

Interfaith Relations in Pakistan

**Perspectives and Worldview
of Youth in Punjab**

By

Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), Islamabad

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- Muhammad Amir Rana

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Introduction

Introduction

In the present day where concerns are gradually shifting from overpopulation to decreasing youth population in many countries, Pakistan's youth population makes it a young nation. On a theoretical level, a large youth population with energy and capacity for work should help boost the national economy and contribute to GDP growth. However, in practice, lack of focus on youth in policymaking has drastically checked Pakistan's ability to capitalize on its youth bulge and channelize the youth's energies for economic growth. Still more worrisome, youth engagement is usually overlooked in policy discourse and formulation concerning peace and security, even though youth are integral to Pakistan's security issues including violent extremism and terrorism. In recent past, the scale of religious extremism and violence witnessed in Pakistan could not have been possible without the formidable role of the youth who were indoctrinated in violent ideologies and used as weapons of war by militant groups.

The Amnesty International has documented the using of youth in conflicts and hostilities around the world. In Pakistan, a Taliban commander Qari Hussain called the children "the tools to achieve God's will".¹ The strategy of using young people in acts of violence was demonstrated by terror outfits,

and children and teenagers were deployed as human bombs. However, despite Pakistan's bitter experiences with faith-based extremism and terrorism, the youth continue to be discounted in policy. There is no effective or functional youth policy to speak of, though leaders do quite often cite the youth bulge as a source of national strength and promise uplift of youth. But rhetoric is barely followed by befitting policy measures. Resultantly, the youth are left largely rudderless and disenchanting which make them vulnerable to exploitation. There is already enough evidence to suggest that the current generation of Pakistani youth harbor anger inside which is often manifested in violent ways including in the forms of vigilantism and lynching.

On the other hand, the system continues to fail to do justice to the youth. The progressive decline of the mass education system, caused by lack of priority and partly by the privatization of education, has only added to the woes of youth in Pakistan. Apparently, the state has reneged on its responsibility to educate the country's children, and the proliferation of the expensive and comparatively substandard private education sector has further reduced mass access to education. Poverty has incapacitated many families to afford even the cheap public

¹ Kalsoom Lakhani, "Indoctrinating Children", CTC Sentinel, Vol. 3, June 2010.

<https://ctc.usma.edu/indoctrinating-children-the-making-of-pakistans-suicide-bombers/>

education, and as such they prefer sending their children to madrassas where free education and lodging are offered. The existing education system with outdated teaching methods and syllabi mostly fail to impart academic and professional skills that could help youth carve out successful careers and improve their socio-economic status in society. Likewise, the educated youth suffer from confusion about the world around them, and majority are devoid of critical and scientific thinking. Many years of schooling add only minimal value in terms socio-economic uplift.

In this context, the Pak Institute for Peace Studies conceived the idea of targeted training and education of the youth around the theme of social peace and harmony. The idea was inspired by PIPS's earlier studies that emphasized the sensitization of the educated youth – ideally the ones enrolled in universities - about issues that impact peace and stability in the country. Therefore, twenty training and educational workshops were designed and held in the four provinces including nine in Punjab. The workshops were preceded by a detailed identification of the educational areas where the regular education lacked, for instance, sensitization about the concepts behind the constitution and democracy, fundamental rights, diversity, critical and scientific inquiry, etc.

As mentioned earlier, nine training and educational workshops were held in Punjab in which hundreds of students from dozens of universities and different districts were

engaged. The workshops were designed for interactive discourse between the experts and the youth on a range of diverse yet inter-related issues. The participants were surveyed both before and after the workshops to elicit their viewpoints and opinions on various matters relating to peace and harmony in Pakistan. Likewise, select participants were also shortlisted for detailed interviews in order to get a deeper insight into how the educated youth in Punjab view themselves and the world around them, and the influence of their thinking patterns on their general behaviors.

The findings of the workshops reveal a picture that is promising at one point and worrying at another, alluding to a prevalent confusion among the youth. The report at hand discusses the core theme and related issues discussed at the workshops and identifies the problems and challenges common among the educated youth in Punjab. It also discusses at length the findings of the pre- and post-workshop surveys as well as the interviews. The findings are valuable both from an academic point of view and practical considerations of policymaking. The report discusses the problems that plague the educated youth in Pakistan and offer potential explanations. In the end, the report offers a set of recommendations for improving the overall state of Pakistani youth. The workshops were held in Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Sargodha, and Bahawalpur.

Themes of Discourse

- Scapegoating the Powerless
- Why Social Harmony?
- The Power of Diversity
- No Subjects in a Republic
- Environment, Culture, and Faith
- Being Intellectually Smart is Not Enough
- The State of Religious Minorities
- Women and the Dual Challenges of Religious Radicalism and Cultural Conservatism
- National Media and Minorities
- Freedom of Expression

THEMES OF DISCOURSE

Scapegoating the Powerless

In many societies from the East to the West, there is an old pattern of majority scapegoating minorities for the society's various ills. This pattern sharpens during times of social unrest, economic hardships, or health crisis such as pandemics etc., and people show enhanced tendency to retaliate against minorities.² Instances abound where minorities were wrongly blamed and punished for society's troubles. For example, at the onset of the current pandemic, people of Asian backgrounds and other marginalized groups like migrants and refugees were blamed for the Covid-19 spread in the West, and subjected to hate crimes.^{3 4} Likewise, in Pakistan the returning pilgrims of the Hazara minority were accused of bringing the virus from Iran, and subsequently the whole community was cordoned off in Quetta.⁵ A similar situation was witnessed in India

where members of the majority Hindu criticized the Tablighi Jamaat (Muslim religious preachers) for spreading Covid-19 through their ritualistic gatherings.⁶

The majority always finds an excuse to shift the blame for a wrong onto the minority. Back in 2015, the impoverished Christian slums in Islamabad were accused of being the breeding grounds for criminal activities by the authorities.

As a justification for its plan to demolish Christian slums, the CDA stated before the Supreme Court that the removal of the slums was 'very urgent' in order to provide a better environment to the citizens of Islamabad and to protect the beauty of Islam.⁷ In its statement, the civic body frequently used the term 'ugly' as a reference to the poor shantytowns dwelled by the minority

² Michael Bauer and others, 'Shifting Punishment on Minorities: Experimental Evidence of Scapegoating', p. 4, NBER Working Paper Series, National Bureau of Economic Research, Aug 2021
https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w29157/w29157.pdf

³ 'Scapegoating of minorities during pandemic increases need for targeted action to combat intolerance and discrimination, OSCE conference concludes', Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), 26 May 2020
<https://www.osce.org/odihr/453207>

⁴ Michael Bauer and others, 'Shifting Punishment on Minorities: Experimental Evidence of Scapegoating', p. 8, NBER Working Paper Series, National Bureau of Economic Research, Aug 2021

https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w29157/w29157.pdf

⁵ 'Balochistan government decides to cordon off Hazara Town and Mariabad areas', Balochistan Express, 26 March 2020
<https://bexpress.com.pk/2020/03/coronavirus-balochistan-govt-decides-to-cordon-off-hazara-town-and-mariabad-areas/>

⁶ Srijan Shuka, 'Pakistan's Hazaras to India's Muslims – people are finding Covid-19 scapegoats', 9 April 2020, The Print <https://theprint.in/opinion/pov/pakistan-hazaras-indian-muslims-people-covid-19-scapegoats/398581/>

⁷ Faras Ghani, 'Islamabad's Christian slums face demolition', 14 Dec 2015, Al-Jazeera
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/14/islamabads-christian-slums-face-demolition>

Christians. As bizarre as it may sound, the CDA even warned that the Christians' continued migration from other cities to Islamabad would threaten the numerical superiority of the Muslims in the nation's capital.⁸ Needless to say the community the CDA accused of spoiling Islamabad' beauty is the community that keeps Islamabad clean as the bulk of CDA's sweepers are Christians.

'What happens within the confines of the national borders goes beyond the borders. And the world respects us only as much as we respect our citizens.'

-Wajahat Masood

The minorities are scapegoated not because they are truly responsible for some wrong, if that's the case that would be very rare, but because they are weak and vulnerable and unable to retaliate effectively. However, it should be remembered that scapegoating compounds problems instead of resolving them, and persecution cannot vanquish the minorities from the country. This point was driven home effectively by renowned writer and author, Wajahat Masood, at the workshops. Masood said the religious minorities may have been belittled as social pariahs and forced to live as second-rate citizens, but no amount of ill-treatment can

whitewash the fact that religious minorities account for nine (9) million in Pakistan which is significant. He said the Pakistani state often feel victimized by its negative portrayal and deteriorating global image. But the national image is a rebound of internal policies.

What happens within the confines of the borders goes beyond the borders. 'The world respects us only as much as we respect our citizens', he said. No nation can project soft power and image or earn the respect of the world community if it discriminates against its citizens on basis of faith, ethnicity, or gender. Wajahat Masood added that humans are born free and they have an in-born right to have any religious faith. He stressed that having a religious faith is no crime, and that Pakistan's constitution has granted upon every citizen the freedom to profess any religion. Masood said Pakistan's real assets were the youth who make up over half of the population. The youth must step forward and take the lead in righting the wrongs inflicted on the Pakistani society including religious fanaticism.

Likewise, journalist Sabookh Syed explained to the students the duplicity involved in cases of faith-based discrimination. He said that members of the majority faith cite religious reasons while justifying discriminatory behaviors towards members of minority faiths, but the real factors behind discrimination are different. For instance,

⁸ Faraz Talat, 'Get rid of Christians, keep Islamabad clean: CDA's Donald Trump moment', 11 Dec 2015, daily Dawn <https://www.dawn.com/news/1225694>



‘Faith-based discrimination is driven less by teachings of religion, and more by socio-economic factors.’

-Sabookh Syed

many Pakistani Muslims will have no problem sitting together with a white European Christian or eating with them on the same table. But, many of these same people will hesitate to sit or eat together with a local Pakistani Christian due to what they call religious reasons, Syed said. He added that faith-based discrimination in Pakistan is fueled less by religious teachings and more by socio-economic status. Decades-old persecution has reduced the religious minorities like the Christians and Hindus to the most dispossessed and disempowered socio-economic class in the country. People of minority faiths are persecuted and discriminated against primarily because they

are poor and powerless, and they fall at the bottom of the class-driven society, Sabookh Syed said.

He urged the students to think critically about social issues and not let themselves just be spoon fed ideas and narratives by others. Can a society ever achieve the ideals of social justice and equality if it holds on to such norms that weigh the worth of individuals on the basis of their socio-economic status? Sabookh asked. ‘It is easier to blame minorities for things that go wrong or persecute them to vent our anger, but it needs courage to embrace the universal value of the equality of humans’, he said. Narrow mindsets have impeded social and economic progress in Pakistan for most parts of its history, and much lies in the hands of the new generation to break free from this debilitating social status quo, Sabookh said. These views were seconded by Prof. Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed – Vice Chancellor, University of Sargodha – who talked about the class structure in Pakistan at length at the workshops in Sargodha. Dr. Ahmed said the class structure is deeply entrenched in the Pakistani society, and it is from this class dynamic that social problems like faith-based discriminations emanate. He said South Asian societies are glued to the values and norms of medieval caste system that bifurcates and polarizes the society based on socio-economic factors. In Pakistan, the minority groups are considered and treated as the low caste which is a reason the minorities have been condemned to low-ranking and menial jobs, he said. According to Dr. Ishtiaq, the

Pakistani society is rooted in caste and class system, and members of every class struggle to upgrade their class by climbing the social ladder. But the gap between the upper and the lower classes are widening which is creating social conflicts. The government must adopt inclusive policies and promote respect for diversity to tackle such social challenges, he added.



‘Class structure is deeply entrenched in Pakistan, and it is from this class dynamic that social problems like faith-based discrimination emanate’.

-Prof. Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed

Why Social Harmony?

Samuel Huntington warned of a clash among civilizations that would bring devastation to

the world. In a conference on Huntington’s theory in Switzerland, Pakistan’s former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto ruled out any clash among civilizations, saying instead that the clash would take place among social classes and religious sects because of the widening gap and increasing social and economic disparity among them.⁹ The frailty of the social fabric in Pakistan marked by incessant conflicts based in class and sect lends credence to Bhutto’s views on social conflicts.

It was, therefore, felt that the Pakistani youth should develop an accurate understanding of the factors that not only trigger faith-based violence but also sustain it to the benefit of the majority. Speaking at the interfaith harmony workshop in Sargodha, Saima Mobashira – an educationist and cultural critic – said religious fanaticism has given the majority a superiority complex in Pakistan, and this feeling of faith-based superiority helps create the environment for ill-treatment and persecution of minorities. The concept of equality of citizens has been done away with, compromising the constitutional safeguards on basic rights and freedoms.

A country being socially at peace with itself is a precondition for national progress and development. Socially diverse nations have greater potential for economic prosperity if diversity is seen as a strength instead of as a threat as in case of Pakistan. Studies indicate that people raised and living in culturally

⁹ Dr. Qibla Ayaz, comment at Youth for Interfaith Harmony Workshop, 2021

diverse societies are tolerant towards difference of opinion, cosmopolitan in their worldviews, and more empathetic for fellow citizens, Mobashira said. Similarly, another speaker Saira Rashid said that religiously tolerant countries are generally stable and prosperous, while the ones lacking this quality are often embroiled in internal conflicts and instability that impede their collective progress.

. ‘People raised and living in culturally diverse societies are tolerant of difference of opinion, cosmopolitan in their worldviews, and more empathetic towards fellow citizens.

-Mobashra Bajwa

However, religious radicalism is not just an impediment to progress and development. A chain reaction of social disasters that engulf all spheres of life is set in motion when faith-based extremism is normalized as a societal quality or institutionalized for political purposes. Once this ruinous process is sparked, it is hard to roll it back. In Pakistan, the state has suffered back-to-back blows to its social fabric in the form of maniacal conflicts rooted in religion and sect.

Speaking at the workshop, former chief of the national counter-terrorism authority Tariq Pervez said religious extremism feeds terrorism in Pakistan. He gave a brief

overview of the human and capital costs of terrorism to Pakistan’s society and economy over the past two decades, noting that the society has lost some of its core values such as tolerance and respect for diversity and dissent. Terrorism and extremism have shattered Pakistan’s image, projecting it as one of the most unstable states in the world. He asked the workshop participants to ask themselves what their country has gained and lost due to religious extremism.

Likewise, senior journalist and writer Aslam Awan warned against the politicization or securitization of religious faith, saying that such a policy runs the risk of leading to social catastrophes. Societies averse to cultural diversity are lethal, he said, adding exceptional political skills are required to manage such societies. And unfortunately, such skills are missing from the country’s power corridors. History testifies that when people’s collective imagination is fired by utopian ideals based on exclusionary ideologies, their shared ability to create and innovate declines. A nation averse to diversity lacks innovation, he said. In the contemporary globalized world where communications happen around the corners of the world in real time, a country that discriminates against or persecutes its citizens because of their religious beliefs cannot go unnoticed. A nation’s conduct and character build its image.

During the workshop in Gujranwala, a young participant asked that how people could learn to respect diversity when there are laws

that discriminate against citizens based on religion. He noted that laws exist that curb freedom of faith and criminalize practices and rituals of certain religions. The speakers agreed with this point, confirming that there are, indeed, certain laws in the constitution that conflict with the concept of equality of all citizens and fundamental rights. Mr. Awan said the first step to rectifying such discriminatory laws is to sensitize people that such wrongs exist that need to be corrected.

‘How could people learn to respect diversity when our legal system promotes faith-based discrimination?’

-A student at workshop

Awareness of a wrong is crucial for correcting that wrong. Once the people have the awareness, they can push their political representatives and lawmakers to rectify such laws. Likewise, another student asked that how the persecution of minorities could be checked given that this problem is occurring in many countries including in neighboring India. In response, the speaker stressed the need for a global campaign to promote universal human values and interfaith harmony. But any advocacy for collective human good must begin at home, he declared.

The Power of Diversity

The question of diversity remained the focal point of all interfaith harmony workshops. The program aimed at discussing topics and issues with the youth to ultimately drive home the central point: why diversity matters. In the world’s powerful economies such as the US and Europe, there has been a strong realization that for their economies to thrive and sustain, they need what Geraldine Richmond calls “cognitive diversity – the grand assembly of different perspectives and skills in laboratories and classrooms.” According to Richmond – president of Sigma XI scientific society – for the US to keep its economy thriving, it needs a diversity of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, experience, and geography.

Studies suggest that a diverse team can identify and address issues that a like-minded or lookalike team might miss, she says.¹⁰

‘Inability to benefit from diversity is a major snag for socially and economically stagnating societies.’

Inability to benefit from diversity is a major snag for socially and economically stagnating or retrogressing countries. Hence, the workshops aimed at educating the Pakistani youth not only about the significance of

¹⁰ Gerald Richmond, ‘The power of diversity’, Oct 28, 2019, <https://www.sigmaxi.org/news/keyed-in/post/keyed-in/2019/10/28/the-power-of-diversity>

diversity but also about the actual diversity that makes up the socio-cultural landscape of the country. The racial and ethnic variations from the plains of Sindh up to the mountain communities of the Himalayas, and the different languages and dialects the Pakistanis speak and the various religions and faiths they profess, all were laid bare at the workshops. The speakers made efforts to alter the established belief that Pakistan was a homogeneous community socially and culturally. The purpose was to take the youth to a quick journey of social and cultural self-awareness – something missing among the educated Pakistani youth.

Underlining the cultural differences, chairperson Council of Islamic Ideology Prof. Dr. Qibla Ayaz said that cultural differences exist not only among different ethnic groups but also within same ethnic groups.

Geography alters cultural values and practices over time, and as a result people belonging to same ethnic group living in different areas develop varying social values and cultural practices. Dr. Ayaz said people coming from different cultures, regions, and religious backgrounds have unique knowledge and experiences and they have a peculiar way of looking at things. And when peoples of diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds are brought together, their collective outlook is amazingly innovative. Such inclusive outlook and innovative thinking are essential for addressing the complex challenges of the modern age, he said.



‘When people of diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds are brought together, their collective outlook is amazingly innovative.

-Prof. Dr. Qibla Ayaz

During the workshops, the notion of diversity being a source of national strength repeatedly came to fore with the speakers stressing that diversity of faiths, beliefs, and views was not to be feared, but accepted and embraced as a blessing. Though it was no easy endeavor for the trainers to take the youth through the suspicion and fears of diversity – infused both actively such as through education and because of the religionization of the state – still the speakers managed to introduce the participants to alternative views that diverged from the readymade notions and narratives. In post-workshop surveys, majority of the

participants said they had come across views and knowledge they did not know before.

No Subjects in a Republic

‘The constitution is a sacred bilateral agreement between the people and the state, and both parties are legally bound to abide by it.’

-Muhammad Amir Rana

Religious radicalism has instilled a divisive social behavior that often view religious minorities more as subjects of majoritarian rule rather than equal citizens of the republic. This phenomenon is usually observed in patronizing behaviors and attitudes among members of the majority faith. The continued religionization of the legal system has given birth to the implicit belief that people of the majority faith particularly those claiming to serve Islam in some way have special claims to patriotism and social and political entitlements. A latent belief that the Islamic republic’s Muslim citizens are inherently mainstream and the rest are peripheral has travelled through several generations, coming down to the present.

Addressing such perceptual problems among the common man is critical for paving the way for acceptance of diversity and inclusion. The first step is to make the majority aware of their perceived entitlements. During the workshops, it was

explained to the youth what the term ‘republic’ in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan exactly meant. Amir Rana discussed the basic elements of a republic, its broader contours, as well as the legal contract governing it. A republic is born out of a written mutual agreement between the people and the state, and the agreement called ‘constitution’ is sacred which both parties are bound to abide by, he said. Under the constitution of Pakistan, the people – whichever region of the country they belong to, whatever faith they profess or culture they inherit – are equal citizens of the republic. Religious faith does not determine their social status, and all citizens are equal before the law whether they are Muslim, Hindu, Christian, or Sikh.

‘The tendency to look down upon citizens because of their religious beliefs contradicts the basic principles of democracy and a republic.’

-Muhammad Amir Rana

Amir Rana also differentiated between subject and citizen, stressing that the youth need to have clarity on how a citizen differs from a subject. Pakistan is neither a kingdom nor a sultanate or caliphate to have subjects; it is a democratic republic where the power rests with the people and exercised by their elected representatives under the constitution. In a republic, citizens or a class

of citizens cannot be treated as subjects. The tendency to look down upon citizens because of their religious beliefs contradicts the most basic principle of democracy and republic, he added. Whatever the reason or excuse, denying a citizen their inalienable rights and constitutionally protected freedoms means denying them opportunities for social, political, and economic growth, and thus pushing them into misery and hardships. Such an injustice creates huge social disparities which ultimately destabilize the whole society.

According to Amir Rana, Pakistan's experiences with faith-based nationalism set the country on a collision course with democracy. While encouraging the people of majority faith to lay claim to the guardianship of the state, such an exclusionary notion of nationalism negates the principles of equality of citizens and rule of law. As a result, the majority enjoys the rights and freedoms as well as the perks and privileges that come with citizenship, while the religious minorities are viewed as lesser citizens. Treating minorities as subjects rather than citizens is evident by their persecution, and this policy or behavior is in direct contravention of Pakistan's constitution and laws. Amir Rana urged the workshop participants to acquaint themselves with basic legal instruments on human rights and citizenship such as the UDHR, the constitutional provisions on basic rights, and other documents like Paigham-e-Pakistan etc. Without the knowledge and

understanding of these legal instruments and the concepts therein, the youth cannot become active citizens nor can they play effective roles in peace, progress, and prosperity of their country.

Environment, Culture, and Faith

Physical environments influence lifestyles such as dress, food, traditions, and outlooks. People's prolonged interaction with natural and physical environments gives shape to unique cultures. And thus, a mosaic of cultures across and within regions are born.¹¹ Likewise, culture influences people's social customs, religious beliefs, rituals, and folklores. In short, culture and religion are interwoven in a way that each affect the other, and in some cases, it becomes hard to tell each other apart. At workshops, the young participants were not only sensitized about the value of cultural diversity, but also about how such a diversity is born.

'A nation's wisdom is derived from the collective knowledge and experiences of the people that live in different regions, speak different languages, profess different faiths, and undergo unique experiences in life.'

¹¹ Zubair Torwali, Swat workshops, Jan 2021

Highlighting the links between culture and religion, Dr. Qibla Ayaz said that culture has always had an influence over people's cultural values and traditions as well as beliefs. And since Pakistan has a diverse geography, people living under different environmental conditions develop different social customs and rituals. Explaining variations within the Pakhtun cultural traditions in the Pak-Afghan region, Dr. Qibla said cultural variations occur not only across national borders but also within Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Pakhtun tribes straddling the borders have developed variations in their lifestyles, values, and customs. He also discussed how social values and traditions differ among the Punjabi, Pakhtun, Sindhi, and Baloch communities. If appreciated and embraced, diversity can be very empowering for a country or community because it brings in different and unique perspectives to the table which can help find solutions to problems and challenges, he added.

The workshops participants were encouraged to read about different cultures in Pakistan in order to deepen their understanding of the social landscape in their country. Knowledge is key to developing empathy among the youth, and unless the youth develop empathy for different peoples and their way of life, they tend to view other cultures as exotic or suspicious. Right knowledge enables the youth to accept diversity as strength, and multiculturalism as a blessing. According to Dr. Qibla, as future torchbearers of the nation, the youth must widen their worldviews through knowledge, and cherish

and preserve the diversity. Valuing diversity means accepting all citizens as equal and integral members of the society without bias and discrimination, he said.

Similarly, Wajahat Masood said that social groups and communities dwelling in different parts of the country have unique knowledge and experiences about life. One community's experiences may be peculiar to that area in which it lives and may not be fully known to another community that lives in another part of the country and vice versa. When varying outlooks and experiences are combined, the resultant shared knowledge and experiences are powerful and amazing. This view was seconded by Amir Rana who said that national knowledge and wisdom is derived from the collective knowledge and experiences of the people that live in different regions, speak different languages, profess different faiths, and undergo unique experiences in life. The greater the diversity, the deeper the knowledge and understanding of the nation.

Being Intellectually Smart is Not Enough

Pakistan has a stagnating literacy rate with about 90 million people unable to read and write, but low literacy is not a major driver of religious radicalization. Extremism is linked more with the nature of education rather than lack of it. Instances abound of university graduates from educated families clinging to violent ideologies or committing acts of violence in the name of religion. Saad Aziz

who masterminded the murder of social activist Sabin Mehmud and helped perpetuate the massacre of the Ismailis in Karachi was a graduate of Pakistan's finest business school i.e. the IBA, and Noreen Leghari who joined the ISIS and planned to bomb a Christian church in Lahore was a medical student of the Liaqat University of Medical Sciences. Likewise, student activist Mashal Khan was lynched by his university fellows in Peshawar.

In the above instances, it was not lack of education but lack of empathy that drove young people to commit acts of violence. Inability to manage emotions can lead an intellectually sound person to react violently to a stimulus. In Pakistan, the rising tide of violent emotionalism conjoined with exhibitionistic religiosity makes it imperative for the youth to learn to manage their emotions and avoid impulsive behaviors. Emotional intelligence is as important as IQ. Coined by American psychologist Daniel Goleman in 1995, the term emotional intelligence or emotional quotient (EQ) has gained increased focus in recent years. The concept was built on a study of hundreds of highly intelligent and successful people suffering failures and downfalls around the world. Education systems and industries around the world are awakening to the significance of EQ among their students and workers.

It was, therefore, felt that the youth should be introduced to the concept of EQ, its basic elements, and why managing emotions was

important. In interactive workshop sessions, the participants were sensitized about EQ through practical examples to help them practice managing emotions in everyday life. Discussing EQ, PIPS program manager Ahmed Ali said that EQ is a skill that could be learned and mastered through practice. The more the practice, the higher the EQ levels. EQ is also helpful in life's transitional phases e.g., university students completing their formal schooling and entering practical life. With high EQ, the youth would be better prepared to live up to the challenges of personal and professional life. A degree from a prestigious university coupled with a high IQ level might help one land in a good job, but these are no guarantee for long term growth and success if one lacks a matching EQ level.

'In Pakistan, the rising tide of violent emotionalism conjoined with exhibitionistic religiosity makes it imperative for the youth to learn to manage their emotions and avoid impulsive behaviors.'

Ahmed Ali described four elements of EQ namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, and explained how to practice them to achieve emotional stability. He discussed the core emotions that are universal to all humans, their evolutionary

imprints in human psyche, and the common underlying factors that trigger them. Awareness of self and empathy for others lie at the core of EQ, he said. Emotional intelligence starts building when one digs into one's fears, happiness, sadness, and anger and unwrap layer-by-layer all the factors that drive these emotions.



‘The purpose of emotional intelligence is not to suppress emotions, but to prevent them from paralyzing the normal functioning of the brain.’

-Ahmed Ali

Likewise, he explained how to empathize with others by putting oneself in their shoes in order to perfect the EQ skills. People usually rush to judge because that is the easiest way to form opinions about others. On the other hand, empathy requires some research and understanding of others’

perspectives or situations. But these little efforts pay huge dividends in the form of emotional stability and maturity.

The purpose of EQ is not to suppress emotions but to prevent them from paralyzing the normal functioning of the brain, Ahmed said. Emotional failures at individual level lead to personal losses like losing a job or a relationship etc., and when manifested at mass level it often results in anarchic situations. According to Ahmed, the lynching of Mashal Khan by a mob of educated youth, while gruesome, tells a lot about the emotional failures and absence of empathy in the society. He urged the workshop participants to practice and develop their EQ skills in order to succeed in life and become emotionally strong and stable members of the society.

The State of Religious Minorities

‘You can create a state, but you cannot create a nation. Nations evolve.’ These words of late Prof. Rubina Saigol explains why the forever project of nation building in Pakistan has been an exercise in futility. No policy has harmed social integration as much as the continued religionization of the political structures. A latent notion pervading the power elite is that ethnic nationalism and provincialism – the perceived threats to country’s territorial integrity and security – would vanish if they manage to manufacture a unified nation under the flag of the majority religion i.e. Islam. However, repeated

experiments with this notion since day one has produced what was meant to be avoided: a socially fractured society. Islamization was no panacea for political problems, but successive regimes kept pushing it nevertheless.

‘Religionization of the political structure has contributed to social fissures in Pakistan.’

As a result of this policy, the political power of religious groups grew exponentially, enabling them to influence, and at times, even dictate the state policies as per their worldviews. While the religious lot extracted more and more space for political maneuvering, the space for minorities kept shrinking. The non-Muslim citizens were disparaged socially and disempowered politically in the scheme of things. Today, the religious minorities are marginalized and subjected to persecution. The challenges the minority communities face in Pakistan were elaborated by PIPS research analyst Safdar Sial during the workshops.

Safdar Sial shed light on the deprivations of religious minorities as well as entitlements of the majority communities in the country, explaining how life is much harder for members of minority groups in comparison with that of Muslim citizens. He discussed at length the social, political, and economic issues that the minorities face on routine basis. Sial said members of religious

minorities face obstacles while applying for citizenship documents such as CNIC or passport. Many fail to acquire them altogether which impacts their economic and financial conditions because without government-issued documents they are denied access to job opportunities. This pushes them into low ranking jobs such as cleaning etc.

In addition to economic exclusion, violence is used to intimidate and persecute the minorities. And the threat of violence comes not only from the religious extremists but also from ordinary members of the public belonging to majority faith, Sial said, citing the example of blasphemy laws which has often been used as a tool of persecution. Cases have also been recorded of people weaponizing these laws to settle personal scores. In such a flammable social environment, a mere accusation of blasphemy can trigger mob lynching. Likewise, while the sword of blasphemy hangs over the heads of non-Muslims, the problem of forced conversions go on without effective check. In a typical case, a young, often underage, Hindu girl is abducted and converted to Islam and married off to a Muslim man. And once converted, her parents are denied access to her.

According to Sial, the religious minorities lack security notwithstanding their constitutionally protected rights. The utility and effectiveness of a law depends on its enforcement in letter and spirit. The state’s inability or unwillingness to implement these

laws renders the legal protections meaningless. These views were also echoed by Dr. Qibla Ayaz who said that protecting the lives, dignity, and properties of all citizens was the responsibility of the state. He proposed the establishment of specific institutions for the protection of minorities' rights.

At one point during the workshop, Safdar Sial elicited the participants' opinions on the rights of the Hindu and Christian citizens. The majority of the participants said they believed the minorities were denied their basic human rights. This reflected that majority of the educated youth were cognizant of the injustices being done to the minorities. Safdar Sial said the youth are the agent of change, and therefore, they must be mindful of what happened in their social surroundings. He discussed why shared values of equal citizenship and peaceful coexistence were important for the collective progress and prosperity of the society, adding that civilized nations uphold the rule of law and sanctity of the constitution.

Women and the Dual Challenges of Religious Radicalism and Cultural Conservatism

Religious extremism is expressly opposed to women emancipation and averse to the idea of equality of women. Any advocacy or movement for women's rights is seen as a West-funded agenda against domestic religious values and traditions by the radical

segments. In recent years, the country has seen a parallel rise in religious extremism and misogyny with experts seeing a relationship between the two. While the radical elements insist on assigning women to household chores, the fact remains that women are stakeholders in countering extremism both at family and society levels. At home, they influence the discourse around various issues including religion and help shape the views of their family members.



‘Due to conservative social norms that view women as a commodity, women empowerment is frowned upon, and social barriers are built to deter women from public life.’

-Dr. Lubna Zaheer

Besides, as pain bearers of their loved ones, women have been worst hit by terrorism.

Over the past decades, the Pakistani women have mourned the deaths of their loved ones killed in acts of terrorism. Therefore, they are a key stakeholder in Pakistan's extremism and terrorism problem. But, unfortunately women have been denied their rights despite them constituting over half of the 220 million population. Women face discrimination and marginalization as a gender. And the exclusion of a chunk of population from public life is one of the greatest disabling factors for development.

During the workshops, the equality of women and the importance of their social, political, and economic emancipation was discussed at length by women leaders and professionals. In a society where men call the shots, it is a herculean task for women to excel in public life and establish their distinct identities. However, despite great odds, women have played crucial role in public life in Pakistan. The Pakistani women's role in public life particularly politics was highlighted by Wajahat Masood. He said that those who tend to look down upon women as weak forget the political history of Pakistan in which women achieved what men could not. When the country was thrown under the martial law and dictator Ayub Khan proclaimed himself as the ruler, it was not men but a 67-year-old woman Fatima Jinnah who led the resistance against dictatorship. That old woman refused to give the usurper a free pass, Masood said. Likewise, when Yahya Khan imposed himself as president, again a woman – an 18-year-old girl – Asma Jahangir challenged the illegitimate military regime of

Yahya Khan in the court of law. Similarly, agitations against powerful dictators like Zia and Musharraf were led by Benazir, Nusrat, and Kulsoom Nawaz, he added.

However, despite women's exceptional services to Pakistan's political development, their role in public life is disproportionate to their population and this fact was lamented by researcher Anam Fatima who said that gender discrimination continues to impede women's empowerment and prevent them from realizing their potential. She discussed the Pakistani women's invaluable services for development and progress of the country and encouraged women to overcome their fears and pursue their dreams. Similarly, another speaker Dr. Lubna Zaheer argued that due to religious conservatism and certain social norms, women empowerment is frowned

upon, and barriers are erected to deter women from public life. However, women must stand up for their rights, she said. Likewise, another speaker said that gender discrimination is very basic in nature as it usually begins at home where parents prefer sons over daughters in most matters of everyday routines. She quoted instances of parents withdrawing their daughters from schools while letting their sons continue their education or allowing girls to get education till only certain levels of schooling. Such discriminatory behaviors at basic levels shape the society's outlook about women, she said, adding that change must occur at home first.

There is no denying that certain cultural norms do commodify women. For instance,

there is proverb in Urdu that 'larkiyan parayi dhan hoti hai' which literally commodifies women as wealth that belongs to others. It roughly means that a girl belongs to her husband's and not father's home. Such norms also otherize women, diminishing their social status in relation to men. At workshops, the general fallacies and stereotypes attached to gender roles were discussed, and women's ability and potential to perform in all walks of life at par with men were highlighted.

National Media and Minorities

Pakistan saw a proliferation of electronic media channels under the military regime of Pervez Musharraf. The expansion brought hundreds of news channels to the screens, and the profitability of the industry also drew investors with non-journalistic backgrounds.

As a result, wealthy businesspeople launched media organizations, and became part of the news market. Understanding the changing dynamics of the media and its overall landscape is important for a common citizen. Therefore, media's role in reporting the plight of religious minorities was discussed at the workshops by eminent journalists. The media's challenges and limitations and the exaggerated public perceptions of media's role in influencing policies were explained in detail.

Journalist and author Aslam Awan said the media have many limitations in highlighting the problems faced by the minorities, and the industry is contributing very little to

alleviating the conditions of the persecuted communities. He said the media's role about minorities can be gauged by the fact that few people know that Karachi had a Jewish community that gradually disappeared. The minorities are full-fledged citizens and sons and daughters of the soil, but sadly states around the world use their minorities for statecraft, and exploit them for political purposes, he said.



'The contemporary media is a commercial industry with heavy investment and commercial interests alongside a focus on public interest. It is not always driven by humanitarian or public interest considerations'

-Gul Nokhaiz Akhtar

Echoing Awan's views, writer and humorist Gul Nokhaiz Akhtar said the media is not always driven by humanitarian or public interest considerations. The modern media is a commercial industry with billions of investment and commercial interests alongside a focus on public interest. He said the public often hold exaggerated views of media's role and its power to influence government policies. Against the common belief, the government usually does not respond to news stories. Unless there is a risk of public agitation, the authorities do not usually act on newspaper or television stories, he said. On the other hand, the agenda setting in media houses are influenced by commercial ratings. The media owners' fortunes rise and fall with ratings. Therefore, media houses focus on boosting revenues even if that means resorting to sensationalism or downplaying public interest stories.

Likewise, journalist and anchorperson Habib Akram said the television penetrates millions of households in Pakistan, and as such the media exert great influence in shaping public opinion. He agreed that the media can do far better in promoting the minorities viewpoints and highlighting their problems. No doubt that cut-throat commercialism in the contemporary media coupled with restrictions from the state have compromised the media's original function of guarding the interests of the public. In addition, intense commercialism also has reduced the quality of stories and contents produced by the countless media houses.

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is the fountainhead of all rights and freedoms which is a reason why it becomes the first casualty of autocratic regimes. Suppression of the freedom of expression paves the way for the curbing of all freedoms. Senior journalist Wusatullah Khan spoke about freedom of expression at the workshops. He said that fundamental rights and freedoms are ensured by the constitution, but that does not automatically mean that those rights and freedoms would be given to the people readily. No right has ever been offered in a plate. One has to take one's rights through struggle and sacrifice. In societies where the public lacks awareness about its rights and does not understand the concept of accountability, the state tends to encroach upon basic rights and freedoms on various pretexts.

While discussing restrictions on the freedom of speech, Wusatullah said that before complaining about state highhandedness, one must realize that curbs on free expression begin at home where young people are often prevented from talking on many issues in the name of social values or traditions. According to him, the society tends to curb free expression on grounds of religious sensitivity, security, or social values.

And the few limited freedoms that exist in the country are also reserved for the privileged lot. The minorities have practically no say in whatever narratives the elite manufacture. While such a practice may create an illusion of all-is-well in the society, but it also breeds

resentment. He warned that suffocating environment leads to explosive outcomes.

Wusatullah said that people in Pakistan often abandon their rights and put their fate into others' hands and then complain about lack of freedoms. No right is ever given willingly

'The people in Pakistan have a habit of abandoning their rights and putting their fate into others' hands, and then complaining about lack of freedoms.'

-Wusatullah Khan

unless voice is raised. Even an infant has to cry to register his hunger and get fed. The state also works in a similar fashion. The people have to raise their voice and take their rights. The people of this region have been waiting for centuries to get their rights, but the state is not designed to give the rights easily. Whatever rights the people enjoy today were taken after painful struggles, and for more rights, the people must struggle more. There is no royal road to achieving rights and freedoms. People often struggle for generations to get their rights. If people embark on a journey for rights and freedoms today, they will be able to secure them for their future generations. So, the bottom line is that the struggle must go on, Wusatullah said.

Problems and Challenges

- Intellectual Stagnation
- Bias and Prejudice
- A Generational Confusion about Nationhood
- The Disconnect Between Youth and Politics
- Diversity vs Uniformity

Intellectual Stagnation

The analysis of workshops' data and observation reveal a familiar occurrence: youth deficient in some basic intellectual skills. In fact, the findings of this report, notwithstanding its limitations of sample size, are no less than an indictment of the education system's failure to impart basic rational thinking and reasoning skills among the students. Learning outcomes remain poor even after prolonged years of schooling, and majority of the youth at higher education levels fail to develop or improve their critical thinking skills. Even students from the relatively better educational institutions of Punjab were found to be lacking critical thinking and reasoning, and many of them were unacquainted with the application of evidence-based thinking. Some tended to stick to flawed ideas found in certain textbooks such as Pakistan Studies etc.

The ability to process a piece of information or an idea coherently and logically was missing among many university students. While lack of coherence and articulation were conspicuous, many also struggled to speak confidently in front of an audience. These problems among the youth were noted to be nearly uniform nationwide. And factors contributing to poor learning and understanding among students are to be found no farther than within the education system itself. The educational curricula, designed purposively to support some of the core political objectives of the state, have played a key role in creating the pathetic state of education in the country.

In fact, if anything, the formal education has been stripped of its fundamental function and utility which is to enable students to think rationally and critically. This function has largely been replaced by indoctrination. In some ways, the schooling system resembles the madrassa system in teaching methods. Both overwhelmingly focus on feeding particular sets of ideas and beliefs, all the while restricting creative and critical discourse and questioning. Likewise, at one time or another, both the schools and madrassas have served as tools in the pursuit of political and strategic objectives.

During the workshops, it was also observed that some of the students were unrelenting in their opinions and convictions about various issues even though they had never measured their views against available evidence and facts. For instance, when asked if the Aurat March was promoting Western agenda, many students agreed. They held strong opinions about the Aurat March being anti-religion and anti-culture. When they were asked if they had read the manifesto of the Aurat March, none had read the easily accessible manifesto. And even after the manifesto was read out to them clause by clause, they still held on to their opinions.

Likewise, a number of students continued to cling to such conspiratorial narratives that were rendered obsolete or proven false by new information long ago. Their knowledge of things was not updated. Overall, thinking and reasoning skills were found to be poor among the youth. That was barely surprising, however, because along with the progressive

decline in the quality of education, the culture of reading and research has also been waning. Book reading is vanishing in Pakistan which is evident by, among other things, the struggling publishing industry in the country.

The issues of intellectual growth among the educated youth can be attributed to a number of factors including the lack of space for free thinking and expression both within and outside classrooms, controlled academic environments, and obsolete teaching methods that stress rote learning and discourage curiosity or questioning. The teacher-student relations are guided by such cultural norms that portray the teachers as authority figures that are not to be challenged by the pupils. And conforming with the established normative behaviors is usually rewarding.

Furthermore, the space for critical discourse and research is limited, and the academicians feel constricted by explicit and implicit curbs on free thinking and expression. Such restrictions come from various sources including the government, society, and religious pressure groups, etc. In such an environment, many academicians resort to self-censorship because any intellectual *mishap* can have serious repercussions. For instance, a university teacher Junaid Hafeez was accused of and booked for blasphemy after he expressed some critical views on matters of faith in Multan in 2013. A young

scholar with brilliant academic record, he faced prosecution and ultimately death penalty in 2019.¹² The ever-growing number of taboo subjects has created immense barriers for the intellectual growth of the academia as well as the pupils.

In this backdrop, it may be assumed that the development or refinement of intellectual skills of the students is not a priority of the education system. Educationists see the teaching methods at schools as flawed because they tend to indoctrinate students with preconceived ideas and notions of religion and nationhood instead of allowing a liberal environment of inquiry. Some experts equate indoctrination with mental violence, committed against the youth. Where critical inquiry is discouraged, rote learning takes centerstage. Pupils with enhanced abilities to memorize lessons or text passages can get along successfully in the examinations even if they happen to lack adequate understanding of the subject. Resultantly, while many students keep progressing to next classes, their understanding and intellectual skills stagnate. And as adults at university levels, they tend to form their opinions and worldviews on the bases of whatever they were taught in the preceding years of schooling.

PIPS observed that the educated youth had little inclination to audit their views or reconcile their opinions with available facts. Poor intellectual skills among youth have

¹² Shakeel Ahmed, 'Multan lecturer sentenced to death on blasphemy charges', Dawn, 22 Dec 2019.
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1523612>

adverse social and economic implications both for the youth and the broader society in a sense that the youth with poor intellectual skills find it exceedingly challenging to compete in the domestic and international job markets. On a greater level, this means the education system's inability to add skilled human resource to the economy. Thus, substandard education is casting negative impacts on individuals, society, economy, as well as the state in general.

Bias and Prejudice

Where the ideologically-driven system of mass education in Pakistan produces confusion and contribute little to intellectual refinement of the public, there it also negatively affects social behaviors and influence the national mood. Within the textbooks, the suppression of diversity and propagation of overtly biased and discriminatory contents create distorted views, stereotypes, and prejudice among the youth. The observation of the workshops' proceedings and the data collected from the youth showed glimpses of the explicit and implicit biases and prejudices harbored by the youth. Besides, a sense of in-group and out-group was noticed among them. Mostly, the youth attending the workshops were significantly selective in their socialization at the event. They tended to socialize with those fellow participants who came from the same religious, ethnic, lingual, or regional backgrounds as they did. Many of them consciously avoided sitting next to a fellow who belonged to another ethnic or religious group.

To reduce social distances among participants of diverse backgrounds and increase interaction among them, PIPS made a deliberate attempt to bridge the gap by rearranging the sittings in a way that the young participants were asked to sit with those fellows who belonged to backgrounds different from theirs. The idea was to give the youth opportunity to interact with *out-group* members and understand their perspectives on things. Social distances based on faith, ethnicity, language, region, or socio-economic status breed distortions in thinking patterns and give birth to stereotypes and prejudices among people. The tendency to interact or socialize mostly with members of in-group reinforces existing prejudices towards other social groups. Prejudices cloud people's judgement and create hurdles for social cohesion and harmony.

Therefore, it was unsettling yet barely surprising that majority of the university youth held biased or prejudiced views for other religious or ethnic groups. Additionally, in their mind space, many students had also created stereotypes towards people on the basis of the latter's geographical locations. Data indicate that at least in the context of the Pakistani youths' perspective, the area one comes from or one's rural or urban background has a bearing on how others formulate one's image in their minds. Generally, people tend to have divergent notions about dwellers of metropolises and rural peripheries. For instance, many students believed people of backward regions had lesser understanding of national issues and politics as compared to people in cities.

PIPS' observation contradicts such biased and preconceived notions. In fact, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, the most active and vocal youth were those coming from the most backward regions of these two provinces e.g. the newly merged rural districts (ex-FATA) and southern Balochistan like Panjgur, Turbat etc. Similarly, the youth from these economically backward regions demonstrated better knowledge and understanding of national issues. Nevertheless, social biases and prejudices based on ethnicity, faith, language, or geographical location continue to inform thinking among youth. Another example of youths' prejudiced worldview was the stereotyping of a particular ethnic group. Many university students believed that certain ethnic groups had a tendency for militancy in Pakistan. Such a stereotypical thinking is fueled by, among others, the mass media. It is a known fact that mainstream media have played monumental role in stereotyping certain ethnic groups or cultures in Pakistan.

Despite the cultural diversity in Pakistan, there is a lack of adequate communal and cross-cultural interaction within the country. Generally, the society is factionalized on religious or ethnic lines and social fissures often lead to deliberate social distancing among communities based on faith or ethnicity. In many cities and towns, different ethnic groups form their ethnic enclaves or localities where they dominate ethnically. In cities like Karachi and Quetta etc., such localities exist side by side for generations without them having enough interethnic interaction or relations to clear off

misperceptions and prejudices towards one another. Enhanced communal interactions help people learn about the lives, cultures, beliefs, and experiences of other ethnic or religious communities, and enable them to correct their misperceptions towards them. In contrast, lack of communal interaction give rise to biases, prejudices, and stereotyping among people. Therefore, the existence of religious and ethnic prejudices among youth points to the lack of social interaction amongst communities.

A Generational Confusion about Nationhood

Confusion about identity and nationhood is the one persisting political legacy that has travelled through many past generations in Pakistan. The state and society are yet to agree on a shared notion of national identity. The narratives around identity and patriotism vary across social groups as well as across regions. Definitional loopholes and diametrical ideals of democracy and Islamism have pushed common citizens into a state of conceptual limbo where they lack clarity about the foundational values of nationhood and citizenship in a modern republic. The problems and contradictions of the state's so-called nation-building endeavor have been pointed out by several generations of the intelligentsia, yet no government or parliament has bothered to take up, debate, and address the continuing identity crisis. The claim to religious basis of the state has proved highly problematic, further adding to the troubles of social disharmony, and

compounding the internal contradictions. The state treads two mutually incompatible paths by aspiring for an Islamic political model while pretending to be a constitutional democracy. The divergent and contradictory ideals result in a confusion that pervades all segments of the society including the educated youth.

Not surprisingly, PIPS observed that the Pakistani youth's confusion about identity was a near constant across provincial, ethnic, and lingual boundaries because basically they came from the same education system. The schooling system around the country is uniform in its failure to serve the fundamental purpose of education. And this failure is caused primarily by the exploitation of education system for political purposes. The country's political tradition is not known for addressing political challenges by means of democratic discourse. Historically, coercion or neglect or both have defined the state's attitude towards parochial issues relating to distribution of political power and resources. Therefore, in attempts to whitewash dissent and manufacture cohesion, the educational network was used as a propaganda machine to create mass conformity with state's narrative and counter parochial trends and movements. Textbooks were purposively written by the state to train the population in a particular strand of nationhood that was underpinned by a singular religious faith rather than the idea of shared identity or citizenship.

The perilous policy of using education to impose an analogous religious worldview on a mass of people with varying social, religious, and cultural experiences sits at the bottom of the prevailing mass confusion about national identity in the country. Such a tailor-made worldview was intrinsically problematic for the basic reason that it excluded and otherized chunks of populations that adhered to faiths other than the state's adopted religious belief system. So, Islam was blended with a rigidly defined nationalism that produced an exclusionary thinking at state and society levels. And the adherents of this worldview are forever struggling to reconcile the divergent ideals of democracy and Islamism.

The systemic failure of the project to produce a custom-built nation with a particular worldview has been identified and anatomized well by members of intelligentsia such as the noted jurist and former chairperson of the Council of Islamic Ideology, Dr. Khalid Masud. According to him, Pakistan while being a modern democratic state, harbors aspirations for a medieval governance model i.e. the system of Shariah laws. Such as policy course has fostered mass confusion in the country. Likewise, the state's nation building project has not only failed to achieve its objectives, but has also muddied the political thinking and added to the confusion. The state's inability to cope with diversity and the heterogeneous nature of the Pakistani society led to attempts to impose a blanket Islamic identity on the country. But, the blend of religion and politics

neither could unite diverse groups into an integrated nation nor could it determine a sense of collective direction. On the contrary, the opposite of what the political elite originally wanted was achieved. A major drawback of the so-called Islamization project was that the ruling class, while imagining the desired national integration through Islamic faith, either forgot or simply overlooked the non-Muslim citizens who accounted for millions of souls in the country.

During the workshops, it was noted that majority of the youth had no clarity as to what political system was suitable for Pakistan and why. Most of them were unbothered by the mixing of religion and politics and believed Pakistan was meant to be an Islamic country. Some had suspicions about democracy while others were unsure whether they were Pakistanis first or Muslims first. Only few of them trusted the country's politicians while in the majority's opinion the politicians were corrupt. In short, the only constant was the political confusion among them. This mass confusion is aggravated by the continued Islamization in the country. In fact, if the Islamization was meant to create a unified nation on the basis of religion, it has certainly backfired in a sense that the country's social fabric has been dented, and the society has been polarized on religious and sectarian grounds. With Muslim faith taking the center-stage in the affairs of the state, the minorities have not only been relegated to the background but also subjected to persecution.

For majority of the Muslim youth, religion was their first and foremost identity, and they tended to have a patronizing outlook towards their fellow Hindus, Christians, and others. Dr. Qibla Ayaz said Pakistan's sociocultural landscape is too diverse for the nation to adopt a single religion as its national identity. Similarly, Muhammad Amir Rana said that in a nation state the national identity is based on shared citizenship rather than religious beliefs or dogmas. He argued that the Pakistani youth needed to drastically rethink their social and political identities in line with the values of democracy and basic human rights. Of course, faith is a crucial identity of a person, but brandishing it as the top or foremost identity is problematic in a socio-culturally diverse place like Pakistan where a multitude of religions and faiths exist side by side, he said.

The Disconnect Between Youth and Politics

Since its early days, Pakistan has been moving in a pendular fashion, fluctuating between powerful dictatorships and weak democratic rules but barely moving forward. A step forward in the form of democracy is usually met with two steps backward in the shape of dictatorship. During the course of its experimentations with the political system, the country has seen three constitutions and various forms of government. The continual interruption of the democratic system has effectively checked a democratic culture from taking roots in the country. The repeated disruption of democracy has

incapacitated the system to deliver, leading to a progressive loss of public faith in politics as a whole. As a result, each decade in the country's life brings a new generation of increasingly apolitical youth who are largely indifferent to their country's political affairs.

Till a few decades back, the youth were critical parts of political movements in Pakistan, and support for political causes was mobilized on university campuses where politically educated youth played lead roles in taking governments to account for their policies. Back then, the Pakistani youth had a better understanding of how political systems worked, and had a greater knowledge of their rights which was evident by the youth political activism of the 1980s. Regimes were fearful of youth political activism. The military regime of General Ziaul Haq banned student unions at educational institutions, marking a turnaround in youth political activism. The subsequent decades saw a gradual detachment of youth from politics. According to veteran journalist Iftikhar Ahmed, Pakistan has seen a steady intellectual decline among its youth, further arguing that the Pakistani youth were more aware politically in the past, and formed movements that used to question and challenge the powerholders and hold them accountable for their actions. The passion that drove youth activism on social and political issues has been lost over years, he said, adding that the contemporary Pakistani youth are awaiting some messiah to come to their help.

Similarly, drawing comparisons between the contemporary Pakistani youth and the youth of the 1970s and 80s, Prof. Dr. Akhtar Baloch says that the youth of the bygone decades were intellectually better and politically more aware than the present lot. In the past, the youth were deeply political, and they read extensively about political ideologies, ideas, and concepts such as capitalism, communism, democracy, fascism etc. He recalled how university students in the 1980s would read newspapers regularly to update their knowledge about domestic and global politics. He also mentioned the political discussions the students used to have on campuses about political issues and ideologies. The youth of today barely show interest in politics and they are mostly unaware of the political developments around the world, he said.

During the workshops, the youth's apathy towards politics was apparent. A great majority of the university students had never bothered to open the book of the constitution or read a page from it. While majority of them had partial knowledge of their fundamental constitutional rights, a good many of them had only some vague idea of their rights and freedoms. Likewise, only few had some knowledge of international instruments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They had little curiosity, if at all, to learn about bilateral and international agreements and treaties their country is a signatory to. Few were aware of the some of their country's international obligations, and even fewer could actually mention some of

those obligations. This points to the political apathy prevalent among the Pakistani youth.

On top of these, many young people hold on to the propagated notion of politics inherently being a *dirty* business of self-serving politicians. In fact, an overwhelming majority of the youth had negative opinions about the country's politicians. A possible explanation for this anti-politics outlook among the youth may be the subtle demonization of politicians through means of education and communication. There is evidence of attempts to belittle politicians as corrupt and blame them for country's ills in the textbooks as well as through mass media including television dramas. Such stratagems further aggravate political confusion among an already confused youth. And the end result is both amusing and sad at the same time. For instance, the workshop participants were surveyed about various social and political issues. The state of political confusion among youth was found to be such that many of them could not tell if it was democracy or autocracy that suited Pakistan best. Some viewed past dictatorships as legitimate, but then went on to say that democracy was good for their country.

Overall, the youth's interest in everyday politics is superficial, lacking depth and mostly confined to informal gossips about politics. They have a tottering faith in the political class and system. The research findings also suggest the youth lack adequate understanding of the minorities' persecution in Pakistan and the legal instruments and

political tools used to persecute minority groups. Majority of the youth believed the constitution accords equal rights to people of all faiths without any discrimination. They either did not know or ignored the facts that the constitution bars a non-Muslim from becoming head of the state or government, and likewise prevents certain faith groups like Ahmadis from practicing their faiths freely. Put simply, the Pakistani youth have undergone a significant depoliticization process over the past decades, resulting in a generation that is disassociated from the political affairs of their state.

Diversity vs Uniformity

It is sad to note that many of the workshop participants lacked adequate knowledge about different peoples and places in their country. Pakistan is blessed with tremendous diversity, yet knowledge about the ethnic and cultural diversities is scarce among the public. The overall environment of religious radicalism is deflating the space for diversity

Pakistani youth have scarce knowledge of the ethnic and cultural diversity in their country. Generally, there is a lack of appreciation for diversity at the societal level, and many people live in a state of oblivion where they are unaware of the religious, ethnic, lingual, or cultural diversity which their country offer. For instance, during one of the workshops in Lahore, a speaker asked the workshop participants that which province the city named Turbat was located in. Sadly, none of the about forty university students knew the answer. Many had never heard of Turbat even though

this important city in Balochistan has been in the news for years due to separatist insurgency and violence. The situation suggests the youth have little knowledge about their own country. In fact, similar situations were observed in other provinces too. This intellectual indifference towards and lack of awareness about one's own country and society can be attributed to the policy of downplaying diversity. As a matter of fact, throughout the country's history, diversity and inclusion have actively been discouraged. There have been efforts to constrict cultural diversity through a faith-based identity. And the process has roots in Pakistan's political history.

At birth, Pakistan experienced the trauma of the communal bloodbath, and was confronted with a powerful and hostile eastern neighbor. Internally, the ruling elite were intimidated by diversity and dissension because these were viewed as hampering consensus on critical issues. Thus, a policy of nation building based on religious faith of the majority was pursued. The idea was to integrate diverse religious and ethnic groups into a nation with uniform worldviews and values. Any centrifugal force or tendency – social or political - within the country was seen as a threat that needed to be countered. The nation's policymakers at the time came up with the idea of using Islam as a binding force to unite the newborn country. This entailed attempts to whitewash diversity and impose cultural uniformity.

The first major step in this regard was the foundational step of Islamization in the form

of Objectives Resolution that attempted to impose a singular religious identity over an incredibly diverse nation. And for most parts of Pakistan's rather restless history, the Objectives Resolution has informed political ideology and lawmaking in Pakistan. Under the Zia regime, a more comprehensive scheme of Islamization was rolled out that aimed at amassing public support for the continuity of the regime. Besides, the so-called Islamization was deemed necessary for and complementing the Afghan jihad against the USSR. As part of the Islamization drive, the educational curricula were reformed, and more religious contents particularly those propagating armed struggle were added to the textbooks. Practically, the process of Islamization of the educational syllabi has never ceased, and over years textbooks have become progressively biased towards the majority faith. On the other hand, non-Muslim faith groups have gradually been vanishing from the educational literature.

As a result, a generation has been produced that shows little interest in learning about its country's diversity. The contemporary youth lack the passion and curiosity to explore the different shades of cultures in their country or learn about the history of their region. In contrast, religiously radical youths refuse to accept that their country has been home to different religions and faiths. Therefore, during the workshops, the participants were urged to expand their mental horizons and deepen their understanding of the world around them by reading books.

Pre-workshop Survey Findings

A total of 250 university students participated in the pre-workshop survey, of which 118 were male and 131 were females while one participant did not answer the question about gender. Age-wise, 218 of these belonged to the age group 18-25, 27 were from the 26-35 age bracket, three were older than 35 and two didn't answer. The survey intended to explore the participants' views on social cohesion, interfaith relations, gender, and basic rights. It also aimed at exploring the students' views about their own roles about the focused issues. Some of the statistics are given below:

#	Question	Options	Freq.	%
1	Have you ever read about a religion or faith other than yours?	Yes No Don't know Not provided	193 49 2 6	77.2 19.6 0.8 2.4
2	What is the main source of your knowledge about other religions or faiths?	Books Internet Newspapers/Magazines Religious Scholars Television Other. Please Specify	98 83 11 35 16 7	39.2 33.2 4.4 14.0 6.4 2.8
3	Do you think people of all religions and faiths are equal citizens of Pakistan?	Yes No Don't Know	206 39 5	82.4 15.6 2.0
4	Do you think textbooks and curricula teach respect for diversity?	Yes No Don't Know	164 59 26	65.6 23.6 10.4
5	Are you aware of your fundamental freedoms granted by the Constitution?	Yes, I am aware of all fundamental freedoms Yes, but I know only few of them Not aware	104 121 24	41.6 48.4 9.6
6	Do you think we need more women in leadership roles in various fields?	Yes No Don't Know	222 21 7	88.8 8.4 2.8
7	Have you ever heard of the Paigham-e-Pakistan?	Yes No Never not provided	136 98 12 4	54.4 39.2 4.8 1.6
8	What do you think is your purpose for attending this workshop?	To learn something new To meet new people No particular purpose	230 10 9	92.0 4.0 1.2

#	Question	Options	Freq.	%
9	Do you think attending training workshops is useful for your future career?	Yes	230	92.0
		No	8	3.2
		Don't Know	10	4.0
		Not Answered	1	.4
10	Have you attended career counseling before?	Yes	109	43.6
		No	138	55.2
		Not Answered	3	1.2

Youth's Views on Diversity

Majority of the respondents (77pc) reported that they had read about other religions. The sources of their knowledge about other faiths varied with the books being reported as the main source for almost 39pc of the students, followed by internet for 33pc. Another 14pc cited religious scholars as their main source of knowledge about other religions. Though a considerable number of the youth (20pc) said they had not studied any religion other than their own, still the majority had had the opportunity to learn about other faiths. It is noteworthy that the internet was cited as the second most used source of information for accessing religious information.

In Pakistan, internet users have a high probability of encountering both disinformation and religiously hateful contents in cyberspace. Many extremist groups and their followers and sympathizers have presence on the internet. They operate online quite freely, propagating their ideas and narratives without much resistance from the authorities. Generally, the government is slow in clamping down on extremist contents. And thousands of Pakistani youths

are exposed to such contents on regular basis. Likewise, on social media platforms significant amounts of disinformation and malicious contents about certain religious groups like the Hindus, Christians, Ahmadis, Jews etc. exist. The youth exposed to such contents may be at risk of taking influence from these. Where users lack critical thinking and reasoning skills, the danger of indoctrination from online contents increases significantly.

On the other hand, when the participants were asked if people of all religions and faiths in Pakistan were equal citizens, the great majority of the respondents (82.4pc) replied affirmatively. This is encouraging as it shows an inclusive outlook on the part of the youth. Likewise, 79.6pc of them said they had read or heard about similarities among different religions. However, it is noteworthy that 42.4pc of the respondents reported to have witnessed an incident of faith-based discrimination at university campus or in society. The figure is significant as it may be an indication that incidents of faith-based discrimination may be high in society

including at campuses. In addition, available evidence also supports the data.

Likewise, 65.6pc of the respondents believed the Pakistani textbooks teach respect for diversity. On the other hand, almost 24pc did not agree that textbooks teach diversity. Here it is striking that in Balochistan only 44.7pc of the students said that textbooks promote diversity. When this same question was posed to the youth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 71pc had replied that textbooks teach respect for diversity. In contrast to youths' perceptions about textbooks, many studies have found that textbooks discourage diversity and promote faith-based biases and instill distorted worldviews.

On the question of non-Muslims' contribution to Pakistan's development and defense, 80pc said the non-Muslims played role in the development and defense of the country. 10pc replied in the negative, while another 10pc were unaware of the non-Muslims' sacrifices and services for Pakistan. Though the response to this question is encouraging overall, there is still a need to include in the educational syllabi the contributions of the Hindus, Ahmadis, Christians etc. to the creation and development of Pakistan.

Identities and Rights

Questions around identities and rights revealed interesting insights into youths' perceptions. Most (64.8pc) of the young respondents said 'citizenship of Pakistan' was

their primary identity. Besides, religion was also an important element of identity as 17.6pc cited 'religious affiliation' as their primary identity. 14pc identified their ethnic background as their key identity. Here it is pertinent to mention that though majority of the students replied that citizenship of Pakistan was their primary identity, PIPS's own practical observation of the students during the workshops show that majority of the participants lacked clarity on the question of identity, and a sense of shared citizenship was also not very strong among them.

Likewise, majority (48.4pc) of the students said they had only partial knowledge of their fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution. 41.6pc said they were aware of all fundamental rights and freedoms, and 9.6pc said they did not know about their basic rights given in the constitution. As mentioned earlier in the report, majority of the university students had little knowledge of the constitution. Barring a few students who had studied law, nearly all students had never had a chance to read a page from the constitution even though it is easily available both in print form and online. A generation of educated youth lacking interest in the constitution may be an indication of their tottering faith in the system where the rule of law is often defied with impunity by the powerful. Of course, the constitution is only as effective as the rule of law in the country.

However, an overwhelming majority of the youth had a favorable view of women's public roles. 88.8pc of the respondents said there

should be more women in leadership roles in Pakistan. Only a comparatively negligible number 8.4pc disagreed. Likewise, majority of the respondents (94pc) said that transgender persons were equal citizens. This is a positive sign for the persecuted transgender community in Pakistan. The response indicates the newer generations may be more understanding towards and accepting of the transgender persons as equal members of the society, though it is still too early to be optimistic about the plight of this socially excluded community.

The workshop participants were also asked if they had heard of the Paigham-e-Pakistan (PeP). The PeP is a critical CVE document, yet evidence suggest it has not been properly propagated for wider public knowledge. 54.4pc of the respondents said they had heard of the PeP but a significant number (44pc) had no information about the PeP or its contents. During practical observations at workshops, PIPS had noted that information about the PeP was scarce among the youth. Even highly educated people have been seen to be unaware of what the so-called PeP stands for.

Post-workshop Feedback of Participants

Learning Outcomes and the Effectiveness of the Training

The post-workshop survey sought to assess the learning outcomes among the participants and the overall impact of the educational and training workshops. The survey attempted to examine if the workshops had contributed to changing the views of the participants about focused issues relating to interfaith harmony and peace in Pakistan.

The total number of participants were 252, out of which 99pc shared their feedback on various aspects of the training program. Majority of the respondents (52pc) were female while 47pc were male, and 86.5pc of the students belonged to age group 18-25, 11.5pc belonged to 26-35 age bracket, and 1.2pc were older than 35. Their feedbacks are given below:

#	Question	Options	Freq.	%
1	Was this workshop useful in enhancing your understanding of issues at hand?	Yes	251	99.6
		No	1	.4
2	Have you learned anything new in today's workshop	Yes	251	99.6
		No	1	.4
3	Do you agree with the recommendation and training given in the workshop about interfaith peace in society?	Yes	195	77.4
		To some extent	54	21.4
		Don't Know	2	.8
		not answered	1	.4
4	Were you provided with the opportunity to participate in the interactive session during workshop?	Yes	229	90.9
		No	6	2.4
		To some extent	16	6.3
		not answered	1	.4
5	Will you be telling your fellow students and peers about this workshop?	Yes	244	96.8
		No	1	.4
		Don't Know	7	2.8
6	Has this workshop helped you understand your rights as a citizen of Pakistan under the constitution?	Yes	210	83.3
		No	5	2.0
		To some extent	34	13.5
		not answered	3	1.2
7		Yes	207	82.1

#	Question	Options	Freq.	%
	Has this workshop changed your understanding of social harmony?	No	8	3.2
		To some extent	34	13.5
		not answered	3	1.2
8	Has this workshop changed your understanding of social harmony?	Yes	181	71.8
		No	9	3.6
		To some extent	60	23.8
		not answered	2	.8

Analysis of the Program Beneficiaries' Feedback

The post-workshop survey was mainly the beneficiary's feedback on various aspects of the workshop, and whether their attendance added any new information to their knowledge about interfaith harmony and peaceful coexistence in Pakistan. On almost all aspects of the training workshops including the overall program design, selection of topics etc., the responses were positive. An overwhelming majority i.e. 99.6pc said the workshops helped enhance their understanding of the focused issues around the theme of social peace and harmony, and an equal number said they had learned new knowledge at the workshops. Likewise, a great majority (77.4pc) fully agreed with the contents and recommendations provided at the workshops, while 21.4pc agreed to some extent. Only a negligible 0.4pc said they did not agree with the contents or recommendations.

The educational and training workshops were designed to engage the educated youth in critical discourse on burning issues around interfaith relations, social peace, and diversity and inclusion. Therefore, most sessions were interactive to let the participants not just listen to speakers but also share their views and opinions. Care was taken to not replicate typical classroom settings where teachers in the form of authority figures often deliver one-way lectures. The workshops were meant to

provide a platform for free expression on critical issues. This objective was achieved as 90.9pc of the participants said they were provided opportunity to participate in the discussions, and another 6.3pc said they were provided opportunity only partially, and a small number (2.4pc) said they were not provided opportunity.

Majority of the respondents (83.3pc) said that by attending the workshop their understanding of their rights as citizens of Pakistan had increased, and similarly an almost equal number also reported that their understanding of human rights had broadened. Only 3.2pc believed their understanding of human rights had not increased by attending the workshops. At the workshops, special segments in sessions were dedicated to discussing some key national and international instruments on human rights and freedom of religion such as the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Paigham-e-Pakistan etc. These were discussed in proper historical context and the factors that necessitated their framing and adoption. Majority of the participants (71.8pc) reported that their understanding of the importance of social harmony had deepened, and likewise another 23.8pc said their understanding had enhanced only to some extent, while 3.6pc reported no increase in their understanding about social harmony. What is encouraging is that 96.8pc said they will share their learning

and experiences at workshops with their peers.

The workshop participants were also asked to provide some qualitative feedback on key aspects of the training program. Overall, the responses indicate the program was received well by the beneficiaries. Many participants reported that they had some misperceptions about other faiths prior to these workshops, and that their participation in the program helped clear their misperceptions and understand other faiths better. Others said their understanding of the concept of human rights and why human rights matter increased after attending the workshops. Participants also opined that youth are a critical social actor in Pakistan because they constitute the majority, and as such the youth needed consistent education and training in critical social issues.

Additionally, the participants reported that they had learned why promoting interfaith harmony in society was important and how to promote it, though their understanding of interfaith harmony still varied from one another's. According to some, interfaith

harmony meant living and interacting with one another peacefully, while others believed peaceful coexistence of all members of society regardless of their religious faith, caste, or color constituted interfaith harmony. Likewise, some participants replied that interfaith harmony was all about respecting people's religious faiths irrespective of which faith they belonged to.

When asked what they intended to achieve by attending these workshops, majority replied that they wanted to learn about religious diversity in Pakistan and the social problems and challenges the minorities face in the country. They wanted to learn what factors prevented interfaith harmony and what triggers religious radicalism. For many students, networking with other people during the workshops was a key incentive for attending the workshops. Overall, the responses by the participants suggest the workshops did provide opportunities to the youth to learn about and appreciate the religious and cultural diversity in Pakistan, and understand the importance of acceptance for diversity.

Making Sense of the Youth in Punjab

#	Question	Options	Freq.	%
1	I am hopeful about my future in Pakistan.	True	31	64.6
		To some extent	13	27.1
		False	4	8.3
2	Our society gives opportunity for growth to those who work hard.	True	22	45.8
		To some extent	22	45.8
		False	4	8.3
3	Merit is valued in our society.	True	15	31.3
		To some extent	22	45.8
		False	11	22.9
4	I have clarity about which profession to join once I complete my education.	True	40	83.3
		To some extent	6	12.5
		False	2	4.2
5	One can make a respectable career through hard work even if one belongs to a poor family.	True	36	75.0
		To some extent	9	18.8
		False	3	6.3
6	Our teachers are helpful in guiding students about career choices.	True	30	62.5
		To some extent	13	27.1
		False	5	10.4
7	Education has given me the skills necessary for making a respectable career.	True	37	77.1
		To some extent	9	18.8
		False	1	2.1
		Not Answered	1	2.1
8	There are enough career opportunities for educated youth in Pakistan.	True	23	47.9
		To some extent	14	29.2
		False	11	22.9
9	I have learned the skill to think critically about issues.	True	37	77.1
		To some extent	9	18.8
		False	2	4.2
10	Free expression of ideas is encouraged in the university classrooms.	True	30	62.5
		To some extent	9	18.8
		False	9	18.8
11	Education is a priority for the government.	True	25	52.1
		To some extent	10	20.8
		False	13	27.1
12	Pakistan is a land of many religions and faiths.	Strongly Disagree	2	4.2
		Disagree	1	2.1
		Agree	16	33.3
		Strongly Agree	29	60.4
13	People of all religions and faiths should be treated equally in our country.	Strongly Disagree	1	2.1
		Disagree	5	10.4

#	Question	Options	Freq.	%
		Agree	12	25.0
		Strongly Agree	30	62.5
14	Incidents of faith-based discrimination happen only rarely in our country.	Strongly Disagree	7	14.6
		Disagree	20	41.7
		Agree	18	37.5
		Strongly Agree	2	4.2
		not answered	1	2.1
15	Every citizen, regardless of their faith, should have equal access to opportunities in Pakistan.	Strongly Disagree	1	2.1
		Disagree	6	12.5
		Agree	14	29.2
		Strongly Agree	27	56.3
16	People of all faiths should be able to hold high public offices.	Strongly Disagree	1	2.1
		Disagree	10	20.8
		Agree	18	37.5
		Strongly Agree	19	39.6
17	We should have more woman leaders in every field.	Strongly Disagree	2	4.2
		Disagree	5	10.4
		Agree	20	41.7
		Strongly Agree	21	43.8
19	But, a woman's primary role is to take care of her home and household chores.	Strongly Disagree	8	16.7
		Disagree	18	37.5
		Agree	19	39.6
		Strongly Agree	3	6.3
20	Fixing quotas for women in government jobs is an unfair practice as it deprives many deserving men of job opportunities.	Strongly Disagree	13	27.1
		Disagree	19	39.6
		Agree	12	25.0
		Strongly Agree	4	8.3
21	Larkiyan parayee dhan hoti hai (Girls belong to not her father's but her husband's house)	Strongly Disagree	22	45.8
		Disagree	12	25.0
		Agree	7	14.6
		Strongly Agree	6	12.5
		not answered	1	2.1
22	Violence against women is a serious issue in our country.	Strongly Disagree	2	4.2
		Disagree	2	4.2
		Agree	26	54.2
		Strongly Agree	18	37.5
23	In rape cases, often the victim women are also responsible in some way.	Strongly Disagree	14	29.2
		Disagree	15	31.3
		Agree	15	31.3

#	Question	Options	Freq.	%
		Strongly Agree	4	8.3
24	Transgender persons should have equal rights as citizens of the state.	Strongly Disagree	2	4.2
		Agree	11	22.9
		Strongly Agree	35	72.9
25	Transgender persons should have access to education and job opportunities.	Strongly Disagree	2	4.2
		Agree	10	20.8
		Strongly Agree	36	75.0
26	Do you think non-Muslims have contributed to the creation and development of Pakistan?	Yes	47	97.9
		No	1	2.1
27	Do you think different religions have similarities?	Yes, many similarities	30	62.5
		Yes, but only few similarities	16	33.3
		Don't Know	2	4.2
28	Do you think our education system teaches respect for all religions?	Yes	22	45.8
		To some extent	14	29.2
		No	11	22.9
		Don't Know	1	2.1
29	The Constitution of Pakistan does not discriminate among citizens based on faith	True	37	77.1
		False	9	18.8
		Don't Know	1	2.1
		not answered	1	2.1
30	Have you ever heard of Paigham-e-Pakistan?	Yes. I know what it is about	38	79.2
		Yes. But, I have no idea what it is about	5	10.4
		Never heard of it	4	8.3
		not answered	1	2.1
31	Secularism opposes religion.	Strongly Disagree	9	18.8
		Disagree	21	43.8
		Agree	13	27.1
		Strongly Agree	3	6.3
		not answered	2	4.2
32	Women naturally lack decision making power as compared to men.	Strongly Disagree	8	16.7
		Disagree	23	47.9
		Agree	17	35.4
33	Women's rights movements work on foreign agenda.	Strongly Disagree	6	12.5
		Disagree	24	50.0
		Agree	11	22.9
		Strongly Agree	7	14.6

#	Question	Options	Freq.	%
34	In Pakistan, some ethnic groups have tendency for extremism.	Strongly Disagree	3	6.3
		Disagree	17	35.4
		Agree	19	39.6
		Strongly Agree	8	16.7
		not answered	1	2.1
35	People of backward provinces have limited understanding of national issues and politics	Strongly Disagree	6	12.5
		Disagree	8	16.7
		Agree	24	50.0
		Strongly Agree	10	20.8
36	India is the eternal enemy of Pakistan.	Strongly Disagree	2	4.2
		Disagree	17	35.4
		Agree	23	47.9
		Strongly Agree	6	12.5
37	Foreign conspiracies are the principal cause of religious extremism in Pakistan.	Strongly Disagree	4	8.3
		Disagree	16	33.3
		Agree	22	45.8
		Strongly Agree	5	10.4
		not answered	1	2.1
38	Our public resources are wasted mostly due to the corruption of leaders.	Disagree	3	6.3
		Agree	27	56.3
		Strongly Agree	17	35.4
		not answered	1	2.1
39	Have you ever read about your fundamental freedoms in the Constitution?	Yes	43	89.6
		No	4	8.3
		not answered	1	2.1
40	Which form of government do you think is most suitable for Pakistan?	Shariah	9	18.8
		Democracy	32	66.7
		Dictatorship	3	6.3
		Don't Know	3	6.3
		not answered	1	2.1
41	Can the constitution be disregarded in the national interest?	Yes, always because national interest is supreme.	12	25.0
		Yes, but only sometimes.	14	29.2
		Never	15	31.3
		Don't Know	6	12.5
		not answered	1	2.1
42		Government	21	43.8

#	Question	Options	Freq.	%
	Whose job is it to determine what Pakistan's national interests are?	Armed forces	6	12.5
		Parliament	20	41.7
		Don't Know	1	2.1
43	Have you ever read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?	Yes	40	83.3
		No	5	10.4
		Never heard of it	3	6.3
44	Do you think Pakistan has international obligations as a member of the United Nations?	Yes	35	72.9
		No	4	8.3
		Don't Know	6	12.5
		not answered	3	6.3
45	How often do you read a newspaper?	Regularly	3	6.3
		Often	20	41.7
		Sometimes	19	39.6
		I don't read newspapers.	6	12.5
46	Which social media platform do you use most of the time?	Facebook	21	43.8
		Twitter	3	6.3
		Tiktok	2	4.2
		You Tube	12	25.0
		Other. Please specify.....	10	20.8
47	How often do you see religious debates on social media?	Often	14	29.2
		Sometimes	18	37.5
		Only rarely	11	22.9
		No	4	8.3
		not answered	1	2.1
48	Do you participate in religious debates on social media?	Often	5	10.4
		Sometimes	9	18.8
		Only rarely	7	14.6
		No	27	56.3

Some Detailed Insight into the Minds of Youth in Punjab

Out of the 252 students at nine workshops in Punjab, 48 active and vocal ones were shortlisted for interviews with the aim to probe into the worldviews and thinking patterns of the youth. The interviewees shared their views on a range of social, political, economic, and other focused issues that affect communal relations in Pakistan. Views were also elicited on factors that contribute to faith-based exclusion and persecution of religious communities like the Hindus, Christians, Ahmadis, etc. Questions were also designed to extract the youth's opinions on diverse yet interlinked matters such as the education system and syllabi, career and future, citizenship, government, socio-cultural dynamics, and political and legal systems etc. The findings give a peek into the Pakistani youths' thinking and experiences, and how they look at themselves and their fellow citizens. Those shortlisted for the interviews consisted of 26 males and 22 females. Likewise, majority (85.4pc) were in the 18-25 age bracket, while 45.8pc were in 26-35 age group and 2.1pc were older than 35. Some of the responses are given below:

Analysis of the Interviews

The Upbeat Thinking and the Conflicting Reality

The interviewed students in Punjab showed an upbeat outlook about the education system, career prospects, and their future in general. A great majority of them (64.6pc) said they were hopeful about their future in Pakistan, and 27.1pc were hopeful to some extent while only 8.3pc reported they were not hopeful. Similarly, an overwhelming majority believed that society gives opportunities for growth to those who work hard, and likewise 31.3pc said merit is valued in Pakistan and another 45.8pc said merit is valued to some extent. The respondents were similarly upbeat about career prospects as 75pc said they could make a respectable career through hard work even if they belonged a poor family.

Majority of the youth also held favourable views about the education system and their teachers. 62.5pc said their teachers were helpful in career counselling, and another 77.1pc believed education had equipped them with necessary skills for making a respectable career. Furthermore, responses show the youth in Punjab are not much concerned about employment as majority (47.9pc) said there were enough job opportunities for the educated youth in the country, another 29.2pc agreed to this to

some extent, and 22.9pc disagreed. Likewise, a great majority (77.1pc) said they had learned the skills to think critically about issues, and 62.5pc believed free expression of ideas was encouraged in the university classrooms, and 52.1pc said education was a priority for the government, another 20.8pc partially agreed to this while 27.1pc disagreed that education was a priority.

While it is encouraging that hope is not scarce among the educated youth in Punjab, yet a critical analysis of their upbeat frame of mind shows that their perceptions about many things are not grounded in facts. For instance, majority of the respondents were optimistic about career opportunities, believing that there were enough jobs for the educated youth. The youth's perception of the economy's capacity to offer jobs to them conflicts the actual situation in the country. The number of unemployed people in Pakistan was estimated to touch 6.65 m in the fiscal year 2020-21. According to Labour Force Survey 2017-18, Pakistan has been experiencing a phenomenon of "*jobless graduates*". The youth unemployment rate is disturbingly high as compared to the average unemployment rate. The highest unemployment rate recorded is 11.56pc,

prevalent among the age group of 20-24 in Pakistan.¹³

Similarly, data also indicate the youth have inflated views of their own intellectual skills. Majority of the interviewed individuals believed education had enabled them to think critically about an issue. In contrast to their perceptions, majority of the youth at the training workshops were found lacking in logical thinking and reasoning skills. There was a notable tendency among them to subscribe to conspiratorial versions of things. The lack of critical thinking and reasoning skills among the educated youth can be attributed to the mode of education and the overall syllabi that tend to encourage rote learning instead of critical inquiry. Besides, the space for free exchange of ideas on campuses has also progressively shrunk in Pakistan, and tolerance for liberal and critical voices has decreased.

Majority of the students said free expression of ideas is encouraged in the university classrooms, but this perception does not reconcile with the fact that university campuses have had incidents of extreme intolerance and violence based on faith, and in some instances, people have been accused of blasphemy for liberally expressing their ideas. The case in point in Punjab is that of Junaid Hafeez, a teacher at Bahauddin Zakariya University, who was arrested for and later convicted of blasphemy. According to a

former colleague of Hafeez, the incident put an end to critical discourse at the campus. And there have been similar manifestations of religious extremism and intolerance at other educational institutions in Punjab. In March 2019, a senior professor, Dr. Khalid Hameed, was stabbed to death by a young student for a mixed gender reception at a fanfare program. The young murderer told the police the mixed gender reception was against Islam.¹⁴

Views on Shared Citizenship

It is promising to note that majority of the youth in Punjab had positive outlooks on shared citizenship. Their responses indicate they are accepting of the country's cultural diversity. Over 93pc of the students said Pakistan is a land of many faiths and religions, and likewise over 80pc said people of all religions and faiths should be treated equally. Similarly, 85pc said that all citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs, should have equal access to opportunities, and only 14.6pc disagreed. Likewise, an about equal number (77pc) said people of all faiths should be able to hold high public offices in Pakistan, though the constitution bars non-Muslims from holding high offices like those of the president and prime minister.

However, what was reassuring was that majority of the youth were understanding towards the plight of the minorities in their

¹³ Bakhtawar Mian, 'Number of jobless people to reach 6.65m in 2020-21', Dawn, June 17, 2020 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1564053>

¹⁴ 'Student kills professor over mixed gender reception', The News, March 21, 2019 <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/446787-student-kills-professor-over-mixed-gender-reception>

country. They were cognizant of the persecution of religious minorities as 56pc believed faith-discrimination was a serious problem in the country. This is significant because denial of problems is an issue in Pakistan. Oftentimes, political leaders and state authorities deny the existence of a problem. For instance, Human Rights Minister, Dr. Shireen Mazari, has publicly declared that minorities enjoy complete freedom in Pakistan, overlooking the persecution minorities face in the country.¹⁵ Therefore, in a social context where denial is in vogue at the level of the government, it is promising that majority of the interviewed youth demonstrated an understanding of the actual situation on the ground.

On the other hand, however, the number of those who believed incidents of faith-based discrimination happen only rarely in Pakistan was also not negligible. In fact, the figure is still staggering as nearly 42pc held this view. This resonates with the general tendency in the country to refuse to acknowledge that minorities do face discrimination and persecution. Many people cite constitutional provisions that accord equal rights and freedoms to all citizens, but they fail to appreciate what really happens beyond the pages of the constitution. Over 77pc of the interviewed youth were of the view that the constitution does not discriminate among citizens based on faith, while only about 19pc believed otherwise.

On the question of state's response to faith-based discrimination, the interviewed individuals were, however, nearly equally divided. 50pc said the government does not take appropriate action to check faith-based violence and discrimination, and nearly an equal number believed in the contrary.

Gender and Ethnic Stereotyping

Majority of the interviewed participants were enlightened towards gender roles, still a significant number tended to stereotype women. Stereotypical thinking is usually rooted in certain cultural norms that depict women as weak with reduced capabilities as compared to men. When asked if there should be more women in various fields, 85.5pc of the interviewed youth replied in the affirmative. But then a significant 45.9pc of the same respondents said that a woman's primary role was to take care of her home and household chores. Likewise, in reply to another question, 35.4pc of the respondents said women naturally lacked decision making power as compared to men. Taken together, these responses imply that a significant number of youth support women's emancipation while still viewing women in the traditional household roles. Such a confused and conflicting thinking about gender equality was observed among the youth during the workshops too. One possible explanation for this confusion is that

¹⁵ 'Minorities enjoy complete freedom on Pakistan: Mazari', The News, 18 Sep 2018

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/370312-minorities-enjoy-complete-freedom-in-pakistan-mazari>

the youth's perception of women's status is influenced both by the liberal narratives of gender equality and the conservative social norms and mores.

Similarly, the youth's perceptions about gender-based persecution showed an element of confusion. For instance, a great majority (91.7pc) of the respondents said violence against women is a serious issue in Pakistan, but then 39.6pc of the same respondents believed that in rape cases, often the victim women are also responsible in some way. Such a skewed thinking while surely disturbing reflects the broader problem in Pakistan where victim blaming is common. Even leaders and popular figures have been seen indulging in victim blaming particularly in cases involving women. For instance, in June 2021, Prime Minister Imran Khan – widely marketed as leader of the youth – blamed women 'wearing very few clothes' for sexual assaults in Pakistan.¹⁶ In an interview with Jonathan Swan, Khan said "we don't have discos here, we don't have nightclubs, so it is a completely different society, way of life here, so if you raise temptation in society...all these young guys have nowhere to go, it has consequences in the society."¹⁷

In a society where physical and sexual assaults on women are rampant and where minor girls are raped and murdered with an alarming consistency, victim blaming by public figures is not only preposterous but also amounts to promoting misogynistic mindset in society.^{18 19 20} Therefore, little surprise that a good number of youths believe that women often share the blame in rape cases. Besides women, questions were also asked about transgenders in Pakistan. Majority of the youth (95.8pc) said transgender persons were equal citizens, and an equal number said the transgenders should have equal access to education and job opportunities. It is promising the newer generation indicates a strongly positive outlook about the transgender community, even though the latter's gender continues to be a social stigma, and the community continues to face discrimination and persecution by the wider society.

However, stereotyping about social groups is not restricted to gender alone because public perception about certain ethnic groups is also informed by biases rather than facts. For long, some ethnic groups have implicitly been typecast as militant through various means including mass media. It is no surprise that over 56pc of the respondents said that

¹⁶ Antonia Noori Farzan, 'Pakistan's leader sparks protest by blaming women 'wearing very few clothes for sexual assaults'', Washington Post, June 26, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/06/26/imran-khan-rape-clothing/>

¹⁷ Saba Bano Malik, 'In Pakistan, outrage as PM Khan again blames women's clothing for rape', Arab News, June 22, 2021. <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/1881256/pakistan>

¹⁸ 'Timeline of the rape case that gripped the nation', Dawn, Oct 17, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1439587>

¹⁹ Mohammad Hussain Khan, '9 suspects arrested after rape, murder of minor girl in Khairpur', Dawn, Jan 21, 2021. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1601123>

²⁰ 'Minor girl abducted, raped in Karachi', ANI News, Sep 18, 2021. <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/minor-girl-abducted-raped-in-pakistans-karachi20210918172430/>

certain ethnic groups have tendency for extremism. Similarly, 70.8pc believed people of the backward provinces have limited understanding of national issues. Contrary to this perception among youth in Punjab, PIPS observed that students from backward areas like southern Balochistan and the merged districts (Ex-Fata) demonstrated better understanding of national issues than their counterparts from bigger provinces.

Youth and the Folklores of Pakistani Politics

Majority (60.4pc) of the interviewed students believed India is the eternal foe of Pakistan, but a reduced number of them (47.9pc) said Pakistan needed to spend more on defence against India. Penchant for conspiracy theory was high as over 56pc held foreign conspiracies responsible for domestic religious extremism. Similarly, the country's politicians were viewed in negative light as usual. About 92pc of the respondents said Pakistan's resources are wasted due to corruption of leaders. On the question of political system, a great majority (66.7pc) of them said democracy is the most suitable system for Pakistan. However, a significant number (39.6pc) believed the past dictatorships in Pakistan were justified, though majority (45.8pc) did not agree that dictatorial regimes were legitimate. Likewise, 54pc said the constitution could be disregarded in national interest, and 43.8pc

said that determining national interests was the government's job. Another 41.7pc said it was the parliament's mandate to determine Pakistan's national interests.

The respondents' views about media and media persons were also elicited. News bulletins were cited as the most favourite program on television by 41.7pc of the students, followed by political talk shows (18.8pc). A slightly over 10pc cited comedy/entertainment as their favourite programs. Likewise, ARY topped the list of most favourite news channels among the respondents. ARY was followed by Geo and Dawn news channels. Among anchorpersons, Shahzaib Khanzada was cited by most as their favourite anchorperson, followed by Hamid Mir and Imran Khan.

However, only 6.3pc of the students said they read newspapers regularly, and majority of them preferred to use Facebook as social media platform. It is concerning that 68.8pc of the social media users reported to have encountered religiously hateful materials on the social media. Over 89pc said they see religious debates on social media. The proliferation of religiously hateful contents including hate speech largely go unchecked on the Pakistani social media sites. Generally, the state has been slow in responding to anti-minorities hate speech on social media platforms even though it was resolved under the National Action Plan that hate speech would be clamped down upon.

Recommendations

Recommendations

1. The concept of shared identity and citizenship may be introduced in the educational syllabi at high school levels to inculcate acceptance for cultural diversity among students. And Pakistan's cultural diversity may be promoted as shared cultural heritage to sensitize the youth about the rich social mosaic of their country.
2. The educational curricula at all levels may be purged of contents that discriminate against or promote ill-will towards any religious belief particularly the Hinduism. Hatred for the Hindus has informed public perceptions in Pakistan for decades with adverse impact on the country's social fabric.
3. The state may avoid the temptation to use schooling for manufacturing chauvinistic mindsets among the youth. Instead of bringing about national integration, this policy has backfired to the detriment of Pakistan's security and stability.
4. The Single National Curricula (SNC) may be further reformed for religiously more inclusive contents.
5. Teaching of the key articles of the constitution such as those about citizens' rights and freedoms as well as the duties and responsibilities of the state may be made mandatory at high school levels to broaden the students' perspectives on citizenship.
6. The Pakistani youth may be sensitized about the adverse impacts of religious extremism and terrorism on the country's economy as well as their individual lives. Currently, majority of the youth lack an understanding of the broader implications of these problems.
7. Women may be projected as equal human beings with equal rights and freedoms as citizens in the textbooks. What students read in the textbooks about women's roles shape their perceptions about gender roles.
8. There is a strong need to sensitize teachers about social peace, inclusion, and diversity as they play key role in shaping the worldviews of the pupils. Teachers may be trained to learn skills to promote counter narratives to violent ideologies that often make their way into educational institutions.
9. Provisions of the Paigham-e-Pakistan that promote interfaith and intersect harmony may be taught at universities.
10. Critical thinking and reasoning may be included in the curricula.
11. Smaller provinces and minority faith groups need adequate representation in the mainstream media. No one can

represent these marginalized entities and defend their interests better than themselves.

12. Civil society organizations may play a constructive role in mitigating the

challenges faced by Pakistan's youth. They can run awareness campaigns and organize educational and training workshops for teachers and students around the themes of social peace and harmony.

Annexure – Speakers’ Profiles

Justice Dr. Muhammad Khalid Masud

Dr. Khalid Masud is Pakistan’s leading scholar of Islamic history and Muslim political thought, with several serious works on Islam to his credit.. He serves on the Shariah Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Previously, Dr. Masud served as chairperson of the Council of Islamic Ideology from 2004 to 2010 – an unprecedentedly critical era when Pakistan was embroiled in terrorism. He also worked as the Academic Director of the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) in Leiden, Netherlands. Besides, he served as a professor at the Islamic Research Institute at International Islamic University in Islamabad.

Prof. Dr. Qibla Ayaz

Dr. Qibla Ayaz is the Chairperson of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). During his tenure, the Council has taken some landmark initiatives to counter religious extremism in Pakistan including the production of a joint fatwa against extremism, commonly known as the Paigham-e-Pakistan. With Dr. Qibla in chair, the CII passed a vital ruling in Oct 2020, allowing the construction of a Hindu worship place in Islamabad after a major controversy. The CII ruling was reported globally. Formerly, Dr. Ayaz served as the vice chancellor of the University of Peshawar and remained the dean of its Faculty of Islamic and Oriental Studies. Besides, he also held the post of the vice chancellor of Islamia College University, Peshawar. His efforts for promoting social peace and harmony have widely been acknowledged.

Muhammad Amir Rana

Muhammad Amir Rana is a novelist with several nonfiction works also to his credit. His latest political novel ‘Meer Jan’ has just been published. Amir Rana is a leading expert on Pakistan’s internal and national security as well as regional security policies. With nearly two decades of experience studying and observing Pakistan’s security matters, Amir Rana is widely regarded for his critical analysis and insight. As the founding director of Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), he has led several significant research projects that probed into some of the most uncharted security issues in Pakistan. Besides, he edits the Pakistan Security Report – a comprehensive annual document with hard facts on Pakistan’s security issues. Likewise, he serves as the editor of the quarterly Urdu magazine Tajziat and writes regular op-eds for the daily Dawn. Amir Rana also delivers lectures on security at educational and professional training institutions both at home and abroad.

Safdar Hussain Sial

Safdar Hussain Sial is a senior research analyst and author of several books on security including ‘Radicalization in Pakistan’ (2012), ‘Taliban Insurgency in FATA’ (2010), and others. As researcher with experience in in-depth study of the phenomenon of religious radicalism in Pakistan, Safdar Sial has conceived, over the past years, many unique research projects to probe the relatively obscure areas of

the extremism problem. These studies have not only helped increase public knowledge about subtle strands of the problem but have also informed many of the PIPS's peace advocacy programs. Safdar Sial's research works have been published in several local and international journals.

Prof. Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed

Dr Ishtiaq Ahmad served as the Vice Chancellor of University of Sargodha, Punjab. He is a former Quaid-i-Azam Fellow at St Antony's College, University of Oxford (2010-2015) and former Director of the School of Politics and International Relations at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad (2016). Dr Ahmad previously served as Vice Chair/Assistant Professor of International Relations at Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus and as Senior Research Fellow at Area Study Centre, Quaid-i-Azam University, from where he did his PhD in 1996. As a senior Pakistani journalist before, he served as Diplomatic Correspondent of The Nation and Editorial Assistant of The Muslim.

Iftikhar Ahmed

Iftikhar Ahmed is a *Pakistani research journalist* and a political activist. Ahmad started his career in 1980, after his release from jail and joined *Jang Media Network* and held a senior position in the Network. Iftikhar Ahmad also hosted interview show Jawab Deh on *Geo News* for over a decade. Ahmad, through his program, Jawab deh questioned several key power players of the coup d'état staged by General *Zia-ul-Haq* and the subsequent hanging of the then elected Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Since 1967, Iftikhar Ahmad has been a political activist as well. He participated in the movement against military dictator *Field Marshal Ayub Khan*.

Peter Jacob

Peter Jacob is a human rights activist with 26 years of experience in advocacy and campaigning. Currently, he is the director of the Lahore-based 'Centre for Social Justice', a research and advocacy organization. He has worked with the National Commission for Justice and Peace, a faith based human rights group, and also served on the board of directors and advisory bodies with prestigious organization including Amnesty International Pakistan group (1991-1997), Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2004-2006), Democratic Commission for Human Development, Forum Asia (2012-2013), Asian Centre for Peoples' Progress (1998-2015) etc.

Wajahat Masood

Wajahat Masood is a *Pakistani newspaper columnist* and a *political analyst*. He is widely considered to be a liberal, and a *human rights activist*. He is currently working with the Urdu-language newspaper *Daily Jang*. He has earlier worked with *BBC* and other organizations. He was associated with national dailies such as *The News International*, *The Post (Pakistani newspaper)* and Daily Aaj Kal. He also worked as the editor of monthly magazine Nawa-i-Insaan, Daily Mashriq and weekly Hum Shehri. He was a columnist for BBC Urdu service during 2005-08. Masood has been a political analyst for *Pakistani television* (PTV), Samaa TV, AAP News and *Radio Pakistan*. In addition, he appears as a TV commentator for different private television channels in Pakistan and abroad.

Wusatullah Khan

Working as a journalist for the last thirty-six years, Wusat has been associated with the BBC Urdu Service since 1991. He is the author of *Sailab Diaries*, a book on the 2010 Pakistan floods. Wusat writes a weekly column *Baat say Baat* for the BBC Urdu Service (online/radio) and has produced documentaries for BBC Urdu TV. He has also contributed a weekly column to the Daily Express. Currently, Wusat co-hosts a daily talk show, *Zara Hut Kay*, for Dawn News.

Sabookh Syed

Sabookh Syed is a broadcast journalist and media trainer, with a vast experience in journalism. He has worked for Geo Group for about 11 years in different capacities. He delivered training under the umbrella of Pakistan peace collective, Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, and various universities on media ethics, reporting conflict, journalist security, and broadcasting. As a journalist, Sabookh has developed a huge network with Pakistan's religious class. He has worked as a researcher/supervisor with the University of Virginia research institute in religion, politics, and conflict to evaluate the behavioural tendencies of religious groups in Pakistan.

Azaz Syed

Azaz Syed is a print and electronic media journalist, media trainer, and author. His book 'The Secrets of Pakistan's War on Al- Qaeda' was declared bestseller in 2015. He writes about democracy, civil military relations, terrorism, intelligence, and national security. His regular Urdu columns appear in daily *Jang*. Syed has also taught investigative reporting at International Islamic University and National University of Modern Languages (NUML) in the past.

Yasir Pirzada

Yasir Pirzada is a Lahore-based popular columnist whose Urdu columns in daily *Jang* attract huge readership in Pakistan as well as among the Pakistani diaspora around the world. He writes on social issues, often highlighting the contradictions in the values and norms of the society. Yasir approaches his typically serious subjects in a uniquely poignant manner, using an idiom of subtle humour and satirical innuendo. He has also penned scripts for television channels including the state television PTV. Pirzada is also a senior civil servant with the federal government, currently associated with the Inland Revenue Service. However, he is better known for his sharp and critical columns in *Jang*.

Romana Bashir

Romana Bashir is an activist for women and minority rights and religious tolerance. Bashir is the executive director of the Peace and Development Foundation in *Rawalpindi* and was appointed by *Pope Benedict XVI* as a consultant for the *Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims*. In 2012 she was a member of a panel of five speakers at a press conference by Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS). The panel called for the *blasphemy law* to be revised to prevent its misuse, abuse and exploitation. In 2013, she was a speaker at a seminar on "Tolerance in Pakistan"

held at *Quaid-e-Azam University*. The seminar urged people to speak up against the rising levels of violence and intolerance related to ethnic and religious differences in the country.

Gul Nokhaiz Akhtar

Gul Nokhaiz Akhtar is a renowned Urdu novelist, with several books and dozens of plays to his credit. His columns in daily *Dunya* titled 'Nokhaiziyan' are widely popular for humour. He writes scripts for many comedy talk shows on television. He is well known for tackling serious social and political issues through humour. Akhtar also serves as creative head at KAGAZ QALAM.

Ahmed Ali

Ahmed Ali is a researcher with interest in security and conflict as well as religious minorities in Pakistan and Afghanistan. He has authored several pieces including reports on terrorism and extremism in Pakistan. Currently, he is project manager at Pak Institute for Peace Studies, Islamabad. Formerly, Ahmed served in the Pakistan civil service for over eight years, working in different capacities in Balochistan and the federal capital.

Muhammad Aslam Awan

Aslam Awan is a senior journalist with rich knowledge about the history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa particularly Dera Ismail Khan. Currently, he serves as the bureau chief of *Dunya* television in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In addition, he also writes Urdu columns on social and political issues in the province

Sahibzada Amanat Rasool

Sahibzada Amanat Rasool is a religious scholar and editor of monthly magazine 'Rooh-e-Buland' in Lahore. He studied in Denmark where he also delivered Friday sermons at an Islamic centre and taught Arabic to university students. His literary contributions include 'Jesus and Quran', 'Creation of Adam and Quran', and others. Sahibzada Rasool also writes columns for national Urdu dailies.

Ammar Khan Nasir

Ammar Khan Nasir is a religious scholar who has written extensively on the contemporary issues in Islamic context. His academic works include "Imam Abū Hanifa and Amal bil Hadith" printed in 1996. In 2007 he academically reviewed the recommendations of the Council of Islamic Ideology, regarding Islamic Punishments. His research on the issue was later compiled and published by Al-Mawrid Foundation for Islamic Research and Education, Lahore. His other research works include 'History of the Sacred Mosque in Jerusalem and the Question of its Guardianship' and Jihad.

Mufti Muhammad Zahid

Mufti Muhammad Zahid is a religious scholar and Vice President of the Faisalabad-based Jamia Islamia Imdadia. Mufti Zahid also advises several legal entities on Sharia matters and chairs the Sharia boards of the leading private sector banks including the Bank of Khyber, the Bank of Punjab etc. A graduate of

the International Islamic University, Mufti Zahid has authored numerous works including on Islamic banking.

Aoun Sahi

Aoun Sahi is an award-winning journalist, researcher, and media trainer with over 14 years of experience. He worked as bureau chief of the 24 News HD and the LA Time's special correspondent in Pakistan. In 2016, Sahi shared in the Pulitzer Prize awarded to The LA Times staff for covering the mass shooting at San Bernadino, California. The following year, he was awarded the 'Pride of Journalism' by the National Press Club, Islamabad. He also won the ILO Pakistan's 'Excellence in Labour Journalism Award' for two consecutive years in 2013-14.

Dr. Lubna Zaheer

Dr. Lubna Zaheer is an Associate Professor of media studies and the chairperson of the Films and Broadcasting Department at the University of Punjab, Lahore. Dr. Lubna Zaheer has been a media practitioner, consultant, and trainer for over 15 years. She has been a regular columnist and talk-show host with state television PTV News. Her academic interests include political communication, public participation and democracy.

Yaqoob Khan Bangash

Dr Yaqoob Khan Bangash is a historian of Modern South Asia. His current research interests lie in the emergence of Pakistan as a post-colonial state, with broader interests in decolonisation, modern state formation, formation of identities, and the emergence of ethnic and identity-based conflicts. Dr Bangash's first book was published by Oxford University Press as, 'A Princely Affair: Accession and Integration of Princely States in Pakistan, 1947-55,' in 2015. Dr Bangash has received several grants and honours including a Senior Fellowship at the Religious Freedom Institute (USA), Fellowship of the Presbyterian Historical Society (USA), David M. Stowe Research Fellowship at Yale (USA) and the American Academy of Religion Collaborative Grant (USA). He also regularly writes for The News, Daily Times, The Express Tribune and other news media.

Anam Fatima

Anam Fatima is a researcher with interest in religious extremism and security. Fatima's research papers have been published in various journals. She has worked in different research and advocacy projects in Pakistan including in 'youth for interfaith harmony'. Anam Fatima remained associated with Pak Institute for Peace Studies as a researcher for several years. Previously, she was a visiting lecturer at the School of Politics and International Relations in Quaid Azam University, Islamabad.

Dr. Amjad Tufail

Dr. Amjad Tufail is a psychologist with over two decades of experience in teaching psychology to degree level students. Currently, Dr. Amjad Tufail is an Associate Professor at the department of psychology, MAO College, Lahore. His works on human psychology have been published in several journals.

Annexure B: Questionnaires

■ Pre-Workshop Questionnaire



Role of Youth for Social Harmony

Date: _____

Questionnaire (Pre-Workshop)

Gender

Age

University

Background: a) Rural. b) Urban. **Province/District:** _____

1. Have you ever read about a religion or faith other than yours?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know

2. What is the main source of your knowledge about other religions or faiths?
 - a. Books
 - b. Newspapers/magazines
 - c. Religious scholars
 - d. Television
 - e. Internet
 - f. Other. Please specify.....

3. Do you think people of all religions and faiths are equal citizens of Pakistan?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know

4. Have you ever read/heard about any similarities among different religions?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- c. Don't know
- 5. Have you ever witnessed incidents of religious discrimination at university campus or in society?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 6. What do you think is your primary identity? *(Please select one only)*
 - a. Ethnic background
 - b. Citizenship of Pakistan
 - c. Religious affiliation
 - d. Provincial affiliation
 - e. Linguistic identity
 - f. Other. Please specify.....
- 7. Do you think textbooks and curricula teach respect for diversity?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
- 8. Are you aware of your fundamental freedoms granted by the Constitution?
 - a. Yes, I am aware of all fundamental freedoms
 - b. Yes, but I know only few of them
 - c. Not aware
- 9. Do you think non-Muslims played any role in the creation, defence and development of Pakistan?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
- 10. Do you think we need more women in leadership roles in various fields?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
- 11. Do you consider a transgender person as an equal citizen?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
- 12. Have you ever heard of the *Paigham-e-Pakistan*?
 - a. Yes

- b. No
- c. Never

13. What do you think *Paigham-e-Pakistan* is?

- a. It is a law
- b. It is a message of peace from the Prime Minister
- c. It is a declaration by religious scholars
- d. Don't know

14. What do you think is your purpose for attending this workshop?

- a. To learn something new
- b. To meet new people
- c. No particular purpose

15. Do you think attending training workshops is useful for your future career?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

16. Have you decided about your future career path?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

17. Have you attended career counseling before?

- a. Yes
- b. No

A few subjective questions:

18. What do you think extremism is?

19. What is your definition of interfaith harmony?

20. How can youth promote social and religious harmony?

21. What do you expect to achieve by attending this training workshop?

▪ **Post-Workshop Interview Questionnaire**

YOUTH FOR INTERFAITH HARMONY

Questionnaire



Gender: Age: University Name:

Place where you grew up was: Rural/Urban..... Province/Region/District:

Note:

- *The surveyor shall apprise the respondent of the aims and objectives of the study.*
- *The respondent should answer questions voluntarily without any pressure or temptation.*
- *The respondent shall be given adequate time for answering each question.*
- *The respondent is not bound to answer each and every question.*

Personal Development and Career

*Please tick **True** or **False** in your responses. Please be open and frank while giving responses.*

No.	Statements	True	To some extent	False
1	I am hopeful about my future in Pakistan.			
2	Our society gives opportunity for growth to those who work hard.			
3	Merit is valued in our society.			
4	I have clarity about which profession to join once I complete my education.			
5	One can make a respectable career through hard work even if one belongs to a poor family.			
6	Our teachers are helpful in guiding students about career choices.			
7	Education has given me the skills necessary for making a respectable career.			
8	There are enough career opportunities for educated youth in Pakistan.			
9	I have learned the skill to think critically about issues.			

10	Free expression of ideas is encouraged in the university classrooms.			
11	Our education system encourages students to be law-abiding citizens.			
12	Extracurricular activities are essential for overall education and training of students.			
13	Education is a priority for the government.			

Diversity in Pakistan

Please Tick the appropriate responses to the following statements. Please be open and frank while giving responses.

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Pakistan is a land of many religions and faiths.				
2	People of all religions and faiths should be treated equally in our country.				
3	Incidents of faith-based discrimination happen only rarely in our country.				
4	The government takes appropriate action against incidents of faith-based discrimination or violence.				
5	Every citizen, regardless of their faith, should have equal access to opportunities in Pakistan.				
6	People of all faiths should be able to hold high public offices.				
7	Our local languages are as valuable as Urdu.				
8	We should have more woman leaders in every field.				
9	But a woman's primary role is to take care of her home and household chores.				
10	Fixing quotas for women in government jobs is an unfair practice as it deprives many deserving men of job opportunities.				
11	Larkiyan parayee dhan hoti hai (Girls belong to not her father's but her husband's house)				
12	Violence against women is a serious issue in our country.				
13	In rape cases, often the victim women are also responsible in some way.				
14	Transgender persons should have equal rights as citizens of the state.				
15	Transgender persons should have access to education and job opportunities.				

Interfaith Harmony

Please **tick** all correct answers in each question.

1. Do you think Non-Muslims have contributed to the creation and development of Pakistan?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't Know

2. Should we read about religions other than ours?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.

3. Do you think different religions have similarities?
 - a. Yes, many similarities.
 - b. Yes, but only few similarities
 - c. No
 - d. Don't know

4. Do you think our education system teaches respect for all religions?
 - a. Yes
 - b. To some extent
 - c. No
 - d. Don't know

5. The Constitution of Pakistan does not discriminate among citizens on the basis of faith.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Don't know

6. In our country, faith-based persecution is a:
 - a. Minor issue
 - b. Major issue
 - c. Not an issue
 - d. Don't know

7. Have you ever heard of *Paigham-e-Pakistan*?
 - a. Yes. I know what it is about
 - b. Yes. But, I have no idea what it is about
 - c. Never heard of it

8. What do you think *Paigham-e-Pakistan* is?
 - a. It's a law
 - b. It's a message of religious harmony from the Prime Minister
 - c. It's a declaration by religious scholars
 - d. Don't know

Thoughts on Random Topics

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Secularism opposes religion.				
2	Some religions are superior to other religions.				
3	Many of our social problems are caused because of people not following religion in true spirit?				
6	Women naturally lack decision making power as compared to men.				
7	Women's rights movements work on foreign agenda.				
8	Western media often run malicious campaigns to damage Pakistan's image.				
9	In Pakistan, some particular ethnic groups have tendency for extremism.				
10	People of backward provinces have limited understanding of national issues and politics.				
11	Criticizing the state or state institutions is against the national interest?				
12	India is the eternal enemy of Pakistan.				
13	We need to spend more to strengthen our defence against India.				
14	Foreign conspiracies are the principal cause of religious extremism in Pakistan.				
15	Our public resources are wasted mostly due to the corruption of leaders.				

Constitution, Citizenship, & Rule of Law

- Have you ever read about your fundamental freedoms in the Constitution?
 - Yes
 - No
- Please list any two fundamental freedoms protected by the Constitution:
 - _____
 - _____
- Which form of government do you think is most suitable for Pakistan?
 - Shariah
 - Democracy
 - Dictatorship
 - Don't know

4. Do you think dictatorial regimes were justified in the past?
 - a. Yes, always.
 - b. Yes, to some extent
 - c. No
 - d. Don't know
5. Can the state disregard the Constitution in the national interest?
 - a. Yes, always because national interest is supreme.
 - b. Yes, but only sometimes.
 - c. Never.
 - d. Don't know
6. Whose job is it to determine what Pakistan's national interests are?
 - a. Government
 - b. Armed forces
 - c. Parliament
 - d. Don't know
7. Have you ever read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Never heard of it
8. Do you think Pakistan has international obligations as a member of the United Nations?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
9. Please mention any single international obligation of Pakistan.
 - a. _____
10. Do you think some citizens face difficulties in acquiring citizenship documents?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know

Media

1. What is your most favorite program on television?
 - a. News
 - b. Political talk shows
 - c. Drama serials
 - d. Comedy/entertainment
 - e. Other. Please specify.....
2. What is your most favorite news channel?
 - a. ARY News
 - b. Geo

- c. Aaj News
 - d. Dawn News
 - e. Other. Please specify.....
3. Please name your most favorite political analyst on television?
-
4. How often do you read a newspaper?
- a. Regularly
 - b. Often
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. I don't read newspapers.
5. Which social media platform do you use most of the time?
- a. Facebook
 - b. Twitter
 - c. Tiktok
 - d. YouTube
 - e. Other. Please specify.....
6. Have you ever come across religiously hateful material on social media?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
7. How often do you see religious debates on social media?
- a. Often.
 - b. Sometimes.
 - c. Only rarely.
 - d. I haven't seen
8. Do you participate in religious debates on social media?
- a. Often.
 - b. Sometimes.
 - c. Only rarely.
 - d. No.

▪ Post-Workshop Feedback Questionnaire



Role of Youth for Interfaith Harmony

Date: _____

Questionnaire (Post Workshop)

Gender

Age

University

Background: a) Rural. b) Urban.

Province/District: _____

1. Was this workshop useful in enhancing your understanding of issues at hand?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know

2. Have you learned anything new in today's workshop?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know

3. Do you agree with the recommendation and training given in the workshop about interfaith peace in society?
 - a. Yes
 - b. To some extent
 - c. No
 - d. Don't know

4. Were you provided with the opportunity to participate in the interactive session during workshop?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. To some extent

5. Will you be telling your fellow students and peers about this workshop?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know

6. Has this workshop helped you understand your rights as a citizen of Pakistan under the constitution?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. To some extent

7. Has this session broaden your understanding of human rights?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. To some extent

8. Has this workshop changed your understanding of social harmony?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. To some extent

9. If yes, How?

10. Please share your thoughts on youth involvement in such training sessions?

Annexure 3 List of Universities

FAISALABAD

1. Government College University, Faisalabad
2. University of Jhang
3. University of Agriculture – UAF
4. Lahore College for Women University- Jhang
5. National Textile University
6. Riphah University- Faisalabad
7. The University of Faisalabad
8. Roots Faisalabd

GUJRAT

9. University of Gujrat
10. University of Lahore, Chenab Campus
11. University of Sialkot
12. Arid, Gujrat

GUJRANWALA

13. Govt. Murray College, Sialkot
14. Punjab College
15. Gift University
16. University of Sialkot
17. University of Narowal
18. Govt. College, Gujranwala
19. Govt. Postgraduate College for Boys, Gujranwala
20. Punjab University
21. Allama Iqbal Open University

LAHORE

22. University of Education
23. Lahore College for Women University
24. Hajveri University, Shiekupura
25. Okara University
26. Govt College University, Lahore
27. University of Lahore

28. University of Engineering and Technology, UET
29. Lahore Garrison University
30. University of Lahore
31. Shiekh Zyed Medical College
32. Punjab University
33. Forman Christian College
34. King Edward Medical University
35. Beaconhouse National University
36. University of Management and Technology
37. Kinnaird College for Women University
38. Superior University, Lahore

BAHAWALPUR

39. Islamia University, Bahawalpur
40. Government Sadiq College Women University
41. University of Central Punjab, Bahawalpur Campus

MULTAN

42. Government Emerson College, Multan
43. Bahauddin Zakariya University
44. Millat Degree College

SARDOGHA

45. University of Sargodha

Annexure 4 Picture Gallery



