagement – which is relatively wider in geographical scope, and more uniform

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and evenly distributed – local and international nongovernmental organizations in Pakistan have been engaging sections of youth of their own choice based on their needs assessments, research findings and resources, which has also implications for outreach and impact of these programs.

Existing youth engagement programs can be improved by inclusion of youth in the designing of youth projects and providing due importance to recommendations by the youth. That is about moving from top-down approach to a bottom-up approach by ensuring participatory youth engagement programs.

- While three provinces have passed youth policies, which itself is a major achievement, implementation on these policies is still pending. There is need to develop a decisive framework under which youth development related decisions are undertaken. The youth policies for administration units like Gilgit-Baltistan, erstwhile FATA, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir should be shaped too, and coordinated with each other.

Serious and concerted efforts are needed at the level of policymaking and service delivery to address the needs and problems of the youth– mainly linked to education, skills building and employments – and eventually make them the vehicle of national development and growth. That should happen before the youth completely lose hope in the state’s will and ability to change things for good.

Introduction

This report is an empirical account of the nature and scope of youth engagement in Pakistan and how it can be improved to yield better results and impact. It also explores, based on a comprehensive survey, Pakistani youth's emerging thinking patterns and sociocultural, political and ideological-religious standpoints, as well as challenges like violent extremism and ideological radicalism. One section, in particular, explains the ways and strategies that can be employed in effectively engaging the youth for the purpose of promoting peace and harmony and reducing the appeal of violent extremism in the youth. Finally, this report lists a range of recommendations for improving the existing programs of youth engagement, investing into less explored and relatively new avenues of engagement, and better strategizing methodologies, themes and frameworks for engaging the youth.

Being a potential and crucial age group, the Pakistani youth holds special space in any discourse that is aimed at building the state and initiating processes of positive sociocultural changes in the society. But at present, as suggested by some recent studies on Pakistani youth, prevailing ideological and socio-cultural narratives in the country lead the youth to utter confusion over the current state of affairs in Pakistan. There is also growing evidence to suggest an upward turn in politico-ideological radicalism and religious extremism among the youth, especially at educational campuses.

In this context, Pakistan's youth bulge, which should ideally serve as a tremendous opportunity and vehicle for national growth and development, is sadly being viewed as being part of the problem. This is vindicated by the fact that most youth engagement

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programs in the country consider the youth as the ‘targeted audience’.

The successive governments have been largely failing to empower the youth stakeholders in the process of national development and social change. They have indeed not been able to fulfill the two basic needs of the youth, i.e. education and employment; so what to talk about youth’s inclusion in the process of policymaking and national development.

Civil society organizations and other institutions have been working with youth – in their own capacities and with little coordination among themselves and with the state and its departments – primarily in a range of themes including leadership, political empowerment, anti-extremism, nationalism, democracy, peace and education etc. through advocacy campaigns, lectures, and engaging youth in activities such as cultural shows, etc. However, a thorough empirical examination and evaluation of such existing programming is extremely needed, mainly in terms of their outcome and impact, with a view to strategize some proper framework that can provide the fundamental context, typology, nature and content for reforming the existing infrastructure and suggesting new programmes meant to engage youth through culture-oriented and other measures.

This was the principal rationale behind the Pak Institute for Peace Studies’ (PIPS) comprehensive study of youth engagement program and this report is the outcome of this initiative.

The report largely builds upon a rigorous fieldwork that was conducted in the four provincial capitals as well as the federal capital i.e. Islamabad. As many as 126 students were surveyed through a semi-structured comprehensive questionnaire in 16 universities. Similarly, as many as 87 comprehensive qualitative interviews were conducted with relevant resource persons, and

five (5) focus group discussions were held with selected resource persons from among those interviewed.

While the last section of the report exclusively lists recommendations, largely gathered from the field, the report on the whole provides policy-oriented analysis of youth engagement. PIPS believes that the report will contribute in improving empirical knowledge base on the best possible ways and strategies of youth engagement. It also anticipates that the report will increase the focus and ability of the state institutions and civil society organizations to unfold and their potential and energies for improving determinants of socioeconomic and political development and a positive social change.

1. *Youth Engagement in Pakistan*

Pakistan has a staggering youth bulge, which can be seen as an opportunity as well as a risk factor depending on how the country educates, trains and engages them. According to a UNDP estimate, about two-thirds of Pakistan's total population is below the age of 30 years. Some 54 million of them are between 15-29 years, or 29 percent of the total population.¹

While Pakistan's youth has a lot of potential and is as energetic and enthusiastic as youth of any other country in the region and beyond, sadly their potential and energies have not properly been channelized and tapped. Indeed youth's potential role and engagement have largely been missing in human development and policymaking discourses, which has not only kept them estranged from national development and state-building but also hurt their self-esteem and confidence. The outcome is somehow reflected in the ongoing multitude of challenges the country is confronted with including in terms of negative processes of sociocultural change such as extremism and intolerance, impoverished political and democratic culture, and a dwindling economy.

The level of youth engagement in Pakistan is quite low as compared to the bulk of youth in the country.

¹ Dr Adil Najam, and Dr Faisal Bari, *Pakistan National Human Development Report: Unleashing the Potential of Young Pakistan* (Islamabad: UNDP, 2017).

At the same time, it is too deficient in quality to bring some considerable positive change en masse. There are two types of youth engagement in Pakistan. The government and public institutions mainly lead the normative engagement such as state-led civic education. For instance, the outgoing PML-N government passed National Commission on Civic Education that also included civic education in curriculum, although due to the devaluation of education to provinces after the 18th amendment, it remained restricted to Islamabad only. Similarly, the government tried to provide youth awareness on governance via different programs like National Internship Program, and the laptop scheme etc.² Extracurricular activities and other avenues of youth engagement at public educational institutions, including by youth-led bodies, are also normative.

The second type of engagement is occasional, which political analyst Zafarullah Khan called as the cosmetic engagement. It mainly entails engagement by civil society organizations. Zafarullah Khan believes that “one dosage of seminars organized by NGOs is not enough for a person whose living sociology is retrogressive or extremist.”³ Others assert that although the nongovernmental youth engagement is not continuous and extensive in Pakistan, yet it is vital when seen in the context of the state’s paltry focus on the youth. They, however endorse the view that civil society initiatives of youth engagement in Pakistan will bear fruit in the medium to long term.

This section of the report describes different levels of youth engagement in Pakistan and nature and scope of different programs they entail. It also discusses the outcome and impact of these programs and highlights constraints in the process of youth

² Zafarullah Khan, former executive director Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

³ Ibid.

engagement. The narration and analysis is built upon an extensive mapping of youth engagement programs in four provincial capitals and Islamabad.

1.1 Nature and Scope of Youth Engagement Programs

Many civil society organizations and other institutions work with youth primarily in a range of themes including leadership, political empowerment, anti-extremism, nationalism, democracy, peace, and education, through advocacy campaigns, lectures, and engaging youth in activities like cultural shows. However, the focus of these programs on various themes has also been crosscutting.

Similarly, in different regions of the country the youth engagement is, understandably, in accordance to the local context and needs of the youth. For instance, in KP's tribal districts the emphasis has been on building capacity and improving resilience of conflict-affected youth. In Lahore, the concept of social entrepreneurship has been taking roots for a while now. The concept of volunteerism is also strengthening in major cities including Karachi, Lahore, and Quetta. Similarly while in some areas there has been a heightened focus on political and economic engagements, such as in Islamabad and Peshawar, in other areas, youth was found more involved in culture, art and literature related activities such as Lahore.

A detailed description of youth engagement orientation in different parts of the country including its nature, scope, goals and philosophy is given below.

◆ *Political Participation and Capacity Building*

Some observers noted that a disoriented and aggrieved youth could easily become apolitical, which is neither good for policymaking processes nor for the development of political

culture and parties in the country. According to one resource person, students unions and local governments are two ultimate channels to engage and politically empower youth, and sadly in Pakistan both links are largely missing. Others noted that political empowerment is not only about power but also about understanding and practicing constitutional rights and responsibilities and in that regards, some organizations are working with youth.

A 2012 report by Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) had noted a clear preference among the youth for peaceful and democratic means to affect change.⁴ Only an enhanced political participation and engagement of youth can ensure that such possibilities for change remain available and meaningful including for countering radical tendencies and preventing such tendencies from taking root among the overwhelmingly young population of the country.

Several organizations and projects have been working for improving political participation and engagement of youth as well as their capacity building and empowerment.

According to Iqbal Haider, consultant at *Bargad*, Lahore, an attempt was made to revive student organizations in 2008 after Prime Minister Gillani announced that student unions will be allowed to function. Bargad had then also researched models of student unions – following the 2006 Lyngdoh Committee report in India that had provided some guidelines regarding elections for students unions – and prepared policy recommendations on how to revive them with certain qualifications, which somehow have fed into policy discourse on youth engagement programs or policies of the provinces because “we at Bargad thought to make an interface of development and politics.” Haider believes

⁴ See chapter on “Youth Radicalization,” in M. Amir Rana & Safdar Sial, *Radicalization in Pakistan* (Islamabad: Narratives, 2012).

leadership is not an event – you cannot make a leader in 5 days – therefore [primary] focus of youth engagement programs should be on producing team players.⁵

Most of the resource persons interviewed for this study agreed that political activity of any kind is a right of students, mainly at university campuses where they have already come of age. They believed it is certainly something healthy if done in a healthy way. Some, however, also contended the idea on the pretext of violence that the political organization at campuses could entail. “What we have seen is that student politics in Pakistan almost always gets violent. So, while it’s extremely important to politically empower young people, it is also needed to ensure that political student-wings won’t get militarized,” one resource person noted.⁶ Some also hinted at growing ethnic politics and violence at educational campuses.

Ayesha Gul, former member of Pashtun Council, endorsed the view saying different student councils promote ethnicity and ethnicity-based extremism in particular; they don’t celebrate diversity.⁷ Women representation in such councils is minimal, which could also be a factor in their vulnerability to the use of violence. Ayesha Gul claimed that **Progressive Student Federation** (PRSF) and **Women Democratic Front** (WDF) were largely meant to address these two problems linked to youth councils, i.e. ethnic violence and women marginalization. “PRSF is an organization for students, irrespective of ethnicity. It doesn’t encourage ethnicity but includes students who appreciate the

⁵ Iqbal Haider, consultant at Bargad, Lahore. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

⁶ Areebah Shahid, executive director PYCA, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

⁷ Ayesha Gul, Progressive Student Federation (PRSF), member of Women Democratic Front (WDF), and former member of Pashtun Council. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

neutral identity. The Woman Democratic Front (WDF), works for women's rights and stands against patriarchy; its cabinet has 20-30 members," she furthermore stated.⁸

One observer noted that as teachers lack the skills of conflict resolution and mediation, they don't dare to interfere in ethnic conflicts among students.⁹ Others hinted that student unions are not independent of social construct, and students are certainly influenced by messages conveyed by political parties via their student wings. "Islami Jamiat Tulaba, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, in the University of Punjab is an example of that," one resource person noted.¹⁰

Iqbal Haider believes that instead of using the pretext of violence to ban student unions at educational campuses, efforts should be made to delink them from factors of violence. He shared some eligibilities and guidelines his organization had prepared in 2008 for elections to student unions. For one, they have recommended that the candidates will have no association with a political party.¹¹ Similarly, Mubashir Akram proposed that initially student councils should be formed and universities, collectively, should prepare a framework of references regarding collective consciousness for student councils. "Even the state can draft framework of references and hand it over to the universities," he said adding that social, civil liberties, and media freedom are also significant for proper functioning of student unions.¹²

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Kishwar Sultana, chairperson Insan Foundation, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

¹⁰ Mubashir Akram, executive director, Centre for Social Education and Development, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in February 2019.

¹¹ Iqbal Haider, consultant at Bargad. Lahore. Interview by PIPS.

¹² Mubashir Akram, CSED, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS.

Dr Alamgir Yusufzai, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pioneer of **Young Doctors Association (YDA)**, believes that youth organizations and bodies help them achieve their rights and address grievances, which if unattended, could lead them to extremism. He said when they established the Young Doctors Association in 2012 they were warned by the administration and seniors against serious consequences, which also highlights how the youth are discouraged from taking initiatives. Now all acknowledge our positive role not only for the welfare of the young doctors but also for the humanitarian work we have been doing.¹³

In Balochistan, too, the YDA covers the range of youth facilitation programs. It helps youth to solve their socio-economic problems besides contributing in the improvement of hospital facilities. President YDA Balochistan, Dr Amal Bugti, claimed it also promotes political awareness in terms of helping the youth understand their rights and duties as citizens.¹⁴ It operates in all the districts of Balochistan. Dr Bugti also noted that Balochistan's youth is politically mature but lacks opportunities. "Bolan Youth Council is engaged in different youth awareness programs. Similarly, different Baloch student organizations aim to promote awareness among students about their rights and responsibilities," he underlined.¹⁵

Progressive Student Collective (PSC) is a youth-linked component of *Huqooq-e-Khalq* Movement, which is about people's fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution and ways and means of securing them. Dr Ammar Ali Jan, a PSC representative in Lahore, said economic equality, education, housing, health, employment, etc., are linked to fundamental guiding principles of

¹³ Dr Alamgir, Young Doctors Association, Peshawar. Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

¹⁴ Interview by PIPS in Quetta in December 2018.

¹⁵ Dr Amal Bugti, YDA Quetta. Interview by PIPS in Quetta in December 2018.

the Constitution and their implementation has implications for youth development. He asserted that PSC works to end education's commercialization, create better citizens, promote rights and knowledge, and provide future/career counseling to youngsters.¹⁶

Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (*Pildat*) has run youth parliament from 2007 to 2017 with an idea to engage and train youth in political and state-running affairs. The selected candidates were divided into two parties i.e. blue (liberal, progressive) and green (conservative), who were then exposed to parliamentary practices through simulations, besides being educated and trained about political issues, i.e. how did they understand and present bills. They were indeed provided with the ambient similar to the actual parliament proceedings where pattern of National Assembly and the Senate was followed for debates and discussions.¹⁷ Pildat's Joint Director Asia Riaz believes that the experience of youth parliament has been very useful mainly in terms of creating an understanding of politics and working of the parliament among the youth as well as in training them in the art of negotiation, conflict resolution and problem solving.

“Members of [Pildat] youth parliament are now members of the parliament and [also] in the process of state functioning. We developed a model to do a simulation, taking the provincial representation model of Pakistan's Parliament. Gilgit-Baltistan, [erstwhile] FATA and Azad Jammu and Kashmir are though not represented in Pakistan's National Assembly, they had

¹⁶ Dr. Ammar Ali Jan, Assistant Professor at Forman Christian College, Lahore. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

¹⁷ PIPS' interviews with Asia Riaz, Joint Director Pildat, in Lahore in December 2018, and former programme coordinator at Pildat Akif Nadeem in Islamabad in January 2019.

representation in Pildat’s Youth Parliament. The purpose was that these members, through the simulation of parliament, should select their leader of the house, leader of the opposition, develop portfolios, present bills on important issues, work in committees presenting reports, and engage with parliamentary committees and members of parliaments from Pakistan and abroad.”¹⁸

Akif Naeem who also worked with Pildat said that a bulk of youth earlier didn’t believe in their potential but after being part of Youth Parliament, they realized that they have untapped potential and there is a lot of space in different areas where youth can play a significant role. “They realized their responsibilities as a citizen and did not blame the state,” he highlighted.¹⁹

Similarly, in 2010, **Hans Siedel Foundation** (HSF) organized SAARC simulation exercise in terms of regional connectivity. This simulation exercise was conducted among male and female students from various universities of SAARC countries. The aim was to debate and share viewpoints on issues of SAARC youth including security, border management, and also youth engagement.²⁰

In 2018, Pildat in collaboration with the **UNDP** held pre- and post-election dialogues to understand major issues of youth and how they should be reflected in manifestoes of political parties. One such dialogue was held nationally inviting youth from across Pakistan, and a dialogue was held for Punjab as well as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa youth. The dialogue model was like the

¹⁸ Aasia Riaz, Joint Director Pildat. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

¹⁹ Akif Naeem, former programme coordinator at Pildat. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

²⁰ Akif Naeem, interview by PIPS.

assembly question hour where government officials conversed with youth. Main issues that were highlighted in these dialogues were primarily linked to socioeconomic development in respective regions and security. In post-election dialogues, youth activists were engaged to talk about their issues and suggest ways through which these issues could be highlighted in the policies of the federal and provincial governments.²¹

The ***Plan International*** engaged youth of 12-25 years old from Thatta (Sindh) and Muzaffargarh (South Punjab) to build their capacities around advocacy, leadership, project management, lobbying and networking. On the second level, a targeted section of the youth was facilitated in utilizing the acquired skills in creating advocacy spaces with policymakers, including political leaders and government officials, like meetings, dialogues, panel discussions, seminars and conferences. The objective of the project was to develop rule of business for Free and Compulsory Education Act in Sindh and Punjab.²²

Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Studies (PIPS) engages young parliamentarians of below 40 years of age via Young Parliamentary Forum. PIPS executive director Zafarullah Khan underlined that unlike the past the Parliament and Senate have invited students of various universities from the diverse regions of Pakistan. Parliament mostly engages students of universities with which PIPS has signed MoUs and the latter facilitates visits to the Senate and National Assembly.²³

²¹ Hamza Hassan, UNDP's Youth Development Program. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

²² Ms Humaira, Plan International, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

²³ Zafarullah Khan, former executive director Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has been engaging student rights activists in its various activities. For instance, it arranges human rights awareness activities with youth around issues of human rights in Pakistan, its international context and significance, and how far human rights are considered during law making. International experts are invited as speakers to discuss issues pertaining to human rights where youth activists get a chance to have a national and international perspective of human rights issues.²⁴

Pakistan Youth Change Advocates (PYCA) ran a governance program that entirely focused on e-governance. Young people from KP and Islamabad took the lead so that the ownership stayed with them. Areebah Shahid, executive director PYCA, states that under the program students of Iqra University developed an application *Speak Up*, to identify the hotspots of sexual harassment. “We are trying to link it with district government so that they can work on the collective action,” she revealed.²⁵ Similarly, the students of Peshawar University made a website named *Sadiq Online* in order to report the cases of corruption.

The **PYCA** also trained students of five universities, three from KP and two from Islamabad, on how to use **digital volunteerism** through the use of digital tools to assist and become partners of the government. According to Omer Ahmed Awan, who remained part of the project, students were educated on how the youths across the globe were using digital tools to play their role in transparency, accountability, efficient public service delivery and to enhance citizens’ participation for a democratic governance process. After this long training process, they were

²⁴ Khushal Khan, HRCP Coordinator. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

²⁵ Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

invited for a competition where they had to float their pilot projects.²⁶

◆ *Economic Empowerment and Development*

Empirical insights gathered from across provincial capitals and Islamabad suggested that Pakistan's youth is enormously concerned about their education and professional careers. The career or economic insecurity seems at the heart of other challenges confronting the youth. Which is why most of the youth is relatively more interested to participate in programs that are linked to career development and education. Many even noted that to prevent radicalism and extremist behaviour among youth, it is important to focus on their economic development and draft measures to enhance their potential skills and capabilities.

Some, however, contended the idea arguing that though it is normal to be worried about one's future, but disorientation among the youth is largely caused by some other important factors, too, including lack of opportunities to express themselves, engage in sports, cultural and recreational activities, and develop social skills. They asserted that these factors, combined with a feeling of not being stakeholders in the affairs of the state including even those linked to them, hurt their self-esteem and confidence thus affecting their professional and career development, too.

Most programs on youth's economic empowerment and development are initiatives of capacity building, skills training and career/professional guidance and counseling. Social enterprise programs are also gaining grounds in part of the country mainly Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi.

²⁶ Omer Ahmed Awan, development practitioner. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

UNDP's youth empowerment program initially aimed at socio-economic development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa youth living in vulnerable areas especially DI Khan, Bannu and southern KP. It started in 2015 as youth and social cohesion project with two components of social and economic engagements. It was a community-level engagement in DI Khan and Banun. In early 2018, the project was transformed into policy-level engagement by merging all youth-related programs of the UNDP. The rationale behind this program is that if the youth bulge is provided with opportunities of employment and social engagement, then economic and social progress of a country can be determined in a proper way. It makes youth economically independent and decreases the youth's dependency ratio.²⁷

Yusra Qadeer, Youth Engagement Specialist at UNDP, revealed some more details of the project as follows:

“It is a multi donor funded 5-year program with the total outlay of USD 20 million. The program identifies three E's as the key levers of change for the youth; the first 'e' is for education, second for employment and third for engagement. We'll be engaging 80,000 youth in the engagement pillar, 20,000 in the education pillar and another 50,000 in the employment pillar. We foresee it to be a Pakistan-wide program. Right now, the key focus is on KP, Balochistan and Sindh along with the federal capital [Islamabad].”²⁸

UNDP is also consolidating its engagement with TEVTA, or Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority, to

²⁷ Hamza Hassan, Research analyst of youth empowerment program at UNDP. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

²⁸ Yusra Qadeer, Gender Specialist at UNDP, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

improve the skills, training modules to make them compatible with the market demands. For that purpose, a member of UNDP team on Youth Development Program revealed that they will work in 2019 on how to implement ‘critical thinking skills’ module in TEVTA’s curriculum. This change of strategy will be built upon lessons learned by UNDP’s collaboration with TEVTA in Karachi, where they provided training to youth of vulnerable areas like Sultanabad and worked to provide post-training employment opportunities.²⁹

Rivets, Islamabad, works for capacity building of youth because, as its former head Haris Khaliq believes youth problems cannot be solved via dialogues only. “It is important to solve their financial issues by providing them direct employment opportunities and improving their skills,” he emphasized.³⁰

Similarly **Maimar**, Karachi provides skills training, *non-formal education* as they call it, to the youth. Saleem Ur Rehman, a center in-charge at Maimar, said that the organization had engaged some 200 students including 150 females, who have completed their skills packages; as many as 20 of the trained girls stitch clothes at their homes. “Shah Bano online business has employed at least 10 females who received training in our center,” he claimed.³¹

Samaaj is about a 4 years old youth-led organization in Lahore. It organized **Maker Faire Pakistan** in July 2017, which was a continuation of similar events held in different parts of the world. They identified approximately 100 makers from across the country, including from far-flung areas, and provided them the

²⁹ Hamza Hassan, UNDP. Interview by PIPS.

³⁰ Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in February 2019.

³¹ Saleem Ur Rehman, in-charge Maimar, Gulistan Colony Lyari. Interview by PIPS in Karachi in January 2019.

platform to sell the products they made. They also conducted 20 workshops on different aspects of ‘making’ as well as talk shows.³²

Dost Foundation in Peshawar has been engaging youth since 1992 apart from focusing on other areas such as drug control and rehabilitation, aids control and human rights.

Youth Employment Program in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa runs under KP IT Board that entails four pillars for the digital transformation in the province namely digital skills, digital governance, digital economy and digital access. Shoaib Yousufzai, who is engaged with digital skills programme, highlighted that the goal of this pillar is to provide youth with digital skills by which they can practice freelancing. Initially, the entire focus was on freelancing, with the idea to expand the flow of foreign currency in the country, and the program trained around 2,100 young people. “The Phase-II of the project broadened our spectrum and initiated “Digital Skills for All” in which we also started focusing on regular employment. We have case studies in which youth have created their own start-ups and are providing employment to others as well. Our target is to train 40,000 people over the span of three years on digital skills,” Yousufzai revealed.³³ He also said that they have an event called “Digital Youth Summit” in which the giants of technical industry are invited to tell youths about their life stories and motivate them. Others can learn from their life experiences and start networking as well.

Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) provides technical education and training to youth. According to its Chief Executive Officer Nadir Gul, they have so far provided technical

³² Sehar Mirza and Maryam Saeed, Samaaj. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

³³ Shoaib Yousufzai, project manager at KP Youth Employment Program. Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

education to 16,000 youth.³⁴ The BRSP also promotes the establishment of rural-level committees and organizations that also engage volunteer youth.

Some organizations have been venturing forth to work in the area of ***social entrepreneurship as a tool of career development***. Besides developing social skills, social entrepreneurship can provide the youth with platforms and channels that can connect and facilitate them with different organizations. Most resource persons noted that social work by youth in Pakistan is far less than in other parts of the world and that social entrepreneurship will not only improve that but also help in providing earnings. Some noted that the youth should be focused on starting from their schools, colleges and universities to the macro-level. That will also give them a level of appreciation or acknowledgement that they are doing something productive. As Pakistan does not have a lot of jobs, there is need to think about alternatives as well. Perhaps that is why entrepreneurship has been progressing in Pakistan in the recent years.

Google Business Group, Peshawar has thousands of entrepreneurs in its fold including mostly youth. Kayenat Khan, who is part of the Group, said, “we go to different universities and try to introduce the concept of entrepreneurship to youth.”³⁵

In 2014, ***Talented Youth Welfare Organization*** engaged more than 1,000 youth in Karachi’s Hijrat Colony to facilitate youth to come forward and work. The platform was also meant to “empowering [Pashtun] youth so that decisions of elders such as in jirgas don't badly effect youth.”³⁶ The organization offered skills development and adult literacy programs besides

³⁴ Interview by PIPS in Quetta in December 2018.

³⁵ Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

³⁶ Fida Ur Rehman, Talented Youth Welfare Organization, Karachi. Interview by PIPS in Karachi in January 2019.

encouraging youth to volunteer service delivery; for instance, the TYWO volunteers were engaged by political parties to install streetlights.

In Peshawar, ***Work to Empowerment*** has brought together 4 to 5 organizations under the auspices of ***Dost Foundation*** to work on youth. According to the project head Fahad Raza:

“After APS incident [in 2014] we sat together and drew contours of a ***social enterprise programme*** for the KP youth. We organized a conference in 2014 inviting people from different sides to initiate some community-level work employing the social enterprise model. Only a few people participated. Next year, in 2015, we reorganized the conference and this time 250 people participated including international delegates. Since then we have been organizing this conference every year.”³⁷ Their methodology is simple. They reach out to students in colleges and universities in Peshawar and explore their needs in professional and career development. On the next level, they provide counseling, training, and personal grooming to those students who voluntarily engage with them. The organization has provided training and facilitation to over 6,000 students in the past 5 years with the main focus on education and tourism.

◆ ***Social and Community-level Engagement***

Social and community-level engagement in Pakistan is quite diverse in terms of aims and goals and targeted audiences. This type of engagement is not specific to one city or another. A major chunk of social and community-level youth engagement is meant to promote peace, inter-faith and intra-faith harmony, religious tolerance, CVE/PVE and counter-ideological responses. A considerable number of programs are designed to promote

³⁷ Fahad Raza, project head, Work to Empowerment, Peshawar. Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in March 2019.

critical thinking, critical consciousness and social empathy among youth. Some organizations strive to promote volunteerism or social work among youth. Interaction, dialogue, training, education and awareness, capacity building, lectures, study circles, open spaces [of expression] etc. are also used as methodological tools.

Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) is an Islamabad-based organization that exclusively focuses on issue related to peace and harmony. For that purpose, it has been prioritizing engagement with youth from diverse backgrounds, particularly since 2008-09, in terms of research and analysis and planned interventions. Most recently, in late 2018, PIPS organized 5 youth camps with 150 students from Bahauddin Zakariya University and some seminars from two union councils of Multan. The purpose of these camps was to provide students with enabling environment to shed their stereotypes about each other and co-exist peacefully. In 2019, PIPS engaged as many as 185 young people from across Pakistan in 6 rigorous dialogues on issues linked to identity in political, socio-psychological, religious-ideological and constitutional perspectives, among others. In 2017, the institute held an expert's roundtable to discuss how to strategise youth engagement in Pakistan.

Similarly, ***Pakistan Youth Change Advocates (PYCA)*** is a five year-old Islamabad-based civil society organization that exclusively focuses on youth for the promotion of social cohesion, tolerance, civic participation, education, culture and heritage. PYCA engages with university youth and has developed MOUs and partnerships with higher education institutions. Their main focus has been on peacebuilding, though recently in an indirect way due to “the government’s advice to take extra care in the use of terms.”³⁸ The organization has also engaged youth in

³⁸ Areebah Shahid, executive director PYCA. Interview by PIPS.

a couple of programs to revive the historical sites and restore the historical artifacts. Similarly, a youth group employed a very simple idea of branding public transport in three cities of Hazara with the stickers that read: *Esai, Hindu aur Musalman, har Pakistani ka hai Pakistan* (Pakistan belongs to all citizens including Christians, Hindus, and Muslims).³⁹

Bolo Jawan is another initiative by PYCA that promotes young citizens' journalism. It is basically a web portal; now they have launched their online community radio as well. Youth can come on those digital platforms and share their stories pertaining to politics, sports and community-based experiences.

School of Leadership conducts a weeklong annual youth conference, Young Leaders Conference (YLC), in which young professionals from different cities of Pakistan participate. The 2019 edition was planned to be held in Lahore from 1-6 July. The idea behind the conference is to realize untapped potential of Pakistani youth. The YLC came into existence in 2002, and since then has transformed itself into a successful youth-led event. The YLC entails multiple events and highlights including skills application, simulation sessions, capacity building workshops, social events, panel discussions, story telling sessions, field visits and engagement with experts and specialists in one-on-one mentoring sessions at the conference.⁴⁰

Similarly, British Council's ***Active Citizens*** is a social leadership training program that runs across over 40 countries including Pakistan. Primarily, it promotes community-led social development and intercultural dialogue. In Pakistan, as noted by Syed Azaz Shah who remained engaged in the program, it has been engaging youth at policy level in the areas of globalization, social media interaction, and social and cultural exchanges

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ More details can be seen on the SL website: <http://ylc.sol.edu.pk>

promoting peace and harmony.⁴¹ The programme trains participants in the skills and knowledge needed to affect social change in their communities.

Individual Land, Islamabad, has different youth engagement programs entailing training and participation in media and journalism, civic engagement, Social Action Plans etc. in Sindh, Balochistan and KP. It also works with transgender youth, who are severely marginalized in Pakistan.⁴²

Volunteerism and social welfare concepts are gaining ground in youth engagement in social sector. While some employ it as a road to entrepreneurship, as discussed in the previous section on economic engagement, others see in it the development of shared experiences which are vital to promote diversity, harmony and tolerance among youth.

But the idea of volunteerism or social work is not as popular among youth as their desire to engage in professional and career related or other programs of interest. One reason for that could be that “we never educated and trained them on social ethics.”⁴³ Secondly, social workers and volunteers are also stigmatized and dubbed as agents, which is also a cause of decline in volunteerism. Nida Kirmani, professor of sociology at LUMS, Karachi, noted:

“Everyone is getting atomized, [negatively] affecting the community building and socio-psychological support. In the 1980 and 90s, there were so many unfunded social/volunteer organizations which were

⁴¹ Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in March 2019.

⁴² Gulmina Bilal, project director at Individual Land, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

⁴³ Mohib Agha, president PSO Balochistan University. Interview by PIPS in Quetta in December 2018.

later replaced by NGOs that work on funding alone and people have not yet accepted these as credible.”⁴⁴

Salman Ashraf is a Quetta-based journalist who once worked with Quetta Youth Organization, a domestic community system. Comprised of volunteer members, this community system worked to mobilize youth and help them to set direction for a progressive future. Its basic aim was to engage youths, even in charity and festive activities like blood donation, and organizing Milad in Rabi-ul-Awal etc. “Then youth organizations were active and community members preferred physical interaction over virtual interaction, but things have changed now,” he noted.⁴⁵

Youth Empowerment and Education (YED) has been doing social welfare work in Balochistan mainly during drought and floods. It has a lot of youth volunteers in the province, mainly from educational institutions. Mohib Agha, president Peoples Student Federation Balochistan University, said he accompanied about 30 other YED volunteers in 2011-12 to provide relief work to those affected by the floods in Manjhi Pur and Sohbat Pur areas of Balochistan.⁴⁶

Lahore Students Union (LSU) is a youth center for community service, extra-curricular activities and educational counseling. Activated in May 2013, it has been running on social enterprise model. LSU’s **Community Service Program** is in its fourth year, and has placed over 1,000 student volunteers at more than 70 NGOs and civil society projects across Lahore. It is also providing support and mentorship to a growing number of

⁴⁴ Nida Kirmani, professor of sociology at LUMS. Interview by PIPS in Karachi in January 2019.

⁴⁵ Salman Ashraf, correspondent Geo TV in Quetta. Interview by PIPS in Quetta in December 2018.

⁴⁶ Interview by PIPS in Quetta.

student initiatives in diverse areas of social development. LSU offers educational counseling services as well as provides training courses in public speaking, extempore debates, creative writing and expression, dramatics, music, model UN, community service and various other activities.

Founder and Program Director of the LSU Gauher Aftab thinks empathy is more important as compared to throwing money at people, and which is why they at LSU encourage youngsters to work with hand or mind on the ground so that they develop the value of human responsibility or social obligation.⁴⁷ The LSU has also been running **Youth Social Leadership Program** from the beginning. Under the program, the participants traverse a cycle. The first phase entails research, consultation with experts, finding implementation partner, and iteration or rehearsal. Then they start the project and keep perfecting and changing it. Gauheer Aftab also highlighted that LSU engaged its youth groups with Sanjan Nagar to implement in Pakistan the **Global Youth Mentorship Initiative**, a U.N.-funded project of Chinese students in Columbia that sought to provide youth-led mentorship to enhance and supplement traditional educationl curricula.⁴⁸

Department of Social Work at the University of Peshawar is also engaged in youth development programs. For one, it has collaborated with Community World Service Asia to work on capacity building of students on peace building, democracy and governance, minority rights, youth empowerment, NGOs management, leadership and communication. Some organizations such as Islamabad-based **Insan Foundation** provide psychological counseling to youth besides promoting self-awareness and addressing identity-related conflicts. The organization, as

⁴⁷ Gauher Aftab, director LSU. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

revealed by its representative Kishkwar Sultana, is currently implementing one such program with university and college students in Sialkot, Bhakkar, Faisalabad, and Bahawalpur region of Punjab. She believes self-awareness is more important and a prerequisite to peace and security; a lack of it makes youths prone to ideological radicalism and extremism.⁴⁹

Similarly, *Young Education Society* in Karachi held a 5-day long counseling camp with youth after the launch of Karachi security operation in 2013. In general, the organization claims it has engaged over 1,200 youths since 2013 in areas of culture, sports, women empowerment and education, mainly in Lyari, Sultanabad, Hijrat Colony, Korangi and Landhi area of Karachi.⁵⁰ The organization also tried to bring youths of Katchi and Lyari together to reconcile two major rival groups.

There are many small community-based youth engagement programmes going on in Lyari. One such group is **YELL**, or Youth for Education Leadership and Learning, which is composed of teenager boys and girls who work against violence, including through theatre. Similarly, *Azm-e-Naujawan* is working with youth groups including in Lyari and other parts of Karachi with the main purpose to promote peace. One reason for heightened focus on Lyari is presence of problematic group histories and violence. Main issues in Lyari are linked to peace and violence but also unemployment and education. Youth has a lot of insecurity including financial and career related. Students in institutions face lack of quality education and lack of counseling, training and jobs as the main issues.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Kishwar Sultana, chairperson Insan Foundation, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

⁵⁰ Maqbool Ahmad, Young Education Society, Karachi. Interview by PIPS in Karachi in January 2019.

⁵¹ Nida Kirmani, professor of sociology at LUMS. Interview by PIPS.

Nojawan-e-Quetta (Youths of Quetta) guides youth on how to best utilize their potential and capabilities; it has also provided financial assistance to needy youths. The organization conducts awareness and training sessions on socio-economic development and career counseling. At present, it has 10,000 members with 200 active members in the districts in Balochistan. These are connected via social media.⁵²

Some organizations are exclusively focusing on education including scientific education. For instance, The Dawood Foundation (TDF) opened *Science Children's Studio* in Karachi. TDF Studio is a space where children can explore science, mathematics, technology, and engineering, illusion with fun, and hands-on activities and exhibits. Maham Ali, consultant at TDF thinks it is important to have these learning spaces for young children according to their interests and aptitudes.⁵³

British Council's program *Dosti* (Friendship) entails multiple measures aimed at enhancing enrolment and quality of education in parts of KP. In Khyber, tribal district program has engaged 16 schools and is working to include 23 more in the project.⁵⁴

Similarly, *Jinnah Academy, Quetta* promotes education in Baloch youngsters and intends to expand its activities across all districts of Balochistan. Renowned educationist, Dr Abdul Razzaq, said institutions like Jinnah Academy can be very helpful in extending advance-level education to Baloch youths where they develop tendency to do research work and explore their abilities in their fields of interest. "But we will not remain bound to Jinnah

⁵² Wadood Jamal, social activist. Interview by PIPS in Quetta in December 2018.

⁵³ Maham Ali, consultant at The Dawood Foundation. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad.

⁵⁴ Jamroz Khan, project head Dosti, Peshawar. Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in March 2019.

Academy as we have plans to broaden our circle in future,” Dr Razzaq revealed.⁵⁵

◆ *Arts, Culture and Literature*

Though Pakistan is a diverse country with immense cultural wealth, the extremist and militant tendencies have, over time, undermined the freedom of its people, mainly youth, to unfold their creative expressions in culture and art, etc. As a result, the lack of cultural participation and similar other healthy alternatives makes the Pakistani youth vulnerable to narrow and extremist socio-cultural narratives, which are abundantly available online as well as offline.

Noting the significance of art and culture for human development, one observer noted that the only difference between homo sapiens and humans is dream and dreaming, or imagination, is not possible without art. “One part of our self is irrational and that part is only satisfied through art. Different forms of art are an art of self-discovery. Politics is required to bring peace because that creates the art of possibility,” stated Muhammad Waseem, director at Interactive Resource Centre in Lahore.⁵⁶ He also underscored that there is an anti-art and anti-music ideological discourse and we will have to respond to it in a similar way i.e. through developing counter-arguments. These different elements when combined, including dialogue, cultural expressions, and exposure to diverse interpretations will provide the youth with internal clarity.

In this backdrop, it is important to connect youth to history, civilization and cultural heritage so that they don't have an identity crisis. Study circles, open spaces such as open mikes, lectures, reading, story telling, movies and films, etc., could be

⁵⁵ Interview by PIPS in Quetta in December 2018.

⁵⁶ Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

among the media for that. A mapping of youth's engagement in activities pertaining to art, culture and literature revealed that though such spaces are present in almost all major cities but are quite limited in scope and participation. For one, these are usually limited to only like-minded people. Secondly, most of them are self-funded which restricts their scope and scaling up. Thirdly, some people are not interested in expanding and becoming dependent on donor-funds with the aim to retain their independence.

Pakistan's most prominent and historical literary circle is ***Halqa Arbab-e-Zouq***, which was established in 1939 in Lahore and has now chapters in other cities also including Islamabad. Being a representative platform of litterateurs of Pakistan, it provides young writers, poets, and novelists with space and opportunities to present their creative writings in front of senior writers for critique. It also provides them an opportunity to interact with senior writers and poets. Khaliq ur Rahman, general secretary of Halqa Arbab-e-Zouq, Islamabad said that more than 30 percent participants of their events and weekly circles are students and youngsters. In all, about 300-400 peoples are engaged with Halqa Arbab-e-Zouq, Islamabad including a bulk of youth. However, he lamented that the literary circles lacked funding and resources that made it difficult for them to scale up and incentivize the engagement of youth.⁵⁷

Young Women Writers' Forum, Islamabad is a youth forum in Islamabad that is exclusively for women writers and poets. It organizes reading and study circles and storytelling sessions with youngsters.

There is a ***Young Women Writers' Forum in Peshawar***, too, which although is for women writers but mostly has young

⁵⁷ Khaliq ur Rahman, general secretary of Halqa Arbab-e-Zouq, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

student members. Kayenat Khan, who is associated with the forum, said it is like the student wing of ***Pak Women Writing Forum***.⁵⁸ A lot of students are engaged in Young Women Writers Forum, and cumulatively a community of 500-600 people is engaged in the forum programs. The forum organizes different events on art and culture and on issues pertaining to women. For instance, in 2018, it organized an event in which a lawyer was invited who explained all the laws pertaining to harassment of women. Similarly, the forum has open mike sessions and meetings of book clubs in which authors are also invited.

Lok Virsa, Islamabad, is also providing some avenues where cultural experiences are introduced for youth.

In Karachi, people like Faisal Arayeen are focusing on art and culture for developing counter narratives for peace. He was part of ***Asia Peace Film Festival*** held in Karachi in which more than 50 organizations participated. Faisal believes that youth should refrain from sitting in rooms and instead should come out to celebrate culture and art, which will also help them evade any sort of alienation. “There is no better way to promote diversity than through inter-cultural engagement such as through food, dress, folklore/stories, etc,” he underlined.⁵⁹

Similarly, ***Aahang Kada*** (Abode of Harmony) runs a music school in Islamabad that engages youth to promote peace and harmony through music, cultural events, and literary festivals. Established in 2016, the school is headed by Bilal Khan, a Tabla Nawaz or drum player from Malakand division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Bilal Khan thinks through art and culture we can disengage youth from extremist activities and ideologies that are disrupting the social fabric of society. In January 2017, on the

⁵⁸ Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

⁵⁹ Faisal Ali Arayeen, youth activist and international volunteer.
Interview by PIPS in Karachi in January 2019.

school's first anniversary, more than 1,000 people attended the musical and cultural event it held. At Ahang Kada, students or individuals from different backgrounds and age groups are getting education on classical music, folk music and musical instruments. The school administration is planning to upgrade the school to a registered degree-awarding music academy.

Others working on youth and music in Islamabad include Wajeeh Nizami and Tajdar Zaidi (Rang School, in F-8 sector), Kamal Mehsood and Jahanzaib Alam (Loke Virsa, Pak-German), Ali Hameed (Aman qlaab, Rawalpindi) and Safeerullah Khan (Bani Gala).

Alhamra Arts Council, Lahore has some youth-focused programs. It manages *Alhamra Unplugged*, like Coke Studio, which attracts youth from universities and colleges and elsewhere. Similarly, *Voice of Punjab* is another youth-based program that entails singing competitions among students and also folk, classical young singers at the divisional level; the mega event is held in Lahore. *Alhamra Performing Arts Academy* has been providing skills training in painting, drawing, sculpture, music, dance, and calligraphy since 1950s. Zulfiqar Zulfi, deputy director at AAC Lahore, said they are going to update it as Alhamra School of Performing Arts to initiate degree classes.⁶⁰ They also hold *Young Artists Competition* of painters in April every year. Artists from across Pakistan submit their work and there are 10 awards or prizes.

Director Culture, KP government, Shahbaz Khan claimed that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the only province of Pakistan that has maintained a cultural policy since the establishment of Pakistan, even at a time when federal government did not have one.⁶¹ He observed that the KP government always sought youth's input on

⁶⁰ Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

⁶¹ Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

cultural policymaking through their participation in conferences held for that purpose. He also revealed that they provide a platform to youth to develop linkages between classical and contemporary Pashtu literature. Also they are running a programme since 2015 titled ***Revival of Indigenous Cultural Heritage***, which has more than 75 percent youth participants.

For the last 5–6 years, many so-called ‘***open spaces***’ are opening up in Lahore and other major cities, which is a welcome development in terms of engaging youth. Olomopolo, Hast-o-Neest, The Last Word, and Faiz Ghar are among the most prominent ones in Lahore. Lahore has also recently established a culture of open mike or mic, where youth from diverse backgrounds are welcomed and encouraged to express themselves through different forms of art, literature and cultural expressions.

For instance, ***The Last Word*** in Lahore has an open mike session where participant youths talk about different subjects and sing. Owner of The Last Word, which is indeed a book house, said: “[The participating youth] talk to themselves and among themselves that creates apathy and human relationship. They feel in control and develop shared experiences, which makes them strong, tolerant and progressive.”⁶²

Similarly, ***Olomopolo Media is*** a volunteer organization based in Lahore that runs across cultural art forms, and also arranges *Open mike nights* for mainly young people who want to read poetry, sing, dance, or say something. Iram Sana, who leads the initiative, said it is sort of democratic platform where equal time is offered to all participants. It is held monthly or bimonthly and offers a space to around 50 people. Those who wish to participate can connect through social media, but the event outreach is limited,

⁶² Aisha Raja, The Last Word, Lahore. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

and is not broadcasted on social media.⁶³ Olomopolo also holds sessions of *OloTotolo*, which entails interactive storytelling, arts and craft and live music activity for young children as well as people of all ages.⁶⁴ It also trains youth to become actors including physically challenged people and minority youths.

Iram Sana of Olomopolo also asserted it is important to connect such open spaces to larger youth bodies such as colleges and universities and that her organization was always willing to do that. Already, they take their would-be-performers to universities, make them speak about the project (play for instance) and motivate students to come as audience. Youth is inspired, especially when renowned actors speak about it, she underlined.

Similarly, ***Faiz Ghar*** is an interactive open space in Lahore. The foundation aims to take further ideology of celebrated poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz and arranges poetry lectures, book launches, and classes of yoga, theater, classical music, and art. Sara Qureshi, who leads the organization, said several student bodies are connected with Faiz Ghar including from FC, GCU and UET. “Promotion of peace, harmony and art and culture is what we promote with youth as Faiz’s ideology,” she underscored.⁶⁵ Faiz Ghar also organizes an annual festival for which it engages around 80 students for one month, who coordinate sessions and escort delegates.

Hast-o-Neest, which was established in 2010 as a trust in Lahore, aims to promote academic, cultural and art heritage. It has four areas of focus including art, architecture, philosophy and

⁶³ Iram Sana, Olomopolo, Lahore. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

⁶⁴ Minahil Tariq, “For the love of performing,” *The News*, May 18, 2014.

⁶⁵ Sara Qureshi, Faiz Ghar. Interview by PIPS.

language. Methods employed for education and training of participating youth include classes, study circles, exhibitions, lectures, celebration of tradition, and training including of skills such as calligraphy. There are also study circles of literature on traditions including books, biographies.⁶⁶

There are about seven to eight major book clubs in Lahore. Sara Qureshi noted that once these were in educational institutions but now the culture is reviving as privately but is still in limited form.⁶⁷ In public educational institutions, however, the culture of book reading needs revival, which is not about reading syllabus books. One college professor noted libraries in colleges and universities hardly issue books to students, because the library in-charge is so protective. That is despite these libraries extract huge funds from the governments.⁶⁸

Readings, Lahore provides books on different views and opinions, according to its general manager Amir Riaz.⁶⁹ Aisha Raja runs **The Last Word**, an independent bookstore in Lahore, which she says is a business, but also provides youngsters a place to read, have coffee, sit, chat, interact. Ms Raja believes that that is how community of youth develops when secure places are provided to them to interact and express themselves.

Like Lahore, the culture of study circles is reviving in other cities as well mainly including Karachi, Islamabad and Peshawar. In Quetta, too, literary circles are active but relatively to a lesser extent.

⁶⁶ Taimoor Khan, Hast-o-Neest. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

⁶⁷ Sara Qureshi, Faiz Ghar, Lahore. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

⁶⁸ Amjad Tufail, associate professor of psychology at Govt. Islamia College Railway Road, Lahore. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

⁶⁹ Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

Aahang Kada, Islamabad, also runs an informal study circle in which more than 25 people from diverse backgrounds, including students from universities and madrasas, writers, social activists and *ulema* are engaged. Farnood Alam, who leads the circle, thinks that with direct interaction, tolerance level is increased and reading books, poetry and fiction etc. is very helpful in denying extremist thoughts and ideologies. Still their study circle is informal but they are trying to transform it into a formal and registered one so that they can do their work in a more frequent way to engage the youth.⁷⁰

The Enlight Lab in Peshawar undertakes to enlighten youth through progressive and pluralistic approach. It specifically engages fresh graduates and university students in study circles through the use of technology, besides arranging conferences and seminars. Currently, the organization is implementing a project on pluralism named *Rethink Peshawar*, which entails digitalizing Peshawar museum. For one, it is launching Buddha's story on a mobile application to provide the youth different lessons on pluralism and social harmony. The project is focusing Peshawar, Charsadda and Nowshera.⁷¹

Art and culture related extracurricular activities in universities and colleges are dwindling compared to the bulk of youth they host. One observer noted that only some educational institutions, and not all, have such activities – though only optional – mainly including those which have a history of being hubs of literature and progressive movements.

Renowned scholar Dr. Tariq Rahman agreed that there is a need to improve extracurricular activities in educational institutions.

⁷⁰ Farnood Alam, writer, speaker and social activist. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in December 2018.

⁷¹ Shafiq Gagyani, social activist, Peshawar. Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

He, however, noted that his university, Beaconhouse National University, arranges a kind of festival entailing fun activities such as musical programs, small stage shows, quizzes, and food stalls. Also, there is a department called School of Visual Art and Design (SVAD) where regular programs are held including lectures and discussions with experts, displays of artists' work. He suggested adding sports, literature, qawwali, etc., to ongoing activities in his institution.⁷²

◆ ***Religious and Ideological Domain***

Religious scholars, leaders and organizations are also engaged in programs implemented by civil society organizations. First, the former believes that peace and harmony is their domain, especially when extremism and militancy in Pakistan are largely linked to religious thought and related factors. Secondly, other organizations and local and foreign donors also want to engage religious scholars and leaders, as well as clergy and madrassas, to promote interfaith/sectarian harmony, freedom of faith and tolerance of diversity, mainly due to the public appeal and influence of larger religious discourse.

At the same time, religious organizations also carry out different activities including social welfare work independently; social work is indeed among their key themes for which they collect huge funds and donations and largely engage youth.

Religious organizations and madrassas are the main beneficiaries of charity and donations in Pakistan. One observer noted that religious organizations, including charities, have adequate resources and infrastructure so people listen to them. They have more appeal to students and youth, even if they don't undertake

⁷² Dr. Tarqiq Rahman, Dean, School of Education at Beaconhouse National University. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

indoctrination. The money and resources they have simply help them attract and sustain their engagement.⁷³

Some other observers also noted that ideology is overrated and youth are more attracted towards spaces and opportunities. They want to develop competencies to become more useful socially and personally. One noted that most of lower middle and middle class students who remained engaged with Jamaat (Islami Jamiat Talaba) learned competencies of networking, public dealing, negotiation etc., and are now running private schools including chains of Dar-e-Arqam and Punjab Schools. Therefore, whoever creates spaces and opportunities, youths will go there, be it Jamaat or someone else. Iqbal Haider outlined that in Gujranwala district, his organization Bargad studied some 210 girls madrassas and there were 25 madrassas having degree programs. About 75% madrassa students wanted to earn the skill of beauty parlor.⁷⁴

A PIPS study in 2010 had noted that almost all religious organizations in Pakistan, including extremist/militant groups, maintain separate youth and student wings. Media organs of religious organizations and militant groups keep a deliberate focus on youth and play a pivotal role in attracting youth to join their causes.⁷⁵ For one, publications by the militants/extremists, as well as religious organizations and madrassas, have a specific target of influencing the minds of children, youth and women.⁷⁶ Secondly,

⁷³ Gauher Aftab, director LSU. Interview by PIPS.

⁷⁴ Iqbal Haider, consultant at Bargad. Lahore. Interview by PIPS.

⁷⁵ Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), *Understanding the Militants' Media in Pakistan: Outreach and Impact* (Islamabad: PIPS, 2010), 186.

⁷⁶ For instance, Jaish-e-Muhammad's monthly *Ayeshatul Binat* for women, weekly *Musalman Bachay* for children and monthly *Al-Marabatoon* for youth; Al-Amin Trust's (new name of banned Al-Rashid Trust) weeklies *Bachon ka Islam* (Children's Islam) and *Khawateen ka Islam* (Women's Islam); Jamaatud Dawa's monthly *Nanhay Mujahid* (Young Mujahid; for children), *Rozatul Atfal* (for

Internet and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have provided new avenues to Islamist extremists, and their supporters and apologists to propagate and justify their violent ideologies and get recruits and financial support.

The rationale of engaging religious scholars and leaders and madrassas in the programs meant to promote peace, harmony and CVE, etc., is built upon the idea of countering extremist narratives from within. The approach takes the religious scholars and clergy in both ways, as part of the problem and solution, and engages them either way to promote peace and harmony among them and/or through them.

Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), an Islamabad-based think-tank, was among the pioneer organizations, which systemically engaged religious scholars, leaders and madrassas. PIPS did that in support of democracy and constitutionalism, to counter the appeal and ideology of violent extremist groups including through academic/intellectual narratives-building, and for promoting inter-faith and intra-faith harmony dialogue and interaction, etc. The institute started this engagement in 2011 and it still continues. PIPS built the rationale of this engagement on some fundamental issues attached to the larger religious discourse, which also greatly influences the public opinion in Pakistan. First, construction and propagation of political views in this discourse—both national-level views and worldviews—is mostly carried out in religious and sectarian perspectives. Secondly, this larger religious discourse had been providing a lot of space to the extremists and militants, until recently, either by supporting them or being silent. Thirdly even though a number of Islamic scholars from all schools of thought exist in this larger discourse and they condemn religious radicalism openly, still their view is not properly presented or publicized. Fourthly, there is a glaring absence of a

children), *Zarb-e-Taiba* (for youth and students), and Monthly *Tayyibaat* (for women), etc.

network of such individuals whose work focuses exclusively on countering the spread of religious radicalism and extremism in the Pakistani society. Finally, and most importantly, people generally don't accept ideological/religious narratives coming from non-religious or secular people, including those meant to counter extremist ideologies and narratives.

In this backdrop, PIPS held in 2011 and 2012, a rigorous intellectual and legal/academic dialogue among credible religious scholars and doctors of Islamic law that focused on concepts, legal rulings, tradition and history of Islam that the ideologues of extremism and violence misinterpreted and used for justification of their use of violence. Two of these series of dialogues focuses on the concepts of *takfeer* and *khurooj*, and democracy and man-made legislation, respectively. Since then, the Institute has been engaging religious scholars, and madrassa students in a range of activities for the promotion of counter-narratives, harmony, dialogue, inter-community interaction and shared experiences, etc.

Similarly, ***Peace and Education Foundation (PEF)***, exclusively engages in religious/sectarian domain for the promotion of sectarian harmony, peace and coexistence among communities. The PEF has also extensively focused on madrassa students and developed some curriculum-related content in collaboration with some madrassas for the purpose of promoting peace and harmony.

Muslim Students Organization Pakistan strives to dominate Islam and stabilize Pakistan. Its Peshawar chapter has 500 students as members who belong to Peshawar and its periphery. President MSO Peshawar Muhammad Amin Ullah believes this is a continuous struggle and needs training of Pakistani youths according to Islam. "Our trained youths have humanistic, Islamic character; they are not rogue and don't have bad character," he

asserted.⁷⁷ Amin regards the conventional student organizations at colleges as the ones with vested interests, which cannot be seen as beneficial for students.

Similarly, ***Musafvi Students Organization*** claims to have been striving for peace and knowledge. “We advocate dialogue. Our leader Dr Tahirul Qadri has told us that there are 4 stages of lawlessness and hatred including extremist thought, narrow mindedness, extremism, and terrorism. We want it to stop at the first stage,” central provincial president of the organization for KP Syed Misbah Noor underscored.⁷⁸ In the province, the organization has over 1,000 active members. They hold several activities in Peshawar University with the permission of Vice Chancellor. The organization engages youth in healthy activities. For one, it organized a ‘bicycle peace rally’ in 2016 from Karachi to Peshawar. The rally was also meant to commemorate the martyrs of Army Public School (APS) attack.

Hafiz Allauddin, Vice President, Ittehad-ul-Madaaris Al-Arabia Pakistan, is heading ***Sustainable Peace and Development Foundation*** in Quetta, which primarily focuses on peace, reconciliation, interfaith harmony, interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance but also works to promote art, culture and sports among youths. He believes that youth programs should focus on three aspects of education and training i.e religion, ideology, cultural and social engagement.⁷⁹

◆ ***Focused on Gender, Minorities and Disabled***

Organizations working on youth engagement try to ensure participation of members of minority and marginalized

⁷⁷ Muhammad Amin, president MSO Peshawar. Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in March 2019.

⁷⁸ Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in March 2019.

⁷⁹ Interview by PIPS in Quetta in December 2018.

communities. But the element of fear hinders the latter to become active and effective participants of these discourses and activities. One resource person emphasized that mainly it is the fear of being accused of blasphemy that restricts and makes minority communities over-cautious in their interaction and discourse with Muslim youth. Yet, civil society should work to increase the representation and participation of youth belonging to minority religions and give them confidence. It was suggested that one way to improve their confidence is to engage the social leaderships of minority communities exclusively.

Naumana Suleman, a member of *DCHD* team in Lahore, has remained engaged with Christian youth through church activities. She believes that it is important to create awareness among minority youth or faith communities about their constitutional or legal rights, and how to integrate in the social fabric that is largely discriminatory. But it is also important to engage majority youths from where violence could largely originate, she noted.⁸⁰

Various needs or problems of religious minority youth can be counted including their educational, social, security-related, and psychological issues. First, syllabus and environment in educational institutions and behaviour of teachers towards youth of minority faiths needs to be corrected. That will help in restoring minorities' confidence in the state system and society. Secondly, as cited earlier, most youth belonging to religious minorities feel insecure due to a persistent threat of persecution and violence that they confront on a daily basis. Thirdly, they need economic empowerment through equal opportunities and jobs; even 5% quota specified for them is not properly

⁸⁰ Naumana Suleman, Democratic Commission for Human Development (DCHD). Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

implemented, one resource persons noted. Finally, they also have psychological needs in terms of counseling.

Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) has been providing training to minorities' youth groups on their constitutional rights, issues and solutions to resolve these issues.

Rivets is an Islamabad-based organization that is planning to prepare a youth engagement program for United Nations (UN) that will ensure minorities and women's engagement in social development.⁸¹

The **DCHD** mainly focuses on human rights issues and has also been engaging girls on different aspects linked to rights and security. Recently, it has engaged 13-17 year old girls with the Girl Guides Association. That entailed education and awareness camps in Murree on different themes such as discrimination, child rights, responsibilities, child sexual abuse, and child labor. The organization has also engaged in the past about 270 students from 10 colleges, and 2 universities in South Punjab on the issue of extremism.⁸²

Sana Durrani, Chairperson **Balochistan Women Business Association**, believes women's participation in household decision-making will be strong if they financially contribute at home. Her organization has engaged around 25,000 people in Quetta, Pishin, and Qilla Saifullah districts of Balochistan for the main purpose of women empowerment mainly focusing on awareness programs in educational institutions. With the support of GIZ, Balochistan Women Business Association has been conducting vocational trainings. It is the very first time in Balochistan that girls are having exposure to e-commerce and

⁸¹ Haris Khaliq, civil society leader and poet. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in February 2019.

⁸² Tanveer Jehan, DCHD. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

vocational skills. Around 5,000 women are members of the Balochistan Women Business Association.⁸³

While *Young Women Writers' Forum* in Islamabad and Peshawar provided exclusive spaces for young women writers, *Aware Girls* in Peshawar held open discussions to critically review 'controversial' books, among other things. "We discuss[ed] the framework of society as discussed in those books. We discuss[ed] the extent of truthfulness and falsehood in such books," Ms Kayenat, who was part of the program, explained.⁸⁴ Dr Khadim Hussain, MD at Baacha Khan Trust Education Foundation, observed that the idea behind the Aware Girls was to engage young girls in cultural and social activities. It also comprised of music and trainings and lasted for around five years.⁸⁵

Similarly there are some organizations exclusively focusing on youth with disabilities. Hafiz Muhammad Ashraf Khan is general secretary of *Persons with Disability Organization* in Karachi. He is himself a person with disability. After having worked independently for the welfare of persons with disability, he joined this organization 10 years before. He said people usually prefer to give ration, money, and clothes to the disabled but no one is concerned about a permanent solution as to how to make them useful citizens. At the PDO, they provide skills to uneducated disabled persons at their auto workshops; thus far they have rehabilitated 10 such people, which means a livelihood for 10

⁸³ Sana Durrani, chairperson Balochistan Women Business Association. Interview by PIPS in Quetta in December 2018.

⁸⁴ Kayenat Khan, Young Women Writers' Forum, Peshawar. Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

⁸⁵ Dr Khadim Hussain, Bacha Khan Trust Education Foundation, Peshawar. Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

families. They do not have financial support or funds and are managing everything on volunteering and self-support basis.⁸⁶

Hafiz Ashraf believes there are many professions which can help disabled youths to live an independent life including sewing, auto workshops, music, dance, teaching, etc. He said there are more than 1,000 disabled persons in Lyari alone, mostly affected by polio. About 500 of them are registered with their organization including 150 women. That also validates the need to raise awareness about polio vaccination.⁸⁷

A **Rotract Club** in Karachi, “Garden”, also supports disabled communities besides arranging community support camps such as medical camps. According to social activist Sajid Ali, Garden is a community-level Rotract Club, while there are others also on the level of universities and colleges.⁸⁸

Balochistan Transgender Intersex Community (BTIC) is one-year old organization, which is working for the rights of the transgender in Quetta where the community has 35 registered members. Komal Afridi, who leads BTIC, said there is a need to initiate skills-training programs for transgender community in Quetta on the lines of ones being run in Peshawar.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Hafiz Muhammad Ashraf Khan, secretary general at Persons with Disability Organization, Karachi. Interview by PIPS in January 2019.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Interview by PIPS in Karachi in January 2019.

⁸⁹ Interview by PIPS in Quetta in December 2018.

1.2 Outreach, Impact and Constraints

By scaling up normative engagement, including the one in educational institutions and district governments, as well as civic engagement, the state can significantly enhance the outreach of youth engagement. Most resource persons underscored that only the state can reach out to the youth bulk as it has the requisite infrastructure for such an engagement at various levels.

Secondly, both governmental and nongovernmental youth engagement programs focus more on major cities and educated youth thus leaving out most of the rural and uneducated youth. For example, one resource person from Peshawar noted that only a limited number of youth, and that too repeatedly from IM Sciences and the University of Peshawar, is engaged in such activities. Others also agreed that rural and marginalized youth from far-flung areas is hardly engaged, and do not have resources to access such opportunities in major cities.

Thirdly, in the absence of a state-led normative engagement – which is relatively wider in geographical scope, and more uniform and evenly distributed – local and international nongovernmental organizations in Pakistan have been engaging sections of youth of their own choice based on their needs assessment, research findings and resources. For instance, there has been a growing focus of CVE and related programs on youths of south Punjab in recent years, despite the fact that there is little empirical evidence to suggest that youth from that particular region is more radical than youth from other regions of the country.

Fourthly, in particular, the youth engagement in areas of art, culture and literature is very limited and confined to only those young people who either have interest in or want to adopt one of these fields as their careers. For instance, most people running ‘open spaces’ in Lahore, such as open mikes or study circles,

revealed that the participation was at an average 50 to 60 people in one event. So in a way these are ‘closed’ and not ‘open’ spaces where likeminded people get together to freely express themselves. These are also ‘closed’ places because participants of these events, for instance entailing singing or performing arts, perhaps feel threatened to do the same publicly. That also highlights the direction of sociocultural changes underway in mainstream society, including among youth, which is apparently largely negative and only mildly positive. Perhaps which is why one resource person noted that there is the need to engage the larger chunk of youth including at educational campuses instead of ‘following’ those few who are already convinced to attend events of art and culture etc.

Yet, these programs of art and cultural engagement have a significantly positive impact on the youth and should not only continue but also expand and connect to larger youth programs. One observer even asserted that youth specific institutes like cultural centers should be in abundance to engage youth on similar themes of art and cultural expression.

However, among all levels of youth engagement discussed earlier in the report, political level engagement with youth is relatively more comprehensive, and is also largely connected with youth issues. Similarly social and economic level engagements may attract more attention of youth but are relatively restricted in their outreach.

As far as effectiveness and impact of youth engagement programs is concerned, these vary from project to project and also depend on who is implementing them. There are structural fault-lines also that negatively affect the impact of these programs. For one, education is fundamental to youth development. “Without correcting structural fault-lines that persist in Pakistan’s education system, short-term training and awareness programs would not be

of much help,” one LUMS professor underlined.¹ Almost all academicians and educationists interviewed for this study agreed to this viewpoint in one way or another.

Another observer assessed that with the current pace and methodology of youth engagement, Pakistan will have to wait for at least next 20-25 years to see outcomes of efforts on civic education, society transformation and youth development.²

Some suggested to assess the outcome of these programs through looking at the tangible change that they have brought on the ground. For one, a social activist from Peshawar argued that while cases like the lynching of Mashal Khan are still happening in KP universities,³ it is very difficult to suggest the effectiveness of the programs we are running there.⁴ Others, however, contended that such incidents even made it more vital to increase the frequency and cope of such programs.

Meanwhile most people interviewed for this study and who ran some youth engagement program felt satisfied with the outcome and impact of their initiatives. While outcome of some programs is also visible in policy discourse, as shared by some observers, as well as on the ground, others mentioned evaluation is not an easy task to do and there are capacity as well as ‘faking’ problems. For instance, according to Farooq Khan, who works for Khadim Al-Khalq Foundation, although many youth-focused programs are underway in erstwhile FATA but their impact and effectiveness is not as is reported. “If you read their [project completion or evaluation] reports, it seems that they have made the targeted area

¹ Nida Kirmani, professor of sociology at LUMS. Interview by PIPS.

² Zafarullah Khan, former executive director Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS.

³ Mashal Khan was killed by fellow students at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan in 2017 on the accusation of blasphemy.

⁴ Shafiq Gagyani, social activist, Peshawar. Interview by PIPS.

paradise but the results or change on the ground are different,” he furthermore shared.⁵

However, another observer from erstwhile FATA acknowledged that the contribution of youth engagement programs was getting positive response from the communities as well. “This is because we started our work when Talibanisation was emerging in the region and youth of our area were joining militant groups. Public schools were not operational. We talked to private schools [for fee waivers] and also generated funding from the community and enrolled around 50 students in these schools,” revealed a Peshawar-based social activist.⁶

Pildat representatives stated that during the PPP government Prime Minister Gillani contacted them to send youth parliament members to give input on youth policy. They also shared that many participants of their youth parliament later became parliamentarians. Pildat and UNDP’s pre- and post-election (2018) dialogues also helped in incorporating youth’s input and concerns in policy discourse. Similarly, provincial youth policies, mainly of Sindh, adopted recommendation made by Bargad, according to Iqbal Haider.⁷

Social development programs have the ability to learn from their own process. Some supported the idea of monitoring and evolution based on engagement level rather than impact assessment or figures. “Cheating can be done in impact assessment but not in the process of engagement,” one noted

⁵ Views expressed in a focus group discussion held in Peshawar for this study.

⁶ Farooq Afridi. Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

⁷ Iqbal Haider, consultant at Bargad. Lahore. Interview by PIPS.

asserting that the process of engagement of youth should be assessed before Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).⁸

PYCA director claimed that in the last five years they reached out to about 35,000 people directly through their interventions including 10,000 students who further reached out to their communities directly. “I don’t know how do you want to measure effectiveness of these programs, but, most certainly, these programs do have a huge impact. We have seen students coming back to us in the last five years with ideas in which they are not asking for funding because they are very self-driven. They come to us for technical backstopping and support,” she explained.⁹

Some underscored the significance of these programs in bringing social change. Once the youth have gone through a certain level of capacity building they express greater degree of civic sense and responsibility and their way of looking at things changes. Especially, since such programs give a lot of life-changing confidence to female youth and students, whose road to higher education institutions and jobs is restrained in many ways.

Others highlighted the role of these programs in developing critical thinking, cognitive opening and sociopolitical educative tools among the youths. “With the help of all these programs, a critical mass of youth emerged who had critical thinking and who could use their skills to permeate their own thoughts and to express themselves. I know many young girls and boys who were not politically or socially engaged earlier, but after going through these programs, they made their own organizations, took initiatives and worked in their respective areas,” noted Dr. Khadim Hussain who leads Bacha Khan Trust Education Foundation in Peshawar. He further revealed that 5,000 students

⁸ Mubashir Akram, CSED, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS.

⁹ Areebah Shahid, executive director PYCA. Interview by PIPS.

had passed out through their programs and 25 percent of all these youth appeared as critical mass with a sense of critical thinking.¹⁰

There are many problems and constraints also attached to the implementation of youth engagement programs, which also affect their results. Some of these problems are general, which may affect all types of civil society engagements, but some are exclusive to youth engagement.

For one, there are restrictions on the use of certain terms and concepts. Areeba Shahid noted revealed they used to brand one of their flagship programs as ‘peace-building program’ earlier. But recently, because of the advice coming from the government, they had renamed it as ‘civic cohesion program’.¹¹ In certain regions, NGOs have to obtain no-objection certificate from local administration to operate and implement their programs.

Some resource persons highlighted that the state did not encourage youth engagement programs that entailed soft content, and instead they emphasized on tangible content delivery or development work. Others said that they understood that educating and ‘indoctrinating’ youth was a state’s prerogative but sadly the state had failed on that front; first it was reluctant to take up the role and secondly the kind of education it has been providing to youth has only developed with a regressive and divisive mindset. Few highlighted that religious groups had relatively more freedom to engage youth and deliver soft content than the so-called secular civil society.

If state refuses to take up its role, then as I.A. Rehman underscored, those who want to engage youth will come with their ideologies and try to impose them on youth. He emphasized

¹⁰ Dr Khadim, Peshawar

¹¹ Areebah Shahid, executive director PYCA. Interview by PIPS.

the need to see things from the perspective of youth. That is, to engage youth, it is important to first understand youth.¹²

Then there is a problem of context. One asserted that when we talk about youth in Pakistan, it is not a homogenous category. A young boy or girl living in Rajanpur has different problems than a boy or girl living in Dalbadin [Balochiatan], and recently merged tribal districts into KP. Another noted that what change on the ground will be visible when underdeveloped areas, which have a bulk of youth, are largely ignored in the designing of these programs?¹³ That view was however contended by one resource person on the ground that mostly it was the government that restricted working and operations of NGOs in so-called conflict areas that are mainly underdeveloped.

Among challenges to youth engagement programs, one is linked to wrong perception about NGOs and civil society organizations. According to one observer, how effective could be your engagement with the students who were told by their teachers to not take NGOs-led seminar seriously for they promoted Western agenda.¹⁴ Others asserted that social development organizations, in general, don't enjoy good reputation. The state has also been demonizing NGOs and INGOs, thus adding to their deficit of social credibility across the country.¹⁵

Sustainability issues are mainly linked to funding and resources. Civil society organizations are unable to sustain their engagement beyond the duration of projects. The concepts of volunteering and self-support are yet not mature enough in Pakistan to sustain

¹² IA Rehman, former chairperson HRCP. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

¹³ Gulmina Bilal, Individual Land, Islamabad.

¹⁴ Kishwar Sultana, chairperson Insan Foundation, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS.

¹⁵ Mubashir Akram, CSED, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS.

the impact of an engagement project. Secondly, charity in Pakistan is also largely flowing to religious organizations and most people still don't believe that donating to 'secular' civil society organizations, which are also 'agents' of West, is justified. Eventually these NGOs have to develop projects in partnership with donors, which have funding and time constraints.

One resource person argued that programs of youth engagement on social cohesion and peacebuilding should be four to five years long to effectively address the deep-rooted social issues including religious differences leading to death. Unfortunately, donors want to end it within 2-3 years and move to other issues. Social nuisance of religious differences and others were aggravated for over 40 years. Therefore, social development projects of 2-3 years won't create any serious impact on society.¹⁶

The issues of motivation and participation also impact upon the youth engagement programs. Some program implementers said at times that they were not able to do promotions and advertisements of few programs, due to government's restrictions. Similarly, sometimes, it is difficult to mobilize women to participate in these programs. Above all, it is also difficult to convince and satisfy young people to participate in such programs in which there is no monetary benefit or provision of certificates.

Availability of trained human resource or experts on different subjects is also a serious challenge. That is evident from the fact that some programs exclusively focus on creating pools and networks of experts, who could be further engaged in training and awareness programs, among others. One observer revealed:

“I have worked with the KP government for one year as consultant. I prepared modules of inclusive education through which they used to train thousands

¹⁶ Mubashir Akram, CSED, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS.

of people. But I found useless human resource, unable to understand what you say. You tell them about inclusive education but they are still at the level where they feel reluctant to drink water from the glass of a Christian.”¹⁷

Terrorism and war against terrorism have also impacted on youth’s psychology as well as engagement in extracurricular activities. For one, a teacher noted that once we received SOPs from the education department that students should not be allowed to group together at one place.¹⁸ Another observer noted that the young generations that have grown up during recent times of violence and insecurity are angry and emotional; they are different from those born in the 1970s and 80s.¹⁹

Big organizations don’t operate in erstwhile FATA claiming it is the red zone. One local observer claimed that there had not been any sort of work in Khyber from 2006 to 13 for security and militancy reasons. Also, the growing insecurity and militancy including attacks on schools had then forced people to send their children to madrassas instead of schools. It has been only in recent years that some local organizations as well as government started rehabilitation of educational institutions. Still, another observer stated, significant and immediate efforts are needed to educate and empower the youth of tribal districts.²⁰

Engaging youth on issues of CVE and peace, and related issues, is in itself a challenge in terms of their effective participation. As far

¹⁷ Gauher Aftab, director LSU. Interview by PIPS.

¹⁸ Yasir Chatta. View expressed in a focus group discussion held by PIPS in Islamabad

¹⁹ Akif Naeem, researcher. Views expressed in a focus group discussion held by PIPS in Islamabad.

²⁰ Views expressed in a focus group discussion held in Peshawar for this study.

as common avenues and themes of youth engagement are concerned, soft skills have become a buzzword and a trend among youth nowadays. For example, youth normally get engaged in workshops for learning technical skills because such workshops are an add-on in their CVs. Events like *Digital Youth Summit*, as well as linked to literature, folk culture, festivals and concerts usually attract youth, but they will be least interested in a conference on anti-terrorism. Their lack of interest in such events is partly also due to the fact, as cited earlier, that such events cannot be advertised. Kayenat Khan, social activist, said she is yet to see a conference in Peshawar which is all about the triggers of, let's say, violence in our society, or things like *Aurat March* which was to be held in the previous month but couldn't happen."²¹

²¹ Kayenat Khan, Young Women Writers' Forum, Peshawar. Interview by PIPS.

2. *Youth Engagement for CVE, Peace and Harmony*

Many organizations engage in activities aimed at counteracting appeal of militant ideologies, and countering or preventing violent extremism among youth. Before delving into the ways and strategies to improve and make more effective these programs, it is pertinent to review programs that exclusively engage youth for the promotion of peace, CVE and harmony, etc. Largely these programs are built upon a philosophical approach that youth is part of a solution to challenges thrown by violent extremism and communal and sectarian discord. Although, in the process, they are seen as ‘target audience’ for which these programs are designed.

Since 2002, Barghad has been managing *Peace and Youth Cooperation* program with the main aim to increase cooperation and association among youths. At one point in time, under the program, there were regional dialogues among the subcontinent countries including Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. That was a sort of youth component of multi-track dialogue, which mainly relied on public universities including the JNU, and others from Amritsar and Bombay in India.¹ *Barghad Volunteer Network* (BVN) has about 3,500 student members; and its restructuring and reorientation continues. The core groups within BVN are used for mobilization of youth on different themes revolving around peace, gender, and rights. Barghad tries to combine

¹ Iqbal Haider, consultant at Barghad, Lahore. Interview by PIPS.

personal and social development mainly engaging youth and employing hands-on experience.²

The CRSS Islamabad has executed few preventing-violent extremism (PVE) and youth development programs. *Balochistan Youth Forum* was one such program that provided exposure to Baloch students from different districts. The Centre has been implementing a program *PACE* since 2015, which engages university students from across Pakistan to promote critical thinking among them employing fundamental global values such as tolerance, rule of law, equal citizenry, respect and acceptance of diversity.³ A similar PVE program was initiated by CRSS in 2017 that mainly entailed rigorous training sessions with youths.

Aawaz's component that worked for preempting violent conflict was used to develop youth groups at the community level. They created a youth circle of influence by visiting around 450 union councils of KP and Punjab and then trained them for two years. After engaging the youth, they conducted a conflict-mapping exercise and drafted peace maps.⁴

Payaam Trust Peshawar has been engaging both educated and uneducated youth since 2009 through residential trainings with an aim to reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies and groups among youth. The Trust also trains youths in how to deal with stress and psychological problems and the positive use of internet. The trained groups are then put into field practice for 3 months and after that are assigned tasks of social welfare and community-level engagements for peace and harmony. Asfandyar said that

² Ibid.

³ Mustafa Malik, program manager at CRSS, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

⁴ Zeeshan Noel, Rivets Learning, Islamabad. Islamabad by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

while representing Payaam Trust about 19,000 youths are currently engaged in this programme, titled *Let's Live in Peace*.⁵

Similarly, *International Youth Federation* (IYF) selects local youth leaders, trains them and eventually engages them in various programs meant to promote peace and conflict resolution. Farooq Afridi, who represents IYF in Pakistan and is fellow of Generation Change Fellow Program, asserts that youth demographic of erstwhile FATA is very significant and without channelizing and utilizing the FATA youth's potential, peace cannot be achieved and sustained in the region.⁶ He is also running an organization by the name of Khidmat-e-Khalq Foundation, which works on youth, peace and education and has been building capacities of tribal youth to play their role in promoting peace at the community level. His organization has collaborated with different entities to train and capacitate over 370 students in Khyber tribal district alone.⁷

Built around its philosophy of non-violence and peace, Baacha Khan Foundation has been running a *Youth Development Program* in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and erstwhile FATA since 2010. The program entails different phases over which it engages young graduates with the aim to create in them the ability to analyze the violent extremist discourse and positively participate in social and political activities. Another underlying objective has been to educate the youth on governance, non-violence and political history of KP. Since it was first launched in 2010, the program's outreach has gradually increased to 25 districts of KP and 7 erstwhile FATA agencies. According to Dr Khadim Hussain, managing director at the Baacha Khan Trust Education

⁵ Interview by PIPS team in Peshawar in January 2019.

⁶ Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

⁷ Ibid.

Foundation, the program advocated for pluralism, democracy and counter-violent extremism was changed into fellowship in 2015.⁸

Such organizations in KP and FATA also exhibited resilience of communities against the Taliban and other militants. For instance, *Khushaal Khan Foundation* in Mohmand tribal district was established to commemorate a person who lost his life in the fight against the terrorists. The organization has been holding events to celebrate peace and commemorate those who laid down their lives in the process. It also engages youth and provides support to their activities including sports and games.⁹

Some organizations are working on enhancing youth participation in informal or traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. *Bara Youth Jirga* is one such consortium that has 10 youth-led organizations in Khyber tribal district. Farooq Afridi, who is a member, believes youth is no way less wise as compared with the old people who dominate the traditional conflict resolution tribal structure of the Jirga.¹⁰

Corporate Social Responsibility is a peacebuilding project that emphasizes winning hearts and minds. They involved 40 companies from Islamabad and Lahore and asked them to spend their charity money for peace building projects and deradicalization activities. They also did quick research about the social welfare programs of the corporate sector to assess how they spent it.¹¹

Community World Service is working on promoting harmony and peace in the youth in Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi. They

⁸ Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

⁹ Muhammad Amin, president MSO Peshawar. Interview by PIPS in March 2019.

¹⁰ Farooq Afridi, Peshawar

¹¹ Shafqat Munir, SDPI, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in January 2019.

bring together youth from across the country, and engage them individually and in groups on different themes such as democracy and minority rights. Then they encourage them to do the same in their areas. They also take theater productions to different cities.

Alhamra Art Council provides a joint platform to youth groups from across Pakistan hailing from different faiths with the aim of promoting art, culture and harmony. Zulfiqar Zulfi, deputy director at the Alhamra said they promoted all forms of art as messages of love and peace. “Many Hindu youths come from Sindh to participate, they are very skillful people and win prizes,” he revealed.¹²

Since 2013 in particular, *Pak Institute for Peace Studies* (PIPS), Islamabad has been executing a comprehensive programme to promote CVE, interfaith harmony and social cohesion in Pakistan. Some components of this program exclusively focus on youth including dialogue, awareness, capacity building, and policy advocacy. For instance, in 2015, the Institute created and trained a pool of 168 young religious scholars from different faiths (including Muslim, Christians, Hindu and Sikh, etc.) and Islamic sects from across Pakistan on the issues linked to social cohesion, tolerance and minority rights. Similarly, in 2017, Pak Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) organized mutual learning and sporting activities of 200 college and madrassa students from different cities of Punjab province including youth camps, study tours, debate contests and cricket matches, etc. In 2018, it replicated the same program for university and madrassa students. Separately, in partnership with the Federal Foreign Office, Germany, short videos as well as critical analyses on themes like CVE, counter-narratives, critical thinking and minority rights are produced and disseminated by PIPS on social media platforms. The purpose is to increase availability of counter-extremist or alternative

¹² Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

narratives in cyberspace for Pakistani youth, mainly in terms of political, religious-ideological and socio-cultural standpoints.

Several other organizations have also been working to enhance interaction and dialogue among madrasa and university/college students or exclusively engaging with madrasa students.

Through one of its related programs, the *Pakistan Youth Change Advocates* (PYCA) reached out to about 100 young people from Multan and Muzaffarabad madrasas and universities, using cricket as a tool to unite the two diverse groups.

Hum Ahang engaged students of universities and madrasas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) for the purpose of social cohesion and peacebuilding. Apart from social interaction, the program aimed at bridging the academic divisions on both sides.

Similarly, the *Peace and Education Foundation* (PEF), Islamabad mainly works on training and awareness modules to promote tolerance and sectarian harmony among madrasa youths. It has also been working on madrasa curriculum in partnership with some credible religious scholars and madrasas.

According to its program manager in Islamabad, the *UNDP* has been working on developing a madrasa engagement strategy. That could be something like bringing together stakeholders of all madrasa boards, officials of ministry of religious affairs and bureaucrats to find out the extent that they are open to socio-economic engagement of young people studying in madrasas. “We are in consultation with madrasa stakeholders to draft an implementation strategy. We focus on madrasa students because they are usually deprived of socio-economic development

opportunities and it is important to bring such youth bulk into the mainstream,” noted Hamza Hassan.¹³

However madrassas provide fewer opportunities to their students to engage in extracurricular activities or interact with madrassas of other sects or mainstream educational institutions. That is despite the fact that madrassas in Pakistan are fairly independent including finance to run them and that kind of freedom gives them such options.

One religious scholar interviewed for this study noted that not all madrassas are into providing some extracurricular or fun activities to their students. Students on their own find spaces like playing football, volleyball and cricket etc. “In some seminaries, however, you will find literary events (*bazm-e-adab* and *baitbazi*, etc), and debating and *naat* reciting competitions. Madrassa students also lack training; and they at least should be allowed to sit before LED/TV for a few hours,” he said.¹⁴ At the same time, he added, that there are some madrassas that are equipped with modern educational and sports and facilities. One such madrassa is in Peer Mahal (Toba Tek Singh) that also includes a big farmhouse. It hosts over 600 students, an excellent science laboratory, computer education, and grounds for football, and hockey, etc. Another observer noted that in recent years many ‘modern’ madrassas were established in the country not only to provide modern education, such as science and computer, but also offered extracurricular activities to their students.¹⁵

¹³ Hamza Hassan, UNDP’s Youth Development Program. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

¹⁴ Ziaul Haq Naqshbandi, religious scholar and columnist. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

¹⁵ Conversation with Nawaz Kharal, office bearer of a religious organization and a writer. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

Some madrassas even go beyond that to engage youths. For one, Jamia Islamia Clifton, Karachi conducts special training sessions with madrassa youths and young scholars on ethics and character building besides promoting extracurricular activities. Their *Tarbiat Ulema Course* (The Course on Scholars' Training) trains 125 scholars each in Karachi and Peshawar every year; so far, they have trained 2,200 young scholars, and 800 orators employing lecture series, visits, study tours, and debates. Mufti Abu Bakar Mohiuddin, administrator of the madrassa, claims that they have brought back many students from extremist views to espousing moderate views. He believes that there is need to engage young religious scholars in such activities, as it is not their fault that they were given the wrong kind of exposure.¹⁶

In 2004, *Muttahida Majlis-e-Ulema* brought together 63 *ulema*, or religious scholars, to explore why madrassa graduates were unable to compete with graduates of mainstream educational institutions in terms of acquiring jobs and professional development. They suggested diverse trainings to remove deficiencies.

Mufti Faisal Japanwala claims he is providing education and awareness to youth in Karachi through exegesis of Quran lectures that entail rigorous question and answer sessions.¹⁷ This view however was shared by many that understanding of Quran is missing in madrassa youths and that it should be prioritised to take them away from sectarianism, jurisprudential discord created by secondary subjects and teachers.

¹⁶ Mufti Abu Bakar Mohiuddin, administrator Jamia Islamia Clifton, Karachi. Interview by PIPS in Karachi, January 2019.

¹⁷ Mufti Faisal Japanwala, Darul Uloom Koranhi, Karachi. Interview by PIPS in Karachi in January 2019.

2.1 Avenues for Improvement

While planning programs on youth engagement for peace and harmony, it is important to first understand the target group i.e. the youth. Do we consider them part of the problem or solution to the problem? Both perspectives can be focused at the same time, but one should be conscious enough while planning the program and devising its methodology.¹⁸

As far as thematic focus of youth engagement programs on peace and harmony is concerned, most of the experts interviewed for this study agreed that a multi-level engagement is needed that should address the diverse factors that contribute in the current state of affairs. This means that the engagement for peace and harmony will be manifold and diverse like the factors of extremism and conflict in the country. All thematic levels of youth engagement, as discussed in the first section of the report are thus equally relevant in the political and economic sphere with special emphasis on aspects like career development, religious-ideological concerns, and incentives to the marginalized, etc.

Similarly, no one or more specifically youth groups should be primarily targeted in these programs. A Pak Institute for Peace Studies' consultation with experts in 2017 on how to improve youth engagement programs on peace and harmony noted that youth radicalization should be understood as a social phenomenon that cuts across different divides. For instance, extremists have been attracting young people from rural areas and urban centers, madrassas and even universities, and from social classes with different education and economic backgrounds. Therefore, multi-dimensional accounts of different sets of youth should be considered in the process of understanding and

¹⁸ Rashad Bukhari, peace activist. Views expressed in a FGD held by PIPS in Islamabad.

preventing radicalization in youth.¹⁹ That necessitates engagement with youth's target groups representing all those segments and backgrounds.

However, importantly, the implementing organizations and institutions should develop specialized scholarship, services and credibility in their respective fields of engagement and also sustainability framework for their programs. Secondly, all those organizations engaging youth for the same purpose of promoting peace and harmony should be brought together in an ecosystem, desirably by the government, to add synergetic value to their work.

Resource persons consulted for this study discussed the philosophies and strategies employed in different engagement areas on the basis of their own experiences and also suggested the way forward.

Many asserted that the best way to counter the faith, sect or class-based misperceptions and biases is through experiencing and developing human connections. One noted that if you put young people subscribing to different faiths together in one working group, after a week or so the mutual respect among them will be on the basis of work and not on the basis of faith or class.

While some put emphasis on providing alternative interpretations to youths of concepts, legal rulings and history that Islamist terrorist misinterpret to justify their use of violence, others noted that the government should not allow religious groups to indoctrinate youths. "If you allow unregistered, unconnected, unmonitored and unsupervised youth

¹⁹ PIPS Policy Brief, "Youth Engagement Program," May 2017, https://pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PB_CVE6_Youth_Engagement_Program.pdf

engagement, it will create problems because the religious-ideological groups would be the first to exploit such spaces,” said Gauher Aftab.²⁰ He also underscored the need to develop programs to create sensitization among youths against violence.

Another suggestion that repeatedly surfaced during discussions with resource persons was linked to providing the youths of all shades a sense of ownership and association with the state and the society. “Peace and harmony are not possible when there is a disconnect and distrust between the state and the society, one observer noted. That in a way also highlighted the significance of state-led normative engagement in mobilizing the bulk of youth on a long-term basis.

Some highlighted the concept of enrolment in developing the traits of discipline and responsibility. Even nongovernmental organizations could establish project-based meaningful avenues of engagement like sports, art and culture, and skills trainings where youth go for enrolment and follow a scheduled work plan. Even established for short periods of time such structures will be helpful in developing a culture of discipline and work ethics.²¹

It is largely due to lack of opportunities of expression and personal development that youth become vulnerable to adopt violent ideologies and militant groups, one resource person from erstwhile FATA noted. Therefore, to promote peace among youth, it is important to provide them with proper direction and opportunities, that underscore the need of designing projects on economic development, career counseling and skills trainings.²²

Sadly, most youths in Pakistan are not convinced about the role and credibility of NGOs and civil society organizations, including

²⁰ Gauher Aftab, director LSU. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

²¹ Sana Mahmud, project officer at Right to Play, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

²² Farooq Afridi. Interview by PIPS in Peshawar in January 2019.

those working on CVE and peacebuilding. Therefore, it is important to convince the youth that neither NGOs nor ‘peace’ are Western terms and concepts but “peace has been historically the ‘art’ of this region where people of different faiths and ethnicities have been living together for centuries. They found a way to live together. We just need to revive that.”²³

Apart from sensitizing the youth about the need of peace and CVE, it is also important to enhance youth participation in the national discourse on peace, harmony and coexistence; as one resource person underscored: “engage the youth in the process instead of bombarding them with lectures.” Youth policies should be revamped, giving the youth responsibility of promoting peace. The committees overseeing the implementation of National Action Plan should have representation from youth, mainly for those clauses of NAP that touch upon the youth affairs.

Educational institutions are the best places to engage youth through formal and informal ways. Formally, content on peace, harmony, minority rights, diversity, CVE, etc., could be made part of textbooks as well as the teaching methodology. Informal ways could include dialogue, festivals, sports and other events where youth from all faiths, sects and classes are encouraged to participate. As an educationist noted:

“Youth is a huge body and most of it is in educational institutions so engage them there. Improve educational institutions – bottom up – and you don't need to have parallel out-of-institution engagements.

²³ Muhammad Waseem, Director Interactive Resource Center, Lahore. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

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That will also spare you from developing extra infrastructure and funding.”²⁴

Some resource persons observed that student politics and unions could also help prevent radicalism at educational campuses if utilized in a proper way, and with some conditions and eligibilities.

²⁴ Amjad Tufail, associate professor of psychology at Govt. Islamia College Railway Road, Lahore. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

3. *The State's Youth Focus*

Education and employment are among the key needs of Pakistani youth. Pakistan's success on these two fronts of youth development can be measured by the UNDP's 2017 National Human Development Report (NHDR) for the country. It projected that "at the current annual growth rate of net school enrolments, it will be 2076 before Pakistan can achieve its goal of zero out-of-school children." The report also noted that Pakistan had the highest youth unemployment in the region and "must generate nearly a million jobs every year for the next 30 years, without interruption, in order to maintain unemployment at the current levels"¹ because youth bulk is not stagnant.

Serious and concerted efforts are needed on the levels of policymaking and service delivery to address the youth's needs and problems and eventually make them the vehicle of national development and growth. Political analyst Zafarullah Khan said, "When the government wants to offer services to consumers instead of institutional elites, and our youth is, say, 60 percent of the total population, then ministries including health, culture and education should offer 60 percent services to the youth."²

¹ Dr Adil Najam, and Dr Faisal Bari, *Pakistan National Human Development Report: Unleashing the Potential of Young Pakistan* (Islamabad: UNDP, 2017).

² Zafarullah Khan, former executive director Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS in January 2019.

Most experts on youth engagement interviewed for this study also noted that the State's failure – some called it persistent denial – to empower, capacitate and make the youth stakeholders in the processes of national development and social change have been undermining their self-esteem and confidence. At the same time, they are losing hope in the State's will and ability to change things for good.

Some observers noted that lack of sustainability in policies and programs was also a problem. For one, the Punjab Youth Festival was an interesting initiative; some even hailed it as the world's largest youth festival. About 4 to 5 million youth participated in a series of events in the year 2014 alone. There were 40,000 public school volunteers, who were together for 15 days and each day learned something new. Iqbal Haider argued that this model should be softened up and revived. Similarly, Haider recalled, there were national games in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Youth were learning as well as rubbing shoulders with big players, thus becoming empowered in the process. While the government is hell bent to take a hard approach for development, these soft measures are also equally important and necessary.³

Many resource persons appreciated the government initiatives for offering incentives such as internship programs for distributing laptops, and also suggested that to enhance the outreach and scope of these initiatives more young people especially from far-flung areas should be involved.

Apart from the enrolment problem, as cited earlier, and other related issues such as inadequate educational infrastructure and trained teachers, Pakistan's public education system has several other fundamental issues, which the successive governments have failed to address.

³ Iqbal Haider, consultant at Bargad, Lahore. Interview by PIPS.

To start with, education curriculum is not developing critical thinking and consciousness and social ethics among the students. Educationists consulted for this study stressed that significant patronage is needed at state-level to include youth in national discourses of peace, harmony and coexistence. The subject of tolerance needs to be introduced in schools at a very early age. Tolerance as a life skill needs to be taught to young students.

Teachers' training is also important to build an inclusive and plural society.

Certainly, Pakistan's education system has failed to enable youth to challenge the appeal of extremism and violent ideologies. Many believe, indeed, it has been a factor of extremism among youth. A PIPS study in 2017 noted some fundamental problems associated with Pakistan's education system and curricula, which are listed below briefly:⁴

- Pakistan's education system and curricula fail to promote this confidence among all Pakistanis that this country does not solely belong to Muslims but belongs to all of its citizens. That is how the role of youth in promoting peace and harmony in the country is negatively and seriously affected.
- Pakistan has well developed distinct educational systems, which cater to the needs of different socio-economic classes, and also espouse different cultures and ideologies, to some extent. That only adds to polarizations and hurts pluralistic coexistence.

⁴ Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), *Promoting Inclusive and Tolerant Educational Narratives* (Islamabad: Narratives, 2017). The report can be downloaded here: <https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PIPS-Promoting-Inclusive-Educational.pdf>

- On the whole, in educational discourse, space for diversity, pluralistic, and accommodative viewpoints is shrinking.
- There are two major missing links in Pakistan's education system that make students vulnerable to consume whatever they were being offered in educational institutions including the content that could have negative implications for harmony and tolerance. First, one of the fundamental purposes of education, i.e. character building or ethics, is missing in Pakistan's educational discourse. Secondly, education in Pakistan hardly promotes the culture of questioning or critical inquiry. The absence of rationality and critical thinking has resulted in self-righteousness, conspiracy theories, externalisation and victimhood among youth.
- One of the reasons behind radicalization among Pakistani youth is a divisive curriculum, which thrusts upon students divisions by promoting exclusive and intolerant narratives and misperceptions about the minority communities such as Christians and Hindus.
- Similarly, teachers are not trained and sensitized enough to effectively deliver the content.
- Students belonging to minority faiths face discriminatory attitude of teachers in schools, which has also contributed in developing intolerant behaviours among youths.

In this backdrop, empirical discourse on education reform asserts that there is a dire need to infuse in the education system in Pakistan a diversity of opinion, and the tools to develop ethical values among students besides training them in critical thinking and research. There is also need to make education curricula and teaching more inclusive and tolerant. Only then can the seeds of

social harmony be sown. Properly sensitized teachers can take a lead role in making this possible.⁵

Apart from the content and quality issues, there are also problems in delivery of educational services. As a UNDP report noted, “while Pakistan has made some progress in improving education indicators, there are considerable disparities in the distribution of this progress based on provincial, rural/ urban and gender differences.”⁶ There are also question marks on the extent to which education is contributing in human development and building capabilities of youth. One reason for that is Pakistan’s 0.29 percent GDP allocation for research and development. According to UNDP, “this is less than half of what other South Asian countries spend on R&D.” Pakistan’s universities lack the culture of research, resources and trained staff further compounding the problem.

A significant population of Pakistan’s youth is in educational institutions where extracurricular activities for students have been only decreasing over the years partly due to degradation of public sector and growth of private education sector. Mushroom growth of private schools and colleges on commercial basis did not ‘necessitate’ spaces for play like sports grounds.

At the same time, public sector education faces a crisis in terms of a growing number of students, as more and more people believe that higher education is a vehicle of social mobility. To tap higher education demand, many private institutions are opening up to receive thousands of students. The first casualty of this

⁵ PIPS, *Education for Peace and Harmony* (Islamabad: Narratives, 2017). The report can be downloaded here: https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Education_for_peace_and_harmony.pdf

⁶ Dr Adil Najam, and Dr Faisal Bari, *Pakistan National Human Development Report: Unleashing the Potential of Young Pakistan* (Islamabad: UNDP, 2017).

process including public-private venturing has been the quality of education. Dr. Ammar Jan highlighted that the Higher Education Commission (HEC) had closed over 165 departments in Punjab due to the same reason, however, without providing alternatives for good quality.⁷

There is also a mental health crisis at educational campuses including growing use of drugs. But sadly there is no state-led comprehensive counseling or awareness program for students in that regard. Some educational institutions, however, have arranged such sessions. For one, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore invites experts to deliver lectures on how to deal with trauma and depression. Officials of drug control authorities are also invited to deliver lectures.⁸

Some also hinted at the problem of securitization of educational institutions where security guards are very powerful and in some instances were also found involved in doing moral policing of students. Dr Ammar Jan lamented that the government was looking at youth at educational campuses as a 'law and order problem', which is evident from the presence of powerful security guards and companies there, instead of seeing them as the future of the nation.⁹

Pakistan's education systems, as well as historical and intellectual discourses, have also failed to address the identity crisis of Pakistan's youth. Nationalism has promoted a religious-ideological discourse. One resource person, who is linked to cultural and art related programs in Lahore noted that Pakistanis as a nation lack intellectual foundation. Youth want to contribute

⁷ Dr. Ammar Ali Jan, Assistant Professor at FC College, Lahore. Interview by PIPS.

⁸ Dr Tariq Rahman, Dean, School of Education at Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. Interview by PIPS in Lahore.

⁹ Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

to society but what they study at universities has no connection to issues around them and to their inner urge and material needs. They are also in search of a meaning in life and identity and for which we will first need to educate them accordingly.¹⁰

Arguably, growing radicalism among youth at campuses has also been result of a deliberate attempt of the state to take away critical consciousness and power of thinking and expression from the young in schools. If we desire a creative indulgence of the youth in the national discourse, we first need to empower them with the power of logic and expressiveness. There should be a concerted effort to instill these abilities in our youth.

The state should be seen to be absolutely open to criticism and free expression. It should let the youth be exposed to divergent ideologies and political thoughts. Only then will the youth be able to meaningfully participate in the national discourse.¹¹

While three provinces have passed youth policies,¹² which itself is a major achievement, some however asserted that implementation on these policies is pending. There is a need to develop a decisive framework under which youth development related decisions are undertaken. Monitoring of youth engagement programs and reporting after its results is also necessary. Others said the youth policies for administration units like Gilgit-Baltistan, FATA, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir be shaped too, and these policies should be coordinated with each other. Most resource persons welcomed the youth policies with some cheering that they had also promised to revive student unions with certain qualifications.

¹⁰ Taimoor Khan, Hast-o-Neest. Interview by PIPS in Lahore in December 2018.

¹¹ AH Nayyar, educationist. Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

¹² Punjab approved its youth policy in May 2012, KP in 2016, and Sindh in May 2018.

One noted that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a different model of youth development on policy level. The province has Jawan Markaz, which has seven (7) divisions – they intend to take it to the district level. The idea of Jawan Markaz is to create centers with different facilities that are providing youth with guidance, counseling and spaces to interact and communicate.¹³

Youth policies also promise to engage youth, to an extent, on the level of community. One observer revealed that in Punjab's youth policy, the government has for the first time talked about youth councilors and promised to fix an 8 percent quota for them; the KP government followed to include the idea in its own policy.¹⁴ But the recently passed twin laws, the Punjab Local Govt. Act 2019, and the Punjab Village Panchayats & Neighborhood Councils Act 2019, have completely abolished the seats of youth. Also, the age limit of candidates has been increased from 21 to 25 years, which will deprive representation of youth between the age group of 18–25 years.¹⁵

Nonetheless, political analysts believe that the opportunities of youth engagement and leadership, which could be created through this single government initiative, i.e. youth participation in local governments, cannot be matched by the efforts of several civil society organizations combined. They suggest that youth councilors should be given lead in certain functions suited for the youth alone.

Currently there are no government sector avenues available for youth engagement in terms of policy change. But the private sector and development sector are creating the avenues for youth

¹³ Iqbal Haider, consultant at Bargad, Lahore. Interview by PIPS.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Experts term new Punjab LG laws devoid of devolution," Business Recorder, May 5, 2019, <https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190505470043>

but most of the time these avenues are also just for fulfilling their own objectives. Many raised objections on successive governments' education policies. First, they claimed, bureaucrats usually made these policies, with the exception of the first one made in 1952. Educationists or teachers, who are aware of the ground realities in this field, do not develop these policies. Education policies have been focusing on science and technology, which is also justified to compete in the modern world, but to create a balanced and a nuanced approach still some focus should be placed on human rights, values, diversity, democracy etc.

A PIPS-led dialogue with university and college teachers in 2018 observed that Pakistan's education policies have failed to widen the scope of education to a level where it could become an instrument of promoting diversity, critical thinking and harmony. One observer noted that Pakistan has developed well-designed nine (9) educational policies since 1947 and almost all of them stressed upon the inclusion of a specific religious-ideological narrative in the curriculum. Meanwhile, Dr. Syed Jafar Ahmed, former Director, Pakistan Study Center Karachi University, argued it is not that attempts have not been made to change educational policies; the problem is that unrealistic targets are set time and again, which are difficult to achieve.¹⁶

Most of the students and their leaders consulted for this study, through a survey and focus group discussion, also agreed that the government was not connected with the youth and their organizations and did not consult them in the process of development of youth policies. Some even noticed that youth organizations are not aware of how and when youth policies were formed and how they are being implemented.

¹⁶ PIPS, "Teachers can foster harmony by promoting culture of inquiry," November 29, 2018, <https://www.pakpips.com/article/3997>

Many also criticized the successive governments' inattention to the revival of student unions. Some thought the government was complicit in university administrations' intransigence to allow the functioning of student unions. After the 2009 VCs' conference on student union issue, which provided its own recommendations, the university administrations have taken it on themselves to not allow the revival of student unions.

Some observers however asserted that the revival of student unions alone will not necessarily address the larger challenges facing Pakistan's youth. For one, those who have seized spaces at educational campuses in the name of politics will not easily surrender.¹⁷ Others however argued that the blame of the failure of education system should not be placed on the student unions.

AH Nayyar believes that revival of student unions will, in any case, be a positive step because union is a forum, which allows students to launch healthy activities at their own initiative. Because of the diverse nature of activities that can result from students' own initiatives, it is likely to generate an environment of rational debates and tolerance of views among them. But for the institution of students' unions to succeed some supporting actions would be needed. For example, they should be allowed to bring under discussion and debate the entire spectrum of political views, not only of the country but from all over the world. Similarly, cultural activities would need to be provided security against opposition and disruption. Literary activities are currently nearly zero. They need to be rejuvenated and given official patronage, with minimum censors. The union activities should be generously supported by financial allocations, with, of course, a strong audit control.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ali Tariq, lecturer International Islamic University, Islamabad. Views expressed in a FGD held by PIPS in Islamabad.

¹⁸ AH Nayyar, renowned educationist. Interview with PIPS.

4. Youth Radicalism and Other Challenges

There are some serious challenges facing Pakistani youth, which not only hinder their personal growth and development, but also affect, in one way or another, the country's sociocultural, economic and political outlook.

The foremost among these challenges is the growing intolerance, extremism, and ideological radicalism at educational campuses. While a lack of education is usually counted as a main factor of extremist behaviour, in Pakistan's case however, education itself is considered by many as a crucial factor in ideological radicalism. One observer noted that education system has rendered our youth devoid of the ability to enter into logical arguments and debates. Eventually they feel unable to differentiate invalid reasoning from valid one, because of which they tend to (i) look to others to tell them right from wrong, (ii) accept as truth any view presented to them in beautiful words and composition, and (iii) easily fall prey to ideologies based on the sense of victimhood.¹

Many experts hold that youth of the country has been brought up in a worldview that does not diverge much from that of the extremists. They have studied textbooks and watched dramas, which thrive on creating stereotypes of non-Muslims. Before Pakistan got stuck in the war in Afghanistan, youth of Punjab

¹ AH Nayyar, renowned educationist. Interview by PIPS.

were radicalized by the historical account revealing civilizational ways in which the animosity with India was propagated.²

Although more empirical evidence is needed to establish that but some argued that those studying science subjects were found more vulnerable to thinking in black and white and falling to extremist narratives than those studying social sciences. Sehar Mirza and Maryam Saeed lead civil society organization Samaaj in Lahore. They shared their experiences from *Maker Faire Pakistan* that their organization held in July 2017: “[We noticed] the youth having extremist tendencies [we]re mostly from the engineering and science subjects, [and] less from social sciences. The students of information technology and science subjects from FAST³ and University of Engineering and Technology (UET) were questioning our engagement with music and transgender community.”⁴

Others believe economic factors are more important in radicalizing them. For one, Haris Khalique thinks unemployment and lack of access to formal and vocational/technical educational support are among the factors that promote extremist behaviour among youth.⁵ That argument is supported when we see widespread frustration among the youth over the current state of affairs in the country, making their future insecure and adding to their career-related insecurities.

² PIPS Policy Brief, “Youth Engagement Program,” May 2017, https://pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PB_CVE6_Youth_Engagement_Program.pdf

³ FAST is Foundation for Advancement of Science and Technology and runs university campuses in different cities, mainly Lahore.

⁴ Sehar Mirza and Maryam Saeed, Samaaj representatives. Interview by PIPS in Lahore.

⁵ Interview by PIPS in Islamabad in January 2019.

Similarly, there are religious-ideological factors too, which provide cognitive opening to extremist thought. Many social and religious variables exist in the Pakistani society, which influence young individuals against ethnic and religious diversity. The religious discourse also confuses the youth and plays a role in their ideological and political radicalization. Social scientists assert that madrasa students are getting isolated from other segments of the society and emphasize that they should not only enhance their interaction across sects but also with all the other sections of the society.⁶ The ideologically driven cultural polarization among the youth getting education from religious and mainstream educational institutions poses a great risk of inculcating alienation and extreme views among them.

While the youth being taught at madrassas are obvious targets for religious radicalization, there is increasing evidence that those educated at the mainstream educational institutions are also susceptible to radicalization. Lynching of Mashal Khan by fellow students in Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan in April 2017 over the allegation of blasphemy is only one example. Notwithstanding the Islamization of curriculum, religious organizations and militant groups, mainly the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group, exclusively focuses on the youth educated from mainstream educational institutions through a variety of ways to influence them for their ideologies and agendas. A PIPS survey of educated youth in 2011 had noted that the ideological and political viewpoints of the youth in national and international perspectives are greatly influenced by the larger religious discourse in the country that has the tendency to externalize the issues of extremism and terrorism and to look at them through shades of religious ideology and anti-West sentiments.

⁶ M. Amir Rana & Safdar Sial, *Radicalization in Pakistan* (Islamabad: Narratives, 2012), 102.

When combined together, these varying educational, political, socio-economic, and religious-ideological factors put the youth at risk of absorbing extreme views and radical tendencies.

While a substantial body of literature exists on Muslim youths' radicalization in different geographical contexts,⁷ few studies have been carried out in Pakistan and abroad that exclusively focus on radicalization among young Pakistanis. The few studies that are available also highlight various factors cited earlier as the root-cause of youth radicalism in Pakistan. A study by Moeed Yusuf in 2008 identified a gradual shift of the Pakistani youths towards radicalization. He argued that poor quality of education, a stratified education system and disparate economic opportunities increase the likelihood for young individuals to be lured towards extremist causes.⁸ A British Council survey of over 1,000 Pakistani youth in the year 2009 had found that there is a demographic increase in a dissatisfied and frustrated youth due to lack of a quality education system, unjust labor practices and lack of trust in the courts, police and local governments in the country.⁹ A March 2011 study from the Mortara Center for International Studies at Georgetown University found that "poor Pakistanis dislike militant groups more than their middle-class

⁷ For example, see Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); Donatella della Porta and Lorenzo Bosi, *Young Muslims in Italy* (Denmark: Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation (CIR), Department of Political Science at Aarhus University, 2010); Colleen McCue and Kathryn Haahr, "The Impact of Global Youth Bulges on Islamist Radicalization and Violence," *CTS Sentinel*, October 2008, Vol. 1, Issue 11.

⁸ Moeed Yusuf, "Prospects of Youth Radicalization in Pakistan: Implications for US Policy." The study examined approximately 350 responses from Pakistan's Swat and Malakand regions.

⁹ British Council Pakistan, "Pakistan: The Next Generation Report," 2009. The report was based on a survey of over 1,000 youths from all over the country. One quarter of the total youths were illiterate.

counterparts, especially the urban poor.”¹⁰ A survey by the Islamabad-based Centre for Civic Education in 2009 concluded that a significant majority of youths (69.6%) believed that extremism was on the rise.¹¹

4.1 Youth and Cyberspaces

Cyberspace offers a great deal of opportunities and risks for youth. While on the one hand, it is deemed a dangerous space where online radicalisation happens and youth are recruited by extremist and militant groups, on the other hand, it offers platforms of connectivity and networking, business and governance, education and learning, social media and city journalism, awareness and policy campaigning, and digital volunteerism and entrepreneurship, among others. At the same time, it could be an effective tool, to counter violent extremism and promote peace and harmony. A lot thus depends on how cyberspace is used and regulated and secondly how youth are trained and incentivized to use it effectively and properly.

The foremost thing to do, however, is to provide youth alternative/counter-extremist interpretations on various social media platforms they mainly use. For one, as cited earlier, religious extremists and their ideologies have found new avenues in form of Internet and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to propagate and justify their violent ideologies and actions and get recruits and financial support. Secondly, not only militants but their sympathizers and apologists also work as disseminators of extremist, intolerant and pro-jihad messages on social media platforms. These non-jihadi disseminators also

¹⁰ G. Blair, et al., “Poverty and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from Pakistan,” Mortara Center Working Paper 2011-7, Georgetown University, March 2011, 26.

¹¹ Centre for Civic Education, Islamabad, “Civic Health of Pakistani Youth,” 2009, <http://www.civiceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Civichealth.pdf>.

include clerics and Islamic scholars, whose messages carry more appeal and credibility for common Muslim users.¹² A 2014 study by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence found that propaganda pages on Facebook could play an important role in radicalizing Muslim youth.¹³ For instance, there are frequent posts of intolerance and hatred – posts that discount the presence of Christians, Jews and different Muslim sects; many such sites and platforms express open sympathy for ‘jihad’ and Islamist militants. More so, young people are often the regular users of Internet.

An investigative report by Pakistan’s leading English daily *Dawn* in 2017 noted that 41 of Pakistan’s 64 banned militant groups were actively present on Facebook in the form of hundreds of pages, groups and individual user profiles.¹⁴ A social activist interviewed for this study said the violent extremist elements raised funds through online forums very shrewdly. They used online media very effectively to arouse a sense of comradeship among youth, which is normally not visible in non-extremist and non-violent groups.¹⁵

Many others also noted that there were frequent messages and posts on social media pages, frequently used by Pakistan’s youth,

¹² J.M. Burger and J. Morgan, “The ISIS Twitter census: Defining and describing the population of ISIS supporters on Twitter.” Brookings Analysis Paper No. 20, March 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/isis-twitter-census-berger-morgan/isis_twitter_census_berger_morgan.pdf.

¹³ J.A. Carter, S. Maher and P.R. Neumann, “#Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks,” ICSR, 2014, <http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ICSR-Report-Greenbirds-Measuring-Importance-and-Influence-in-Syrian-Foreign-Fighter-Networks.pdf>.

¹⁴ Jehanzaib Haque and Omer Bashir, “Banned outfits in Pakistan operate openly on Facebook,” *Dawn*, September 14, 2017.

¹⁵ Gulmina Bilal

which spread sectarianism, and political extremism. Political, ethnic and religious parties and groups and their followers also overwhelmingly used social media, advertently or inadvertently, as a propaganda tool for political and religious-ideological propagation, in many instances using demeaning and abusive language. Hate speech is also a common feature of such messages that often goes unnoticed by the state's regulatory bodies.

Less exposed to different/alternative views and lacking in critical thinking, many of the young Internet/social media users run the risk of falling victim to the one-sided messages floating online including those carrying extremist messages and ideology-driven explanations, rather than the ones driven by ground realities and rational thinking. That is where the role of fake news on social media also comes in.

Online or social media as an emerging media faces the severe challenge of credibility compared to the print and electronic news media. Media practitioners criticize the print and electronic media for gradually losing the editorial instrument and institution and one can understand the situation of social media where such traditional and professional controls do not exist at all. Many highlighted that the Internet is a source of information as well as disinformation. People, even highly educated and most socially conscious ones, also easily fall prey to false information. Often enough, our youth are being misguided by false pieces of information that are meant to control their minds for divisive and destructive ideologies since the Internet is unfiltered and ubiquitous. Its influence cannot be avoided.

Apparently due to this reason, social media is one of the root-causes of discrimination and polarization among people. Also, there are no specific measures taken to stop the disputed content. Everybody is free to say anything without realizing the adversity of what has been said. Most of the time, the news / discussions is posted without authentic source.

Others however argued that social media is still in the transition phase and once this transition is over, people will eventually learn to positively use it and to distinguish the correct from the fake.

Many also provided their viewpoints on positive utility of cyberspace and how youth could extract maximum benefit out of it for their education and professional development. Viewpoints also emerged on how cyberspace can be used to counteract appeal of violent extremism and ideological radicalism.

Some noted that cyberspace or social media provides candid platforms of discussion where interaction is more real than is possible in the physical world. According to one resource person youth have little space available in families and educational institutions to talk and vent out but that space is abundantly available on social media.

Engaging youth online is also easy, cost-efficient – can engage a lot of youth without involving any logistics – and timesaving. However, a reliance on digital tools in any program, whether it is youth-oriented or not, would categorize these tools as enablers rather than as an outcome. There are demerits of such virtual engagements, too, which can be avoided or reduced through prudent moderation and prescription of rules, procedures and policies for any online community and digital forums. Secondly, there are a lot of young people around who would prefer to be engaged in a virtual way rather than come to especially attend a physical platform. They are also relatively better prepared at presenting themselves in a virtual environment rather than face-to-face.

Cyberspace is a huge space of interaction, networking and also training. In 2017, Planning Commission facilitated the establishment of a WhatsApp group by the name of *Digital Media Stakeholders* comprising of about 100 young writers. The purpose was to provide opportunities of interaction to them

through seminars and conferences, but due to political uncertainty the project could not sustain for long. Renowned social media activist and journalist, Sabookh Syed, claimed IBC Urdu, an Urdu-language website providing news and analyses, is providing similar opportunities of interaction and training.

“[Through IBC Urdu, since 2015] we have been providing youth with a platform to share their viewpoints and interact. Under this self-supported volunteer project, we organized a young writers’ conference, which could not be sustained due to financial issues. Similarly, we held sessions on social media with students of Shaikh Zayed Islamic Centre, International Islamic University Islamabad, Peshawar University, Khuzdar University, Fatima University and youth from FATA.”¹⁶

Sana Mahmud, who manages *Right to Play* in Islamabad underlined that the online groups are important for girls in Pakistan, who have a mobility issue and usually don’t go out alone. That is how they miss many opportunities also. But through online groups, they can share thoughts with their peers. “This is how I also mobilized girls, through the Internet. I made a Whatsapp group of women footballers and coordinated physical meetings through those groups,” Sana explained.¹⁷ However, she cautioned that human interaction could not be completely replaced with online interaction. Similarly a resource person from Peshawar shared that during one of his project-related assignment in Lower Dir of KP he observed that young girls were not allowed to go to school but they had Facebook accounts.

¹⁶ Sabookh Syed, Islamabad-based journalist. Interview by PIPS in January 2019.

¹⁷ Sana Mahmud, project officer at Right to Play, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS.

A social activist in Peshawar said he is member of different youth-oriented groups including *Baacha Khan Fellows, Peshawar City Circle, Peshawar Book Club, Friday Circle, Peshawar Civic Innovation Lab* and *Peshawar Literary Club*, and found these virtual youth groups equally meritorious as traditional youth groups.¹⁸

Some people interviewed for this study also suggested ways to make social media more useful for youth and effectively engaged youth through social media. One observed that first we should train youth in the art of thinking critically and the use of social media, otherwise they will keep posting and forwarding what they receive from others.

For one, some level of technological integration could make our work more productive. Therefore, it would be intelligent to embrace digital intervention along with traditional circles.

Social media is a medium of expression for everyone. Media is being transformed through short videos, films, and blogging. The youth should be leaders as well as target audience. According to one observer, everyone is now a film director and cameraman and can give whatever message he wants to deliver.

Similarly, students who want to work for few hours a day or week to make money have the opportunity to do so from home. They should learn the art of utilizing and expanding the virtual world that entails all aspects of life from business and entrepreneurship to cultural expression. In this regard, youth engagement programs should be designed to train youth in the use of cyberspace for their personal benefit including economic, education and learning, etc.

¹⁸ Shafiq Gagyani, social activist, Peshawar. Interview by PIPS.

Youth volunteerism in Pakistan is largely missing, which needs to be revived. Such online networks of youth can be developed that provide volunteer services such as citizen journalism portals where young people report problems of their communities.

4.2 Youth's Needs and Problems

The first need of youth is their personal development and growth for which they get education or skills to make life better. In 2010, the right of education was given to them that still needs proper implementation. There are institutions of vocational and skills development but they are still uneven, and urban youth is far ahead of the rural youth.¹⁹ Unemployment is the main problem, even for professionally qualified people.

While career development is a uniform interest of youth across Pakistan, regional, context-bound concerns are also there. For instance, for youth of conflict-affected and underdeveloped areas such as erstwhile FATA and Balochistan, peace and security have been the major issue. Students hailing from these areas studying in Islamabad and other major cities show varying symptoms of psychological distress and insecurity.

Then there are identity related issues including what most resource persons called the 'Identity crisis'. Early young age is in itself an age of search for meaning and identity for young people. This age entails important "social, psychological, economic and biological changes."²⁰ In this critical period, they need more interaction, engagement and counseling to develop positive life experiences and emotions.

¹⁹ IA Rehman, former chairperson HRCP. Interview by PIPS in Lahore.

²⁰ Dr Adil Najam, and Dr Faisal Bari, *Pakistan National Human Development Report: Unleashing the Potential of Young Pakistan* (Islamabad: UNDP, 2017).

A recent report by Pak Institute for Peace Studies, which narrated proceedings and findings of 6 dialogues on identity crisis in Pakistan, revealed interesting findings, some of which are summarized below:²¹

- Most identities pertain to religion, ethnicity, and nationality, and tend to tenaciously cling to their group identity, which in turn has eclipsed any discussion on individual rights;
- Young girls are also taking on what were long considered as tabooed subjects, thus transforming the entire focus of Women Rights Movement;
- Many of the day-to-day problems people face, they think, are because of what they believe or where they came from. Lack of constitutional safeguards further strengthens this sense of exclusion;
- The state gets the most flak for sowing the seeds of identity crisis in Pakistan by using it for the larger ‘religious-ideological project’ to glue the disparate people together, which created problematic group histories around ethnicity, culture, nationalism, and even religion.

Experts assert that education is not enabling Pakistani youth to overcome parochial biases and disassociate their understanding of the world from a single identity, whether ethnic, religious or sectarian. The outcome is that Pakistani youth in general is less educated and trained to celebrate diversity and live with multiple identities. Due to critical areas and flaws in education and curricula, and an exclusive history, students of mainstream and religious educational institutions tend to construct their national and worldviews through a certain religious identity framework at

²¹ Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), *Who am I: a study of identity and co-existence in Pakistan* (Islamabad: Narratives: 2019).

the cost of interfaith harmony and pluralistic coexistence. As a result, concepts of Pakistan-ism, or citizenship-based identity, constitutionalism and nation-state have not yet firmly established in the country, and modernity is pejoratively rejected as Westernism.

Nonetheless, some observers noted that most students are interested in doing work and growing, and not in understanding ideologies and philosophical complexities of life. Sadly there are not many opportunities for that. It adds to their confusion and alienation towards life

For one, education in Pakistan is also largely focused on obtaining maximum grades or marks. Some educationists advocated the immense need to make extracurricular activities including sports, literature, fine arts, debate, etc., as an integral part of education. Dr Amjad Tufail, who teaches psychology in Lahore, said, “if you do a survey to explore social skills and perspective of students, you will realise, though I don't have a scientific evidence to prove, that those at lower strata – getting less marks in examinations – will be more shining. That underscores the need to take the students out of books or the race for grades and engage in extracurricular activities.”²²

One observer in Lahore shared her personal experiences about young people's identity-related issues: “[They] get upset if Pakistan's [bad] image is displayed before the world, like the Asia Bibi case was highlighted on social media. It is like they have accepted 'we are bad' and need to conceal it. That is something we need to unpack at our earliest and one way to do that is

²² Dr. Amjad Tufail, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Secretary Halqa Arbab-e-Zouq, Lahore. Interview by PIPS

through giving them self-esteem and self-belief, which come from the sources of hope and empowerment.²³

Another way to address the youth's identity issues is to connect them to [an inclusive] history, civilization and cultural heritage. Some organizations are already doing that through study circles, lectures, and movies/films.

Youth also face the problem of generation gap, which one observer said is actually the communication gap, because we don't talk with youth in their language. Understanding youth including their diction and idiom as well as environment of physical and intellectual engagement is a foremost prerequisite to effectively communicate with them.

In terms of political participation, some youth activists noted that youth should be provided appropriate space in political parties including leadership roles. One noted that social movements like Pasthun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) will continue to emerge if political engagement of youth is denied and their voice is not included in policymaking processes.²⁴ Similarly, another young political activist asserted that justice is very important for improving the positive perception of the system. "Had Naqeebullah Mehsud been given justice, the PTM would not have been as strong as it is now," he observed.²⁵

Most students interviewed for this study noted there are drugs on campuses and students need counseling and awareness services. According to Ismail Khan, project manager at PIPS, "when we talk to university administrations about the promotion of peace

²³ Aisha Raja, *The Last Word*, Lahore. Interview by PIPS.

²⁴ Khushal Khan, HRCP Coordinator, Islamabad. Interview by PIPS.

²⁵ Muhammad Amin, president MSO Peshawar. Interview by PIPS.

and harmony, most of them tell us that their foremost priority is to control drugs and extremism.”²⁶

Resource persons and youth from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa highlighted that the problem of insecurity and extremism was still not going away. They also emphasized the youth’s economic, and educational needs. Some exclusively counted the number of schools and other educational institutions that were destroyed by militants and many still needed reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Similarly, in Balochistan, youth face multiple problems ranging from lack of educational opportunities and facilities, unemployment to a sense of marginalization and alienation from rest of the country. Nadir Gul, CEO BRSP, claimed that there are 35,000 vacant posts in Balochistan, requiring youth recruitment. In Balochistan, social interaction among youth is also limited and lack of social and physical activity has caused frustration among the youth. A student leader commented that a survey in 2016 noted that about 30,000 Balochistan youth graduate every year but only 1,500-2,000 among them get some sort of employment. That means that the number of unemployed youth is growing.²⁷

The situation of education in Balochistan is worst, along with erstwhile FATA, compared to the other regions of the country. According to Quetta-based social activist and student leader Mohibullah Agha, there are far less educational institutions in Balochistan than required to cater to the needs of over 10.3 million people of the province. “The provincial capital of Quetta has some facilities but in the rest of Balochistan there is acute shortage of educational infrastructure” he noted.²⁸ That also causes frustration among Baloch youth as another observer noted:

²⁶ Views expressed at a FGD held in Peshawar for this study.

²⁷ Views expressed in a FGD held in Quetta for this study.

²⁸ Views expressed in a FGD held in Quetta for this study.

“Bring educational institutions like SZABIST and FAST in Balochistan and also provide scholars to Baloch students and then we will see what ‘mised’ voice emerges from there. When youth do not have opportunities where will they go? Today, that is why the Baloch youth is caught between scrap and drugs.”²⁹

While media in general provides less coverage to youth and their issues, the situation in Balochistan is relatively poorer, which is least represented in the mainstream media. While Balochistan’s geography, sparse population and underdeveloped road infrastructure provide little interaction and connectivity opportunities to Baloch youth, the indifferent role of media further alienates them from the mainstream.

Unfortunately, Balochistan youth has linked their career development largely with recruitment in the government sector. Balochistan lacks the concept of entrepreneurship and career counseling. Partly, it is due to least presence of private sector and consequently availability of jobs. It is not possible that all degree holders get jobs in the public sector.

Wadood Jamal believes it is due to lack of opportunities for youth development in Balochistan that youth in Balochistan is not as progressive – not necessarily in political but socioeconomic and development terms – as youth in other provinces. He noted that besides lack of educational facilities, basic issue in Balochistan is also lack of quality education that compounds the problem of unemployment.³⁰

A discussion with a group of youth from Balochistan, conducted for this study, revealed that Baloch youth usually live in an environment of fear. The securitization of the province is badly

²⁹ Jameela Abdullah, a TV journalist. Views expressed in a FGD held in Quetta for this study.

³⁰ Wadood Jamal, social activist. Interview by PIPS in Quetta.

affecting the youth's potential and mental capabilities. Baloch young people feel that it is due to that fear that there are fewer links among different ethnic, religious or other youth bodies. They also underscored that while there is no youth policy in Balochistan, the government policies on the whole do not promote but actually undermine cultural diversity. Baloch youth also feel that there are curbs on their freedom of expression.

City	<i>Youth's viewpoints in terms of needs and challenges</i>
Quetta	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Curbs on freedom of expression○ An environment of fear and insecurity○ Securitization of the province○ Lack of educational facilities and poor quality of education○ Lack of skills and technical/vocational training○ Lack of employment opportunities and almost absence of private sector○ Lack of links across ethnic, religious and other youth bodies○ A growing of marginalization and alienation; reduced social interaction including due to sparse population and lack of infrastructure○ No youth policy in the province○ Lack of media coverage of Balochistan and its youth○ The use of drugs

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| <i>Peshawar</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Conflict and insecurity○ Drugs○ Extremist mindset including on educational campuses○ Employment and job○ Youth from conflict zones, such as some tribal districts, developed psychological issues but were not provided counseling and rehabilitation○ Extremist onslaught on art and culture left few spaces for youth○ A section of youth developed a sense of ‘Pashtun victimhood’ due to long militancy and war on terror○ Lack of interaction and coordination among those engaging youth○ Educational infrastructure damaged by terrorists not fully rehabilitated in erstwhile conflict zones mainly in tribal districts |
| <i>Karachi</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Lack of direction and opportunities○ Economic insecurity○ Lack of rationality; mindset of complaining and articulating conspiracy theories○ Lack of cultural and sports activities and infrastructure○ Use of drugs including at campuses○ Religious extremism; religious discussions are growing at campuses○ Lack of avenues of character building○ The role of media in youth’s distraction○ Lack of academic intellectual trend among youth○ Generation gap |

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Lack of counseling (psychological and career)
Lahore	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Cultural and identity conflict○ Drugs on campuses and mental health crisis○ Ideological radicalism including sectarianism○ Securitization of educational campuses○ Lack of academic freedom○ Lack of social skills and perspectives○ Lack of social empathy○ Class-based and ethnic polarization○ Unemployment
Islamabad	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Meaningless and directionless life goals; general disorientation○ An environment of fear in society as well as academia including youths○ Youth policies irrelevant; those who make youth policies are not aware of youth's problems and needs○ Outdated educational curricula that fails to create creative consciousness among students○ Lack of social empathy among youths○ Identity issues○ Drugs○ Anger and intolerance and lack of counseling○ Parents' inattention and generation gap
Some common concerns and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Social and economic insecurity○ Drugs on campuses and lack of counseling○ Identity and cultural conflict○ Intolerant and extremist tendencies○ Growing estrangement from state and society; diminishing belief in politics and democracy○ Low quality of education

5. *Exploring the Mindset of Educated Youth*

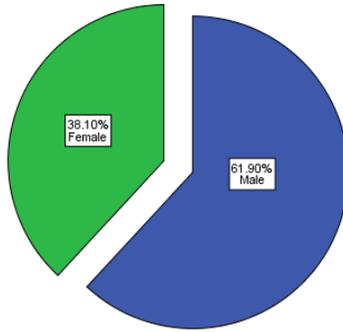
‘Try to first understand the youth, before you engage them’ was one of the key suggestions that emerged during consultations with a variety of resource persons including those working on or with the youth. This section of the report builds upon a comprehensive empirical dataset to better comprehend youth’s viewpoint on a range of issues including culture, society, politics, ideology, religion, community engagement, and personal aspirations, etc.

The dataset used in this section was collected through a comprehensive survey questionnaire, containing 44 mostly closed-ended questions, which was extended to 126 students in 16 universities in the 4 provincial capitals and Islamabad. (*For the list of these universities, see Annex-2*)

Out of the total 126 students surveyed for the study, about 62 percent were male and 38 percent female. The students were randomly selected to engage in the survey.

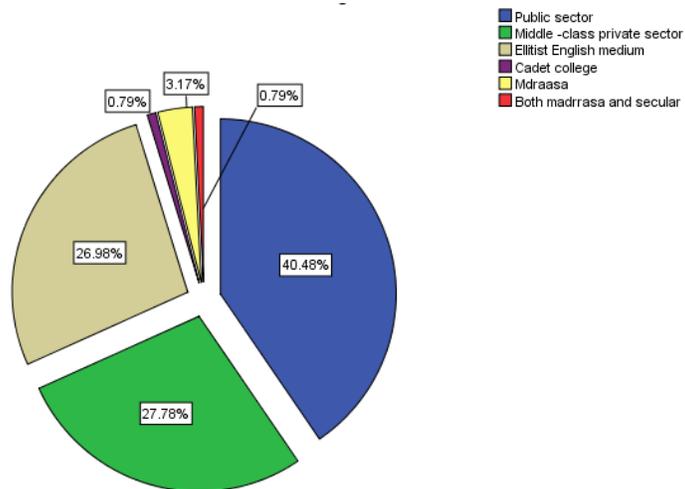
As many as 25 respondents each were from Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi, and 26 were from Lahore.

Chart 1: Gender distribution



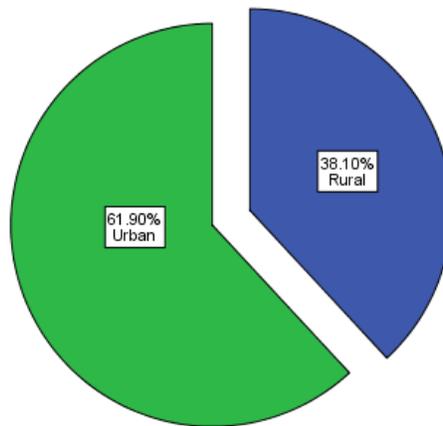
The respondents had different educational backgrounds. Overall, 40 percent had studied at public sector educational institutions, and almost 28 percent at private sector institutions. As many as 27 percent of the total respondents came from English medium institutions, while 3 percent had madrassa background.

Chart 2: Educational background



From overall 126 respondents, 38 percent respondents hailed from rural areas and almost 62 percent of respondents were from urban area localities.

Chart 3: Administrative domain



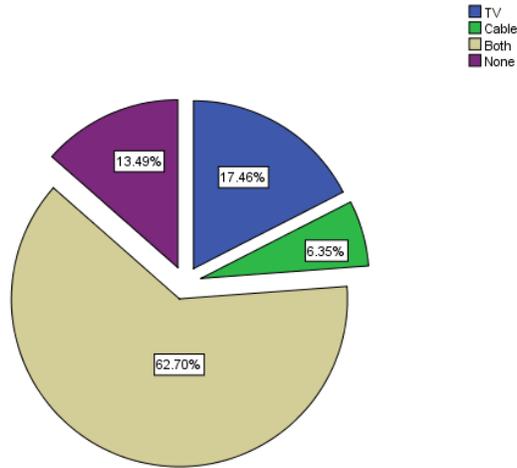
A. Culture

Most respondents (about 63 percent) said they have both TV and cable. As many as 17 percent said they possessed [only terrestrial] TV, over 6 percent said they had only cable; as many as 13.5 percent did not have either of them.

In Quetta and Peshawar, 100 percent responded to having a TV/cable at home whereas in Karachi though only a small percentage of 32 percent had both; in Islamabad 48 percent and in Lahore 81 percent of respondents had both the facilities.

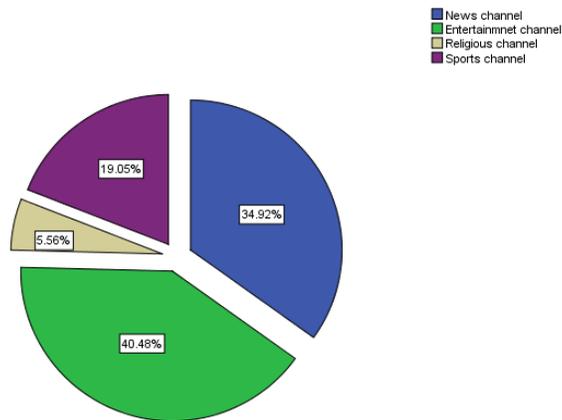
When asked which TV channel(s) they liked the most, as many as 34 percent of the total 126 respondents said they watched TV news channels, 40 percent watched entertainment channels, 5.5 percent watched religious channels, and 19 percent respondents watched sports channel.

Chart 4: Do you have TV/cable at home?



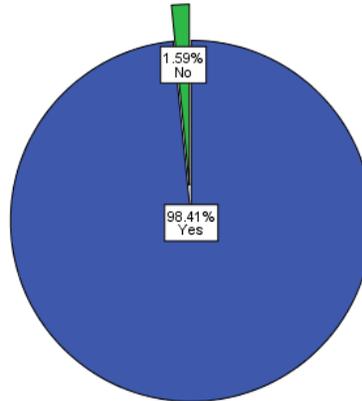
As many as 44 percent of respondents from Quetta, 40 percent in Peshawar, and 52 percent in Islamabad said they liked entertainment channels the most. Whereas in Karachi, 52 percent of local respondents liked watching news channels, and in Lahore 34.5 percent liked to watch news as well as the entertainment channels.

Chart 5: Which TV channel do you like the most?



A big majority (98.4 percent) of total respondents used Internet and almost two percent said they did not use it.

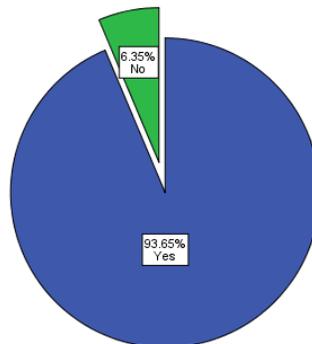
Chart 6: Do you use Internet?



Those using Internet were further asked if they used social media, too. From overall 126 respondents, about 94 percent said they used social media and 6 percent replied they did not.

In Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Islamabad, around 90 percent of the respondents said they used social media, while all the respondents from Quetta said that they used social media.

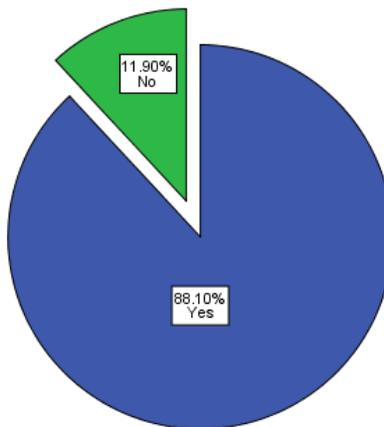
Chart 6a: If Yes, do you use social media, too?



The respondents were further asked if they had friends on social media and interacted with them. Out of total 126 respondents from across all 4 provincial capitals and Islamabad, over 88 percent said they interacted with social media friends and about 12 percent did not interact with their social media friends.

In Lahore, Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad, more than 80 percent of the respondents each said that they interacted with their social media friends while less than 20 percent of the respondents in all these cities said that they did not interact with their social media friends. In Karachi, 96 percent of the respondents said they interacted with their social media friends while 4 percent did not interact with the same.

Chart 7: Do you interact/chart with social media friends?

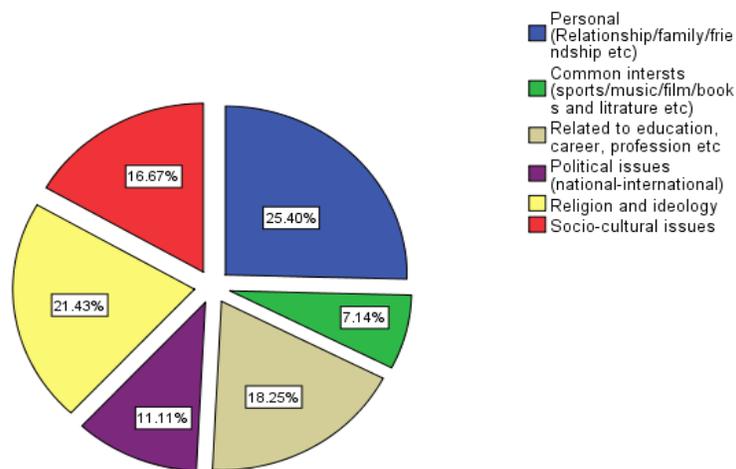


While a quarter respondents (25 percent) said they usually discussed personal matters and relations with social media friends, over 21 percent said that they discussed religion and ideology. Only 18 percent said they discussed matters pertaining to their education, career and profession with social media friends.

That is, in a way, is contrary to empirical evidence gathered through interviews with people and organizations working on youth engagement which said that the youth is more interested to join programs on educational and professional career-building than ideological and religious discourses.

Similarly, about 17 percent respondents talked online with friends on sociocultural issues, another 7 percent discussed sports, culture and literature, etc. Meanwhile 11 percent also discussed politics.

Chart 7a: If Yes, what kind of issues you often discuss with social media friends?

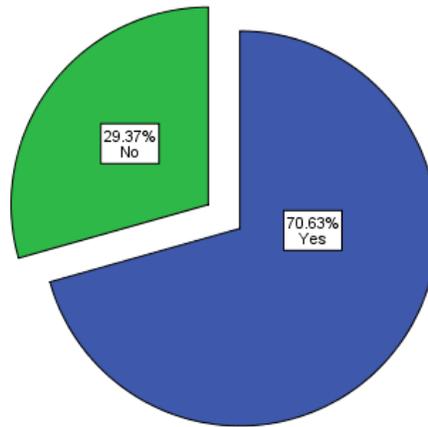


Out of total 126 respondents from across all 4 provincial capitals and Islamabad, about 71 percent said they have non-Muslim friends on social media and 29 percent did not have any non-Muslim friends among social media friends.

In Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad, more than 70 percent of the respondents said they have non-Muslims friends on social media while around 30 percent said they did not have the same. In Quetta, 84 percent of the respondents had non-Muslim friends

on social media while 16 percent did not have any. In Peshawar, 64 percent had non-Muslim friends on social media while 36 percent did not have.

Chart 8: Do you have non-Muslim friends on social media?



Students were also asked which kind of websites they usually liked to surf on the Internet. In response to this particular question, a combined total of 59 percent of respondents said they surfed recreational and informative websites (35% and 24%, respectively). About 14 percent surfed websites were related to their professions. About 8 percent respondents surfed religious/Islamic websites and a similar percentage surfed through websites on games and sports.

When asked if they listened to music, over 90 percent of the total 126 respondents said 'yes'; 10 percent responded in the negative.

In Karachi, Lahore and Quetta, more than 80 percent of the respondents listened to music while around 20 percent said they did not. In Islamabad, a vast majority of the respondents i.e. 96 percent listened to music, while all the respondents from Peshawar said they listened to music.

Chart 9: Which kind of websites you mostly like to surf?

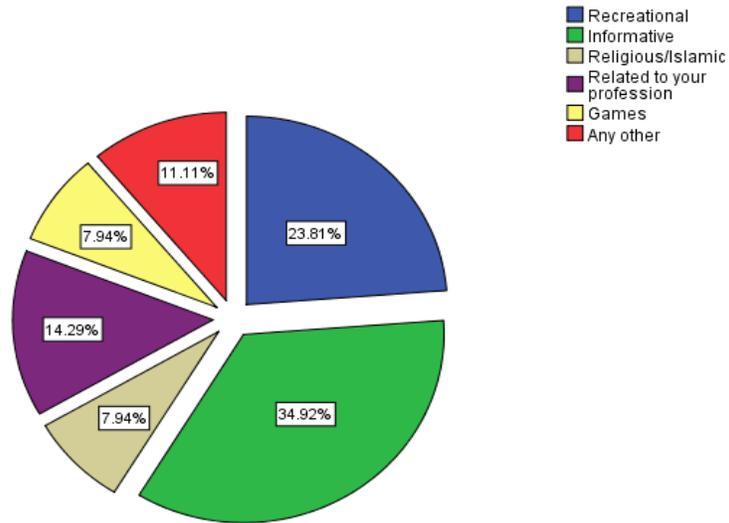
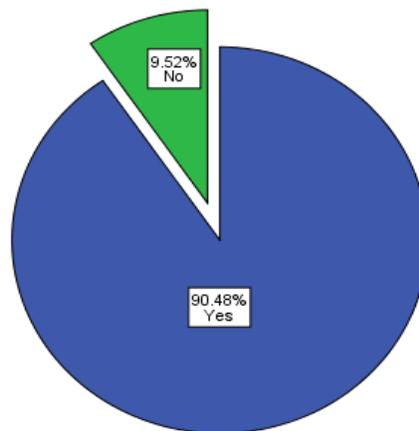


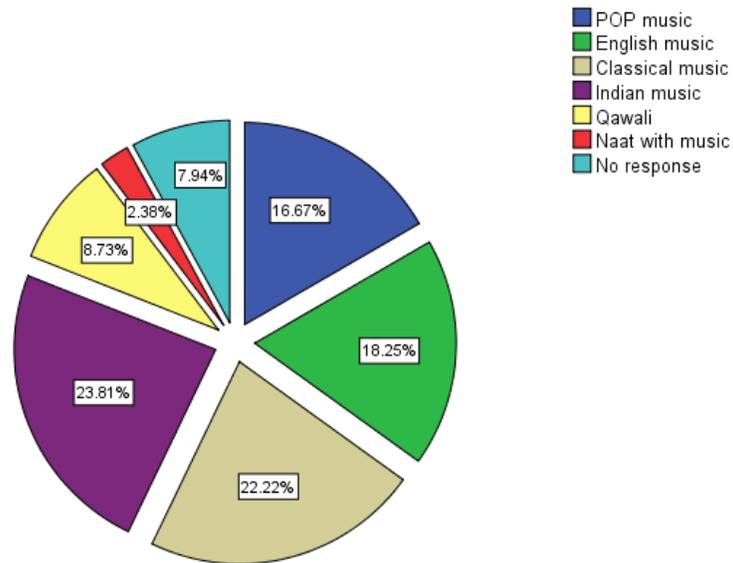
Chart 10: Do you listen to music?



As far as choice of music is concerned, responses were distributed across a spectrum of different types of music with 24 percent

liking Indian music, 22 percent classical music, 18 percent English music, and another 17 percent respondents liked popular music. Meanwhile about 9 percent liked *qawwali*, over 2 percent liked *naat* as well as music.

Chart 10a: If Yes, which kind of music you like the most?



Respondents were also asked about the choice of their dress code. Most of them (53 percent) said they wore both national dress (shalwar qamees) and English dress (jeans and trouser). Over 41 percent wore only national dress, while 5.5 percent used only English dress.

A majority of respondents (75 percent) said dress code had nothing to do with religion, 11 percent however said that dress has religious connotations.

Chart 11: Which kind of dress do you like to wear?

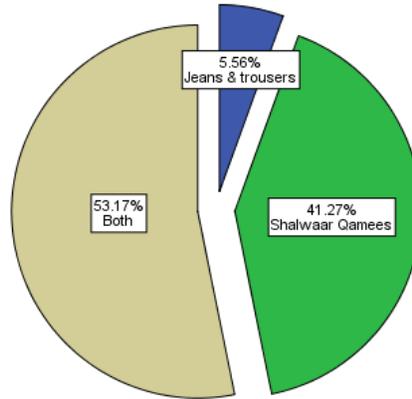
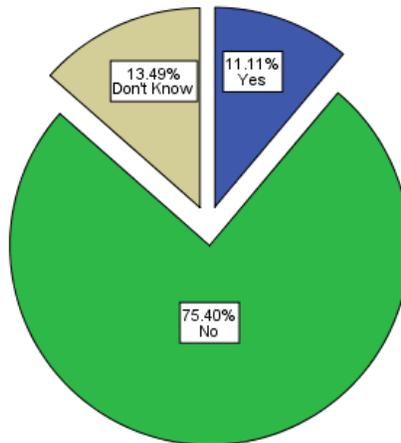


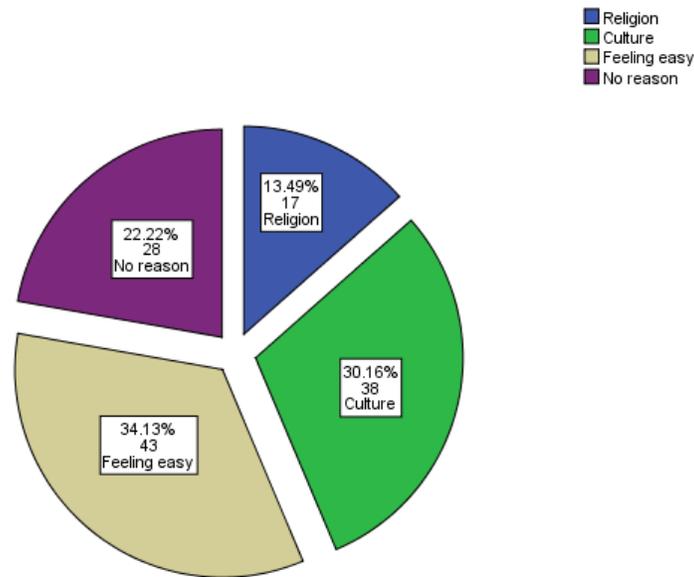
Chart 12: Do you think dress code has something to do with religion?



Meanwhile those who wore national dress (shalwar qamees) did so either due to no reason (22 percent) or because of a variety of reasons including ease (34 percent), cultural (30 percent) and religious (13 percent).

In all the five cities surveyed, around 40 percent of the respondents deemed culture and religion as prominent reasons for wearing Shalwar Qameez while a majority thought they wear it because it feels easy.

Chart 13: In case of wearing shalwar qamees, what is your reason of doing so?

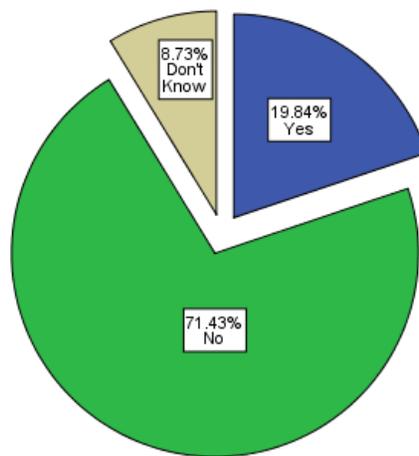


About 71 percent of respondents also believed that wearing western dress did not mean an inclination towards the West or going away from religion. However, about 20 percent believed otherwise and said having a preference for western dress meant going away from religion. The regional responses are given below:

- ◆ In Karachi, 60 percent respondents said wearing Western dress did not show an inclination towards the West or distance from religion while 20 percent said otherwise; 20 percent said they did not know.

- ◆ As many as 68 percent of the respondents in Islamabad said wearing Western dress did not mean going away from religion or an inclination towards West, while the rest (32%) believed otherwise.
- ◆ More than 75 percent of the respondents in Quetta believed wearing Western dress showed inclination towards West while 12 percent did not believe in that and the rest did not know about it.
- ◆ About 72 percent of the respondents in Peshawar said Western dress did not show an inclination towards the West while remaining respondents believed otherwise.
- ◆ Almost 81 percent of the respondents in Lahore were of the view that the Western dress had nothing to do with the West or religion while almost 8 percent thought otherwise and the remaining respondents chose not to respond.

Chart 14: Do you think wearing Western dress shown inclination towards the West and distance from religion?



Students were also asked about their leisure, or free time activities. Out of the total, 126 respondents from Karachi, Lahore, Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad, about 28 percent and 26 percent, respectively, chose outing or traveling and reading as their favorite leisure activities. Around 18 percent of the respondents said that they liked to spend their leisure time in sports, 14 percent preferred staying at home, and about 8 percent visited friends in their leisure time.

Table 1: What is your favorite leisure activity?

<i>Preferred Leisure Activities</i>	<i>Responses (Yes)</i>
Reading	26.2 %
Sports	18.3 %
Outing/travelling	27.8 %
Staying at home	14.3 %
Visiting like-minded friends	7.9 %
Others	5.6 %

Similarly, more than half of the respondents from all the five cities surveyed termed cricket as their favorite game while 11 percent of the respondents' favorite game was football. The remaining respondents stated that their favorite games were tennis, volleyball, indoor games and others.

Table 2: Which is your favorite game?

<i>Games</i>	<i>Responses (Yes)</i>
Cricket	54.8 %
Hockey	1.6 %
Tennis	6.3 %
Football	11.1 %

<i>Games</i>	<i>Responses (Yes)</i>
Volleyball	1.6 %
Indoor Games	7.1 %
Others	17.5 %

In response to how they perceived a women wearing a veil, more than 45 percent of the respondents termed it a religious obligation, while another 41 said that wearing a veil was a woman's personal choice. Around 6 percent of the respondents said that for women wearing a veil was not necessary. The remaining respondents did not want to give their opinion on this issue.

As far as regional responses are concerned, around 50 percent of the respondents from Karachi, Lahore and Quetta believed that the veil is a religious obligation for women. As many as 56 percent of the respondents in Peshawar, and over 40 percent in Lahore and Islamabad were of the view that the veil is a personal choice for women; 30 percent of the respondents in Karachi and Quetta also chose the same option.

Most of the respondents (71 percent) were not part of any cultural community circle or activity in their towns or cities while 29 percent said that they were part of some community circle or cultural or community activity.

About half of the respondents in Quetta and Islamabad were however part of some cultural community circle or activity.

Chart 15: How do you perceive a woman's wearing a veil?

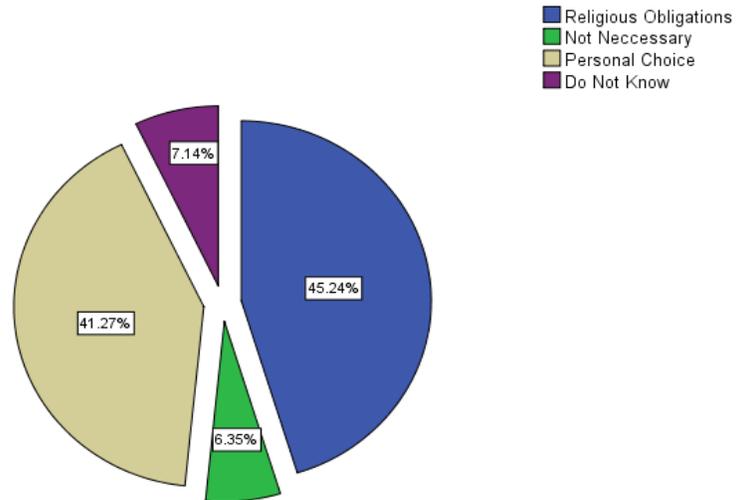
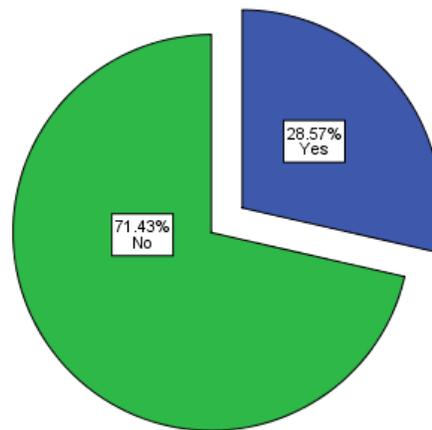


Chart 16: Are you a part or aware of some cultural community circle/activity in your town?

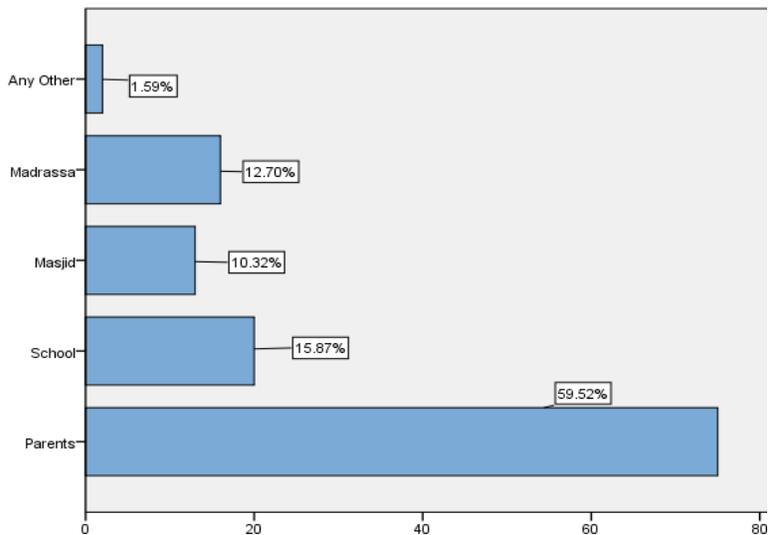


B. Ideology and Religion

Around 60 percent of the respondents from the five cities said they got their basic religious knowledge from parents while the remaining respondents got their basic religious knowledge from schools, seminaries or mosques.

In Lahore, around 27 percent of the respondents said that they got their basic religious knowledge from the mosque, over 11 percent said from school and the same percentage from seminary. A combined total of 52 percent of the respondents from Karachi said they get their basic religious knowledge from schools and seminaries while 16 percent said they got the same from mosques. In Quetta, 32 percent of the respondents got their basic religious knowledge from schools while another 20 percent from seminaries.

Chart 17: Where did you get your basic religious knowledge from?

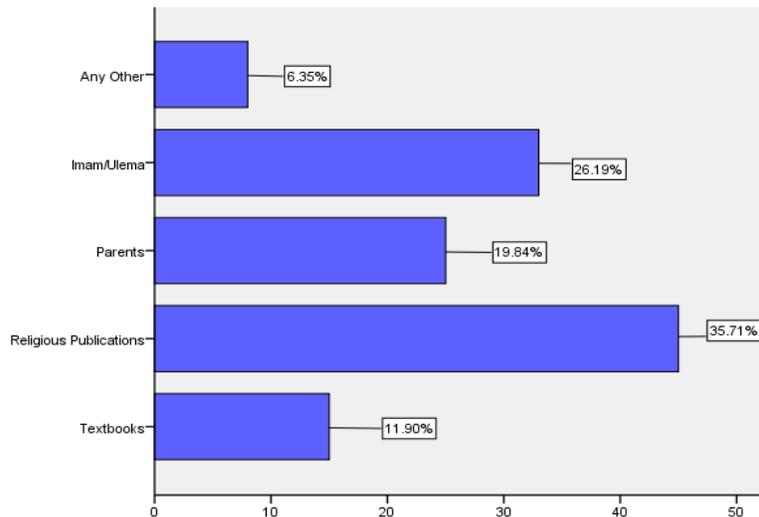


Respondents were also asked about whom they trusted most for the true interpretation and understanding of Islamic concepts.

Around 36 percent of the total respondents said they would trust religious publications; another 26 percent vowed to trust religious scholars and clerics. About 20 percent respondents claimed to have trust in parents for the same, and over 6 percent had trust in some other unspecified sources about what Islam really says.

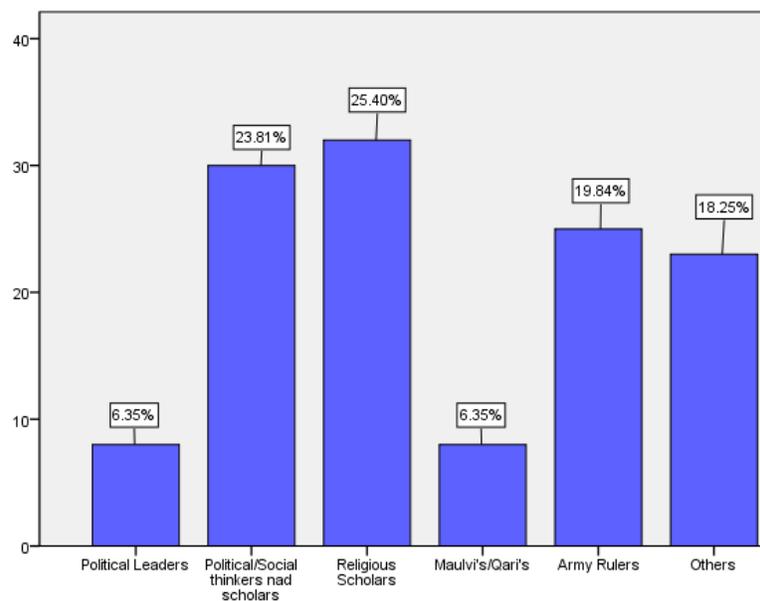
In Karachi, Quetta and Lahore, more than 42 percent respondents believed that they would trust religious publications the most to find out the truth about what Islam really says. In Peshawar and Islamabad, 24 percent of the respondents trusted the same. More than 25 percent of the respondents in Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi stated that they trust clerics / Imams the most regarding the teachings of Islam. In Islamabad, 48 percent of the respondents trusted the same. More than 12 percent of the respondents from Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar expressed their trust in textbooks, while in Islamabad and Lahore, less than 10 percent of the respondents expressed their trust for the same.

Chart 18: Whom will you trust most to tell the truth about what Islam says?



On asking who is serving and contributing well to our country, Islam and people, a quarter of respondents credited religious [Islamic] scholars, and about another 24 percent acknowledge the role of political and social thinkers and scholars. About 20 percent lauded the role of army leadership whereas only 6 percent believed political leaders were serving well the country and its people as well as Islam; a same number of respondents (6%) appreciated the role of clergy or clerics in that regard.

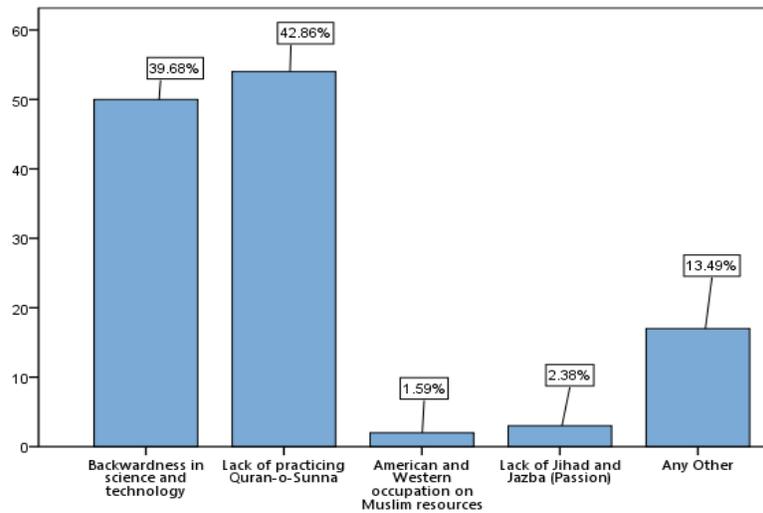
Chart 19: Who are serving well the country, Islam and people?



About 43 of the respondents believed that the reason for Muslims being backward and weak in the world is the lack of their practicing the holy Quran and the Sunnah, or tradition of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and backwardness in science and technology. That conforms to the emphasis Pakistan's education policies have been placing on Islam and Science and Technology since the 1950s. A few respondents also counted lack of the

passion for Jihad and American/Western occupation as the reasons for Muslims' being backward.

Chart 20: What is the reason for Muslims being backward and weak in the world?



A clear majority of the respondents (66 percent) also believed that one couldn't become a good Muslim without praying five times a day; 23 percent thought otherwise, while around 11 percent of the people did not respond.

When asked about how they saw the differences among beliefs of Muslim sects in Pakistan including Deobandi, Sunni, Shia, Barelvi and Ahl-e-Hadith, etc., a combined total of 57 percent respondents termed them merely as differences of opinion (29%) and interpretations or jurisprudence (about 28%). However, over 18 percent said that these were serious religious differences, and another almost 8 percent said these differences were politically motivated.

Only 15 percent respondents from Lahore however believed that the differences among Muslim sects are were differences of

opinion; conversely 56 percent of the respondents in Islamabad and 52 percent in Peshawar were of the same view.

Chart 21: Can one become a good Muslim without praying 5 time a day?

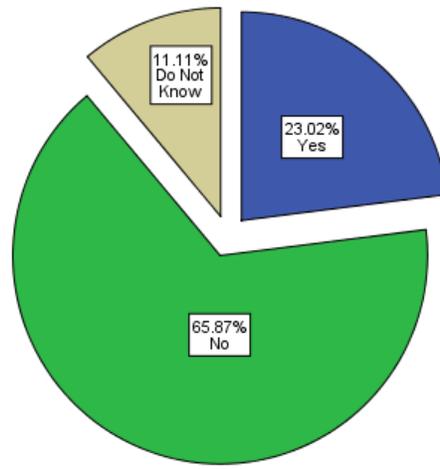
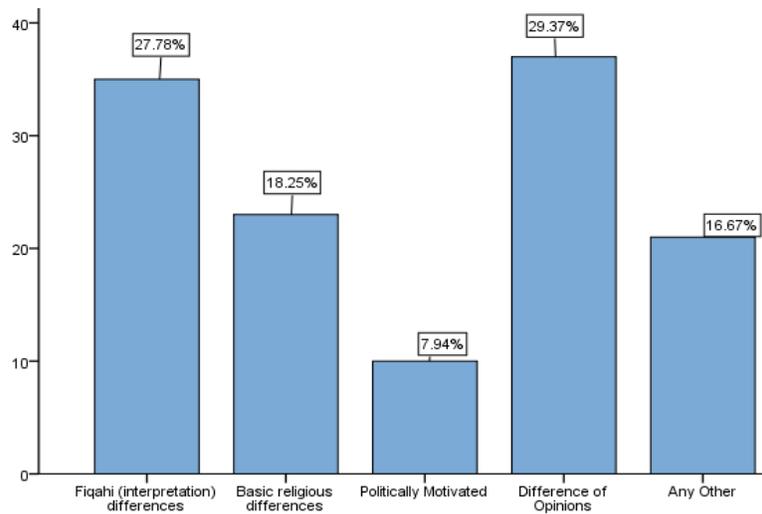
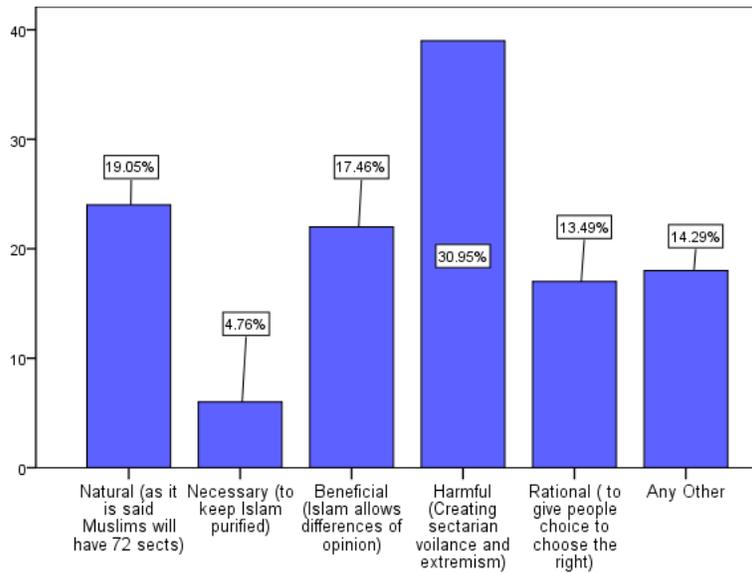


Chart 22: What do you say about differences among beliefs of different Islamic sects



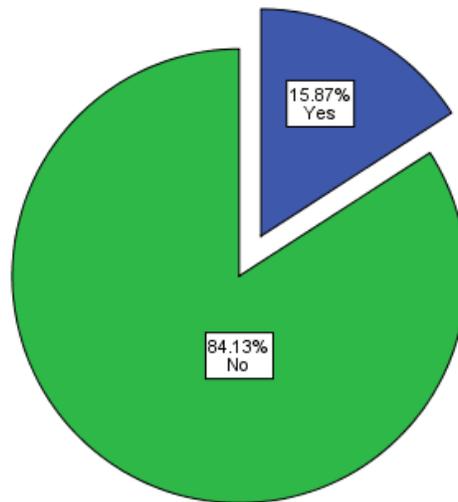
Around 31 percent of the respondents from the cities surveyed said the sectarian division is harmful and creates violence and extremism. 36 percent of the respondents from all the cities believed that the sectarian division is natural and beneficial. Almost 14 percent of the respondents saw sectarian division as rational while around 5 percent of the respondents said that this division is necessary. More than 14 percent saw sectarian division stemming from other reasons.

Chart 23: How do you view the sectarian division in Islam?



A clear majority (84 percent) of the respondents were part of some religious or ideological community in their area, while around 16 percent of them were not.

Chart 24: Are you a part of some religious, ideological circle or activity in your town?



C. Socio-Political

As many as 96 percent of the respondents deemed girls' education as necessary in all the five cities surveyed for this study. A little over one percent said it is not necessary, while 2 percent opted not to respond.

All the respondents from Karachi, Peshawar and Islamabad said girls' education is necessary. In Quetta, 92 percent of the respondents were of the view that girls' education is necessary, while 8 percent thought it is not so necessary. In Lahore, more than 88 percent of the respondents thought it was necessary while around 12 percent of the respondents did not respond.

More than two-thirds (76 percent) of the respondents thought women should work outside their homes while almost 21 percent said they should not work outside their homes. About 3 percent of them did not respond to this question.

Chart 25: What do you think about Girl education

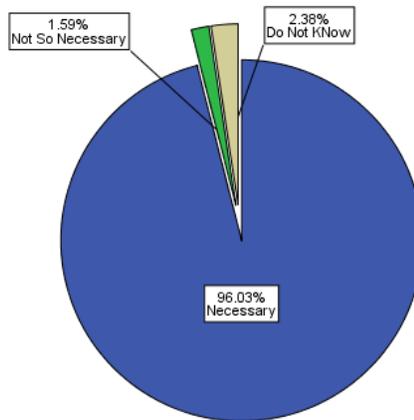
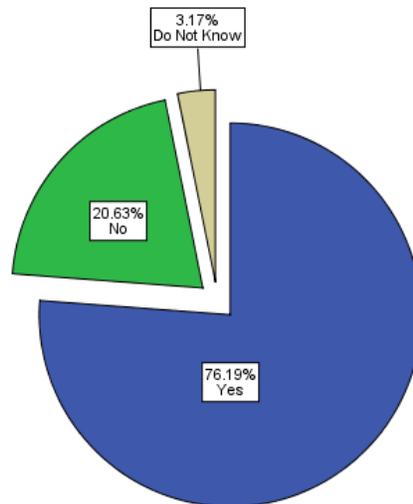


Chart 26: Should women work outside of their homes?

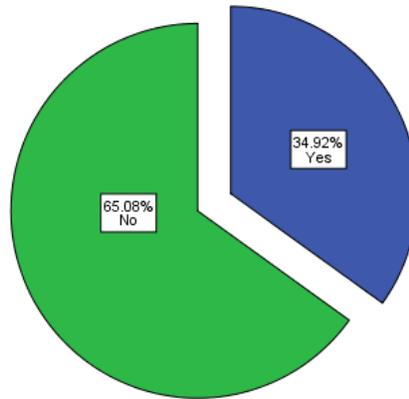


More than 80 percent of the respondents from Peshawar, Islamabad and Quetta said women should work outside of their

homes while the rest thought they should not or did not know how to respond to this query. In Karachi and Lahore, however, more than 65 percent of the respondents thought women should work outside their homes, however, the rest thought otherwise or did not know about it.

From all the respondents surveyed from the five cities, 65 percent did not know about the Hudood Ordinance while almost 35 percent of the respondents knew about it.

Chart 27: Do you know what is Hudood Ordinance about?



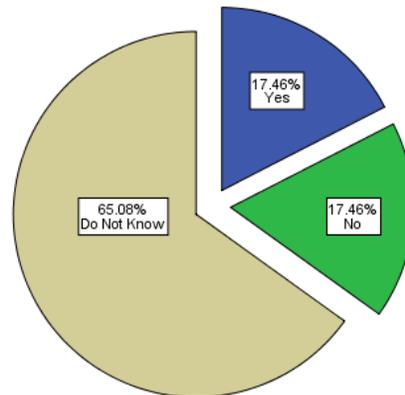
Upon asking whether the Hudood Ordinance should be changed, 65 percent of the respondents from all the cities surveyed said that they did not know about it. The rest of the respondents were equally divided between 'yes' and 'no'.

Around 42 and 44 percent of the respondents from Quetta and Lahore, respectively, did not know whether or not to change the Hudood Ordinance.

Almost 31 percent of the respondents from Lahore and 20 percent from Quetta thought it should be changed while almost

27 percent from Lahore and 36 percent from Quetta thought it should not be changed.

Chart 28: Should Hudood Ordinance be changed?



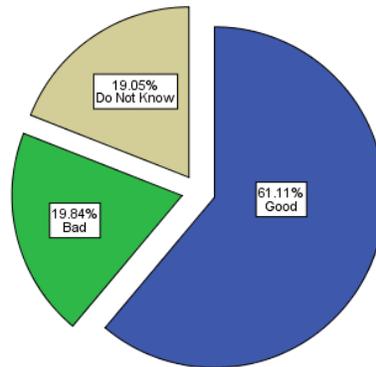
Over 61 percent of the participants were of the view that it is a good thing that women have the right to divorce, while about 20 percent termed it as a bad practice; 19 percent said they did not have an opinion regarding this issue.

As many as 28 percent and 31 percent respondents from Lahore and Islamabad, respectively, thought that women having the right to divorce it is a bad practice.

40 percent of the participants in Karachi said it is good that women have the right of divorce while 24 said otherwise; 36 percent did not know about it.

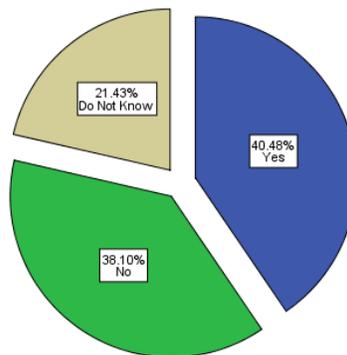
More than 40 percent of the respondents from said that it is important that the spouse should be from the same religious sect while 38 percent thought otherwise and nearly 22 percent did not respond to this query.

Chart 29: Is it good or a bad thing that women have the right to divorce?



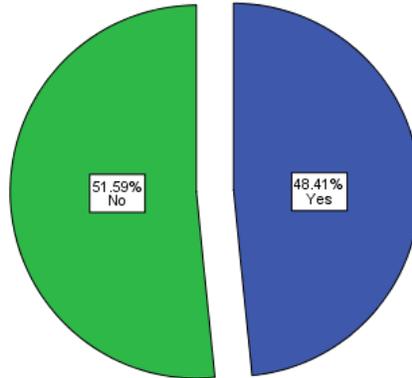
A relatively fewer number of respondents from Lahore and Quetta (31% and 32%, respectively) said the spouse should be from the same religious sect, while 56 percent and 58 percent, respectively, believed it otherwise.

Chart 30: Is it necessary that spouse should be from the same religious sect?



In Islamabad, 52 percent of the participants said that the spouse should be from the same religious sect while 20 percent said otherwise; 28 percent said they did not know about it.

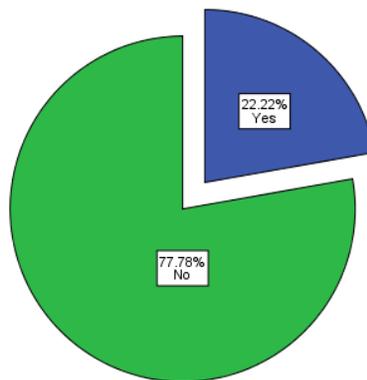
Chart 31: Are you a supporter of some political party?



From all the cities surveyed, almost 52 percent of the survey participants were not supporters of any political party while 48 percent supported some party.

A clear majority of almost 78 percent of total respondents did not support any religious party or organization while the remaining 22 percent supported a religious party or organization.

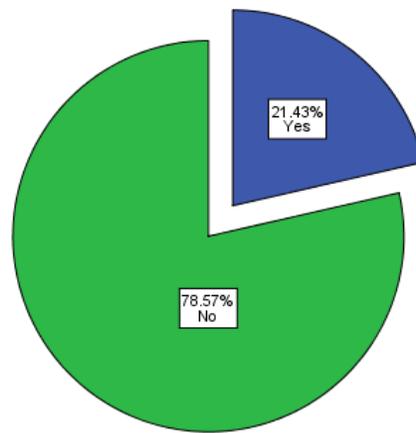
Chart 32: Are you a supporter of some religious party/organization?



D. Community Engagement

About 79 percent of the total survey participants from the 4 provincial capitals and Islamabad were not members of any sports club while 21 percent said they were members of a sports club. The responses were almost evenly distributed in all cities with only slightly variations.

Chart 33: Are you a member of any sports club?



Similarly, 61 percent respondents said that they were not members of any literary society, social club, religious study circle or other organization, or *Jamaat*. The remaining 39 percent however said they were members of the same.

When asked about the reason for not being member of any community circle, about 40 percent did not mention a reason. Over 22 percent said they were not aware of any such community circle in their neighbourhoods. As many as 19 percent were not interested in community activities or circles, and as many others said they did not have time to become a member of any such activities.

Chart 34: Are you a member of some literary society, social club, study circle or other?

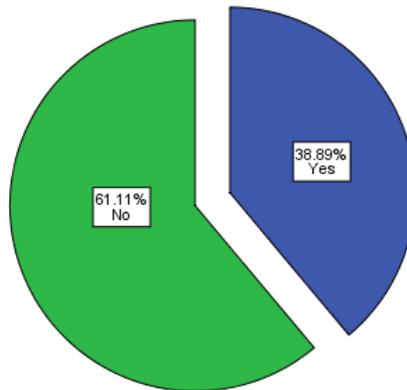
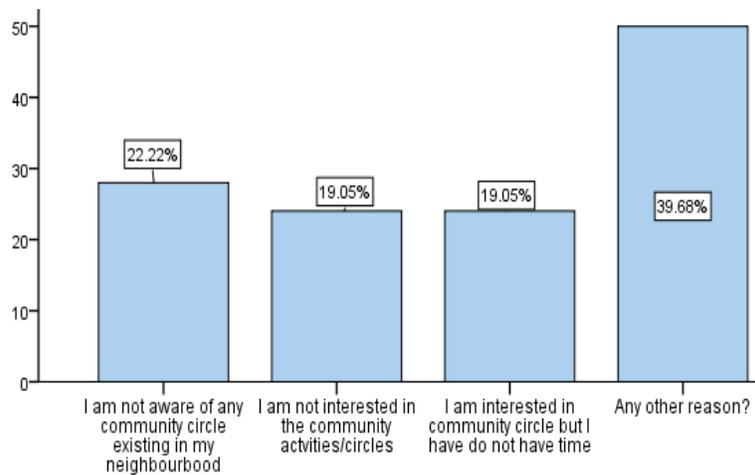
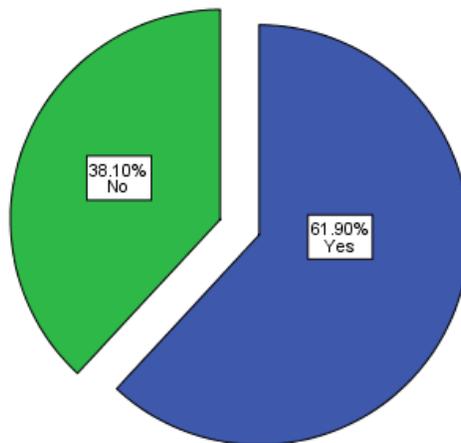


Chart 35: [If not member of a community circle, then] what's the reason?



When asked whether or not they would like to become member of any community circle, literary, cultural or religious groups if the opportunity is provided to them, 62 percent of the participants replied 'yes' while the remaining 38 percent said 'no'.

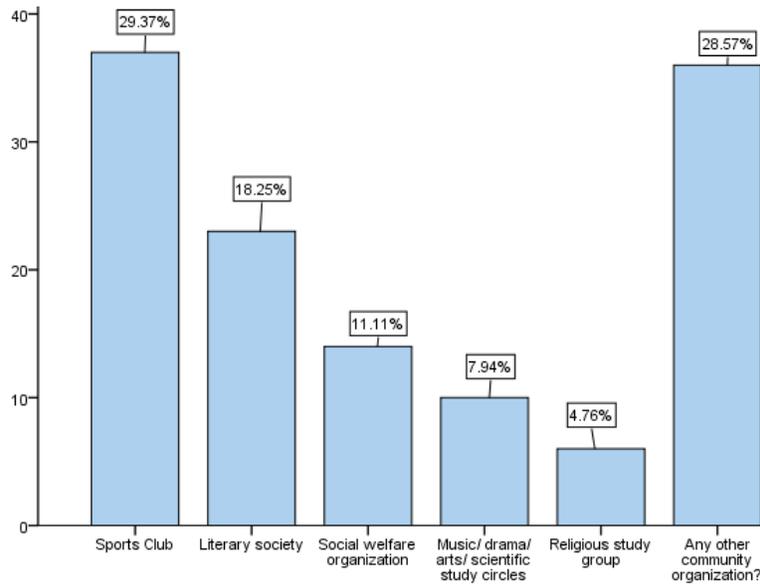
Chart 35a: Would you like to become a member if opportunity is provided?



In Karachi and Lahore, respectively, 84 percent and 88 percent of the respondents said that they would like to become members of any such circle or group if given an opportunity. However, only 52 percent, 56 percent and 61 percent of the respondents from Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad, respectively, wanted to join any community circle.

Similarly, those interested in joining were further asked what were their prioritised areas in community-level engagement. As many as 29 percent said that they would prioritize joining some sports club, Over 18 percent were interested in joining a literary society, 11 percent said they would like to join a social welfare organization, and about 8 percent were willing to join some art and culture related circle or organization. About 5 percent said they would prefer to join some religious study group. Meanwhile, as many as 28 percent respondents marked 'any other' as their preference.

Chart 35b: [If Yes,] what would be your priority?



E. Travel and Expeditions

Around 83 percent of the participants surveyed from the five cities had visited the tourist sites of Pakistan while 17 percent did not visit any tourist site of Pakistan.

82-92 percent of the participants from Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta had visited the tourist sites of Pakistan while 8-18 percent of the same did not visit the same. In Karachi, 64 percent of the participants did visit the tourist sites of Pakistan while the remaining 36 percent did not do the same.

Meanwhile, 46 percent respondents said that natural scenes attracted them the most, while about 32 percent were charmed by historical sites. Seven percent liked religious or cultural tourist sites. However, not a single respondent from Karachi said that religious or cultural tourist sites attracted them the most.

Chart 36: Have you ever visited a tourist site in Pakistan?

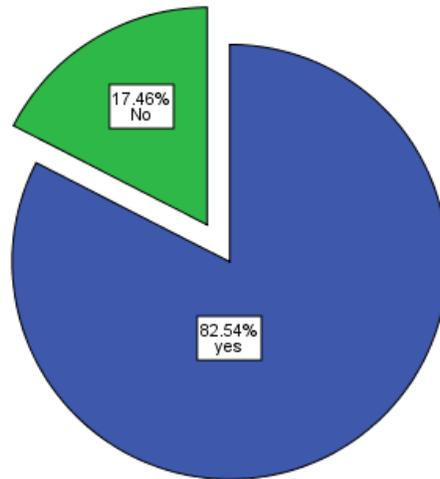
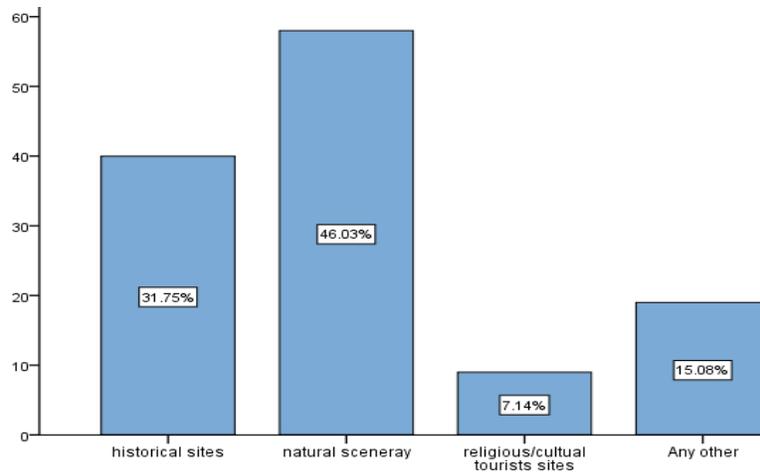
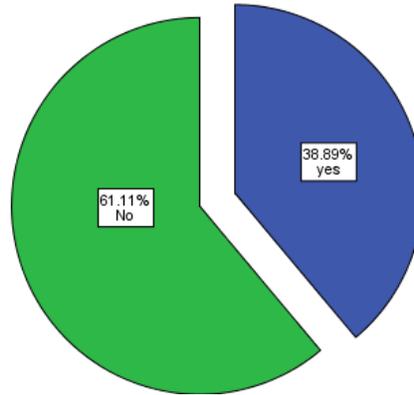


Chart 37: What in tourist sites attracts you most?



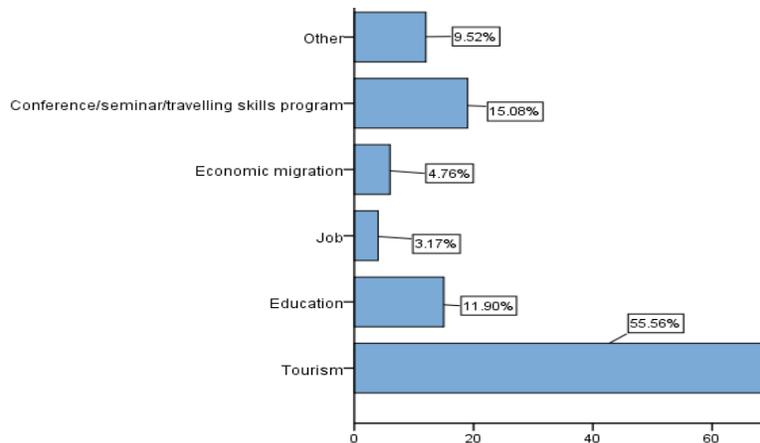
About 61 percent of the survey participants from all the cities had never travelled abroad while about 39 percent said that they had travelled abroad. In Quetta, 76 percent of the respondents had travelled abroad while 24 percent had not travelled abroad.

Chart 38: Have you ever traveled abroad?



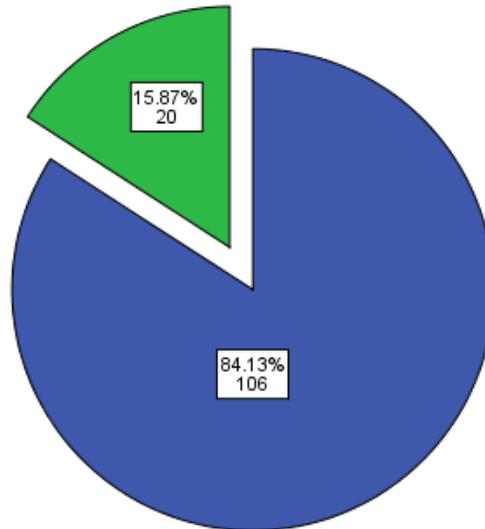
The visit purpose of over 55 percent of the respondents for travelling abroad was tourism.. Fifteen (15) percent went to attend some conference, seminar or skills training program and another 12 visited solely for educational pursuits. About 5 percent said they went abroad as economic migrants and 3 percent mentioned that their purpose of visiting abroad was to pursue their work. 24 percent respondents from Karachi said they went abroad for job.

Chart 38a: What was the purpose of your visit abroad?



Around 84 percent of the overall survey participants had plans to visit abroad while 16 percent did not have any such plans.

Chart 39: Do you have a plan to visit abroad?



When asked about their response if provided with an opportunity to visit abroad, almost 94 percent of the participants said 'yes'.

Those who wanted to avail the opportunity to go abroad, if provided, were further asked for what purpose would they undertake the journey. Over 44 percent said that they would like to avail a tourism or expedition opportunity, and about 35 percent aspired for an opportunity to study abroad. Few respondents, a little over 2 percent, were willing to become economic migrants and another 3 percent said that their purpose of visiting abroad will be to see their relatives.

Chart 40: What will be your response if provided an opportunity to visit abroad?

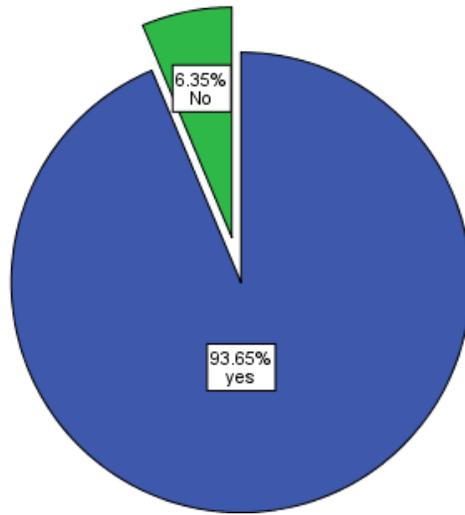
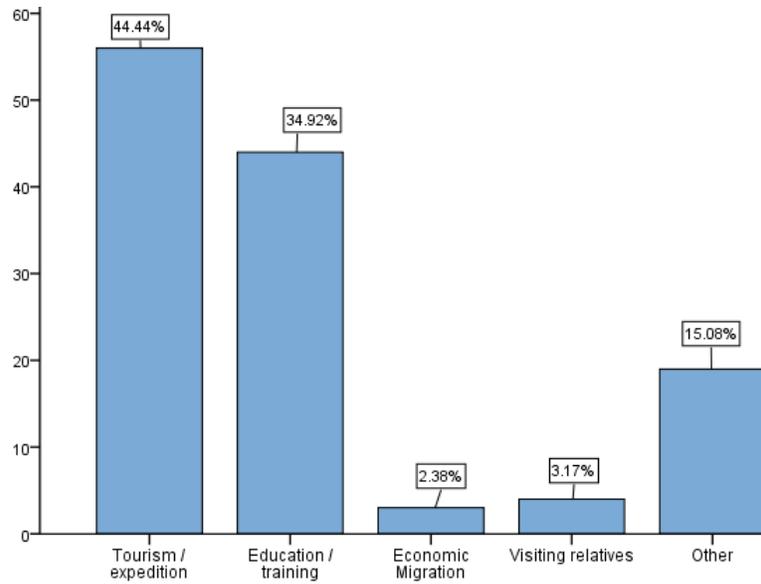


Chart 40a: [If Yes,] for what purpose [will you travel abroad]?



Almost 48 percent of the total survey participants said that their response would be ‘yes’ if provided an opportunity to settle or emigrate in some Western country, while 52 percent said ‘no’.

In Lahore, 50 percent of the participants said ‘yes’ and the same percentage said ‘no’ in response to the same question.

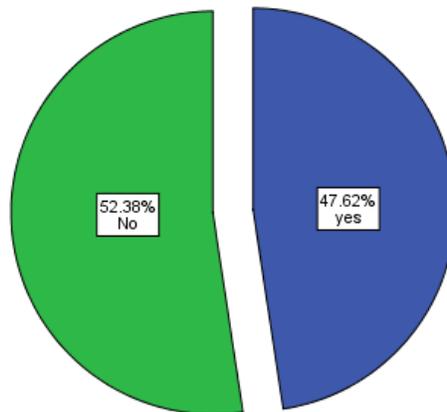
In Quetta, 52 percent of the participants were for settlement or emigration in some Western country while 48 percent were against the same.

In Karachi, 48 percent were for while 52 percent were against settlement in some Western country.

About 56 percent of the participants in Islamabad also wanted to settle in any Western country, while 44 percent were against it.

However, only 32 percent of the participants from Peshawar wished to settle in some Western country while 68 percent replied in the negative.

Chart 41: What will you say if offered to settle/emigrate in some Western country?



6. The Way Forward for Youth Engagement

6.1 Improving and Expanding the Existing Program

- Simulation models of youth engagement, like youth parliament, etc., can be replicated with more innovations at provincial and district levels. At regional level, the SAARC simulation model can be adopted to engage the youth from member countries. The contemporary discourses on integration, regional connectivity, shared security, and peace building can take a central stage at this kind of simulation platforms. Even academic institutes can initiate and facilitate such programs in collaboration with the government. Youth will certainly feel empowered by participating in such programs because they would be led and guided by high profile people. On the whole, these simulation programs will significantly add to a youth's understanding of constitutional and parliamentary functioning as well as the subtleties of foreign relations.
- There is need to create an ecosystem to connect youth engagement programs. In Pakistan, at present, there is no coherent source of data or reference regarding the work done either by the state or the civil society organizations. While the government lacks focus on youth issues, NGOs are largely working with little or no coordination with one another, and their programs are also led by diverse mandates within the ambit of how donors see the problem and develop a theory of change. Similarly, most of the communities have their own small-scale programs. In this backdrop, Pakistan

needs to develop a coherent ecosystem where all the stakeholders work under a national-level umbrella. Such ecosystems can be developed at the provincial level too, since after the 18th amendment, youth affairs and education have become provincial subjects.

- Civil society endeavors are neither sufficient nor a substitute of much needed state responses on youth engagement in Pakistan. However, there should be cooperation among civil society organizations and government institutes. The government should also replicate successful models of youth engagement, including those developed and executed by civil society organizations. For the moment, civil society in Pakistan faces a huge trust deficit. Due to foreign funding, NGOs are considered as the new face of the enemy to the state. There are several avenues for youth engagement if the state has trusts NGOs and also provides financial support for this endeavour.
- Enhanced networking and connectivity among governmental and nongovernmental organizations will also help in sharing experiences and lessons learnt by avoiding overlapping as well as providing concerted effort for policy discourse for promoting youth engagement. Networking is a key to sustainability as well. There should be a 'youth services mapping' directory containing profiles and contacts of all those who are focusing on youth in their programs.
- While a lot of policymaking is required at the government-level, there is also need to connect works of different organizations to the policy framework.
- Politics is becoming a 'disliked' subject in Pakistan, and this perception needs to be changed for enhancing youth's political participation and empowerment. For one, political parties should mobilize youth by setting up or strengthening

their youth wings. Secondly, student unions should be revived after ascertaining certain eligibilities. Thirdly, the governments should also create space for youth in the political process.

- Economic engagement is always focused because it is measurable. But sociocultural engagement is equally important. There is lack of social engagement programs at district level. Social engagement should be promoted via literary circles, cultural shows, and youth wings of the political parties.
- The existing scope of cultural and art related engagement of youth is quite limited and it can be expanded by linking it to educational institutions, where the bulk of youth is concentrated. That could be done either by inviting students to the events of art, culture and literature being organized in their respective cities or organizing such events at educational campuses. The best way however is to promote such activities and organizations in universities and colleges.
- Art and culture are important themes to connect youth and promote harmony. Inclusive groups can be developed for programs of art and cultural expression, such as multi-faith musical bands, to promote human relationships and shared experiences.
- Existing youth engagement programs need to link better to other pillars like employment, education or skills building. They should lead to certain clearly defined ends. For one, programs should be designed to develop connectivity of youth of madrassas and universities with that of the civil society. First step in this direction is to reduce mistrust the youth may have in civil society organizations. The social entrepreneurship model can be adopted to connect youth to these organizations, which will not only develop social

empathy and responsibility among them but will also link their efforts to their careers, in one way or another. This is also important because youth shouldn't be just provided with the skills, but they should also be enabled to express these skills and connect these to employment as well.

- Similarly, programs can be developed to encourage social enterprise practices among youth. For instance, engage students, from madrassas and elsewhere, and train them in marketing and other such tasks. The government should also develop a plan for that. Globally such practices are a norm where students learn by working while studying in schools, colleges and universities.
- Existing youth engagement programs can be improved by the inclusion of youth in the designing of youth projects and providing due importance to youth's recommendations. That is about moving from a top-down approach to that of a bottom-up approach arising out of participatory youth engagement programs. Youth should indeed be part of the process and not merely a 'targeted audience'; at present, most of the interventions viz a viz youth engagement are focused on capacity building, which many saw as activities that are only confined to either lecturing or patronizing them. Youth-led initiatives of youth engagement could be more useful in this regard, where they are not only 'capacitated' but also are able to adopt leadership roles. For one, exclusive youth panels should be part of all conferences, seminars, related events, and they should be led by youth alone.
- Similarly, old people mainly lead community-level sociocultural circles, where youth participation also needs to be improved.
- More physical activities like sports should also be included in youth engagement programs. For the moment, the role of

sports is very much limited in the youth development discourse. Pakistan needs to revive and strengthen that era where there were a lot of sports grounds and events were regularly held within schools, colleges and universities. For one, sports infrastructure and events at public educational institutions should be restored and strengthened. Secondly, private educational institutions should be lawfully obliged to provide required sports infrastructure and facilities to their students.

- Youth engagement programs should be made interesting and attractive to enhance youth participation. One way to do so is to first understand the targeted groups of youths and then to design the program around their areas of interest and needs. Also, the methodology should be more engaging and interactive than merely being focused on content delivery. The use of digital tools could also bolster youth's participation. At the same, a comprehensive preparedness should be ensured for each program before its launched.
- There is also need to expand the outreach of the existing youth programs. For one, these programs should not remain focused on few cities and universities or colleges. A bulk of youth is in rural areas, which largely remains ignored. Secondly, the representation of young women and girls and uneducated youth should be ensured in these programs. Thirdly, the youth of underdeveloped regions such as Balochistan and erstwhile FATA should be prioritised in programs of socio-economic development.
- Similarly, to expand the outreach of existing 'open spaces' of art and culture, there is scope of organizing summer camps entailing education and training programs for music, dance, yoga, martial arts, creative arts, theater, etc. Organizations promoting art and culture have issues of funding and space, which keeps them constrained from expanding and reach

out/connect to larger youth. Some projects provide them the luxury to expand but after the project is over they again shrink to their original volume. Similarly, such spaces, circles are restricted to big cities, and programs should be designed to link or expand them to small cities and towns.

- Madrassa students are good in Urdu language. They can be engaged in literature, essay writing, poetry (*naat, hamd*), poems on ethical teachings, and calligraphy, etc. Similarly, programs should be developed, in collaboration with madrassa administrations, to provide opportunities of extracurricular activities to madrassa youths including the ones who do not study at the madrassas. Similarly, programs should be developed to provide skills training to madrassa students and connecting them, as cited earlier, to different employer organizations, for internships and employment opportunities.
- Engage community influencers including parents and teachers in programs on socio-psychological aspects of youth development.

6.2 Less Explored Avenues

- While identity-related issues are at the heart of Pakistani youth's vulnerability to extremist thought and ideological radicalism, only few youth-focused programs exclusively target this area. It is extremely important for the state and civil society organizations to develop effective programs that connect youth to inclusive history, civilization and cultural heritage so that they begin to own their culture and tradition. Study circles, lectures by experts, and various forms of fine arts such as theater and films can also be used for that purpose.

- There is need to engage rural youths, who are relatively marginalized, so that they get the same opportunities and facilities of education and training as the urban youth enjoy. While macro-level needs and problems of Pakistani youth may be similar, there are some context-bound specificities in that regard for each and every region. Projects at local, or rural levels should first understand the youth dynamics in the local context, which will also help in setting the target realistically.
- Programs should be developed to promote the idea of establishment of youth-specific institutes such as cultural centers. Civil society organizations could do two things in this regard. First, they can launch policy advocacy and awareness campaigns to influence provincial governments and their related departments. Secondly, they can work independently or in collaboration to establish similar institutes.
- Similarly, there is a need to establish Youth Peace Centers in educational institutions that not only launch courses on different aspects of peace and harmony but also bring together youths from different background to engage in dialogue and other healthy activities.
- Similarly, institutes like Punjab Arts Council, which have infrastructure in several cities, should make a youth engagement charter, and engage youth according to a set calendar. They can partner with civil society organizations, who have local experience and engagement formats, and provide them the infrastructure and resources, to develop and implement joint programs.
- The government and civil society organizations should try to replicate successful youth engagement program of other countries. For example, the culture of summer schools is

widespread in the world mainly in Europe, which not only provides exposure and connectivity to youth but also helps them develop their careers. In Pakistan, too, this culture can be promoted and connected with international summer schools. The public and private universities can take a leading role in this regard.

- Government initiatives like National Action Plan (NAP) should engage youth groups to develop social consensus. Similarly, youth should be engaged in policy discourses on different elements of NAP and other national charters such as Paigham-e-Pakistan. Indeed, the state and society needs to understand emerging dynamics/challenges of the growing youth bulge and thus engage youth in all dialogues and discussion that are meant to devise a future roadmap of this country. This will make them a stakeholder and give recognition to their efforts as citizens who believe that their input is needed and appreciated at all levels.
- Provincial youth policies should ensure that the slots of youth councilors are given lead suited to youth in the local body governments.
- Besides career counseling, also youth need psychological counseling. In particular, at educational campuses, arrangements should be made and awareness campaigns launched to prevent the use of drugs and to rehabilitate those using drugs.

6.3 The Spectrum and Methodology of Youth Engagement

- Aims or goals of youth engagement should be clearly defined for each program, such as in terms of awareness, consultation/policy input seeking, collaboration, training and

education, and empowerment etc. While programs focusing exclusively any one of these goals along activity spectrum are desirable, different levels of engagement are also possible simultaneously.

- For education and training oriented engagement programmes, some of the preferred themes could be:
 - Career counseling: pathways to purposeful, prosperous life
 - Creation of critical consciousness
 - Identity, values and integrity
 - Self-esteem, confidence and self-awareness
 - Empathy, compassion and emotional health
 - Positive relationship with peers and adults
 - Appreciating diverse perspectives and diversity
- Avoid approaching ideological/religious issues directly. Instead, provide youth with the skill of critical thinking and engage in an indirect way on issues linked to religious extremism, sectarianism or communal tension. One effective way could be to develop shared experiences of life and human empathy among youths subscribing to different faiths and sects. Similarly, there is a lot of work that still needs to be done in terms of helping young people respect gender, religious and ethnic diversity.
- It is important to provide youth with participation and training certificates and achievement awards because youngsters are keen to develop their professional profile.
- Cyberspace and social media are becoming preferred media of engagement, mainly for urban youth, this aspect should be considered while developing programs of engagement. For instance, digital volunteerism and entrepreneurship are the key areas where youth can be engaged.

- While devising the youth engagement programs, one particular consideration should be to take care of targeted groups' educational and other professional timetable so that they can easily participate. For attending seminars, workshops, camps or joining some tours or social welfare activities, they should not be missing their classes or studies.
- Minorities must be engaged in youth engagement and cultural exchange programs. The participation of youth of minority communities in any discourse is hindered by many factors, which should be addressed beforehand, including their lack of confidence as well fear of being persecuted and accused of blasphemy.
- There is a lack of gender equality. Women in youth organizations are under-represented, with limited growth over a decade. Youth organizations should ensure gender equality.

6.4 General Recommendations

- Student unions should be resumed for long-term youth engagement. If functioning properly, without a political misapplication, student unions will enhance a student's capabilities and prevent radicalism from spreading at educational campuses.
- Young people should be involved in policymaking processes. For one, youth should be engaged in programs pertaining to particular regional issues and then youth of different regions should be brought at one platform. Secondly their interaction with policymakers should be increased through various initiatives. Thirdly, political parties should fix quota in their parties for youth leaders.
- There is need to train and educate youths about the social media mainly related to fake news, cyber crimes, etc.

- Develop programs meant to bridge the generational or communication gap with the youth.
- In Balochistan, there is need to provide technical and vocational education and training facilities at the grass-root level. In Balochistan youth also needs exposure, information and interaction with youth from rest of the country.
- On the whole, young people of the marginalized areas should be uplifted. Besides providing political rights in these areas, universities and colleges should be established in areas like Balochistan and erstwhile FATA. The strength of functional institutions in these areas is very small.
- Youth should be represented on media through special youth-focused programs. There is a need to explore how youth-centric content can be aired during prime time TV; such content should not be detrimental to the business of the young people, who constitute majority of the population. But more than focusing on news channels, there is a need to review the content broadcasted in the name of entertainment. Dramas often depict non-Muslims in stereotypical fashion. Local opinion makers shape the thinking patterns of the young people. These opinion makers write in regional papers and are often ignored in any sensitization activity meant to promote peace and harmony.
- Engage MPhil and PhDs so that they can challenge prevailing myths in different fields. Train them in research and critical/objective thinking. NGOs should also develop projects that promote research culture and organizations.
- Academic freedom is very important to add to knowledge and reform a society. Therefore, the governments should include it as an essential in their youth and education policies.

The Way Forward for Youth Engagement

- Remove biases in the curriculum, even based on urban/rural stigmas, and against women. Revisit subjects sowing apartheid, introduce courses on citizenship; most important of all, literature can help instill tolerant human values. Similarly, teachers and courses promoting sectarianism in madrassas should be checked.
- The State should avoid curbs on recreation.
- Youth engagement programs mainly those related to policy discourse should ensure participation of provincial representatives as after the 18th Constitutional Amendment youth affairs has become a provincial subject.

Annex-1: List of 87 resource persons interviewed in 5 cities

ISLAMABAD

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
1	Mustafa Malik	Program Manager CRSS	Anam Fatima & Zarghuna Alam
2	Hamza Hassan	UNDP Youth Development Program	Anam Fatima & Zarghuna Alam
3	Zeeshan Noel	Rivets Learning	Anam Fatima & Zarghuna Alam
4	Zafarullah Khan	Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS)	Anam Fatima & Zarghuna Alam
5	Zehra Arshad	Pakistan Coalition for Education	Anam Fatima & Zarghuna Alam
6	Maham Ali	USAID's World Learning Program	Anam Fatima & Zarghuna Alam
7	Akif Naeem	Senate Policy Forum, Coordinator PILDAT Youth Parliament	Anam Fatima & Zarghuna Alam
8	A-H Nayyar	Educationist	Anam Fatima & Zarghuna Alam
9	Farnood Alam	Ahang Kada- Rang School Music	Huzaiifa Masood
10	Shafqat Munir	SDPI – Research fellow	Huzaiifa Masood
11	Nasreen Azhar	Council member HRCP	Shozab Askari
12	Ayesha Gul	Women Democratic Front/ Member Progressive Student Federation	Shozab Askari
13	Kishwar Sultana	Chairperson Insan Foundation	Shozab Askari

Annexures

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
14	Khushal Khattak	Communication and Program officer HRCP	Shozab Askari
15	Sabookh Syed	Journalist, Social media activist	Huzaifa Masood
16	Yusra Qadeer	Gender specialist UNDP	Talha Saeed
17	Sana Mahmood	Project officer – Right to Play, Pakistan	Talha Saeed
18	Mubashir Akram	Executive Director Center for Social Education and Development	Shozab Askari
19	Harris Khaliq	General secretary HRCP	Shozab Askari
20	Khaliq-ur-Rehman	General secretary - Halqa Ahabab Zoq, Islamabad	Huzaifa Masood
21	Omar Ahmed Awan	International Development practitioner	Talha Saeed
22	Gulmina Bilal	PD – Individual land	Talha Saeed
23	Humaira	PC-VSO	Talha Saeed
24	Areeba Shahid	Executive Director - PYCA	Talha Saeed

PESHAWAR

	<i>Names</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
1	Khadim Hussain	Founder Bacha Khan Trust	Talha Saeed
2	Shoaib Yousafzai	Youth Employment Program- Project Manager	Talha Saeed

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	<i>Names</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
3	Shahbaz Khan	Director Culture Nishtar Hall	Huzaifa Masood
4	Dr. Alamgir	President YDA, Peshawar	Huzaifa Masood
5	Noor Zeb	Young Lawyer	Talha Saeed
6	Farooq Afridi	Inter federation unit	Talha Saeed
7	Dr. Faizullah Jan	Journalism Department University of Peshawar	Huzaifa Masood
8	Shafiq Gagyani	Social Activist	Talha Saeed
9	Asfandyaar	Paymaan Trust	Huzaifa Masood
10	Prof Dr. Rashid Khan	Chairman Department of Social Work University of Peshawar	Huzaifa Masood
11	Kainat Hameed	Young Women Writers Forum	Talha Saeed
12	M. Ameen	Former President Muslim Students Organization Dist Peshawar	Shozab Askari
13	Syed Misbah Noor	Provincial President KPK Mustafvi Students Movement	Shozab Askari
14	Azaz Shah	Senior program officer, Dost Foundation	Shozab Askari
15	Shafi-ullah Khan	Project Head: Taking Child to school- A British Council project	Shozab Askari
16	Fahad Raza	Project head: Work to Empower	Shozab Askari

Annexures

	<i>Names</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
17	Jamroze Khan	Project Head “Dosti” A project of British Council	Shozab Askari

QUETTA

<i>No</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
1.	Dr. Amal Bugti	President Young Doctor Association (YDA)	Sabookh Syed
2.	Hafiz Ala-Udin	Vice President Ittehad-ul-Madaaris Al-Arabia Pakistan	Sabookh Syed
3.	Jalila Haider	Advocate/Hazara Activist	Sabookh Syed
4.	Kabeer Khan	President provincial Pakhtunkhwa Students Federation	Sabookh Syed
5.	Khalil Acakzai	Member Jamiat-e-Talba-Islam	Sabookh Syed
6.	Khalil-u-Rehman	Member Jamiat-e-Talba-Islam	Sabookh Syed
7.	Komal Afridi	Leading member of Balochistan Transgender Intersex Community (BTIC)	Sabookh Syed
8.	Salman Ashraf	Correspondent Geo TV	Sabookh Syed
9.	Sana Durrani	Chairperson Balochistan Women Business Association	Sabookh Syed
10.	Wadood Jamal	Social Activist	Sabookh Syed
11.	Dr. Abdul Razaq	Social political scholar Balochistan, Educational promotions	Sabookh Syed

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<i>No</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
12.	Mohib Agha	Member of Balochistan University Youth empowerment and education	Sabookh Syed
13.	Nadir Gul	BRSP (Balochistan Rural Support Program)	Sabookh Syed

KARACHI

	<i>Names</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
1.	Abu Bakkar Mohi-uddin	Nazim Jamia Islamia	Sabookh Syed
2.	Ashraf Khan	Gen Secretary Personal Disability Organization	Sabookh Syed
3.	Faisal Ali Araaein	Youth Activist/volunteer	Sabookh Syed
4.	Fida-ur-Rehman	Talented youth welfare organization	Sabookh Syed
5.	Maqbool Ahmad	Social Activist	Sabookh Syed
6.	Sajid Ali	Member of Rotary Club	Sabookh Syed
7.	Saleem-u-Rehman	Youth Volunteer	Sabookh Syed
8.	Mohammad Baloch	Social Activist/volunteer	Sabookh Syed
9.	Mufti Faisal Japan Wala	Lecturer Iqra University, Religious scholar Darul-Uloom Karachi Korangi	Sabookh Syed
10.	Nida Karmani	Lecturer (sociology) at LUMS, Karachi	Sabookh Syed

Annexures

LAHORE

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Designation/ Organization</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
1.	Gauher Aftab	Founder and Program Director, Lahore Students Union	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
2.	Sara Qureshi	Faiz Ghar	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
3.	Maryam Saeed	SAMAAJ	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
4.	Sehar Mirza	SAMAAJ	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
5.	Iqbal Haider Butt	Consultant Bargad	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
6.	Aisha Ahmad	Social activist	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
7.	Muhammad Waseem	Director Interactive Resource Center	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
8.	Ziaul Haq Naqshbandi	Young religious scholar and columnist	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
9.	Aisha Raja	The Last Word	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
10.	Shahid Rahmat	Chapter Leader of World Faith Lahore	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
11.	Saleem Ashraf	Youth for Democracy and Development, Nankana Sahib	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
12.	Taimoor Khan	Hast-o-Neest	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
13.	Amjad Tufail	Assistant Professor of Psychology and Secretary Halqa Arbab-e-Zouq	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
14.	Dr. Tariq Rahman	Dean, School of Education at Beaconhouse National University	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar

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	<i>Name</i>	<i>Designation/ Organization</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
15.	Tanveer Jehan	Democratic Commission for Human Development (DCHD)	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
16.	Ammar Ali Jan	Assistant Professor at Forman Christian College, Lahore	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
17.	Aasia Riaz	PILDAT (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency)	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
18.	Zuldiqar Ahmad Zulfi	Deputy director at Alhamra Arts Council	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
19.	Professor Anjum James Paul	Chairman Pakistan Minorities Teachers' Association (PMTA) (He was on visit to Lahore)	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
20.	Naumana Suleman	Democratic Commission for Human Development (DCHD)	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
21.	Amir Riaz	GM Publications at Readings	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
22.	IA Rehman	former chairperson HRCP	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar
23.	Iram Sana	Olomopolo Media	Safdar Hussain & Sajjad Azhar

Ammex-2: List of universities where 126 students were surveyed through a semi-structured questionnaire

<i>Sr. No</i>	<i>List of Universities</i>
1	International Islamic University (IIUI), Islamabad
2	Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi
3	Air University Islamabad (AU), Islamabad
4	Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad
5	National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad
6	Beaconhouse National University (BNU), Lahore
7	Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Lahore
8	University of Balochistan (UOB), Quetta
9	Balochistan University of Engineering and Technology (BUETK), Khuzdar
10	Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS), Quetta
11	University of Peshawar (UOP), Peshawar
12	Islamia College, University of Peshawar
13	National University of Computer & Emerging Sciences - Peshawar Campus
14	University of Karachi (UOK), Karachi
15	Iqra University, Karachi (IU)
16	Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), Karachi