

Making Sense of Pakistani Youth

How Youth in Pakistan View State,
Society, Religion, and Politics

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- Muhammad Amir Rana

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The broader context

Youth radicalization threatens social stability in Pakistan. Incidents of religiously motivated violence at educational campuses and the rise in youth-led vigilante crimes are symptomatic reflections of growing radicalization among the educated youth. The problem is exacerbated by a perilous combination of factors such as the unmanaged youth bulge, declining rule of law, absence of youth policy, and a chronic ambiguity of the state vis-à-vis extremism. The Pakistani youth are exposed to a doctrinal and exclusivist education that allows only peculiar interpretations of history and precludes cognitive growth in youth. The educational discourse instils suspicion for multiculturalism and adds to religious radicalization.

The radicalization process obfuscates principles of liberalism, democracy, and basic human freedoms. A major casualty of the growing extremism in Pakistan is the freedom of religious beliefs, and the upshot of radicalization is ultimately felt by minority faith groups. Social discontent among religious minorities is high, mainly because structural and constitutional safeguards are barely

adhered to, and the state is either unable or unwilling to stem the rising tide of religious radicalism particularly among the youth. Left unchecked, extremism has the potential to disrupt the cultural and communal landscape in the country and lead to social instability. Such a prospect would be nightmarish for a country that is already hard pressed to address myriad of other challenges relating to its security.

Why this study?

In view of the growing radicalization among educated youth and its adverse effects on Pakistan's social, political, and economic stability, the study was conducted by Pak Institute for Peace Studies. The research was driven by the necessity and urge to understand youths' internal thinking processes that shape their behaviours and actions. It is an attempt to make sense of how educated young men and women make sense of themselves and the world around them. To answer this question, the study sought to gain insights into various dimensions of youths' thinking through a mixed-method approach to data collection, using survey questionnaires, interviews, observations as well as literature review.

The findings present an interesting overall picture of an ordinary youths' thinking and shed light on how youths situate themselves within their in-groups and the larger society. The study also aimed at appraising the overall quality of thoughts among youth and their

tolerance/acceptance level for diversity and inclusion. Questions were designed to gauge youths' cognitive skills, and their ability to think clearly and argue rationally etc. Likewise, another objective was to observe the impact of education on their outlook and general behaviour. The findings also provide a peek into worldviews commonly held by the youth, and whether they identify themselves as members of the larger human fraternity.

Aims and objectives

The study's overarching aim is to analyse youth radicalization through empirical inquiry using primary data and reveal useful facts about the problem. And building on these facts, to propose potential solutions to key problems identified in this report in order to help appropriate policy change or reform. The objective is to sensitize the policymakers about different dimensions of youth radicalization and call attention to prioritize youth in legislative debates, policymaking, peacebuilding, wealth redistribution, and resource allocation. The research is presupposed to serve as an incentive for elected representatives to engage more with youth in their respective constituencies to alleviate any sense of alienation or abandonment among them.

Similarly, it seeks to be a stimulus for the government to pay attention to the plight of public education and its continued failure to check radicalization in society. Besides, in the non-government

realm, the civil society plays a crucial role in both identifying and helping address issues. The findings of this study while adding to the body of existing knowledge on youth radicalization can help inform programs and agendas of civil society organizations. They can help amplify the knowledge around youth radicalization through awareness and advocacy campaigns.

Likewise, the study brings a certain level of clarity about the issue and paves the way for further and more focused research in this area by local and international research organizations working in related fields. And finally, the research seeks to give the educated youth and educational institutions some food for thought and a stimulus for self-reflections.

Practical usage

The primary audience of the report are the policy makers and practitioners, and elected representatives. Likewise, other key audiences include educational institutions, civil society, think tanks, intelligentsia, and youth leaders and activists. The report at hand will be formally launched at a policy-level seminar in Islamabad with policymakers, elected representatives, media persons, youth leaders, and members of academia in attendance. The findings will be shared with the participants and the identified issues will be discussed with the objective to convince lawmakers to take up the issue at the floor of legislature. The findings will also be shared with the press and electronic media for dissemination to

a wider audience. Likewise, the hard copies of the report will also be sent to public libraries in Pakistan, universities, relevant government agencies, and scholars and teachers etc.

Scope of the study

The scope of the study was limited to engaging 618 participants for opinion surveys and observations and 113 for quantitative and qualitative interviews. The inclusion and exclusion criteria put constraints on sample size as persons officially defined as *youth* i.e., aged 15 to 29 and attending a university were included in the study. It may be noted that a few very rare exceptions in the inclusion criterion were observed; for instance, some participants were university students who were older than 29. However, those having no education or studying at educational institutions below a university were excluded. Likewise, geographically, the study was limited to four provinces and Islamabad capital territory as respondents were recruited from educational institutions of these regions. Universities situated outside the afore-said geographical areas were excluded from engagement. The inclusion and exclusion factors are important while interpreting results of this study. Therefore, the statements may not be generalizable to all Pakistani youth (which include illiterate youth too), and primarily those fulfilling the inclusion criteria fall within the scope of the study.

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SUMMARY

- Pakistan's youth bulge is projected to grow further till 2030. Whether this youth bulge becomes a game-changing asset or a nightmarish liability depends on how governments deal with it. As of now, there is no effective policy to manage and channelize youths' energies for positive social and economic outcomes. In effect, a rudderless young population is left to fend for itself.
- The state has a primal aversion for cultural diversity and has attempted to homogenize the society through religious education and indoctrination. This has encouraged religious radicalism.
- Extremist groups eye youth as their principal audience of propaganda and target for recruitment. And youths' stunted cognitive abilities, caused by a failing education system, make them susceptible to extremist ideologies and exploitation.
- The educational curricula are dogmatic, and the schooling system discourages critical thinking and learning. As a result, educated youth fail to develop the ability to think clearly and rationally.

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- The country has seen a sharp resurgence in faith-based hate crimes in recent years, indicating unchecked radicalization in society particularly among youth.
- Youth from politically peripheral regions show signs of indignation towards mainstream, and they are comparatively more critical in their views than their counterparts in urban centers.
- Prejudices based on faith and ethnicity play a prominent role in informing perspectives and behaviors among youth. This has a negative bearing on social behaviors and communal relations.
- The current generation of educated youth show reduced interest in constitutionalism. Constitutional illiteracy is common among them.
- Growing youth radicalization calls for policy interventions by the state to target key areas. The foremost area of reform is education, followed by other sectors.

Pakistan is in a process of social change marked by a popular embrace of religious exhibitionism and conservatism. The change process while obscuring values of social diversity is fostering religious radicalism and otherization of minority faith groups. No doubt, while the real and imagined dangers of a radicalized Pakistan continue to captivate the imagination of Pakistan watchers – both domestic and Western, inadequate attention has been given to the principal audience and actor of radicalism i.e., the educated youth.

Over the past decade, enough evidence has emerged to challenge the hypotheses that factors like poverty or illiteracy were chief contributors to Pakistan's extremism problem. Some of the most shocking acts of violent extremism in the country were perpetrated not by the illiterate or the poor but graduates of reputable schools from well-to-do social backgrounds. Disturbing as it is, the phenomenon of educated young people being spurred by radical ideologies to execute acts of violence could not go unnoticed for long.

Making sense of Pakistani youth

Several studies by Pakistani academicians and Western think tanks have attempted to call attention to youth radicalization in Pakistan and explain its evolution over the past decades. A PIPS study in 2019 identified youth radicalization as a potential destabilizing factor for Pakistan's internal security and stability. And this fact is not lost on state functionaries either as there are indications of adequate level of awareness about the problem in policymaking circles. For instance, the incumbent National Security Advisor and one of the architects of the latest National Security Policy, Moeed Yusuf wrote that "Pakistan exhibits symptoms that point to high potential for youth radicalization. The situation is marked by poor education system stratified along socio-economic lines and disparate economic opportunities across segments of society."¹

However, whether such state-level realization triggers course correction or pushes corrective policy measures is a separate debate. In Pakistan, the state is habitually slow in heeding to early warning and pre-empting a crisis. It mostly behaves reactively only after a crisis has struck. And by the time the push comes to shove, it is often too late because lack of will and capacity as well as resources leaves the state incapacitated to act effectively. As a result, the problem often progresses to next stage of degradation,

¹ Moeed Yusuf, "Prospects of youth radicalization in Pakistan: Implications for US policy", *Brookings, Analysis Papers*, October 14, 2008

Introduction

further eroding rule of law and encouraging extremist and anarchic tendencies in the society.

As hinted earlier, the problem of youth radicalization and its allied risks have been too pronounced to escape the attention of policy researchers and analysts. In fact, as a research and advocacy think tank, PIPS was impelled by the factors discussed above as well as its own findings to formulate a framework for prevention of the proliferation of fanatical ideologies at educational campuses. Thus, a program of educational workshops for youth was created on the premise that the youth – university students to be specific – needed to be introduced to alternative and fact-based ideas about the world around them in order to counter extremist thoughts and sweeping worldviews in them.

Of course, given the limiting factors of time and resources, it was clear at the outset that the intervention was to be specific in theme and restricted in its reach and scope, yet learning outcomes among beneficiaries as indicated in their feedback and the knowledge and insights gathered from the program are no small gains. The workshop platform was also used for survey and observational purposes to study thinking patterns and behavioural tendencies among youth regarding state, society, religion, and politics. The findings while backing PIPS earlier studies about youth

radicalization also reveal more obscure aspects of the problem, thus adding to the body of existing knowledge.

Under the program, twenty two-day educational workshops around themes of interfaith harmony and social peace and inclusion were held in different cities of four provinces in which over 750 male and female university students from around 80 universities, mostly those in public sector, were engaged. As a principle, at least 30pc female participation was to be ensured, but the actual ratio exceeded 30pc. The formulation of the program design was preceded by a thorough assessment of the role of education system in encouraging religious radicalism in youth. In this regard, problems and lacunas in educational curricula and textbooks were identified and workshop themes and agendas were decided accordingly.

Studies indicate a relationship between what students read in the textbooks and the ideologies and worldviews they subscribe to. Therefore, the interactive discourse at the workshops was centred around the main theme of interfaith harmony with sub themes including cultural diversity, freedom of faith, constitution, democracy, fundamental rights, citizenship, freedom of speech, emotional intelligence, and common sense etc.

Introduction

A crucial aspect of the program was to provide a safe space to the youth for critical and creative self-expression – something largely missing from the regular Pakistani classrooms. In short, the interactive workshops aimed at giving opportunity to youth to not only listen to and interact with well-known authors, academicians, and journalists but also to speak up their minds on interfaith issues without fear of judgment or censure. As mentioned previously, the workshops served two purposes: first, the youth were sensitized about various issues around the theme of interfaith harmony; secondly, the young participants were recruited for research with the purpose to understand the dynamics of youths thinking and mindsets on thematic issues.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Research design

Research design is determined by the aim of the study. This study aimed at understanding the educated youths' views on topics relating to social peace and harmony. How youth view their fellow citizens of other faiths? What factors influence their sense of identity? Do they appreciate or suspect diversity and multiculturalism? What is educated youths' level of awareness about the social challenges faced by minority communities? How prevalent is religious intolerance among the educated youth of majority faith? These were some of the questions that were investigated during the study.

The study was inclined towards qualitative approach as the purpose was to gain in-depth knowledge about the under-researched problem of educated youths' thinking in the context of growing radicalization. Likewise, understanding their perspectives on thematic issues and their social experiences as they lived in an increasingly radicalized society were key objectives of the study. On the other hand, however, the study also sought to measure variables and their inter-relationships and note frequencies in

responses of the subjects which could be achieved through quantitative approach. Therefore, a mixed-method approach was adopted to integrate aspects of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. As stated earlier, the aim was to gain in-depth knowledge about youths' thinking, so the mixed method was most suitable to give a more complete picture of the problem under investigation and improve the credibility of our conclusions.

Mixed-method

As discussed above, aspects of quantitative and qualitative approaches were combined to investigate subjective experiences as well as frequencies and patterns. Thinking processes and perspectives could not be investigated adequately through a standalone quantitative approach which is why a mixed-method approach was applied to capitalize on the strengths of both approaches to gain a fuller picture of the problem. Mixed methods are common in researching societal issues. However, a more important factor for choosing mixed method was to gain a generalizable outcome. External validity could not be achieved through qualitative approach alone as sample size in this method was too small to be applicable to a larger context. This weakness was reduced by integrating quantitative approach. Similarly, the mixed method approach enabled us to contextualize the statistical data to reach a detailed and context-based conclusions especially

where relations between different variables were to be established and explained. And lastly, the data collection through different methods helped triangulate the data sets.

Convergent parallel

In mixed-method approach, the convergent parallel was chosen wherein quantitative data through survey questionnaires and qualitative data through interviews and observations were collected at the same time. The two data sets were analysed separately, and after the analysis the results were compared, and conclusions drawn.

The quantitative data was analysed through statistical analysis to investigate trends, patterns, and relationships. This helped organize and summarize the quantitative data. Next, inferential statistics were used to understand the larger population of Pakistani youth from which the sample was taken. On the other hand, the qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis because of its suitability for analysing views, perspectives, and experiences of the study subjects.

Ethics

Our research involved adult human subjects, and as such it was ensured that ethical considerations were adhered to during data collection. The research involved investigating human thinking,

behaviours, and experiences. Therefore, participation in the study was voluntary, informed, and fully safe for the subjects. No physical harm was done during the study, and there was no indication or sign of a psychological harm to any subject either.

Descriptive research

The study mainly focused on the *how* and *what* of the problem, and the aim was to identify characteristics of educated youths' mindset and note frequencies and trends in their thinking processes. Therefore, descriptive research was deemed suitable for systematically describing the youths' thinking and perspectives in the context of religious radicalization in Pakistan. Descriptive research is most appropriate for observing and measuring variables as they are. Though studies have been conducted on religious extremism including youth radicalization in Pakistan, yet there is a scarcity of research on the worldviews and thinking patterns of Pakistan's educated youth. Therefore, before understanding why youth radicalization is occurring it is important to understand the processes and dynamics in youths' mental spaces i.e., how and where it is happening.

Survey

Survey allows gathering of large amounts of data that can be systematically analysed for frequencies, averages, and patterns to give an easily understandable picture of the problem under investigation. During this study, survey questionnaires were administered to 618 subjects. The questionnaire contained closed-end objective questions as well as some subjective types for qualitative data.

Structured interviews

Structure interviews were chosen for systematized data collection and the participants were asked closed-ended questions in a set order on thematic issues around social peace and diversity. However, to capture a deeper understanding of the respondents' perspectives and experiences, some open-ended questions on related themes were also added. The structured interviews allowed us to compare responses among participants from different geographical regions and gender orientations in a uniform context. Besides, they helped identify patterns easily. The study participants belonged to different social, religious, and geographical backgrounds, and as such it was essential to mitigate chances of biasness on the part of the researcher. In this regard, structured interview was a great help as all participants were asked the same set of questions.

Observations

Attitude and behaviour tell a lot about people's thinking and perspectives. Under this study, we applied observation to understand how educated youth acted and reacted in real-life settings as they interacted with their peers from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. The observation not only supplemented the overall research but also helped with data triangulation.

Stratified probability sampling

Since the study aimed at drawing inferences about the educated youth of Pakistan, a stratified probability sampling method was used to generate externally valid conclusions. The sample population was divided into strata based on characteristics of age, gender, geography, and religious faith to create a sample representative of the whole educated youth in Pakistan. After stratification, participants from each stratum were selected randomly. Throughout the sampling, every participant had an equal chance of being selected.

Pilot study

Before the start of the study, the research tools i.e., survey questionnaire and interview questions were put to test in a three-day pilot study. PIPS research team visited three universities in Islamabad namely Quaid Azam University, National Defence University, and International Islamic University to test the research tools. Randomly selected students from these universities were administered the questionnaire to fill, and others were interviewed with the designed questions. The pilot study helped refined questions including for clarity.

A tendency for radicalism among educated youth

Despite high costs of terrorism borne by Pakistanis, support for extremist ideologies in Pakistani society is strong. The matter gets worse when radical tendencies are observed among the educated youth. During workshops, many students expressed regressive views on human rights, civil liberties, and inter-faith relations. Some were highly reactive to the question of blasphemy. For instance, in a workshop in Punjab, a young student believed that murdering a suspected blasphemer was perfectly justified.

Likewise, some comments from students discussing minority rights reflected patronizing attitude and lack of empathy. A student in Islamabad was of the view that the responsibility to engage with majority falls on minorities. He blamed minority communities' supposed introversion as a barrier to the creation of a homogenized and unified society. Many other students across Pakistan failed to comprehend the notion of unity through diversity, questioning that how unity could be achieved while keeping religious differences intact. Believing unity as some kind of similitude is a prevalent mindset in Pakistan because the state has long followed the policy

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of creating a “national” narrative, cancelling all forms of divergent views. However, this one-toned concept of nation runs counter to political realities of the post-modern world.

Do you think people of all religions and faiths are equal citizens of Pakistan?

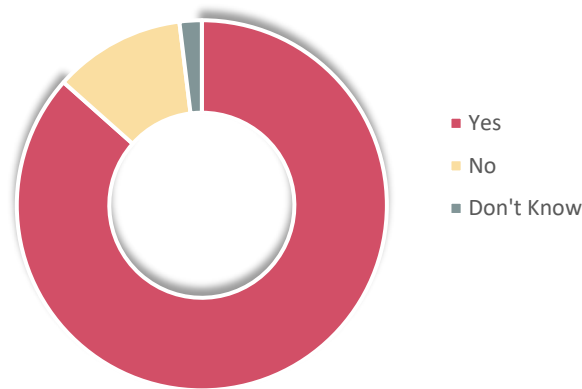


Figure 1: Do you think people of all religions and faiths are equal citizens of Pakistan?

Comparing these views with the results of the survey shows that despite 87 pc of students believing minorities as equal citizens of Pakistan, one cannot ignore the remaining 13 pc due to their displayed aversion for diversity. Similarly, the respondents were asked whether they will accept a member of other faith as their neighbor, roommate, or marital partner of any male or female relative. Interestingly while most were okay with having religious minorities being their neighbours and roommates but on question

Key findings & analysis

of interfaith marriage there was a serious divide. Close to 40 pc were not willing to accept an interfaith marriage.

Would you accept a person from a different religion marry a relative of yours?

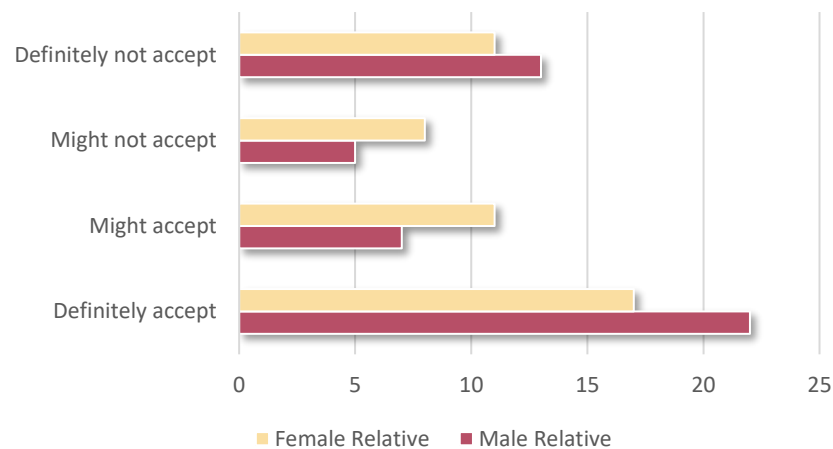


Figure 2: Would you accept a person from a different religion marry a relative of yours?

Around 17 pc also said they would laugh at a joke on religion other than theirs and 12 pc said they would be uncomfortable but would not argue. Joking about religions, other than Islam, is common which reflects a lack of empathy among youth for people of other faith groups. On the other hand, the society shows little tolerance to comments with a hint of pun towards majority faith. In 2020, human right activist Marvi Sirmad faced blasphemy allegations and threats to life for a satirical tweet on question of missing

persons.² Likewise, actress Saba Qamar and singer Bilal Saeed faced blasphemy allegations for shooting a music video in a mosque.³

Some attendees also implicitly tried to justify radicalization and persecution of minorities in Pakistan, citing that these were common throughout the world. The logic was based on the premise that if the world cannot resolve an issue, we cannot resolve it either. Dr Khalid Masud found flaw in this comparative approach and advised the students to treat each case as unique, rooted firmly in the geographical and social realities of the region. Also, this blame shifting goes a long way, making us look away from our social problems as a conspiracy against Islam.

Confusion and contradiction

Universities are meant to be the guardians of reason and critical inquiry. Therefore, university students are expected to have developed better intellectual and cognitive skills. However, at several instances, youth attending the training workshops exhibited confusion and contradictory views. For instance, in structured interviews, majority declared democracy to be the most suitable system for Pakistan, but a large percentage also felt that

² Marvi Sirmad, "In Pakistan, a tweet can bring a death sentence," *The Washington Post*, September 29, 2020.

³ "Saba Qamar, Bilal Saeed indicted in desecration case," *Dawn*, October 7, 2021.

Key findings & analysis

previous dictatorships in Pakistan were justified, and that the state could disregard the constitution to serve the national interests.

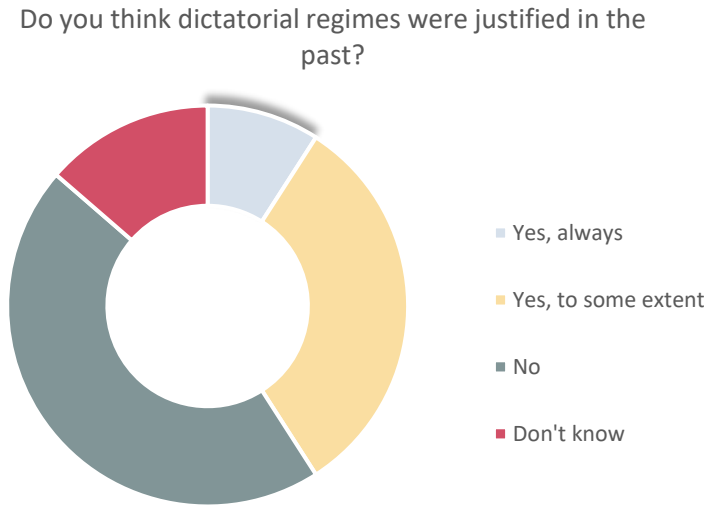


Figure 3: Do you think dictatorial regimes were justified in the past?

Contradiction was also observed regarding views on career opportunities in Pakistan. More than half held that merit was valued in our society only to some extent but over 77 pc held that a person could make respectable career in Pakistan even if one belonged to a poor family. Students were mostly divided on whether there are enough career opportunities in Pakistan with 39 pc replying “Yes” and 37 pc choosing “to some extent.”

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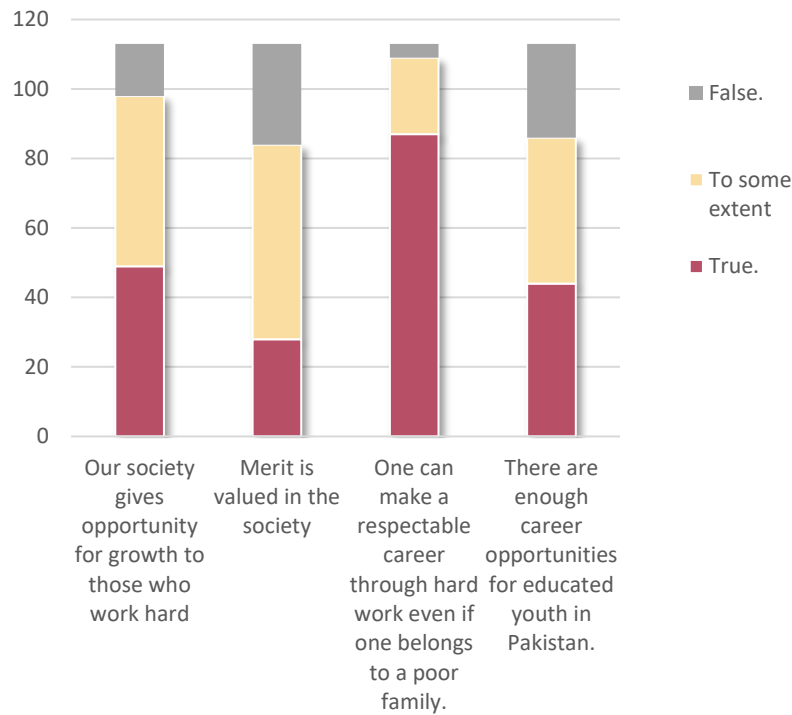


Figure 4: Merits is valued in our society

Elucidating reasons behind confusion in the Muslim world, Khursheed Nadeem held that while the world moved from pre-modern period to modern period, the Muslim societies remained stuck in the pre-modern era of Islamic empires and kept on trying to revive their lost glory. They never fully adopted the modern institutions such as nation-state, democracy, private property etc. Consequently, as post-modernism progressed human civilization further, the globalization knitted the world together, making it impossible for Muslim societies to remain isolated. This jump from

Key findings & analysis

pre-modern to post-modern civilization without experiencing modernism naturally induces confusion in these societies which we are currently observing in our youth. Dr Khalid explained further that because Muslims perceived modern institutions as anti-Islamic, they happily adopted the post-modern critique of modernism. However, since the root of post-modernism is the acceptance of diversity as natural, their critique does not match well with the criticism of Muslim scholars, resulting in a dilemma.

Dr Khalid Masud, however, believed that Western societies are similarly confused but their experience of enlightenment period provided them a methodology to present their perspectives in a well-structured convincing language, obscuring the confusion behind that thought. The problems of articulation exhibited by majority of the students while asking questions from the experts confirm this. Instead asking precise questions, most struggled with structuring their thoughts and kept circling around the key problem.

Confusion in our youth is also an outcome of their fear of differences. A student talked at length on the importance of limiting free speech, mixing the concept with hate speech, and inquired what standard needed to be followed to limit freedom of speech. Khursheed Nadeem answered that collective consciousness of a society must decide that limit, and that the state should not

intervene in this matter. He held that dress code, etiquettes, and social behaviours should be decided by the society and the state cannot codify such limits. A few students similarly shared concerns about fake news and supported the idea of regulating social media as necessary. While the experts acknowledged that fake news was indeed a problem, they also explained the limitation of state-led regulation on social media and educated the participants on how social media users had equal responsibility to share verified and authentic content only.

On the question of Pakistan being a republic, the society has a general critical view of values and norms deemed foundational for a republic; many consider them as foreign ideas suited to the secular liberal societies of West. According to Dr Khalid Masud, we tend to approach problems with a comparative view, keeping one's model as the ideal. The Western societies suffer from same issues when they try to westernize the world, believing their model to be perfect. The solution to this confusion lies in accepting these biases as limitation of human intellect and accepting relative realities instead of seeking objective ones. The inability to accept this limitation result in extremist views with one accepting one's realities as the only truth and rejecting all others as false.

Gender prejudices

Women make up almost half of total population (48.8 pc) and, hence, must have equal share in the planning and functioning of the state. Pakistan cannot achieve sustainable socio-economic, political, and cultural progress without empowerment, participation and representation of women in all walks of life. Yet there is a serious level of discrimination against women in the country. In addition to cultural barriers to their freedoms, women encounter serious problems such as honour killing, acid throwing, harassment, sexual assaults, domestic violence and so on. Equal economic opportunities, political inclusion and decision-making participation are merely a dream for large chunk of women in Pakistan.

Due to the strong emphasis on intersectionality of the persecution of minorities in Pakistan, students' views about gender equality were gauged. The global and domestic feminist movement seem to have contributed to a shift in attitudes as over 90 pc of workshop attendees accepted that more women were needed in leadership role, about 91 pc were accepting of a female in their family working in a 9-5 job and almost 94 pc were accepting of female as their supervisor / manager.

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Would you accept a female as your supervisor / manager in your office?

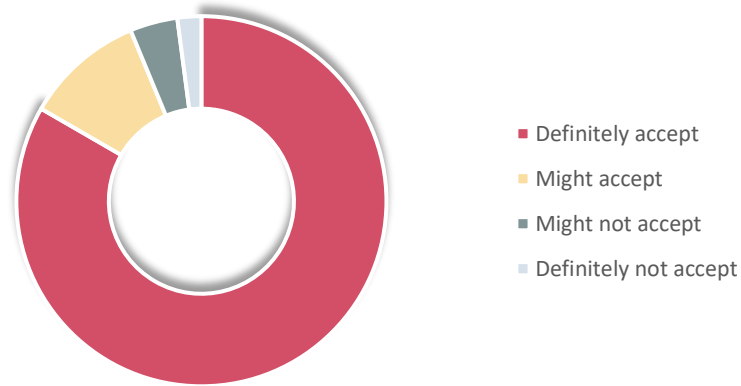


Figure 5: Would you accept a female as your supervisor / manager in your office?

The overall attitude towards transgenders among students was also encouraging with over 91 pc accepting transgenders as equal citizens of Pakistan and close to 95 pc accepting them as their neighbor. However, on question of informing others if a transgender is born in a family, there is a clear divide as close to 30 pc showed reluctance in social acceptance of a transgender being born in their family. Research shows that majority of families abandon the transgender children, forcing them to live impoverished lives and depriving them of basic facilities of life including education and employment.

Key findings & analysis

Would you inform others if a transgender is born in your family?

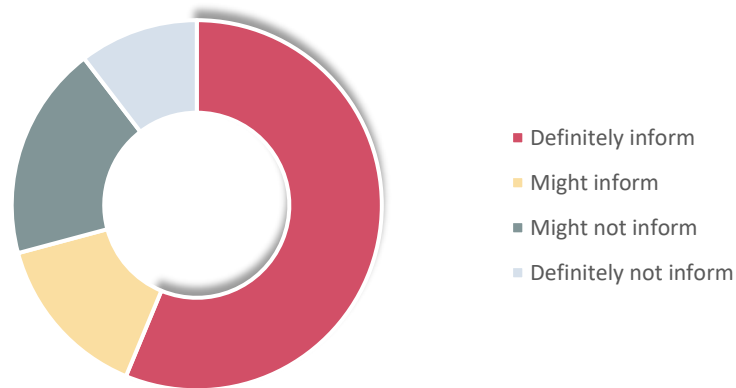


Figure 6: Would you inform others if a transgender is born in your family?

The discussants during the workshops pointed out the proverbs and phrases in Urdu that symbolize gender stereotyping. One such phrase is *“larkiyān parayā dhan hutī hain”* [Daughters are wealth belonging to others] which declare daughters as non-members of the family who must be wed to their real owners. Such a phrase not only necessitates marriage for a girl to have her real family but also objectifies her as a commodity. The students agreed that such phrases are commonly used in society but majority of them lacked an understanding of their true meaning. Upon inquiring their views about such sayings, majority disagreed with the statements.

However, a shift from the claimed belief on gender quality could be observed when specific question on women rights were posed

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to the participants. Almost 40 pc of respondents to structured interviewed agreed in gender division of labor and supported the idea of women's prime responsibility as home makers or housewives. There was an overwhelming majority accepting violence against women as a serious crime in the country, but most suffered from the issue of victim blaming as close to half believed that victims of rape crimes were also responsible.

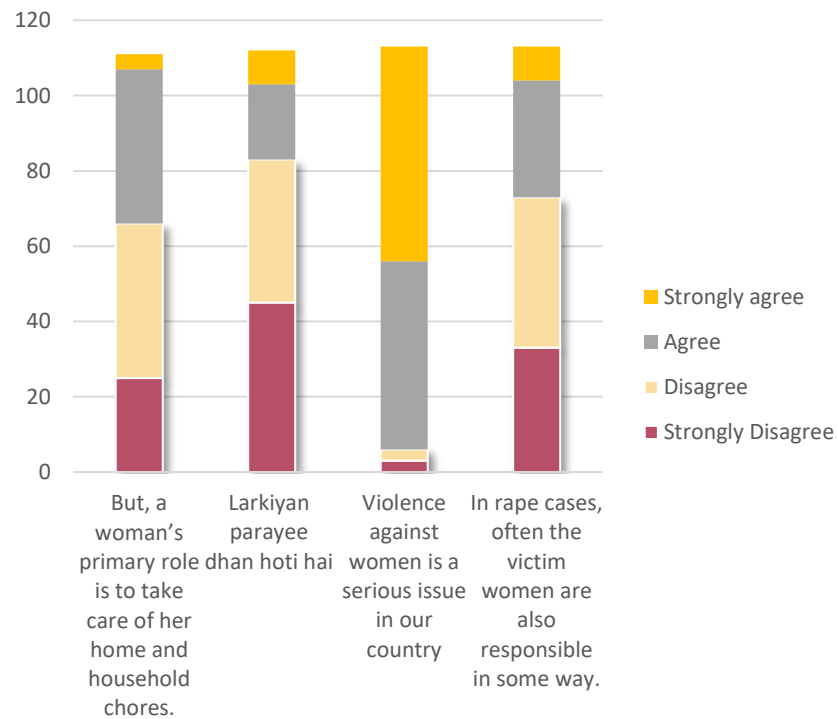


Figure 7: Perception of Gender Roles

Key findings & analysis

Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences in the views of male and female respondents, indicating that Pakistani women tend to accept social views even if these are against their gender. Experts view it as a lack of gender consciousness among women for they could not relate the issue with their gender identity.

Identity clash and obliviousness

With the rise of nation-state as the main unit of global political system, citizenship became the main legal identity of individuals in the post-Westphalian world. Yet the ethnic, linguistic, and faith-based identities remain intact. In countries where a consensus could not be achieved on the primary national identity, this competition among identity groups often results in violent conflicts. Unable to establish a conciliatory relationship between multiple identities, the members of such societies face an identity crisis. Pakistan is one such example. Hence, it should not be surprising that the youth exhibited some confusion and obliviousness over their primary identity. During a workshop, Dr. Lubna Zaheer engaged students in a discussion on what their prime identity was. While all started with claims of Pakistani being their identity, they could not answer what being a Pakistani meant to them and ended up accepting that they are confused over what their true identity was.

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In the survey, 69pc responded that they consider citizenship to be their prime identity. But still almost 30pc chose other identities. Moreover, during a workshop when Amir Rana inquired what citizenship identity entails, many equated it with religion being their national identity and were confused as to how to separate the two.

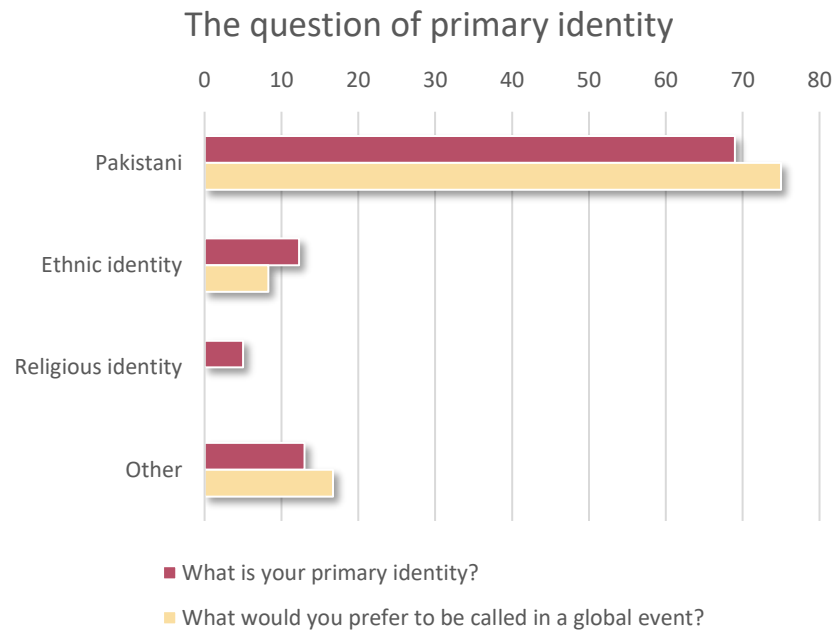


Figure 8: The question of primary identity

The state since its foundation has tried to impose a singular national identity based on religion and treated cultural and ethnic identities as threats to its security. The country experimented with different political models, trying to fit in modern institutions in the pre-

Key findings & analysis

modern religious structure. The problem of ethnic and religious minorities is overlooked in this effort by state to homogenize the society. Khursheed Nadeem identified the irony in the Pakistani concept of national identity for the state defines it and nation just adopts it. He held that this approach is unnatural because it takes away the human liberty to make choices, to choose right from wrong, to make mistakes and learn from them. He held that the modern democratic concept of state is to facilitate humans in making their own choices and to accommodate their differences of opinion. Dr Khalid furthered this thought explaining while all religions grant “autonomy of self,” when states adopt one religion as a state ideology, as in the case of Pakistan, it takes control over the religious interpretation, presenting religion as a hegemonic force.

A student raised objection to these views, believing that Islam was the only binding factor in the Pakistani society with diverse ethnicities and languages. She inquired what would constitute the Pakistani nationalism if not Islam. Khrusheed Nadeem explained that the concept of nationalism is seeing a decline in the post-modern world as it tried to merge state with nation. He gave example of the separation of East Pakistan to support his argument: despite active involvement of Bengalis in Muslim nationhood movement that led to the creation of Pakistan, they gave up on this ideology as ground realities changed. He held that the current

concept of state is based on social contract where the function of state is not to unite but to serve. In this new concept of state, social peace and harmony are based on the ability of the state to protect the rights of citizens in accordance with the constitution. If a state fails in serving its citizens, they will eventually revolt. He gave reference to a study on Pakistan Tahaffuz Movement, where a vast majority complained of being humiliated by the authorities that were supposed to facilitate them.

Since the concept of citizenship identity is rooted firmly in the legal contractual relationship between the state and the individuals, a sense of belonging can only be achieved through knowledge of the nature of contracts and its basic tenants. Upon several instances, the young students acknowledged their poor understanding of this contractual relationship. When asked if they had read the constitution, only a few could reply in affirmative.

Majority also reported to have never read the Human Rights Charter or other international legal instruments on human rights. With state prioritizing religious education over civic education, one can find chapters on religion even in non-religious courses like science and mathematics but literally nothing on constitutional rights and obligations. Expectedly, majority of the students surveyed agreed that their knowledge of fundamental freedoms

Key findings & analysis

granted through constitutions were very limited, and 11 pc said they had no knowledge of these constitutional freedoms.

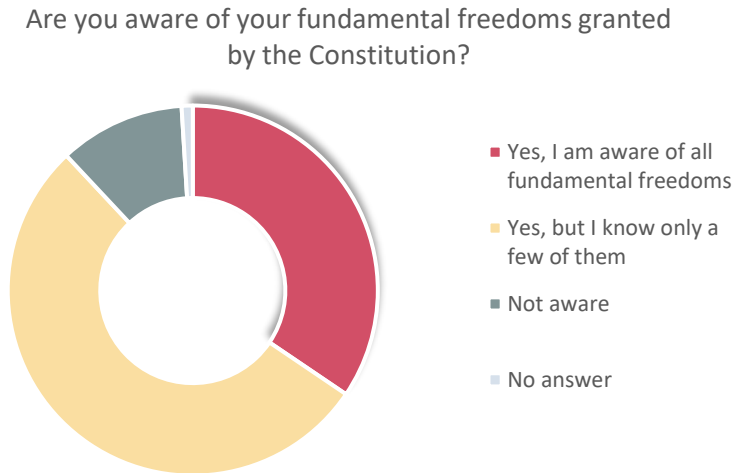


Figure 9: Are you aware of your fundamental freedoms granted by the Constitution?

Knowledge deficit and lack of civic education

The observations of the students' attitudes and behaviors showed that despite learning in higher education institution, most of them could not grasp basic concepts and were unable to answer simple questions raised by the scholars. This level of knowledge deficit shows serious inadequacies and issues in the education system of Pakistan.

The Constitution of Pakistan mandates state to provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 5-16 years

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and enhance adult literacy. Yet, the budget allocated for education is never enough to meet the targeted goal of Education for All. In addition to the problems of inequality of access and opportunity, the system could not even serve the ones fortunate enough to get admitted in schools, colleges, and universities. The curriculum is not only outdated, it is full of factual inaccuracies, social and political prejudices, and poor representation. Students from minority communities complained during the workshop that there was not enough content on religious beliefs of Hinduism or Christianity in the textbooks while Islamiyat was mandatory.

Have you ever read about a religion or faith other than yours?

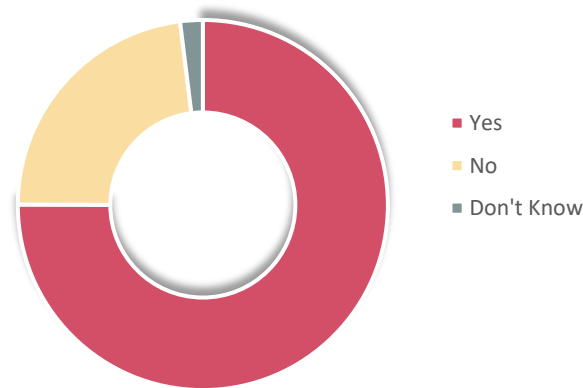


Figure 10: Have you ever read about a religion or faith other than yours?

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Consequently, it was a bit surprising that majority of students claimed to have read about religions other than theirs. However, since almost 30 pc claimed to have used internet and other 17 pc mentioned religious scholars as the main source to gain knowledge about other faiths it looked more like self-learning. Owing to the absence of adequate content on non-Muslims in our formal education curricula, many students were not aware of the contribution of non-Muslims in creation, defense, and development of Pakistan, with over 10 pc believing they made no contributions.

Do you think non-Muslims played any role in the creation, defense and development of Pakistan?

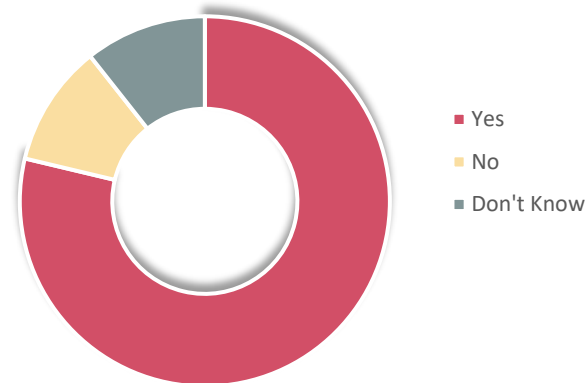


Figure 11: Do you think non-Muslims played any role in the creation, defense and development of Pakistan?

Poor understanding of social realities among youth was also reflected in the hopes shared by them. While it is good to have a

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positive outlook on life, believing in “everything is good” can reflect defective thinking and can lead to despair when those hopes are not met. A good majority had positive view of the education system in Pakistan, which conflicts with findings of independent analysis. Almost 50 pc claimed that their teachers had provided career counselling to them and close to 80 pc reported to have learned necessary intellectual skills. There was a wide gap between the belief of respondents on employment opportunities in Pakistan and the actual employment rate. While almost 40 pc believed that there were enough job opportunities in Pakistan, International Labor Organization estimates the unemployment rate has risen from 0.8 in 2011 to 4.3 in 2021.⁴ Similarly, while education falls in the least funded area of our budget, over half of the students believed that education was a priority for the government. Some 33 pc believed that faith-based incidents of violence happened only rarely in Pakistan while a large majority of them reported to have witnessed faith-based violence at university campuses.

It was stressed during the workshop that technical knowledge alone cannot bring any notable change in civic behavior. Hence, it was recommended to add chapter on civic education in the curriculum to strengthen democratic values in the society. Regarding civic education, the prime document to study is the

⁴ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=PK>

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constitution. When experts inquired workshop attendees whether they have read constitution, majority replied in negative. Students also had limited knowledge of the legislative efforts to counter radicalization and extremism in the country. When inquired about Paigham-e-Pakistan – a joint declaration by religious scholars of Pakistan against armed insurgency and suicide bombing – majority held that they had no knowledge of it, and even among those who claimed to know what it was, close to 30 pc believed it as a message of peace from Prime Minister.

Have you ever heard of the Paigham-e-Pakistan?

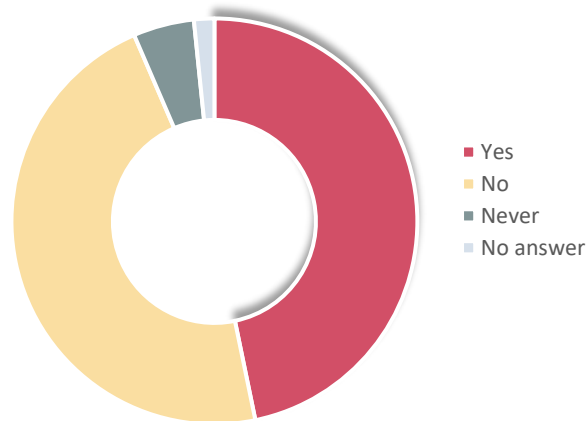


Figure 12: Have you ever heard of the Paigham-e-Pakistan?

Some students did exhibit critical understanding of topics under discussion. For instance, a student noted the contextual differences in the meaning of common sense for different individuals, another

used mathematical formula to answer an analytical question, and some others could correctly answer factual question raised by trainers. However, they were an exception rather a norm with majority either answering incorrectly or not responding at all to the questions.

Despite this display of intellectual deprivation, most students had heightened view of their intellectual capacity. Over 95 pc held that they had clarity about the profession they wanted to join and close to 90 pc claimed to have the necessary skills to make a respectable career. While critical thinking was lacking in most students, about 78 pc believed that they had acquired the skills to think critically. Only 3 students could see lack of critical skills in them. This poses a serious issue as without self-criticism and realization of their limitations, it is hard to encourage the youth to improve their intellectual potential.

4

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

VARIANCE IN YOUTHS' VIEWS ACROSS PROVINCES

Pakistan is a culturally diverse country. With over 70-80 languages spoken and some 10-12 religions practiced, a rainbow of cultural and religious traditions stretches across Pakistan. While majority of Pakistani Hindus live in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is home to most Sikh families and Punjab and Islamabad have the largest share of Christian population. In addition to these cultural and faith-based differences, the federal units differ in their relationship with central government. Punjab, the most populous province, enjoys extensive political power while smaller provinces demand more equitable share in resources. This has led to a rise of ethnic and linguistic movements in these provinces, which the state view as a threat to its authority.

Given this contextual diversity, it is expected that the youth belonging to different provincial units in Pakistan would be different in their political views and perception of the religious diversity, gender role, fundamental rights, and other socio-political issues. During the study, data was collected from university students in four provinces through surveys, interviews,

and observation. This section provides a comparative analysis of their responses, examining the similarities and differences in the views and knowledge of Pakistani youth belonging to different geographical areas.

4.1 Views before the workshops

For the baseline measurement of the views and knowledge of Pakistani youth on state, politics, religion and society, all workshop attendees were given a survey questionnaire to fill. A total of 618 filled in the questionnaire; 250 were from Punjab, 130 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 103 from Balochistan, 98 from Sindh, and 37 from Islamabad.

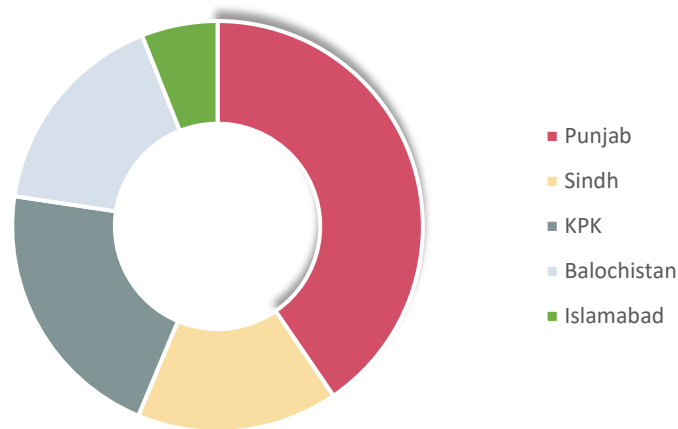


Figure 13: Province-wise respondents

Awareness and perspectives of religious diversity

While majority of students across all provinces reported to have read about religions other than theirs, there was a divide among them on the sources of their knowledge. More than 70pc participants from all four provinces and Federal Capital Territory acknowledged to have read about other religions and faiths of which majority had reportedly attained information about other faiths mainly from books (34.1pc) and internet (31.2pc). Comparative analysis shows that the use of book for reading about other faiths is not so prevalent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where participants had greater inclination towards Internet. Interestingly, significant number of attendees from Islamabad (27.0pc) claimed to have attained knowledge about other beliefs from religious scholars.

What is the main source of your knowledge about other religions or faiths?

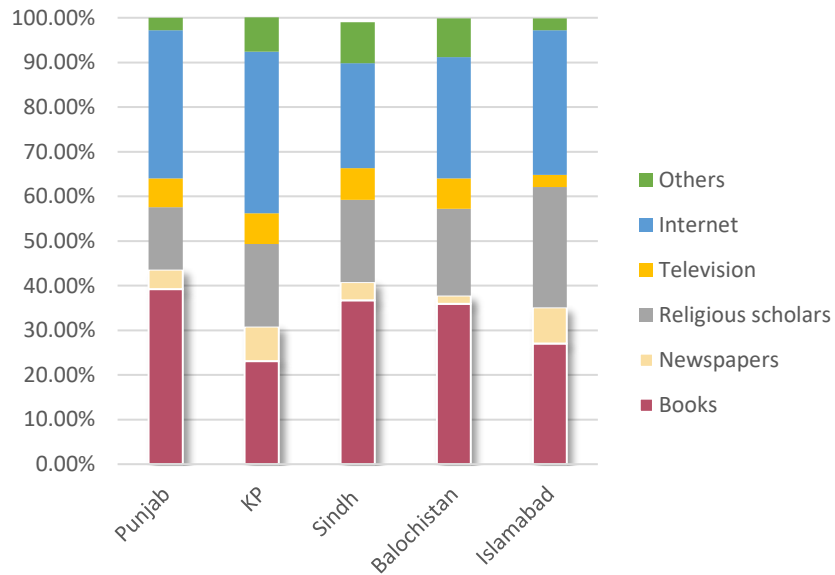


Figure 14: What is the main source of your knowledge about other religions or faiths?

In order to assess participants' perspective on the status and rights of minorities, they were asked about equal status of religious minorities. While significant number of workshop attendees (86.6pc) agreed that state should provide equal rights to all citizens irrespective of religion, the ratio of participants who disagreed with the equal citizenship rights to all individuals was relatively higher in Punjab (15.6pc) and Balochistan (12.6) than other provinces.

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Do you think people of all religions and faiths are equal citizens of Pakistan?

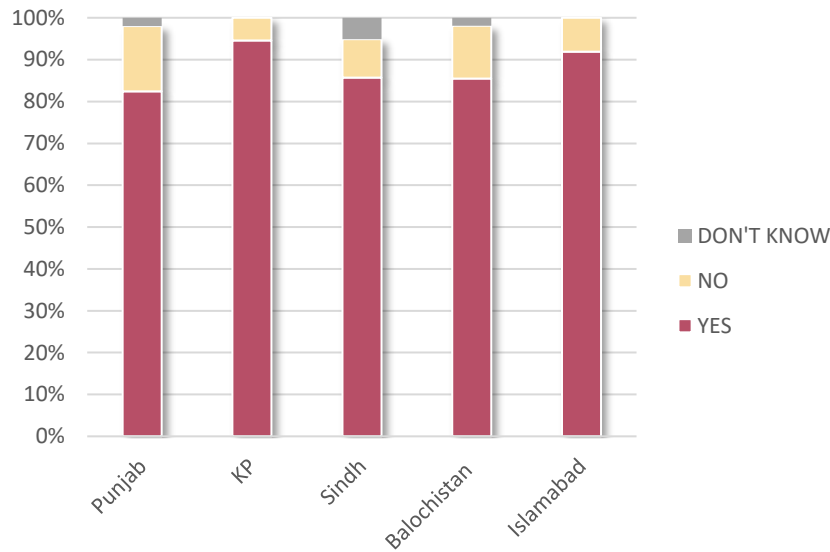


Figure 15: Do you think people of all religions and faiths are equal citizens of Pakistan?

It is also promising to note that a considerable number of participants in all provinces agreed about major similarities among all religions. This perception can help create enabling environment for interfaith dialogue and discussion among youth. As media report incidents of faith-based violence and persecution on almost daily basis, it should not be surprising that majority of participants encountered such incidents on university campuses. Around 41.6 pc of university students across Pakistan claimed to be the observer

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of violence on the basis of faith and the situation seems to be similar in all provinces.

Have you ever witnessed incidents of religious discrimination at university campus or in society?

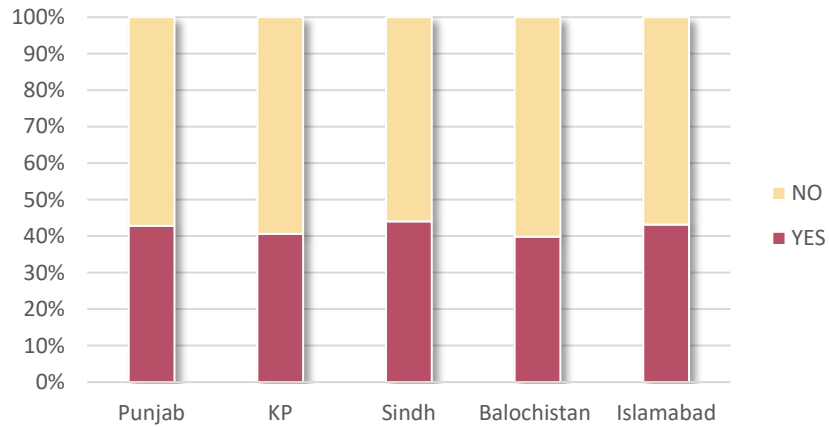


Figure 16: Have you ever witnessed incidents of religious discrimination at university campus or in society?

Citizenship identity and political awareness

Identity is a matter of choice and it could be different in different contexts. It was pleasing to note that over 69pc of all workshop attendees preferred their citizenship or nationality as their primary identity in line with the modern concept of national identity. However, the overall percentage of participants choosing citizenship identity is notably higher in the capital city as compared to provincial units. Also, the percentage is slightly lower in Punjab (65pc) and Balochistan (64pc), as majority of those choosing religious identities as their primary identity belonged to Punjab and Balochistan.

What do you think is your primary identity?

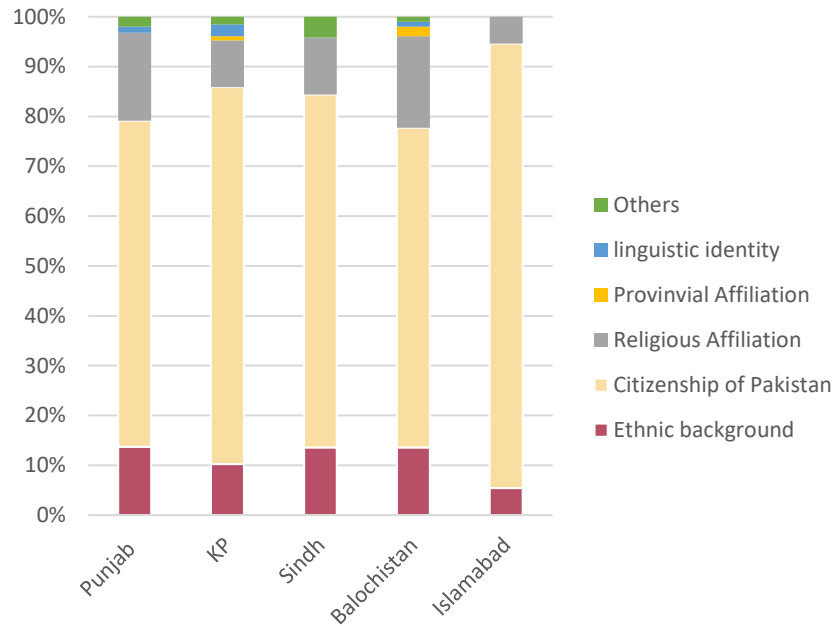


Figure 17: What do you think is your primary identity?

Taken together the students showed clear signs of poor understanding of the minority issues and fundamental rights. Interestingly, the situation was relatively better in provinces considered “politically backward” i.e., Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Many scholars and analysts have indicated a causal relationship between curricula and religious radicalization in Pakistan. Yet, majority of students seemed to disagree with this

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view with over 60 pc of participants in all provinces, except Balochistan, believing in the positive impact of curriculums on diversity. However, a significant number of students in Balochistan (42.7pc) were sceptical of the positive impact of curricula on religious diversity and inclusion.

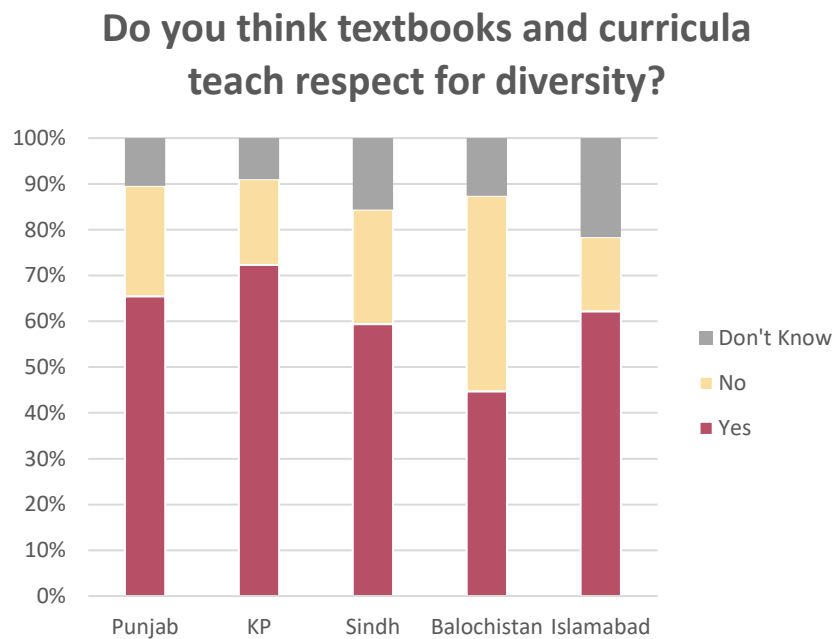


Figure 18: Do you think textbooks and curricula teach respect for diversity?

Similarly, full awareness of constitutional rights was reported only by a minority of the students. More than 60 pc of the participants from Sindh and Balochistan reported to have only slight knowledge of the constitutional rights, whereas 21.6pc students of Islamabad were completely unacquainted with the constitutional rights. In

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addition to it, when the question related to the contribution of minorities in the creation of Pakistan was asked, while majority of the participants were aware of their contributions, close to 13 pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 12 pc in Balochistan believed that non-Muslims made no contribution in the creation and development of Pakistan.

Majority of the students were also unaware of Paigham-e-Pakistan, in all provinces. While 62 pc of participants from Islamabad, 55 pc in Punjab and 52 pc in Sindh claimed to be aware of it, only an insignificant number of students truly had the knowledge about it. Overall, only 18pc defined Paigham-e-Pakistan correctly.

Comparative analysis

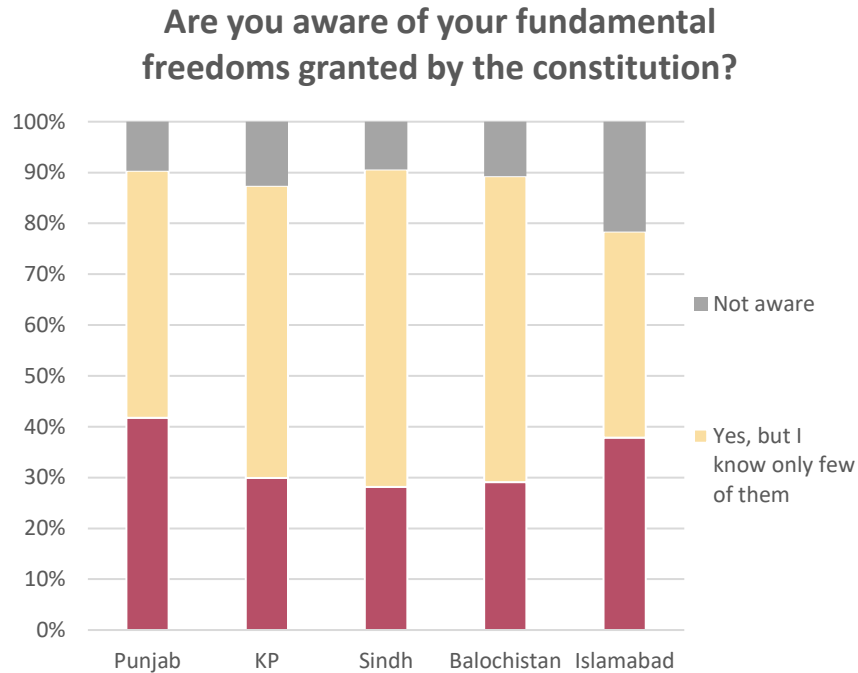


Figure 19: Are you aware of your fundamental freedoms granted by the constitution?

Acceptance of gender rights

Questions were also centered on the rights and roles of women and transgenders. Students were asked about their acceptance of women leadership in all fields of life. A substantial number of the participants, irrespective of their provincial affiliation, agreed that Pakistan needed more women in leadership roles. In contrast to a commonly held belief that the tribal Baloch society opposes women emancipation, over 96pc of the students of Balochistan were in favor of women as leaders. Likewise, students in all provinces were

of the view that transgender people must be considered as equal citizens.

Expectations from workshop and career counselling

Great majority of the respondents (91.7pc) said they attended the workshops to gain new knowledge across all provinces. Additionally, more than 90pc of the students from all provinces were optimistic about the impact of workshop on their future. Gladly, the feedback indicates that they were aware of their career pathways. Punjab had the highest number of students (8.0pc) who were unsure about their future. Unfortunately, though career counselling is an essential prerequisite for better career choices, yet a substantial number of students (57.4pc) had never attended career counselling before. The percentage was highest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 74pc of the students had never received counselling for choosing career.

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Have you attended career counselling before?

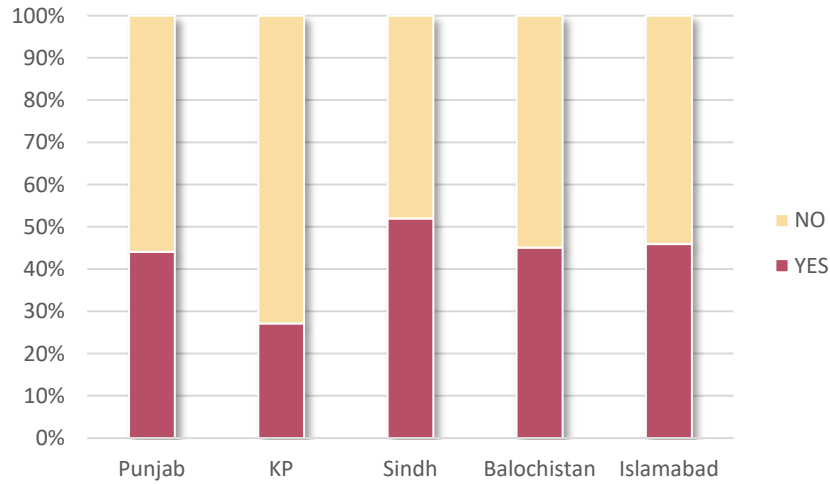


Figure 20: Have you attended career counselling before?

4.2 Analysis of interviews

During the training workshops, some active students were selected from the pool of workshop participants for a detailed qualitative and quantitative interview. Of total 113 interview responses, 48 were from Punjab, 20 from Sindh, 25 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 16 from Balochistan and 4 from Sindh.

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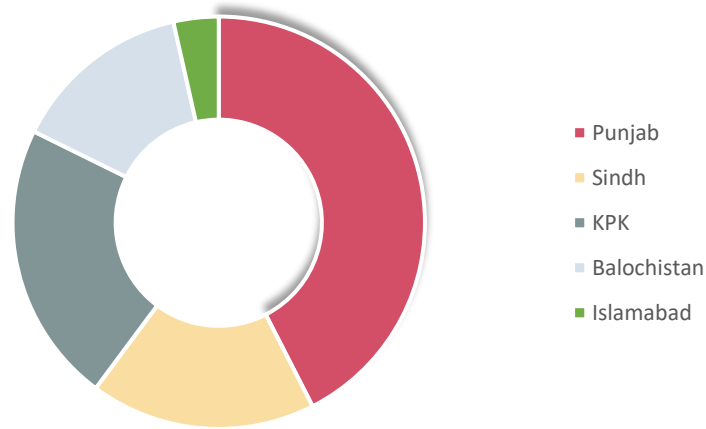


Figure 21: Province-wise responses

Structure and system in Pakistan

Overall, the educated youth appear to hold an optimistic view of Pakistan, reflecting what may be referred to as patriotism. However, province-wise analysis shows that positive perception of the system is far lower among Khyber Pakhtunkhwa students. In Sindh, 95pc students were hopeful of their future in Pakistan, followed by Balochistan and Punjab where percentage was close to 60, while only 44 pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa shared that hope. While the percentage of students hopeful about their future was also very low for Islamabad (25pc), most shared that they were hopeful to some extent, and none reported to have lost hope.

Comparative analysis

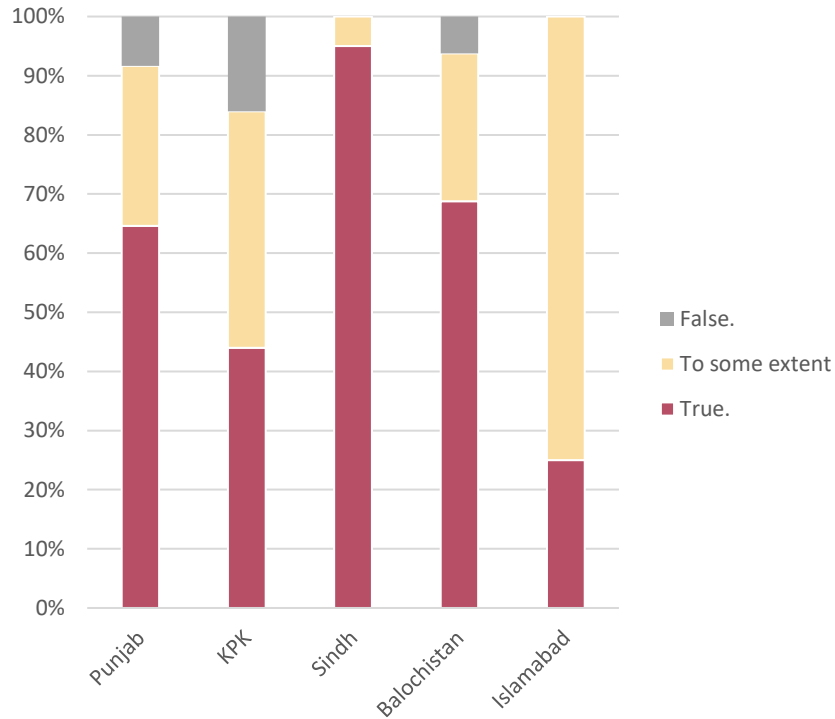


Figure 22:: Perceptions about merit

The percentage of students believing that merit is not valued in society was also highest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (40pc) followed by Balochistan (31pc). However, majority of students (65pc) in Balochistan believed the society gives opportunity to those who work hard, while only 24 pc of students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa thought so. Echoing same thought, while 93 pc students in Balochistan and 85 pc students in Sindh thought a person belonging to low socioeconomic class could make a respectable career through hard work, only 68 pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa shared this

optimism about equal access to career opportunities in Pakistan. Likewise, the percentage of students believing there are enough career opportunities in Pakistan was lowest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (20pc).

University environment and education quality

There were serious contradictions in the views of students regarding quality of guidance and help they receive from universities. This contradiction was sharper province wise. While less than 30pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan reported that their teachers provided career guidance, above 50pc in Sindh and Punjab reported this. But when it comes to receiving career-making skills from university, the difference in views were minimal with close to one third of students in all provinces claiming that the education system had equipped them with the required skill sets. Majority of student irrespective of their provincial affiliation claimed to have clarity of the profession to join and to have learned the skills to think critically about issues.

However, analysis shows that the positive views expressed by students do not adequately reconcile with ground realities. For instance, more than half students in all provinces reported that education was a priority of the government. As discussed in previous section, such views show lack of knowledge about budget

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allocation to education in all provinces. Even after the 18th amendment that devolved the subject of education to provinces, the higher education commission continues working under federal government, dictating policies and practices to the universities deemed to be independent bodies. The government has not yet taken any effective action to implement a policy that liberalize the education system.

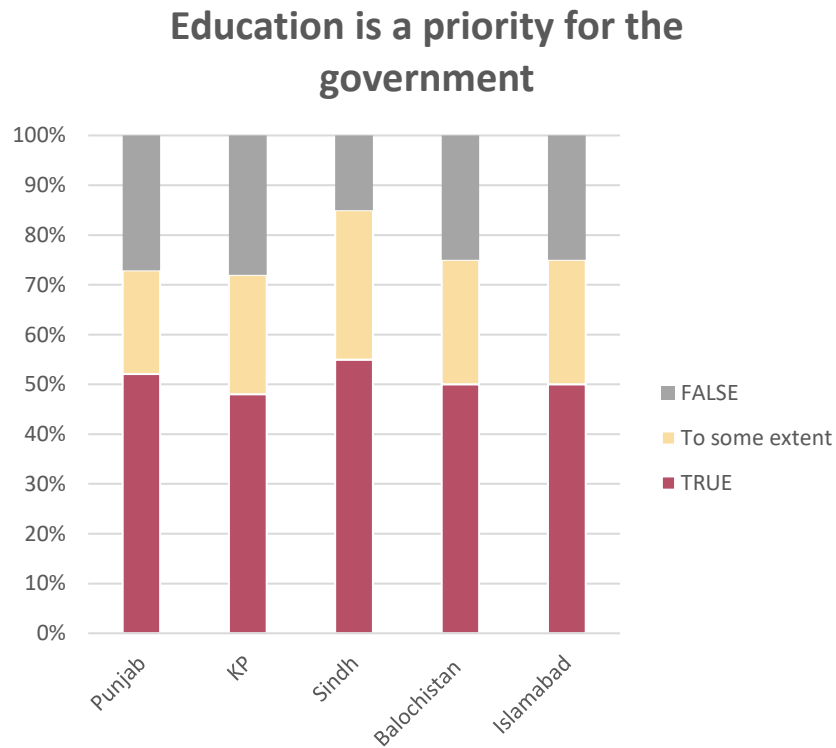


Figure 23: Education is a priority for the government

Students reporting encouragement of free expression in university classroom was highest in Punjab and Islamabad; only 18 pc in Balochistan reported to have freedom to express themselves in university classroom. This could be the result of stringent regulation of speech in Balochistan in the context of the separatist insurgencies. Baloch students were also more critical of the education system, with majority claiming that the education only slightly encourages students to be law-abiding.

In contrast, students reporting that the education system taught respect for all religions was highest in Sindh (60pc), followed by Balochistan (50pc). More than 30 pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa feel that the education system did not teach respect for diversity while 75 pc in Islamabad thought so. The views of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad students were more in line with studies on lack of inclusivity in educational curricula.

Religious and linguistic diversity

Irrespective of provincial differences, the students overwhelmingly recognized the cultural diversity in Pakistan, but on the question of equality of rights of all faith groups, some differences along provincial lines surfaced. Students in Punjab showed least acceptance to treating all faith groups as equal citizens of Pakistan whereas the acceptance was highest among the Khyber

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Pakhtunkhwa students. Similarly, while only 56 pc students in Punjab strongly agreed that every citizen should have equal access to opportunities, irrespective of faith, close to 70 pc of students in Sindh and 64 pc of students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa thought so. The different was more prominent on the question of whether people of all faiths should be able to hold high public offices. Less than 40 pc in Punjab strongly agreed to this, but over 64 pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 45 pc in Sindh supported this view.

Do you think non-Muslims have contributed to the creation and development of Paksitan?

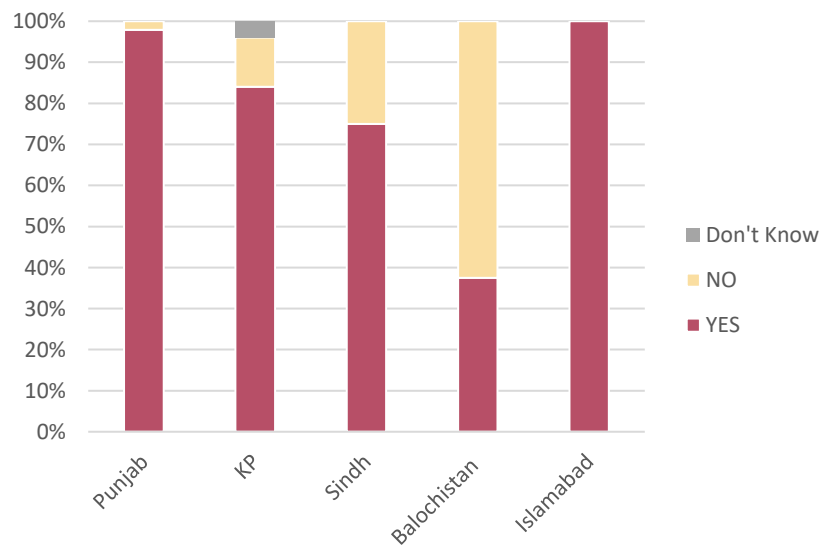


Figure 24: Do you think non-Muslims have contributed to the creation and development of Pakistan?

Knowledge about the contribution of non-Muslims to the creation and development of Pakistan was lowest in Balochistan where 37 pc were unaware of the services of non-Muslims in Pakistan. The percentage was much higher in Punjab (2pc) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (12pc), probably owing to the presence of religious minorities in these areas. More importantly, while 90 pc of students in other provinces wanted to read about other religions, the figure in Balochistan was only 75 pc.

However, 25pc students in Sindh - home to largest Hindu population in Pakistan - also failed to recognize the contribution of non-Muslims in Pakistan. The non-Muslim population in Karachi played key roles in strengthening the economy of Pakistan. This high percentage of students claiming that non-Muslims had no contribution to the creation and development of Pakistan could be a sign of growing religious radicalization in the province which was once known for its interfaith harmony. However, irrespective of province, there is a prevalent view among students that faith-based persecution is a major issue in Pakistan.

Students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also showed higher level of acceptance for linguistic diversity in Pakistan. While about 64 pc of students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa strongly agreed that other languages are as important as national language, the percentage was much lower for other provinces: 25 pc in Islamabad, 30 pc in

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Sindh, 37 pc in Balochistan, and 41 pc in Punjab. However, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa students showed higher provincial biases with close to 32 pc strongly agreeing that backward provinces have limited understanding of national issues; in other provinces the percentage was below 20 pc.

Gender equality and rights

Almost all students agreed or strongly agreed with having more women leaders in every field of life. The percentage of student having strong agreement was higher in Sindh (70 pc) in comparison to that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (48pc), Punjab (44pc) and Islamabad (25pc). Notably only in Punjab, two students strongly disagreed with having women leaders in every field.

We should have more women leaders in every field

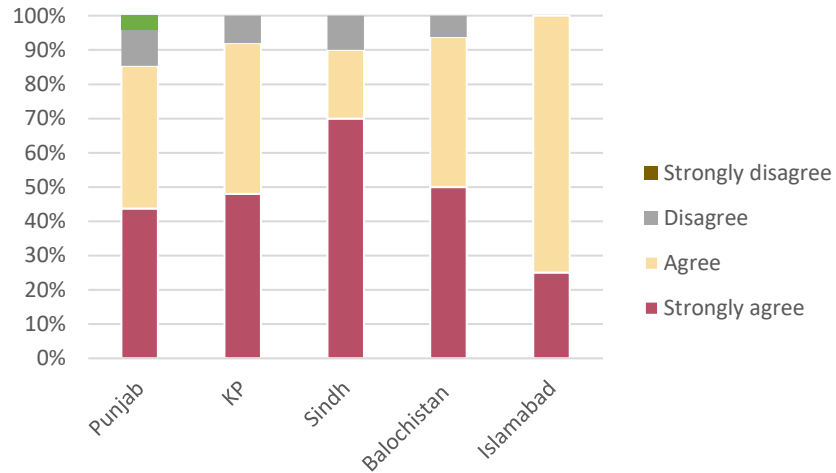


Figure 25: We should have more women leaders in every field

The gender-based conservatism in Punjab is also reflected in response to other questions. While 44 pc in Balochistan and 30 pc in Sindh did not believe that women’s primary role was home making, the percentage was only 17 pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. Similarly, while only 20 pc in Sindh believed that women lack decision making skills, close to 50 pc in Balochistan and over 35 pc in Punjab agreed with women naturally lacking decision making power.

On the issue of gender-based violence, majority of students in all provinces strongly agreed that violence against women is a serious

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issue, except Punjab where majority of students agreed (not strongly) with it. However, overall, the students were divided on issue of victim blaming with almost half agreeing that in cases of rape, women were also responsible in some way, except in Islamabad where all student disagreed with it. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa presents a little better situation where, the pc of students agreeing with victim blaming was relatively low. Students were also divided on whether women rights movements worked on foreign agenda or not. It is concerning that over 24 pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 31 pc in Balochistan, 35 pc in Sindh, 37 pc in Punjab believed that feminist movements worked on foreign agendas.

In rape cases, often the victim women are also responsible in some way

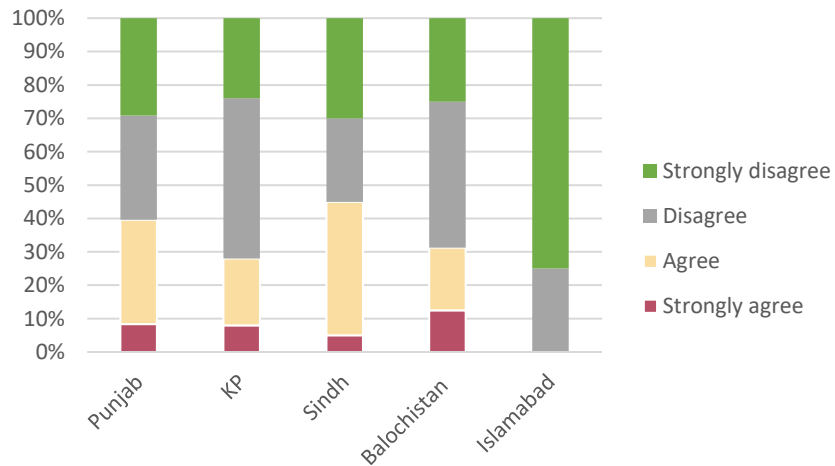


Figure 26: In rape cases, often the victim women are also responsible in some way

No differences were observed with regard to the equal rights of transgender in the country. Majority of students in all provinces agreed that transgender were equal citizens of Pakistan and they should have equal access to education and job opportunities.

Constitutional awareness and political knowledge

Majority of students in all provinces believed that the constitution does not discriminate among citizens on basis of faith. The percentage was much higher in Punjab (77pc) and Sindh (70pc) as compared to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (68pc) and Balochistan (56pc). This reflects constitutional illiteracy among the educated youth as majority in all provinces reported to have never read the constitution.

Some improvement in the knowledge of legal framework protecting minority and human rights was also observed. Compared to pre-workshop survey, most student interviewed claimed to have read Paigham-e-Pakistan and correctly described it. Majority also reported to have knowledge of fundamental freedoms in the constitution and were able to write two fundamental freedoms. Similarly, more than 80 pc in all provinces reported to have read Universal Declaration and close to 75 pc agreed that Pakistan has international obligations as a member of

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the UN. Most students in all provinces shared that they knew of the difficulties faced by minority citizens.

Students were inquired about the common political misperceptions in Pakistan to see how much they believed in myths. They were mostly divided on whether criticizing the state or state institutions was against national interests. The percentage of students strongly opposed to the criticism of state institutions was much higher in Punjab (17pc), Sindh (15pc) and Balochistan (12pc) than in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (4pc). Similarly, majority of students in Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan viewed India as eternal enemy of Pakistan, but only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa percentage of such students was below 30 pc. However, like other provinces, close to half students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa supported strengthening of defence against India. Students were divided on the role of foreign conspiracies in spreading religious extremism in Pakistan, with above 60 pc agreeing to it in all provinces, except Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where divide was 50-50.

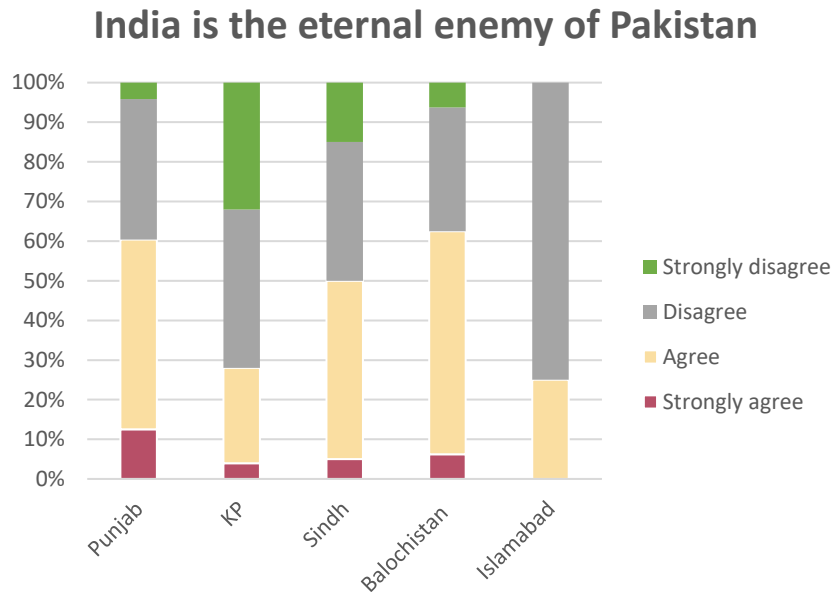


Figure 27: India is the eternal enemy of Pakistan

Democratic orientation

Democracy was the preferred form of government for majority of students in all provinces. The percentage of students choosing democracy was notably higher in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (80pc) while for other provinces the percentage was close to 60 pc. It is important to note that only students in Punjab and Islamabad chose dictatorship as a preferred form of government while almost 30 pc students in Sindh preferred a Shariah based model. Some students in Punjab also believed the military was responsible for determining national interests.

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However, contrary to their own preference, majority justified past dictatorial regimes. Less than half of students in all provinces, except Islamabad, rejected any justification for past dictatorial regime. However, one must note that 25pc students in Balochistan did not answer this question as the province has a history of strong resilience against dictatorial regimes. Probably, fear of retribution may have been a factor stopping students from openly expressing their views about dictatorships.

Do you think dictatorial regimes were justified in the past?

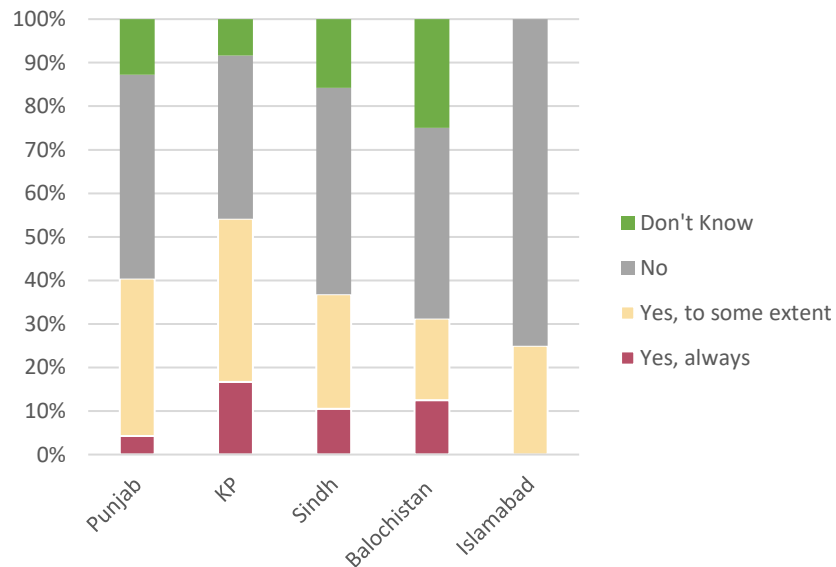


Figure 28: Do you think dictatorial regimes were justified in the past?

Despite positive views about democracy, students succumb to the prevalent narrative of politicians being corrupt and responsible for all problems in Pakistan. In all four provinces, the students held that resources in Pakistan were wasted due to corruption of leaders. Such views reflect lack of trust towards the people running the democratic system, and they may likely reduce the motivation for political participation among youth.

The power and use of media

Students were asked questions about their exposure to multiple modes of media and their preferable use of each medium. While during interviews, most students reported to read newspaper regularly, their showed understanding of current affairs.

Majority of students in Punjab and Sindh preferred to watch news on television while majority in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan preferred political talk shows. Use of television for watching entertainment programs and performing arts was seemingly low among youth, possibly due to the growing popularity of digital media among the youth. This is reflected in the choice of social media platforms. Facebook was the most popular social media platforms among youth, while Twitter was much less popular in Punjab and Sindh than in other provinces. Facebook is mostly used to connect with family and friends and for accessing

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entertainment content while Twitter is a popular modicum for more serious political discussions.

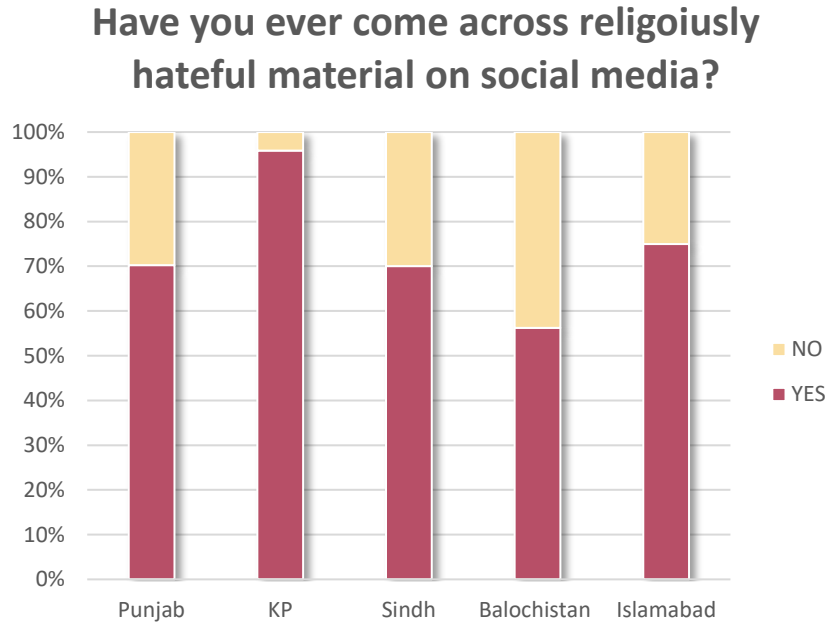


Figure 29: Have you ever come across religiously hateful material on social media?

While 92 pc of students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa held that they had come across religiously hateful material on social media, the percentage was below 70 for other provinces and for Balochistan only 56 pc claimed to come across such content. As students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa showed higher political knowledge and understanding of interfaith issues in other questions, this percentage is indicating higher sensitivity among Khyber Pakhtunkhwa students for recognizing such content. This is

particularly important considering that the percentage of students seeing religious debates on social media did not differ much in different provinces.

4.3 Views after the workshops

After the workshops, feedback about the participants' experience of the training was collected. Total 609 responded to the post-workshop survey, of which 251 were from Punjab, 137 were from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 93 from Sindh, 92 from Balochistan, and 35 from Islamabad.

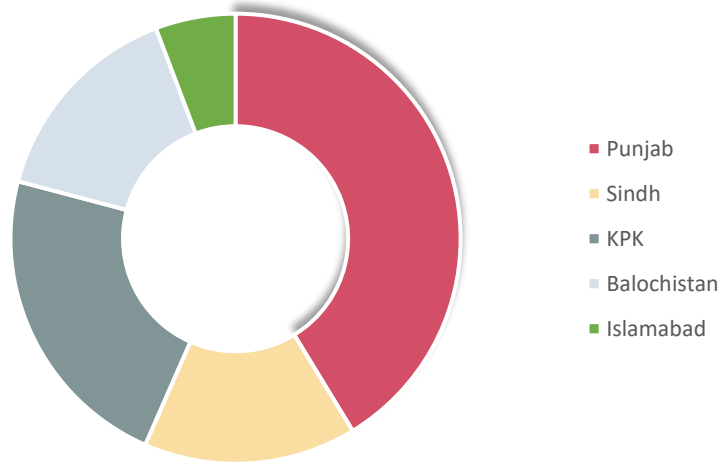


Figure 30:: Province-wise feedback on workshops

No significant regional/provincial variances were observed in post-workshop responses to survey questions. Majority in all

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provinces found the workshop useful for in enhancing their understanding of issues at hand. Most claimed to have gained new knowledge, and improved their understanding of constitutional rights, human rights, and social harmony.

Were you provided with the opportunity to participate in the interactive session during workshop?

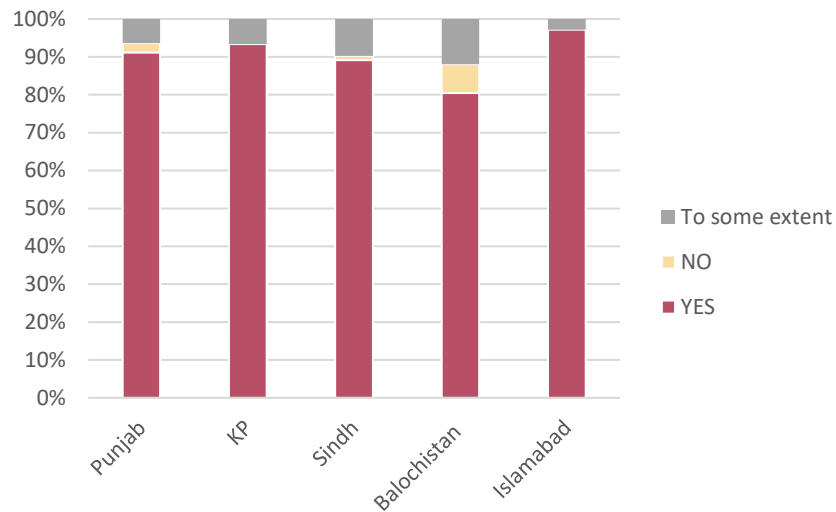


Figure 31: Were you provided with the opportunity to participate in the interactive session during workshop?

While majority agreed with the recommendation given in the training, the percentage of student not agreeing with the recommendation was slightly higher in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa than other provinces. Similarly, while majority reported satisfaction

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with the opportunity to participate in interactive session, some students in Balochistan wanted to participate more.

- The educational curricula need to be redesigned so that they develop and refine students' cognitive skills and teach them transferrable skills with practical value.
- Students may be sensitized about the significance of rule of law, constitutionalism, and democratic culture in society through textbooks. Likewise, sense of mutual citizenship based on fundamental rights and freedoms as provided in the constitution may be instilled through schooling.
- Any upcoming youth policy may focus on skills development. Due to lack of professional and saleable skills, the current generation of Pakistani youth is finding it highly challenging to make a place in the competitive job market.
- The parliament may initiate a debate on why faith-based nation building has not worked. Thus, a first step towards revisiting the long-run policy of using education for religious and political indoctrination may be taken.
- Key articles and clauses of the constitution relating to core duties and responsibilities of the state and rights and freedoms of the citizens may be included in the syllabi of educational institutions.

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- The parliament may debate the question of identity and come up with a consensual definition of national identity, reflective of Pakistan's socio-cultural diversity. This may help mitigate the prevalent mass confusion about identity.
- The educational curricula and syllabi may be made more inclusive by incorporation of lessons on all religions and faith systems native to this region. Cultural diversity may be promoted as Pakistan's national heritage. That may help give newer generations a broader context in which to see diversity in a positive light.
- Formal teaching of critical thinking and logic may be introduced at all levels of schooling. In the same way, these may be mandatory parts of the pedagogy. Both students and teachers may be trained in critical thinking and reasoning skills to improve their cognition.
- Institutions of higher learning can be made more innovative and productive through liberalization of the environment at campuses. Democratization of universities through academic freedom and greater space for free thinking can help produce critical minds that would be resistant to indoctrination, exploitation, as well as religious extremism.
- Teachers may be mandated to take refresher courses on scientific thinking and reasoning as well as human biases and prejudices. Well educated teachers can inculcate better and

Recommendations

positive thinking among youth and help improve their intellectual abilities.

- The government may help rejuvenate the youth by creating active platforms for debate and dialogue, opening public parks and playgrounds, promoting youth clubs, online communities, and campus publications like magazines etc.

Rational thinking through common sense

The objective of university education is beyond transferring knowledge and facts to students. It must build self-reflective skills and rational thinking among young students, so to make them open to new ideas through research and discussion.⁵ However, in Pakistani youth, emotionalism, intellectual stagnation, and rote learning is increasingly taking dominance, as reported in several studies on students in Pakistan.⁶ Owing to a close link between poor cognitive abilities and youth's inclination towards extremist ideologies, trainers in the PIPS workshop emphasized on improving cognitive and analytical skills of Pakistani youth as one key measure to build a progressive society.

⁵ David Moshman, Rationality as a goal of education, *Educational Psychology Review* Vol. 2, no. 4 (1990), pp. 335-364.

⁶ Pervez Hoodbhoy, "Pakistan's higher education system – What went wrong and how to fix it." *The Pakistan Development Review* 48, no. 4 (2009): pp. 581-594; Nadia Sajjad, "Causes and solutions to intellectual brain drain in Pakistan," *The Dialogue*, 6, no. 1 (2011), pp. 31-55; Muhammad Ayub Buzdar, Riaz ul Haq Tariq, & Akhtar Ali, "Combating terrorism on intellectual battlefields: Lenses on the potential on universities in Pakistan," *Higher Education Policy*, 32, pp. 441-460.

Dr. Syed Jaffar Ahmed, an educationist and historian, trained the participants on how to be critical and rational. He compared the mythical and traditional approach with the modern scientific approach, highlighting how the former often results in prejudices and conspiracies. While he recognized the contributions of myths in expanding linguistics and imaginative skills, he held that they can be harmful in times of crisis. Giving example of COVID-19 pandemic, he explained how unscientific approach resulted in people questioning the virus and vaccination, risking their lives and wellbeing. In comparison, the scientific approach uses empirical methods to test hypothetical knowledge, filtering only verifiable facts. This strict adherence to objectivity and empiricism has enabled several innovations and inventions, adding comforts to human. Unfortunately, while people have adopted the technology developed by scientific advancement, they question the methodology and strategy that work behind it. Consequently, " we have not made any remarkable contribution to scientific knowledge and technological advancement since 19th century,". Dr. Jaffar Said.

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Dr Jaffar Ahmed explaining process of scientific thinking and reasoning

Likewise, Journalist and writer, Yasir Peerzada, also held interactive sessions on rational thinking asking students such as whether they believe that COVID-19 was a conspiracy, or Malala Yousufzai was a western agent or Pakistan is a water-scarce country. Based on their responses, he shared facts and figures on each question to explain how majority answered incorrectly because they answered based on their gut feeling rather on factual information. He defined critical thinking as clear, accurate, précised, relevant, logical, consistent, complete, and fair. He clarified that critical thinking is different from professional education as the former concerns use of logic and reasoning in daily life decisions while latter involves technical and skill-based learning. Hence, there have been cases of doctors and engineers involving in terrorism. He, therefore, urged students to adopt

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rationality so to save themselves from extremism and radicalization.

Dr. Jaffar Ahmed explained that since all scientific theories are falsifiable, there is a fast-paced growth of knowledge in the world of science. Religion, in turn, requires submission and acceptance without questioning. The two are not contradictory but deals with different arenas of life and must not be mingled. It is unfortunate that the curriculum in Pakistan tries to indoctrinate religious ideas through formal education, making classrooms unfriendly to critical discussion and questioning. The students produced by such system fear challenging the norms and offering new solutions to the old problems.



Amir Rana, Dr Masud, and Khursheed Nadeem in discussion about identity and culture

Adding a new angle to this discussion between religion and science, Senior Judge Supreme Court, Dr Khalid Masud held that ideologies, including religious ideologies, bracket a phenomenon to simplify it. Hence, our natural ability to view things without bracketing should guide us in critically evaluating any ideology. One should only adopt an ideology with a flexible approach. Progressive societies allow people to think independently and express openly. In Pakistan, religion is used to negate this principle of human nature, forcing people to adopt religion without questioning.

Journalist Sabookh Syed also talked about this intellectual deprivation in youth. He held that inability of educated youth to question the ideas spoon-fed to them in schools and colleges increase their vulnerability to any radical ideas spread by extremist groups. He encouraged the young university students to realize their power and use it rationally. He believed that critical questioning skills equip youth to choose their political and religious leaders not based on charisma and catchy slogans but on their policies and practices.

While discussing rational approach with the workshop attendees, the experts recognized the inherent tendency in human to separate good from bad and make practical judgements in everyday matters, usually termed as common sense. The experts during training

sessions presented this common sense as a main remedy to the problem of emotionalism and confusion in youth. Amir Rana, founding director of PIPS and an expert on security issues, did an exclusive session on common sense to explain its connection with social harmony and peace. He presented common sense as the ability to view things in simpler fashion, allowing one to use natural instincts for making right judgements in everyday life. Mr. Amir believed that as humans grow up, their world views becomes complicated with addition of several social, cultural, religious, ideological, and economic prejudices. To make a rationale decision, one need to put aside these prejudices and use common sense to choose the right path.

Dr Khalid Masud spoke about on limitation and subjectivity of human knowledge. He said, "Our views and opinions are shaped in light of our lived experiences and if we only recognize this limitation of our knowledge, we can accept others' views and opinions as other versions of truth." Mr. Amir Rana seconded his views and explained that reactive response leads to wrong decision. He gave examples of numerous incidences of mob violence where irrational and emotional reaction to false news led to loss of a human life. Youth, easily get instigated to perform the heinous crime only to regret later. He encouraged youth to avoid irrational and reactive decision making and to follow their natural

instincts based on simple question of whether the act would have positive or negative consequences.

Challenging the prejudiced attitude towards minorities

Though protecting the rights of minorities poses a challenge throughout the world, in countries like Pakistan where national identity is founded on a single religion, communities not following the “national religion” are bound to face discrimination. With state trying to homogenize the society through a singular faith, the cultural and religious/sectarian diversity is treated as a threat.

As a key objective of the workshops was to create acceptance for diversity of religious views in Pakistani youth, the experts repeatedly address the stigmatization of minorities and challenged the prevalent view of them being “other.” Dr Saima Mubashara, an educationist from University of Sargoodha, talked at length on the issue of superiority complex in Muslim majority population seeing themselves as the owners of the land. Ironically, these non-Muslims have been living in this land for centuries, much before the creation of Pakistan. Several speakers talked about the contribution of non-Muslims in creation of Pakistan and in economic and political progress of the country to remove this perception among audience that Pakistan was founded for Muslims alone. Senior Journalist Sohail Sangi said the Objective Resolution was passed under a Hindu Minister of Law and asked if the Quaid could trust a non-

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Muslim to develop the constitution, why can't we trust them to run our country.



Students at Sargodha University listening to a session on career counseling.

Safdar Sial, senior research analyst at PIPS, highlighted the discrimination being faced by minorities in accessing educational and employment opportunities. He shared the problems minorities regularly face in Pakistan while applying for national identity card, the discrimination they face in public offices etc. A similar tabooed attitude is displayed in hiring employees from the religious minorities, keeping only menial jobs for them. Consequently, close to 80 pc of sanitary workers in Pakistan are Christians. The minorities in Pakistan face difficulties in practicing their religion openly and at peace because of attacks on their religious sites,

forced conversions of minor girls, blasphemy accusation and mob violence.

In addition to the social stigmatization and persecution, religious minorities are also persecuted through legal structures. With policies such as compulsory education of majority of faith in schools and colleges, ordinances such as Ehtaram-e-Ramzan, and clauses in the constitution such as barring non-Muslims from holding the offices of President or Prime Minister, the state is itself endorsing the exclusionary attitude towards non-Muslims. For many sitting in Islamabad, the voices coming from different corners of the country demanding their rights sound like a challenge to the writ of state. Commenting of this prevalent attitude among the power elite, a renowned writer and scholar, Wajahat Masood, held that the real threat to the national security comes not from the minorities but from paranoia of the majority. "No one is conspiring against us; our bigoted policies and oppressive practices ruin our global image."

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A student at workshop in Abbottabad

Due to the state's insistence on keeping Islam the primary national identity, it has to concede space to the radical right groups, bowing before their undemocratic demands like declaring Ahmadis as non-Muslims. Amir Rana stressed that faith-based nationalism has created an imbalanced social structure, granting Muslims an exclusive entitlement to state resources while raising question over the patriotism and loyalty of non-Muslims. More importantly, this policy has led to rise of religious radicalization and militarization in society. Despite bearing huge losses of lives and resources, the country still follows a policy of appeasement towards religious political groups and militant organizations, as reflected in recent efforts for negotiated settlement with Tahreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan

and Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. The former chief of National Counterterrorism Authority, Tariq Pervez, warned against this policy, outlining the social, financial, and diplomatic losses Pakistan suffered in recent years due to terrorism.

The world has already recognized the positive outcome of embracing social diversity as contributing towards economic prosperity and social development. In almost all workshops, scholars talked of the benefits of embracing diversity. Dr. Qibla Ayaz, the chairperson of Council of Islamic Ideology, held that diversity is the law of the nature and, hence, we see differences even within one ethnic or sectarian group. These differences are the outcome of different lived experiences and must be embraced to build a more comprehensive outlook. See them as puzzle pieces, all different, yet together they create a big picture. We similarly need different voices and views to find collective solution to real-life problems. Senior journalist and writer, Aslam Awan, noted that Pakistan's policymaking circles lacks the variety of voices to handle the social problems of the country. Not surprisingly, we are failing as a state with rising insecurity, growing distrust towards government, and mass movement of our intellectual assets to foreign countries.

Many experts focus on the constitutional rights of minorities and shed light on the rights granted by the constitution of Pakistan. Article 20-26 of the constitution were quoted by many speakers to explain the basic human rights and civil liberties guaranteed for all citizens of Pakistan, irrespective of their faith. Wajahat Masood specifically focused on freedom of faith granted by the constitution and held that all religious groups should be given equal opportunities to profess and practice their beliefs. There was also detailed discussion on the problem of implementation and how certain regular practices go against the spirit of constitution. The experts also mentioned the international legal principles and the Charter of Human Rights to enlighten audience on how the constitutional equality of citizens, irrespective of their beliefs, is a universal right.

However, experts also recognized the discriminatory clauses in the constitution that go against the principles of inalienability and indivisibility of human rights. Writer and political analyst from Sindh, Jami Chandio pointed out contradictions in the constitution where some articles recognize equality of citizenship, irrespective of religious beliefs but other articles add Islamic provisions in the law, alienating non-Muslim populations. Sohail Sangi, veteran journalist and educationist, held the democratic deficit in Pakistan to be responsible for growing deprivation in minorities because

when state itself violates constitution, it cannot fully secure the constitutional rights of its citizens, minorities included. Aslam Awan also acknowledged the existence of discriminatory laws and held that in a democratic society, such laws can be rectified through popular movements.

The troika of power, class, and religion

Experts acknowledge that with declining rule of law and abysmal human rights records, Pakistan is becoming a difficult country to live for almost all citizens. Despite claiming to be a republic, power corridors are open to only to a small class of elite while majority of population remains impoverished and powerless. In the class-driven society, those sitting at the top have full control over political and economic resources of the country. Explaining the deep rootedness of this conjugal relationship between political and economic elites, a senior journalist Sohail Sangi enlightened audience of the role of British colonizers in enforcing this structure. He held, "The British government awarded large acres of lands as well as administrative authority to those bowing their heads before the crown. In return, they helped the colonial regime in disempowering large majority of the population and silencing all nationalist voices demanding their rights of sovereignty." He asked students to do some research on the family background of people running the affairs of the state, telling them they would be

surprised to see how most of these political families are a gift of despotic policies of our colonial rulers. Having gained power through our orientalist rulers, the political elite in Pakistan tries to maintain a sense of superiority through cultural dominance and hegemonic control over market.

For religious minorities, given their much smaller representation and their non-adherence to state ideology, the effect of elitism is far more austere. Religious minorities in Pakistan are not just lesser in number, they also fall at lowermost strata of our class- and caste-based structure. Majority of Christians in Pakistan are descendants of low-caste Hindus who converted to Christianity during colonial period. Similarly, the Hindu elite living in Punjab mostly migrated to India after partition, leaving behind the poor and powerless low-caste Hindus in rural areas of Sindh. As textbooks are filled with denunciation of Indian caste system as a Hindu problem, we brush off any discussion on the caste-based discrimination in Pakistan, believing that there is no space for caste in a largely Muslim society. While low-caste Hindus and Christians in Pakistan face three-fold discrimination of caste, class, and religion, limited efforts for inter-faith harmony do not move beyond religion. In these workshops, PIPS made an intentional effort to extend discussion to other two layers of discrimination.

Journalist Sabookh Syed, who actively cover minority issues in Pakistan, affirmed the role of socioeconomic factors in regulating social behaviors towards religious minorities. He asked the audience why we feel proud sharing pictures of their interaction with non-Muslim foreigners but start using religious card to justify their non-participation in activities of local non-Muslims. He believed that problems of minorities should be addressed through an open-minded and critical approach, identifying the economic, cultural, and ideological barriers to their inclusion in the society. Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed, Vice Chancellor of University of Sargodha, confirmed the class-based division as reinforcing the faith-based discrimination in Pakistani society. He identified the historical legacy of caste system that runs deeper in our social structure of South Asia, keeping the political and social policy domains out of the reach of minorities.

While Pakistan adopted intertwining relationship of religion and economy from the colonial India, the Islamization of the country intensified the ties. Using Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to explain the "politics of common" in Pakistan, Asim Sajjad Akhtar wrote about the rise of ultra-religious middle class in the 1980s. He explained that with the Islamization of military and bureaucracy during Zia's dictatorial period, "the role of religion has become ever more important in conditioning economic, political and

cultural fields.”⁷ During the training, some experts like Sohail Sangi endorsed these views, sharing with the audience the strong connection between religious radicalization and social injustice. As state embraced the ultra-religious groups to wage a Jihad against Soviet Union in Afghanistan, they entered the power corridor and made partnership with the economic and political elite – a partnership that still remains intact and breed fanaticism in the country.

No one can explain these multiple layers of discrimination faced by religious minorities in Pakistan better than the minorities themselves. Hence, members of the minority communities were invited to share their experiences of living in Pakistan. Senator Krishna Kumari, a Hindu legislator, told the audience how her bitter experience of feudal system in Sindh led her to start a political movement against landlords. She shed light on the poor condition of Hindu minorities in her area, mainly because of the income equality and caste-based discrimination. She inspired the young students by telling how she could not have achieved this status without education. However, the journey was not easy in any way as she had to face multiple layers of stigmatization for being a religious minority, a member of socioeconomically deprived

⁷ Asim Sajjad Akhtar, *The Politics of Common Sense: State, Society and Culture in Pakistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 89.

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segment and a woman. It was only through her resilience and her family support that she could continue her education and is now able to represent her community in the Senate of Pakistan. Not everyone in her area is fortunate enough and many still struggle to get access to basic necessities of life like clean water, education, or justice.



Anmol Sheraz speaking about woman rights at event in Peshawar

Citizenship as the primary identity

The experts talked extensively on the citizenship identity in a republic that is necessary to give a sense of belonging to the individuals living in particular country. An authority on the subject of citizenship identity, Brian Turner in his classic work *Citizenship and Social Theory* described citizenship as a set of legal, economic, and cultural practice, highlighting that a citizen's loyalty towards state is intrinsically connected to legal and economic rights granted

by the state. Hence, citizenship identity is not founded on emotions but on objective legal relationship with the state.

Zafarullah Khan, an expert on constitutional rights, explained that the constitution forms the foundation document to connect state with the citizens. Constitutional awareness is a pre-requisite to get a sense of citizenship. He held that owing to a latent belief among our society that constitution is a legal document for students of law, we see an absence of civic sense among our people. Neither we understand the responsibilities of being a citizen of Pakistan nor people are aware of their rights. Being a strong proponent of constitutional liberalism, Amir Rana, the founding director of PIPS, encouraged the workshop attendees to recognize the significance of being a citizen of a state, highlighting the plights of stateless communities such as Burmese and Rohingyas. He also educated the youth on differences between being subject and citizens, explaining that latter is sovereign and enjoys certain rights over the governing state.

Experts in the workshops also talked about the reason for placing citizenship identity above other identities. Ethnic and religious identities can survive alongside the citizenship identity without creating a clash or confusion because the idea of citizenship is based on legal contract between state and an individual whereby state acknowledges the individual's freedom of culture and belief.

Hence, citizenship identity is a tool to maintain equality among individuals with cultural and religious differences. In case of Pakistan, the state's emphasis on Islam as a source of identity has led to cancellation of the equality of citizenship and delegitimization of alternative forms of identity rooted in ethnicity or linguistics. This state-devised competitive model has now recoiled as we witness a constant tug-of-war among the different forms of identities.

An excellent argument given by one student during the workshop was how he is supposed to be a Muslim first while his culture predates the coming of Islam in the subcontinent. The state could easily save its citizens from raising such question by keeping the culture and religious identity to the individual level. As explained by Khursheed Nadeem, an authority on religious studies, the state model we follow in Pakistan is not practically founded on the concept of social contract, explaining why there is no emphasis on constitutional education in our curricula. We are a security state where security is prioritized over welfare of citizens. Our leaders vow to "eat grass but make bombs." We celebrate people sacrificing their lives for "motherland." In such a state, a person demanding rights from the state and refusing to make sacrifices is viewed as an infidel.

Diversity

Over 90 pc of population in Pakistan professes Islam as its religion. The power aspirants, hence, actively exploit religious sentiments of the masses to serve their political and personal interests. Most militant organizations in Pakistan operate on religious lines, particularly targeting youth because the latter often lack knowledge of Islamic teachings that preach mutual respect for other religions and faiths. Therefore, several prominent religious scholars were invited in the series of workshops to share how Islam addresses the subject of religious diversity and non-Muslim citizens in Muslim-majority state.

Maulana Ahmed Yousaf of Jamia Banoria quoted several verses from Quran where Allah espouses to have intentionally kept the religious and social diversity of humans. Celebrated in Quran as a religion with no compulsion, Islam promotes a culture of dialogue and discussion. Maulana Yousuf held that Allah did not even punish Iblees and granted him freedom to astray humans from the righteous path. For humans, he chose to converse and dialogue, as is the method of the Quran itself where logic, facts, and arguments are used to convince readers. He described the hate speech and abusive language against minorities as negation of Allah's method. A student objected, asking how they will exercise the Amar Bil Maruf without preaching Islamic teachings. Maulana Yousuf

clarified that preaching requires two-way communication where active listening and understanding of opposing point of view must be proceeded before presenting sharing your views. Hence, while Islam encouraged preaching, it does not allow dictating and imposing one's views on others, even if your views are correct.

Khursheed Nadeem asserted that Islam accepts diversity. Quran explicitly mentions at least thrice that Allah, despite having power to create all humanity as one Ummah, deliberately allows humans to keep their differences of opinion intact. In fact, the very idea of Ghalba - of being dominant over other religious groups - is not coinciding well with the Quranic thought where in Sura Hashr it has been narrated that if one groups tries to dominate all others, Allah replaces it with a new group. He held that Islam treats different religious groups as members of the society and not as minorities.

A student inquired how we can claim that Islam protects minorities when in Islamic history, Prophet himself demolished idols placed inside Kabba. Dr Khalid answered that it was a symbolic act required in the pre-modern period of human history to declare victory. It was more of a political requirement rather a religious one. However, since we are currently living in different time, where the concepts of equality and inclusivity have been adopted, if we will demand freedom to demolish idols, we will have to give others

a similar freedom to demolish Islamic symbols where they are in power. We experienced this in the Spain where thousand mosques were demolished to announce Christian victory over Islam. This power-based model cannot function anymore.

Religion and culture

The foundational idea of Islamic reformist movements in our region was to purify Islamic practices from the effect of sub-continent culture. Such movements that gained notable following and popularity during colonial period emphasized on how “local traditions” have corrupted Islam. As Pakistan came into being, this traditionalist view gained momentum here with many religious political parties trying to create an “Islamic system” in the country free from the cultural innovation and rituals. However, during the workshop, the scholars emphasized on the inseparability of culture and religion and how one influences the other.

Dr Qibla Ayaz, the chairperson of Council of Islamic Ideology, held that the religion and culture tend to influence each other. Although religion is a transformative forced that originates in response to certain wrongs in a society, it cannot exist in vacuum and must embrace the cultural values of the region. Zubari Towali, an expert on cultural studies, explored this connection between religion and culture in the context of Pakistan. He talked about the Mehargarh

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and Gandharan civilization and their influence on our cultural practice. Through examples he explained how a number of religious rituals in Pakistan have resemblance with some ancient traditions. Scholar and human rights activist Haroon Sarab Dayal also shared his views on the civilizational history of Pakistan to explain that the region has hosted several religions, with each contributing to the rich culture of the subcontinent we see today.



Zubair Torwali talking about indigenous culture of mountainous regions of Pakistan in Swat.

The scholars presented the cultural diversity as a natural phenomenon that must be recognized and celebrated. Zubair Torwali, a community activist and educator, explained the geographical roots of the culture. He held that culture is a product of human contact with physical environment, consolidated through choices for food, fashion and rituals. With variation in the environmental and geographical conditions across the globe, we

see a variety of cultural traditions and sub-traditions. Extending this discussion on variability in cultural customs, the Dr Qibla emphasized the different adaptations within single culture with Pashtun living in Pakistan having certain different cultural tradition than Pashtuns living in Afghanistan. Same is true of all ethnic identities where culture subtly shift and merge with neighboring culture as we move from one area to other.

This fluidity of culture is not just along geographical lines, but culture tend to change with time as well. Dr Khalid Masud, a renowned scholar of political Islam, highlighted the transiency of cultural traditions over time. He explained, "Every new generation is an agent of change; the generational clash we observe regularly in our homes is a result of youth trying to change the values and traditions while the elders trying to preserve it." Our elders, hence, often connect our cultural traditions with religion to maintain the status quo, presenting religion as a force against the wave of change.

Through educating students about the important of cultural diversity, the speakers also laid emphasis on inter-cultural and inter-faith relationships. Students were asked to visit different areas of Pakistan, to befriend members of other faith groups and provinces and to read about the variety of religious and cultural beliefs and traditions of this region. Such cultural exposures are

important to end misperceptions about different ethnicities and religions, common among young Pakistanis.

Media as a tool for social harmony

One cannot cure a problem without diagnosing it. A major impediment to bringing peace and harmony in Pakistan is that we close our eyes to the religious bigotry and social injustice, insisting that minorities in Pakistan are living at peace. The role of media is crucial in drawing attention to issues the society try to overlook. Hence, journalists and media analysts who actively cover issues of minorities were invited in these workshops to share with the audience their observations and experiences. Journalist Aslam Awan talked of the gradually vanishing Jews and Parsi communities in Karachi, despite their notable contribution to the economic growth and industrialization of Pakistan in its early days.

The discussion on role of media entailed a critical analysis of how media portray minorities and what level and type of coverage they give to the non-Muslim Pakistani citizens. Almost all journalists agreed that mainstream media does not sufficiently cover the issue of minorities. Renowned journalist, Riaz Sohail, pointed out that only 1 per cent of Pakistani media is composed of non-Muslims. He attributed this low representation of minorities in media to cause negligence to minority issues, particularly Parsis, Jews, Bohris, Agha Khanis and other small minority groups. He also drew

attention to the gap between the coverage of minorities in print and electronic media, with former giving more space to such stories than the latter.

The shift from print to electronic media during the Musharraf period brought remarkable change in the nature of profession and its prime function. Once considered to be a sociopolitical institution meant to protect the public right of information, media became an industry to earn revenues. Journalists held that this commercialization has reduced the content diversity and issue-centric selection of stories. Journalists Aslam Awan and Gul-e-Nokhaiz Akhtar described the electronic media as an industry that works on demand supply system. Hence, the small percentage of religious minorities cannot be the target audience for the business tycoons running media houses.

The censoring of critical voices by state-run media regulation authorities makes it even more difficult to feature stories of forced conversion, mob attacks on religious sites of minorities or hate speech or discrimination faced by non-Muslims in Pakistan. Journalist held that state view such news as an attack on Islamic identity of the country and an effort to sabotage Pakistan's image in the world.

Despite the cut-throat commercialism and the suppression of freedom of expression, some journalists still believed in the power of media and urged journalists to use whatever limited space they have to perform their professional duties. Habib Akram, who produced several well-acclaimed TV plays during Zia rule, held that writers and journalists should learn to subtly deliver messages without being overcritical. He believed the owners alone cannot be blamed for the poor quality of content we are seeing on television as it reflects lack of professional excellence in writers and producers. The renowned journalist Wussattullah Khan also held society accountable for not raising enough voice against the curbs on freedom of expression. He held that we cannot blame state for not granting what we never demanded; we never take a firm stand for press freedom and other civil rights and just complain of the state condescension.

Youth engagement with social media is far higher than with print and electronic media. During the training workshops, Sabookh Syed, a well-known media person, inquired young attendees of their use and reliance of different modes of media. While almost all claimed to use social media, only a few said they watch news on Television or even fewer reported to read newspaper. Sabookh noted that the prime strength of social media is its two-way communication and empowerment of all users to exercise their freedom of speech. It is not a domain to be used by media

professionals only. Therefore, he urged the participants to use this power for good. Giving examples of several social media campaigns that successfully made or changed policies, he advised the trainees to raise their voice against discrimination of minorities.

Gender mainstreaming

With recognition of faith-based stigmatization and persecution as a sociological problem rooted in the power dynamics and class structure of society, one can realize the impact of religious radicalism on gender role. Just as powerful segments of society try to subjugate the religious and cultural minorities to maintain their control, they also hinder women from challenging the social values and norms. Hence, while discussing the impact of religious radicalism in Pakistani society, there was a frequent reference to misogyny, harassment, and gender-based violence. Experts held that there is a strong connection between faith- and gender-based persecution because both are principally a violation of equality of human rights.

Ranked the second lowest in gender equality, Pakistan follows a patriarchal social structure where men are deemed as the sole breadwinner. The gender norms prevalent in almost all society prohibit women from getting education, work outside home or work in the profession they like. The prevalent view among

Pakistanis is that women are weaker and less rationale and, hence, should be kept at home. Writer Wajahat Masud rejected the notion of female as weaker gender, highlighting the Pakistani women like Fatima Jinnah, Asma Jahangir, Nusrat and Benazir Bhutto and Kulsoom Nawaz who stood firm against tyrants of their time and led strong democratic movements, against all odds.

The experts also highlighted the absence of female voice in all discussion on deradicalization and peacebuilding. Anum Fatima, a researcher from PIPS, held that although women are almost 50pc of Pakistan's population, their presence in the policy and public domains is minimal. She stressed on the need to increase women presence in all domains and held that such a change requires change in the mindset of both male and female. Women leaders like Journalist Qatrina Hussain and legislators Shagufta Malik and Meena Kumari were also invited to share their struggles with the audience and to inspire them to stand firm for their rights.

Dr. Lubna Zaheer, an educationist from Punjab University, held the cultural conservatism to be responsible for these social barriers against women empowerment. She held that while no religion prohibits women from education or employment, people use religious arguments for not letting women continue their education or getting employment of their choice. Nevertheless, she also found flaw in the western concept of women empowerment for its

overemphasis on economic empowerment of women without considering the social, political, and familial dimensions. She said, “empowerment is a much broader concept; be it the national assembly, your workplace or your home, the ability to independently make decisions is what makes a person empowered and financial empowerment is a necessary but not the sufficient condition for it.”

Dr Lubna also highlighted the intersectionality of gender, class, and religion where women belonging to poor households or non-Muslim groups have to bear much higher level of discrimination and oppression. Her views coincide well with the observations of cases of forced conversions shared by Safdar Sial and Rumana Bashir. Rumana Bashir, a human rights activist, asked audience why majority of conversion cases are of minor females. She shared that in most cases the Nikah is performed after rape of the abducted girls and stressed for treating such cases as criminal offences. Even in cases where girls leave their houses intentionally, Safdar Sial added, they could not return to their families due to social pressure. Both agreed that gender adds an extra layer of social stigmatization in such cases, making them even more difficult to solve them.

7.1 Speakers' profiles

Ali Baba Taj

Ali Baba Taj is an Urdu and Persian poet and educationist based in Quetta. He has degree in Persian language and literature from the University of Balochistan. Ali Baba has written several articles in Urdu and Persian regarding poetry and literature in Pakistan. His literary works have also been published.

Amber Rahim Shamsi

Amber Rahim Shamsi is a multimedia journalist, who has worked in both national and international media for more than fifteen years. She has worked with BBC World, Arab News, Dawn News and Hum News as an anchorperson, producer, reporter and columnist. She is currently working with Samaa News as an anchorperson. She is the member of the non-profit organization "Coalition for Women in Journalism" and as a jury member for the first "Pakistan Data Journalism Awards."

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.

Anmol Sheraz

Anmol Sheraz is a journalist with an MPhil in media studies. Currently, she is associated with Voice of KP and writing for the Hilal magazine. She is an active voice on women and minority rights and has extensively worked for them. Previously, she served as communication officer with an international organization.

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,

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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.

Aslam Awan

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

Azaz Syed

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

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, extremism, and persecution of minorities. Currently, he is program manager at PIPS, Islamabad. Previously, Ahmed served in the Pakistan Civil Service for over eight years, serving in various capacities in Balochistan and Islamabad.

Dileep Doshi

Dileep Doshi is a lawyer, human rights activist and advocate of religious minorities. Dileep is a successful professional in the field of humanitarian, community development, research and rural development work. He has profound capacity of coordination, supervision, program implementation, field management, social mobilization, qualitative and quantitative data collection with national and international organizations.

Dr Ishtiaq Ahmed

Dr Ishtiaq Ahmad served as the Vice Chancellor of University of Sargodha, Punjab. He is a former Quaidi-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

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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.

Dr 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.

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.

Dr. Fazal Ur Rahman

Dr. Fazal Ur Rehman is director Pakistan Institute of China Studies (PICS), University of Sargodha. He has worked for the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) from 1986-2013. Dr. Rahman, has contributed a number of research articles and bookchapters on China, East Asia, and Asian multilateral organizations. Dr. Rahman is one of the founding members (Trustees) of - "Pakistan Council on China" (PCC), "Strategic Studies Institute Islamabad" (SSII), "Foundation for Fundamental Rights" (FFR), and "Peace Education and Development Foundation" (PEAD).

Dr. Fouzia Saeed

Dr. Fouzia Saeed is a social scientist and activist, whose work is centered upon gender development, cultural heritage and Civil Society Organizational Capacity Building. Her works are mainly focused on sexual harassment, gender violence and women in folk culture, as she has authored two important books; *Taboo: The Hidden Culture of a Red Light District* and *Working with Sharks: Countering Sexual Harassment in our Lives*. She remained the

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Deputy Director, Research at Lok Virsa and later in 2020 she was appointed as Director General of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

Dr. Khadim Hussain

Dr. Khadim Hussain is a writer and scholar, and a senior leader of the Awami National Party. He serves as ANP's culture secretary in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He authored a book 'The Militant Discourse' and Rethinking Education'.

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.

Dr. Qibla Ayaz

Dr. Qibla Ayaz is the current chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). Dr. Ayaz has served as the vice chancellor of the University of Peshawar and also remained the dean of its Faculty of Islamic and Oriental Studies. Besides, he has also held the post

Islamia College University Peshawar vice chancellor. Dr. Ayaz has made laudable efforts in bridging the gap between religious scholars and modern researchers during his last tenure as CII chairman.

Dr Rashid Ahmad

Dr. Rashid Ahmad is professor at Shaykh Zayed Islamic Centre (SZIC), University of Peshawar. He edited an Arabic language journal *Al Idah* (Sawt al Markaz) from 1999 to 2005. Dr. Ahmad has extensively translated Arabic Islamic literature into Urdu for the Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad. He is member of the committee for articulation of new course for SZIC, and also serves on the board of study of the theology department of the Islamia Collage University, Peshawar.

Faiza Mir

Faiza Mir is a lecturer at the department of International Relations in the University of Balochistan. She holds an M. Phil in strategic and military relations. Her publications include *The End of History and Clash of Civilization: A Comparative Study*, *Iqbal's Concept of Khudi and State's Self-Reliance: A Comparative Study from Self-Worth to Resourcefulness* and more.

Fatima Iqbal Khan

Fatima Iqbal Khan is a widely-respected human rights activist and development practitioner with eleven years of working experience in the nonprofit & non-governmental sector at different senior positions. She has served as provincial head of different projects and programs of various non-government organizations.

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 comedies 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.

Hafiz Hussain Ahmed

Hafiz Hussain Ahmed is a senior leader of the JUI-F from Balochistan. A politician and scholar, Ahmed served two times as member of the National Assembly of Pakistan from 1988-90 and from 2002- 07, and as a Senator from 1991-94. During his term in the National Assembly, he was elected deputy parliamentary leader. Hafiz Hussain Ahmed was a political activist in the 1970s and remained associated with the Pakistan National Alliance.

Haroon Sarab Diyal

Haroon Sarab Diyal is an outspoken activist for minority rights. He is the chairperson of the All-Pakistan Hindu Rights Movement, an organization working for the rights of the Hindu community. He is also researching human rights issues in Pakistan.

Harris Khalique

Harris Khalique is a poet, a constitutionalist, and a civil society activist. He has authored nine collections of poetry and two works of non-fiction. In March 2018, he received the Presidential Pride of Performance Award as an acknowledgement of his contributions to Urdu and English poetry. Khalique is also a University of Iowa Honorary Fellow in Writing.

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.

Jami Chandio

Jami Chandio is the executive director of the Center for Peace and Civil Society (CPCS), a think tank based in Pakistan's Sindh province. He edits CPCS' quarterly journal Freedom and oversees policy dialogues and research programs that target civil society, especially young writers, journalists and academia. One of Pakistan's most celebrated writers and scholars, Mr. Chandio is the former editor in-charge of Ibrat, Pakistan's largest Sindhi-language daily newspaper, a former anchor on Sindh TV and KTN, and former chair of the Liberal Forum of Pakistan. The only two-time winner of the All-Pakistan-Newspapers-Society Award (in 2000 and 2001), he has authored more than a dozen books in Sindhi, Urdu, and English on literature, politics and Sindh. He was awarded Reagan Fascell Democracy Fellowship in fall 2008 by International Forum for Democratic Studies.

Khursheed Ahmed Nadeem

Khursheed Ahmed Nadeem is a veteran journalist, anchor, and an author, who remained associated with Council of Islamic Ideology as an editor of a journal "Ijtehad" and the editor of quarterly "Fikro-Nazar" published by Islamic Research Institute. He was

associated as a columnist with Daily Jang, but currently he is writing columns for Daily Dunya. He has hosted and hosting several shows such as Geo TV and PTV for past 13 years. Moreover, he has authored 8 books and various articles centered upon religious perspectives. He is the founder of an organization called “Organization for Research and Education (ORE)”, which focuses on the development of an organization working for a democratic, tolerant Muslim society.

Krishna Kohli Kumar, Senator

Krishna Kohli Kumari is the first Hindu Dalit woman as a member of Senate, who is known for her support for vulnerable and marginalized groups and raise her voice against women oppression and bonded labor. Krishna Kumari presided a session in February, 2022 to express solidarity with Kashmiris. Similarly, she has tried to pass a bill for minorities’ rights, but it was turned down.

Maulana Muhammad Ahmed Yousaf Binori

Maulana Muhammad Ahmed Yousaf Binori is a renowned religious scholar of the Jamia Binoria. He is a vocal support of the Islamic teachings of peace and harmony and has delivered lectures and trainings on Islamic concept of rational thinking, interfaith

dialogue and communication and social and sectarian cohesion in Pakistani society for PIPS.

Mufti Faisal Japanwala

Mufti Faisal Japanwala is a lead trainer of the TIME CLUB and a Visiting Faculty at University of Karachi. He has completed his master's from University of Karachi in 1999 with double majors in Islamic Studies and Arabic. He is specialized in Fiqah from Darul-Uloom, Karachi. He has done some basic training courses from IBA. His grip on Arabic language had provided him the opportunity to train the professionals in the Middle Eastern countries, UAE & Saudi Arabia. He has a vast experience of travelling to Southeast Asian countries specifically Singapore and Thailand.

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.

Muhammad Amir Rana

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. He recently wrote a political novel 'Meer Jan'.

Muhammad Khalid Masud

Muhammad Khalid Masud is currently the Director General of Islamic Research Institute, who was the chairman of Council of Islamic Ideology from 2004 to 2010 and a former professor at the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He was associated with International Institute for the Study of Islam in Modern World, The Netherlands as an academic direction and

taught Islamic Law at several universities of various countries. He has been an editor of the journal Islamic Studies, and he has authored various publications, such as “Shatibi's Philosophy of Law”, “Iqbal's Reconstruction of Ijtihad” and few others, which covered Islamic Law and issues and trends in Muslim Societies.

Mujtaba Rathore

Mujtaba Rathore has twelve years of experience in research analysis and project management, working with a number of non-government organizations in Pakistan. He has managed the projects in areas of conflict and peace studies, peacebuilding and reconciliation, rule of law, international law, governance, human rights, education, interfaith harmony, and media studies. Mr. Rathore studied peacebuilding and reconciliation at the University of Winchester, UK. He has also authored three books.

Nadia Abbasi

Nadia Abbasi is Assistant Professor at Institute of Art and Design, University of Sargodha.

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.

Puruesh Chaudhry

Puruesh Chaudhry is a futures researcher and strategic narrative professional, who is a distinguished fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. She is the founder of the non-governmental organization, AGAHI, which supports initiatives for the development of Pakistan. She is currently the member of CIME and and a Mentor for UN-Habitat Youth Fund Program. She manages to mentor journalists all over Pakistan about ethics and moral values. She is recognized as the Global Shaper by World Economic Forum and representing the Pakistan's Chair for Millennium-Project of the Planning Committee.

Quatrina Hosain

Quatrina Hosain is a veteran journalist with a career spanning over 30 years. She has served as Pakistan bureau chief for AFP, editor of daily The News, director Current Affairs at Express News and has hosted political talk shows on Express, AbbTakk and PTV. She has also been a columnist for several national and international publications.

Riaz Sohail

Riaz Sohail is a senior correspondent and journalist at BBC Urdu, where he has been working since 2004. Previously he worked as a journalist for local dailies of Pakistan including Kawish. He extensively writes on issues such as minority rights in Pakistan, politics and militancy in Sindh and Balochistan, and human rights issues in both national and international magazines and newspapers.

Rifatullah Orakzai

Rifatullah Orakzai is a senior journalist based in Peshawar. He worked for the BBC for 13-years during which he extensively reported on the Taliban militancy in Pakistan's former FATA region. Later, he joined the local media industry. Currently, he hosts a current affair show on the Kay2 television. His area of expertise includes terrorism and extremism.

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.

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 behavioral tendencies of religious groups in Pakistan.

Safdar Hussain

Safdar Hussain 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.

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 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.

Saleem Shahid

Saleem Shahid is a senior journalist working with the daily Dawn for the past several decades. Based in Quetta, Shahid has a critical eye on social, political, and security issues of the insurgency-hit province.

Shagufta Malik

Shagufta Malik is a politician and leader of ANP. She was elected to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly in 2018. As a woman politician in a comparatively conservative society, she promotes girls' education and speaks for women's emancipation.

Shahzada Zulfiqar

Shahzada Zulfiqar is a veteran journalist based in Quetta. Zulfiqar is the first journalist from Balochistan to be elected president of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ). He has formerly reported from Balochistan for the daily Nation and magazines like the Newline and Herald. He also served as the bureau chief of the Samaa news television channel in Balochistan. In the past, Zulfiqar served as the president of the Quetta Press Club as well as that of the Balochistan Union of Journalists.

Sohail Sangi

Sohail Sangi is a senior journalist and activist of the leftist movement in Pakistan, presently working with the daily newspaper Dawn. He is also a visiting faculty of the Mass Communication Department at the University of Sindh. Sohail Sangi joined journalism in the mid-1970s. He was one of the pioneers of Daily Sindh News which was published under the editorship of Sindhi nationalist leader Shaikh Aziz in 1975 and

later, also worked with Daily Ibrat, Daily Safeer, Daily Awami Awaz, and Daily Kawish. He also worked with weekly magazines of Sindh such as Bedari and Sachai.

Veengas

Veengas is the founding editor of The Rise News – a Karachi-based non-profit news organization. Besides, she also contributes to The Wire and other news organization. Veengas is a vigorous voice for minorities’ rights, and her work focuses on the forced conversion of the Hindus, religious conflicts, and national politics. She has been a fellow at ICFJ, Asia Journalism Fellowship, and the Alfred Friendly Press Partners.

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.

Yar Muhammad Badini

Yar Muhammad Badini is a renowned Baloch Scholar and an editor-in-chief of Balochi language monthly magazine called "The Balochi Zind." He also writes columns in *Balochistan Today*. He has worked persistently for the promotion of Balochi language. He has done his masters in Balochi Language and Mass Communications from the University of Balochistan, Quetta.

Yasir Pirzada

Yasir Pirzada is a social critic whose Urdu columns in daily Jang attract huge readership in Pakistan and abroad. Pirzada is also a civil servant, but he is mostly known for his newspaper columns.

Zafarullah Khan

Zafarullah Khan is a constitutionalist and parliamentary historian with a diverse professional background. He is executive director, Centre for Civic Education, Pakistan. Previously he served as the director of Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services. Khan possesses rich experience spread over three decades in the fields of journalism, parliamentary democracy, civic education, constitutionalism, and human rights.

Zia ur Rehman

Zia ur-Rehman is an investigative journalist, researcher and author, currently working with The News International in Karachi. He regularly contributes articles to the New York Times. Has has also been published by The National, TRT world, Friday Times, Dawn and Herald. Rehman mainly covers security, political and human rights issues, migration and labor rights, and monitors and specializes in Islamist and ethnic movements in the region. He has been widely quoted in international and national publications, such

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as Washington Post, Reuters, AFP, and Radio Free Europe Free Liberty. He is author of a book Karachi in Turmoil and has also contributed chapter and articles for national and international publications.

Zubair Torwali

Zubair Torwali is a researcher, writer, and advocate of the cultural and indigenous rights of the mountain communities. He serves as the executive director at Idara Baraye Taleem-o-Taraqi (IBT) (Institute for Education & Development) Bahrain, KP. His works include Muffled Voices: Longing for a Pluralist and Peaceful Pakistan. Torwali also speaks on matters of local languages, cultures, education and climate change in international conferences.

7.2 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

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- 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?

Making sense of Pakistani youth

- 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

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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

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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	Larkiyān 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.				

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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

Making sense of Pakistani youth

- 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				

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	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

1. Have you ever read about your fundamental freedoms in the Constitution?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. Please list any two fundamental freedoms protected by the Constitution:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

3. Which form of government do you think is most suitable for Pakistan?
 - a. Shariah
 - b. Democracy
 - c. Dictatorship
 - d. 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

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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

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- 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

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- 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

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- b. No
- c. To some extent

9. If yes, How?

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

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7.3 Picture Gallery



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Annexures



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