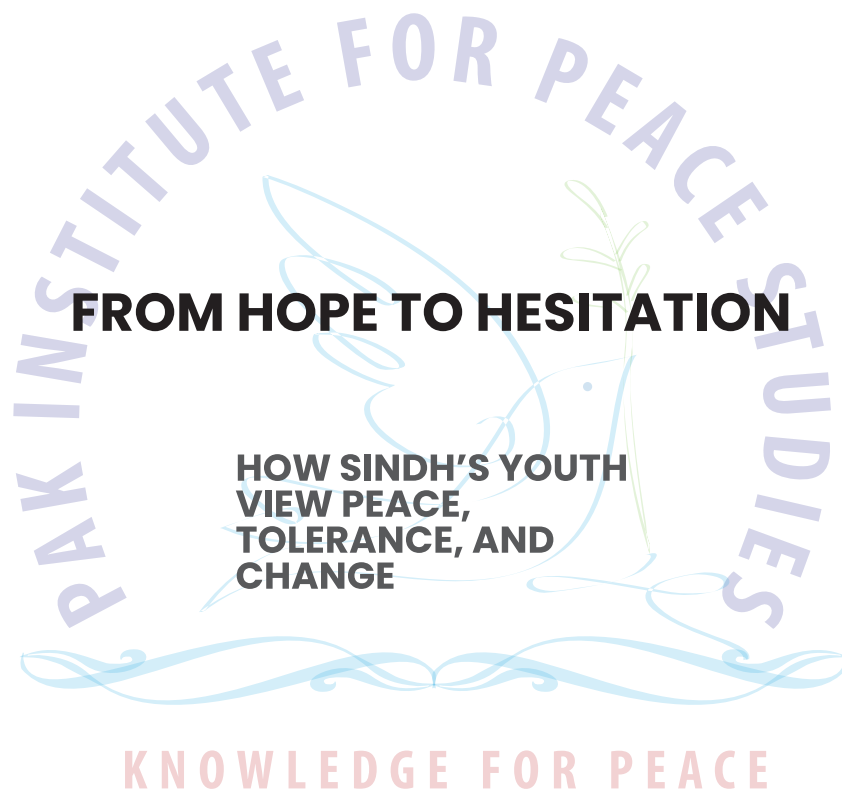




FROM HOPE TO HESITATION

HOW SINDH'S YOUTH VIEW
PEACE, TOLERANCE AND
CHANGE





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Muhammad Amir Rana

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Executive Summary

This report, based on a mixed-methods study by the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), reveals a profound paradox among educated Pakistani youth in Sindh: a generation that is personally optimistic about its future but deeply concerned about the state of society and the efficacy of its governing institutions. The study engaged 60 participants through two two-day workshops in Karachi and Sukkur, as well as surveys, to assess their attitudes toward religious tolerance, gender equality, and governance, among others.

While a majority of participants believe their career success depends on hard work rather than family background, they simultaneously express deep-seated anxieties over pervasive religious discrimination, political corruption, and institutional failure. The study's key findings on tolerance, gender roles, and the rise of misinformation underscore a societal crisis that demands urgent policy and educational reform. Overall, as noted earlier, the potential of Sindh's youth as a force for progressive change, as viewed by the youth themselves, is currently hindered by a climate of intolerance and institutional failure.

The youth cohort surveyed demonstrates a shift away from reliance on traditional state apparatuses for change. Instead, social media platforms and cross-border youth engagement programs are perceived as more effective vehicles for highlighting grievances and fostering diplomatic relations.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The survey study reveals a complex and nuanced picture of educated Pakistani youth in Sindh—a generation brimming with personal optimism yet deeply troubled by the societal issues surrounding them.

When it comes to religion, an overwhelming majority (88.2%) recognize faith-based persecution as a major issue, and most (76.4%) agreed that people face discrimination based on their religion. They strongly believe in equal treatment of all citizens, yet 82.4% feel that non-Muslims cannot express their views freely. There is a widespread consensus (88.2%) that the government's measures to address faith-based discrimination are inadequate, and many (82.4%) worry that such incidents of violence or persecution often go unreported.

On social issues, the views of youth in Sindh appear more progressive. Most (76.5%) reject the notion that a woman's primary role is limited to household chores, and a significant portion (64.7%) support equal rights for transgender individuals.

Politically, there is strong condemnation of corruption (82.4% agree it wastes resources), and clear support (76.5%) for democracy as the best form of government for Pakistan. Perhaps most strikingly, these young people display a powerful sense of self-reliance—88.2% believe that their success depends on hard work, not family background. Yet, they don't see the state as part of the solution. Instead, the same percentage (88.2%) view social media as an effective platform for change, and just as many believe cross-country youth programs can enhance diplomatic relations.

In response to these insights, this report calls for meaningful action. It urges educational reforms that emphasize critical thinking, practical skills, and constitutional values—including teaching about all indigenous faiths to promote inclusivity. It also recommends policy changes that reflect Pakistan's diversity, foster free thought in academic settings, and provide teachers with training in scientific reasoning. Finally, it highlights the need to create more physical and digital spaces where young people can engage in constructive dialogue, empowering them to shape a more tolerant and inclusive future.

1. Introduction and Methodology

The future trajectory of any nation is inextricably linked to the mindset of its youth. In Pakistan, a country with a vibrant demographic landscape, the perceptions of its educated young people are particularly critical for understanding the way forward. The findings, as cited earlier, reveal a generation ready for change, yet one that lacks confidence in the very institutions tasked with enabling it. By analyzing the attitudes of educated youth in the Sindh province, this study provides a foundational understanding of the dynamics at play and highlights the urgent need for systemic and societal reform.

1.1 Background

Pakistan remains deeply affected by extremist ideologies remains a significant concern, even after years of enduring the profound human and economic toll of terrorism. Alarming, these views are not fading among the educated young—a concern starkly illustrated during recent workshops organized by PIPS. While the majority expressed a progressive outlook, many youths still voiced regressive opinions on human rights, civil liberties, and interfaith relations.

Radical thought is not limited to marginalized or uneducated groups; it is also widespread within institutions of higher learning. The prevalence of such views highlights an urgent need for educational initiatives that promote tolerance directly counter extremist narratives.

Pakistan is a nation characterized by profound cultural and religious diversity, with over 70 languages spoken and more than a dozen religions practiced. Communities of Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians enrich the social fabric of all provinces and regions of Pakistan.

Yet this cultural richness exists alongside political tensions, particularly between Punjab—the largest and most powerful province—and smaller regions calling for fairer resource sharing. These dynamics have sometimes led to ethnic and linguistic movements, which are often viewed with suspicion by the state

It is within this complex landscape that PIPS set out to understand how young people across Pakistan's different regions perceive issues like religious diversity, gender roles, and fundamental rights. The research is especially relevant as old theories about extremism are being reconsidered. Poverty and illiteracy are no longer seen as the only drivers of radicalization. In fact, some of the most shocking acts of violence in recent years—such as the lynching of Mashal Khan, a journalism student falsely accused of blasphemy—were committed by educated youth from stable backgrounds.

Responding to this urgent challenge, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) designed a series of workshops for university and madrassa students, journalists, and youth leaders. This report is based on such workshops held in Sindh with the goal of offering fact-based perspectives and critical thinking tools that can help young people resist radical influences.

1.2 Research Methodology

This study was designed not only to sensitize youth on issues related to interfaith harmony but also to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of their thinking on a range of thematic issues. A convergent parallel mixed-methods approach was adopted, in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously through two two-day workshops conducted in Sindh (Karachi and Sukkur).

Out of 60 workshop participants, 44 completed both pre- and post-workshop survey questionnaires, while 17 randomly selected participants were interviewed extensively using a semi-structured questionnaire.

The mixed-methods design served two purposes: first, to capture diverse perspectives through multiple forms of data; and second, to use the workshops as a platform for recruiting young participants for the research.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis: Survey questionnaires were administered before and after the workshops. Statistical analysis was employed to identify trends, patterns, and relationships. Both descriptive statistics (to organize and summarize the data) and inferential statistics (to draw conclusions about the larger population of Pakistani youth) were used.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis: In-depth interviews with selected participants and observational data from the workshops formed the basis of qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis was applied to uncover underlying perspectives, attitudes, and experiences of youth regarding interfaith harmony and related issues.

Both data sets were analyzed independently and then compared to draw integrated conclusions. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding by highlighting points of convergence as well as divergence between quantitative findings and qualitative insights.

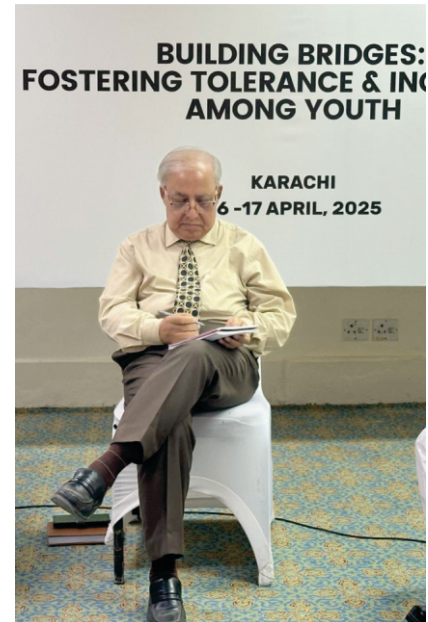
Despite limited time and resources, the intervention was implemented with a focused scope. Nevertheless, it yielded significant outcomes, including valuable participant feedback and fresh insights into the thinking patterns of Sindh's youth.

2. Key Themes and Analysis

2.1 Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Pakistan

Human identity is inherently complex and unique, shaped by a combination of genetics, environment, and personal choice. This diversity forms the foundation of a rich collective human experience, allowing societies to appreciate contrast and difference.

Dr. Syed Jaffar Ahmad, an academic and historian, noted that while a narrative of brotherhood and unity is often promoted in Pakistan, unity should not be mistaken for uniformity. Religious and ethnic identities, some thousands of years old, cannot be altered by the choices of a few. Diversity should be promoted and respected at all levels. He cited Karachi as an example, a city where diverse cultural and ethnic groups coexist, yet which has also experienced severe ethnic riots. In a progressive age, the cross-fertilization of ideas is vital; the clash of ideas must not lead to chaos, and differences of opinions must be acknowledged and respected.



Jami Chandio spoke about the culture and extremism in Sindh. He stated that Sindh is a land of tolerance and devotion. This land has nurtured different religions from Buddhism, Hinduism to Islam. This is a land of diversity, history, culture and heritage. The history of this land starts from the ancient civilization, the Indus Civilization when people began to settle down by the bank of flowing waters of Indus River. But culture keeps changing. Migration happened. This region has seen a significant pattern of migration in the last seven decades.



One that happened in 1947 as the Indian Subcontinent divided into two states, India and Pakistan. And even now, many people are migrating, especially Hindus who are the sons and daughters of this soil are leaving it. There are many reasons behind this migration that need to be studied. One of the major issues is the forced conversions that are happening here. The second is abduction for ransom. These forced conversions have created an environment of fear. People suffer a lot due to such fear. It impacts them psychologically.

Ali Raza Lashari pointed out that the state needs to establish its writ. Extremism is increasing in Sindh and overall Pakistan. The youth is being impacted negatively. The religious seminaries need a visionary and revised approach under the authority of the state. These religious seminaries and students from Madrassas need to be connected to universities. This would help influence their mindset and broaden their sphere of thinking.

2.2 Social Cohesion

Humans have an innate drive to form groups and belong to each other. Human relations play a crucial role in the development of society. Almost all societies are built upon the principles of goodness and well-being of all their members. There are certain norms, terms and traditions of each society. These norms and traditions are often influenced by their history, culture and religion.

Individuals are identified primarily by their personal positions and status in society. We observe that humans are evolving very fast with economic competition and technological developments. This has not only created competition at the state level but also on the personal level too. Some argue that human nature is selfish and self-centered.

Mr. Farnood Alam trained the participants in analyzing individuals' temperaments. Some people are characterized as extroverts. They enjoy socializing and dealing with the public. On the other hand, some people are introverts, and they do not like interactions and networking. For example, we often hear that society is hospitable. But it does not mean that all the people are same, and they have the same characteristics. Humans differ from one and other in many ways. But societal pressure and norms compel them to behave in a certain way that would be polite.

Every state and society go through the process of change or evolution. European societies have gone through many wars. A pivotal moment was the Treaty of Westphalia, which marked a new era and set the stage for the modern nation. Following this, the Renaissance, and particularly the liberalization of French society, saw the collapse of an authoritarian regime, which unfortunately led to violence and chaos.

The concepts of modernity and globalization are rooted in the liberation and freedom of choice for all individuals. This movement began with the emancipation of humans but, ironically, has resulted in a certain neglect of the individual. In the modern era, scientific facts are prioritized because they can be measured and quantified. In contrast, abstract concepts like values and morality are often undervalued. This has led to a persistent effort to apply the principles of natural sciences to understanding human behavior and other societal abstract concepts.

As qualitative and quantitative research methods, originally designed to measure thought and imagination, gained prominence, they established a framework that positioned the West as the global standard for what it meant to be "modern."

The imposition of Western modernity on South Asia during the colonial period was a painful process. This framework came in a direct conflict with the deeply rooted values and social structures of South Asia. The colonialists, in their attempt to "civilize," failed to understand or respect the local social fabric, leading to significant disruption and a painful experience for the indigenous population. Any attempt to challenge or question this Western-imposed system was often met with resistance, and those who dared to speak out were either silenced or labeled as traditionalist and apologetic.

Mr. Masud emphasized that Pakistan was created on the name of Islam. The roots of the country should unite a nation so that it can protect sovereignty. However, we remain bound to the differences and conflicts like sectarian divide. Tolerance is the basic teaching of Islam.

Mr. Mujtaba Rathore advised young leaders that acceptance of diversity begins with cultivating tolerance for differing opinions and showing respect for others by treating them equally. In the eyes of the constitution and the state, no individual is superior to another.



2.3 Constitution, Citizenship, and State

Mr. Imran Mukhtar, a senior journalist, discussed the relationship between Constitution, parliament and citizenship. These three elements are the pillars of a state and work interconnectedly. The Constitution is a supreme law that elaborates the structure and power of the institutions within state. It also highlights the rights and responsibilities of the citizens of that state. Pakistan is a democracy, and the constitution of Pakistan explains in detail the distribution of power. The power is distributed among three branches: the executive, the judiciary, and the legislative. The parliament is the building that consists of two houses, upper house Senate and lower house the National Assembly. It serves as a bridge between the people and state. It is tasked with formulating, passing, and implementing laws as per the constitution of the country and will of the citizens.

Citizenship is a legal status that is granted to the people by the state. Article 25 of constitution guarantees that all citizens of Pakistan are equal before law. The constitution is also amended for the welfare and according to the will of the citizens. Mr. Mukhtar elaborated that 18th amendment is a major event in the constitution of Pakistan. The 18th Amendment brought about a major shift in power, moving it from the central government to the provinces. This measure, aimed at decentralization, strengthened provincial autonomy and governance. Additionally, the amendment significantly enhanced the rights of minorities and women, providing them with greater legal protection and empowerment. A crucial provision of this amendment is the right to free and compulsory education for children aged 5 to 16, a step toward improving literacy and human development across the country.

Ms. Veengas, a renowned journalist conducted a session, "Quest for equal protection, government policies and religious minorities". The Hindu community has historically played a significant role in Pakistan's economy. In cities like Jacobabad, Hindu business owners were once central to local markets, as noted during the period of President Musharraf. However, a decline in their presence is now evident. This shift is linked to an environment of increasing vulnerability, as highlighted by incidents such as the tragic killing of a Hindu businessman in Larkana.

While politicians often visit these communities to secure the "vote bank," the underlying issues of security and protection remain. It is the fundamental duty of the state to ensure the safety and right to life for all its citizens, irrespective of their background or contributions. Furthermore, the majority population bears a crucial responsibility to act as allies and advocates for minority rights. Their voices carry significant weight. They can play an instrumental role in ensuring that the concerns of minority groups are heard and addressed. This, in turn, fosters a more inclusive and secure society for all.

The cases of violence against minorities are increasing day by day, but no one is taking any strict action. The cases of forced conversion have been happening for more than a decade now but still no law is passed for the protection of Hindu Minor girls.

Ms. Veengas calls for a change where institutes exhibit transparency in their performance. She pointed out the example of forced conversion, Rinkle Kumari case got very highlighted where she was forcibly converted and married to a Muslim man. The role of state is questionable.



In authoritarian systems, political suppression is common, and citizens are often denied fundamental rights. In contrast, the principle that democracy is the best policy is based on providing equal participation and representation for people of diverse ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds. The parliament is, in essence, a reflection of this social contract.

Mr. Amir Rana, while discussing the differences in the rule of authoritarian regimes and democracy stated that even weak democracies can lead to oppression and political instability, which, in turn, can result in negative economic growth.



A clear example is Myanmar (formerly Burma), where a seemingly democratic structure with a lower and upper house is undermined by the military. The armed forces are assigned over 25% of the parliamentary seats and hold veto power over constitutional changes. This institutional flaw has contributed to decades of ethnic cleansing, conflict, and chaos. The country's struggles are further compounded by a weak institutional structure, rampant corruption, a lack of transparency, and widespread human rights violations.

Pakistan's parliamentary system is a legacy of its history, having evolved from the British colonial governance model. At over 75 years old, Pakistan's journey has, like any other developing nation, included mistakes. The path forward requires the country to acknowledge these blunders and move toward a policy of reform aimed at rectifying its institutional weaknesses and strengthening its democratic foundations.

2.4 Gender Disparities

Ms. Hina Khaliq Taj, Research Officer at Pak Institute for Peace Studies, gave a presentation on Gender Equality: myths, values and practices. The main objective of the presentation was to develop the understanding among the participants regarding the Gender concepts, providing them the brief knowledge about the constitutional provisions about gender. In the year 2024, Pakistan ranked 14th out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap index. The female political participation also accounted for about twenty percent. A country where the female population is forty nine percent, economic, health and educational disparities prevail. About fifty seven percent of the females are anemic. Women in Pakistan have the highest rate of breast cancer in Asia. The labor force participation rate among females is twenty five percent while among males is eighty one percent in 2023. About thirty one percent of the males own house but only two percent females own a house. These imbalances are often related to cultural aspects. There were 5112 cases of gender violence in 2024, 799 abduction and 533 rape cases that were reported nationwide.

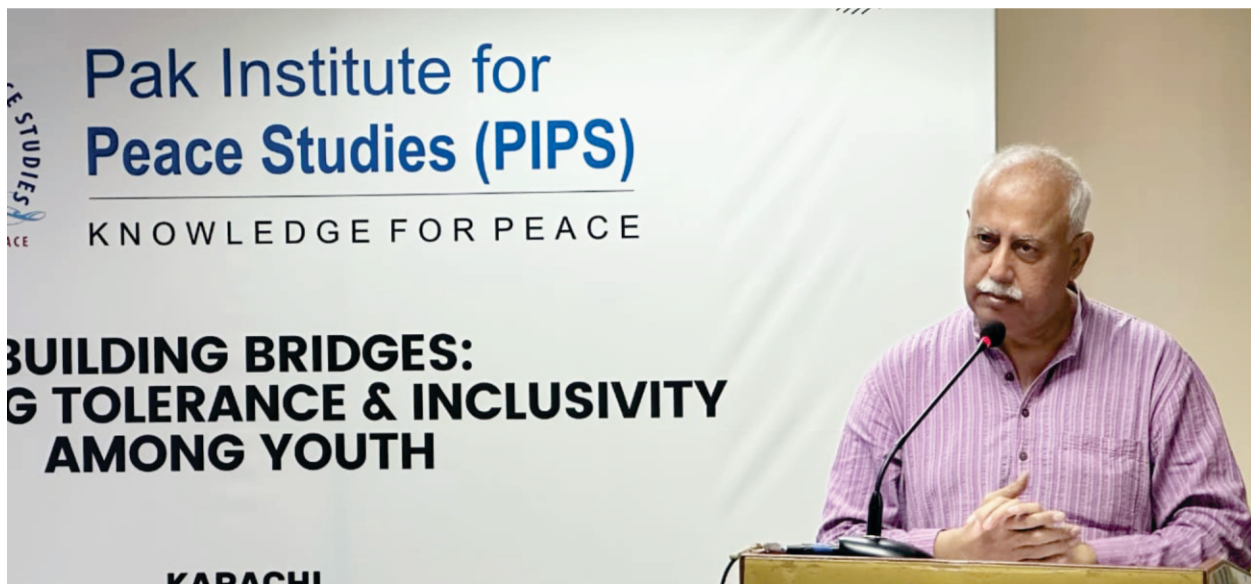
- If we investigate the constitution of Pakistan, Article 25 guarantees equality before law and prohibits discrimination based on sex.
- Article 27 ensures non-discrimination in public employment.
- Article 34 directs state to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of practical life.
- Article 37 promotes social justice and eradicating all evils. The state of Pakistan had taken legislative measure. Some of the examples are:
 - Protection of women Act, 2006: criminalizing practices such as acid attacks and forced marriages.
 - Protection Against Harassment of women at workplace Act (2010) that aims to ensure safe environment for women at workplace.
 - The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act ensures safeguard against domestic abuse.
 - The Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act (2021) ensures mechanism for speedy trials and victim protection.
 - The Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act (2011) addresses acid violence and provides support to survivors.



2.5 Fake News vs Real News

Journalist and columnist Wusatullah Khan explained the types of fake news.

- An exemplary case of fabricated news occurred last year in Britain. While the initial report of a man attacking a school was accurate, the details that followed were entirely false. Misinformation quickly spread, falsely claiming the assailant was a Muslim from North Africa, despite authorities cautioning against speculation and withholding the attacker's identity. This fabricated story, which went viral after being shared by an individual, incited protests in various cities, some of which turned violent. It was later traced back to a man in Lahore, Pakistan, who admitted to creating the fake news to gain social media engagement and generate income. This incident serves as a stark reminder of the profound real-world damage and societal destabilization that can result from a single act of misinformation.
- A second type is presenting rumors as news. The rumors do not have hands and feet, but they travel very fast. If I think about an example, before the first tenure of Modi government during the elections of 2014, there is a place in UP province of India: Muzaffarnagar, some news was spread that a Muslim man has tried to molest a girl. Before that the news could be investigated, many people had died and many had become homeless. This all happened because of a rumor that was being spread.
- Then there is an example of a village (Dadri) near Delhi, a man named Akhlaq Ahmad used to live there. He might have some animosity with someone. A rumor was spread that he had slaughtered a cow. It was also mentioned that he had cow meat in his refrigerator also. The forensic teams had come and investigated the matter. The meat was taken from his home and sent to the lab for assessment. It was too late as he was lynched over the suspicion of slaughtering cow.
- The latest example is of Hamas attacking Israel in 2023, a claim as a rumor was spread that Hamas has slaughtered forty children of Israel. This news needed to be properly authenticated but the American President Joe Biden gave a statement without any proofs. Afterwards, the White House had to take this statement back. Some time later, the reference of this news was again mentioned by Joe Biden. He was again notified that no such incident had taken place according to the investigations. These are examples of rumors as news. Another type of fake news is that rumor is mixed with the facts to formulate some news. It is believed that the news cannot be interesting if it is not mixed with some spicy rumors in some way.



- The example of this type of fake news coming in my mind is that on 26 November fires were opened on PTI rally in Islamabad. The government gave the statement that we wanted peace and were undergoing negotiations with them. They have themselves opened fire on the rally, to gain the empathy of Public. After that, the PTI said 120 people are being killed. Then in a press conference the PTI leadership said that the people who got killed are 80 in number. The number turned into sixty after a few days and then it got less and reached twelve in numbers. And the final number came out as 6 casualties. But doubts and mistrust were spread till then.
- Another example is Jaffar Express. The attack took place, and there must have been someone behind it for a specific reason. But a government representative from Balochistan gave the statement that RAW is involved in this incident. This statement came after seventeen minutes. I was thinking that if the CIA is this strong that it gives statement without any evidence in just a few minutes. Then it was said that the handler of this case was in Afghanistan, and he was instructing this whole time.

One of the important steps in the process of checking the authentication of any news is to check the source of the news. Some people try to hide their names as source to not face the backlash if the news is not true. The second type is that the facts and figures are altered in such a way that they are right, but they are made up into a spicy story.

A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes." This is a classic saying that highlights the speed at which misinformation spreads compared to the often-slower pace of verified information. The modern version of this, as you've noted, is even more extreme. The battle between truth and falsehood has become increasingly difficult in this digital age. A significant challenge is the rise of social media platforms and the commercialization of authenticity.

"The ability to purchase a "blue tick" has created a system where an algorithm, which prioritizes likes and views over truth, gives more visibility to paid accounts. This has made the spread of misinformation a game for many, turning lies into a commodity. This environment is further complicated by platforms like TikTok, which, according to the BBC, has a massive user base in Pakistan, particularly in rural areas. The focus of this generation has shifted to likes, views, and dollars, with falsehood becoming a form of currency. This digital ecosystem floods screens with fake news every hour, making the fight for truth more challenging than ever. Despite these hurdles and limited solutions, it is the fundamental responsibility of journalists to combat fake news and hold the line for accuracy.

2.6. Common Sense, Critical Approach and Critical Thinking

In Karachi workshop, journalist and author Ghazi Salahuddin highlighted the significant impact of student movements on society. He emphasized that their importance isn't necessarily in overthrowing governments, but in their ability to influence social structures and government policies. A notable example is the May 1968 student protest in Paris, which nearly led to the collapse of the French government and was one of the largest movements in the country's history since the French Revolution



There was a time when student groups were highly engaged, forming communities based on the political ideologies they followed. They were a curious and well-read generation, actively participating in study circles and discussions, fueled by a quest for knowledge and a desire to challenge the status quo. To engage with the inevitable clash of ideas in society, one must first understand their own position. Developing an informed opinion requires a comprehensive approach to learning. This includes reading philosophy, understanding history, and staying current on scientific discoveries and technological advancements. He advised the young minds and students that there is a certain period in your life when your thoughts are of a specific kind, when you learn to dream, when you have sense of fidelity towards ideas and human beings. When you fall in love. When you aim to change the world. When you aspire for things. This is a very precious time of life, and one must think that what do they want to get in life. One must develop a syllabus for their life, like we have syllabuses in schools and colleges for different subjects. Other than career choices and professional choices, one must develop a timeline of his or her life and analyze their life accordingly.

Mr. Amir Rana, president PIPS conducted an interactive session where he asked participants to identify their personal qualities; strengths and weaknesses, which elicited a diverse range of responses. Participants described themselves as Hardworking, Disciplined, Punctual, Creative, Resilient, Optimistic, Humble, Respectful, and Compassionate. Others also highlighted specific skills, including proficiency in cooking, writing, communication, and leadership. In discussing their faults, participants identified characteristics like being: Lethargic and Impulsive, Overly Emotional or Insensitive, Indecisive, Stubborn, and avoidant of responsibility. Mr. Rana noted that all these were common human traits. He argued that the most significant human flaw is lying or dishonesty, which erodes credibility and trust. He explained that lying, whether to others or to oneself, leads to mental exhaustion, constant fear, and ultimately destroys a person's self-confidence. Dishonesty is a significant social evil and a form of oppression. It fuels corruption, fraud, and the spread of fake news and hatred. A state is accountable to its people, and similarly, truth must be upheld in personal and social interactions. Therefore, it is the duty of citizens to be truthful, just as it is the duty of the state to be transparent.

In his concluding session, Mr. Amir Rana highlighted the importance of cultivating an informed and knowledgeable community. He emphasized that the workshops' core purpose was to instill a mindset that prioritizes common sense, critical thinking, and a scientific approach to personal and societal challenges.

According to Mr. Rana, common sense is a vital tool for navigating daily life and fostering mutual understanding through shared values. However, he also noted its limitations, particularly in diverse cultural contexts where assumptions can easily lead to misunderstanding and even hatred.

Mr. Rana defined two essential skills promoted in the workshops:

- Critical Thinking: A mental discipline that involves practice, analysis, and refinement. It enables individuals to break free from conventional societal thought patterns, understand diverse perspectives, and admit their own mistakes, thereby cultivating humility and empathy.
- Scientific Approach: This involves applying methods of inquiry through observation, evidence-based reasoning, and experimentation. This process helps to produce reliable conclusions by eliminating personal biases and is a key driver of critical thinking.

To illustrate the necessity of these principles for societal progress, Mr. Rana referenced a historical period in Europe, from the 15th to the 18th centuries, where women who challenged social injustices were often executed. He noted that this era, dominated by religious extremism and misogyny, demonstrates that societies must often navigate such dark phases to reach a period of enlightenment and revolution. Ultimately, Mr. Rana concluded that adapting to a changing world requires a clear understanding of one's worldview. A worldview is a comprehensive framework of beliefs and values through which individuals interpret the world. This framework not only shapes our perception and decision-making capacity at personal and societal level.

3. Challenges and Way Forward

Pakistan faces significant challenges related to the rights and security of its minority populations. These issues manifest across social, economic, and constitutional levels, creating a climate of fear and insecurity for many.

3.1. Discrimination and Constitutional Limitations

Since the Second Amendment to the Constitution in 1974, the Ahmadiyya community has been declared non-Muslims. This constitutional change has led to widespread discrimination and an institutional failure to protect them as citizens. Recently, following Eid al-Adha in June 2025, Ahmadiyya community members faced police cases for engaging in animal sacrifice, a practice that is part of their faith but is restricted by law. (1)

3.2. Forced Conversions and Blasphemy Laws

A recurring issue is the abduction and forced conversion of young minority girls, particularly from the Hindu community in Sindh, who are then married to Muslim men. Such cases, like the recent ones in Sanghar and Tando Allahyar, predominantly affect girls from the marginalized Hindu castes. (2) The misuse of blasphemy laws has also surged, leading to mob lynching and extrajudicial killings. The Islamabad High Court has formed a commission to investigate potential blasphemy gangs that file false claims for financial gain. The case of a Christian man acquitted by the Supreme Court after 23 years in prison highlights the prolonged injustice, while the murder of Dr. Shahnawaz in Mirpur Khas underscores the failure of law enforcement to protect individuals accused of blasphemy. (3)

3.3. The Need for Societal and Legal Reform

Extremism and radicalization are no longer confined to specific terrorist groups; they have become a societal issue. There is a pressing need for new laws to protect minorities and reform existing ones. Specifically, the process of religious conversion should be regulated, with courts overseeing applications to prevent coercion. Stricter laws are also needed to prevent the marriage of minors.

1. Human Rights Watch, "Pakistan: Surge in Targeted Killings of Ahmadi," Human Rights Watch, November 26, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/26/pakistan-surge-targeted-killings-ahmadis>.

2. Pakistan: UN Experts Alarmed by Lack of Protection for Minority Girls from Forced Religious Conversions and Forced Marriage," OHCHR, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/pakistan-un-experts-alarmed-lack-protection-minority-girls-forced-religious>.

3. Guardian staff reporter, "Pakistan Says Police Orchestrated Killing of Doctor Accused of Blasphemy," the Guardian (The Guardian, September 26, 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/sep/26/pakistan-police-orchestrated-killing-of-doctor-accused-of-blasphemy>.

Dr. Masood emphasized the importance of a "4D" approach—Discourse, Debate, Dialogue, and Deliberation—to foster greater harmony and understanding. The creation of common ground where all people are treated equally under the law, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, is essential to addressing these deep-seated issues.

4. Recommendations for Stakeholders

4.1. Educational and Curricular Reform

- Redesign educational curricula to focus on developing students' cognitive skills and teaching practical, transferable skills. Textbooks should instill an understanding of the rule of law, constitutionalism, and democratic culture, emphasizing a sense of mutual citizenship based on fundamental rights.
- Incorporate key articles and clauses of the Constitution related to the state's duties and citizens' rights into educational syllabi.
- Make curricula more inclusive by introducing lessons on all religions and faith systems indigenous to the region. Promote cultural diversity as a core element of Pakistan's national heritage to foster a positive view of diversity among younger generations.
- Formally introduce the teaching of critical thinking and logic at all levels of schooling. These skills should be a mandatory part of pedagogy, and both students and teachers should be trained in reasoning and cognitive improvement.

4.2. Institutional and Policy Changes

- Parliament should initiate a debate to revisit the long-standing policy of using education for religious and political indoctrination. A first step would be to forge a consensual definition of national identity that reflects Pakistan's socio-cultural diversity, mitigating widespread confusion.
- Any new youth policy should prioritize skills development. Addressing the lack of professional and marketable skills among Pakistani youth is crucial for enhancing their competitiveness in the job market.
- Liberalize the environment at higher learning institutions by promoting academic freedom and creating more space for free thought. This will help produce critical minds resistant to indoctrination, exploitation, and religious extremism.
- Mandate refresher courses for teachers on scientific thinking, reasoning, and human biases. Well-educated teachers are essential for nurturing positive intellectual abilities in the youth.

4.3. Youth Engagement and Empowerment

- The government should actively work to rejuvenate the youth by creating platforms for debate and dialogue. This includes opening public parks and playgrounds and promoting youth clubs, online communities, and campus publications to encourage healthy engagement and expression.

5. Findings of Survey Study:

The study was conducted in two main cities of Sindh: Karachi and Sukkar. It was, however, the focus of concentration that the sample is collected from the youth all over the province. The respondents belonged from the different cities of Sindh including Khairpur, Hyderabad, Larkana, Mithi, Karachi, Sukkar, Mirpur Khas. Most of the participants were students enrolled in the different universities of Pakistan. A few participants belonged to media or civil society. There were Madrassah students who also participated in the survey and workshops.

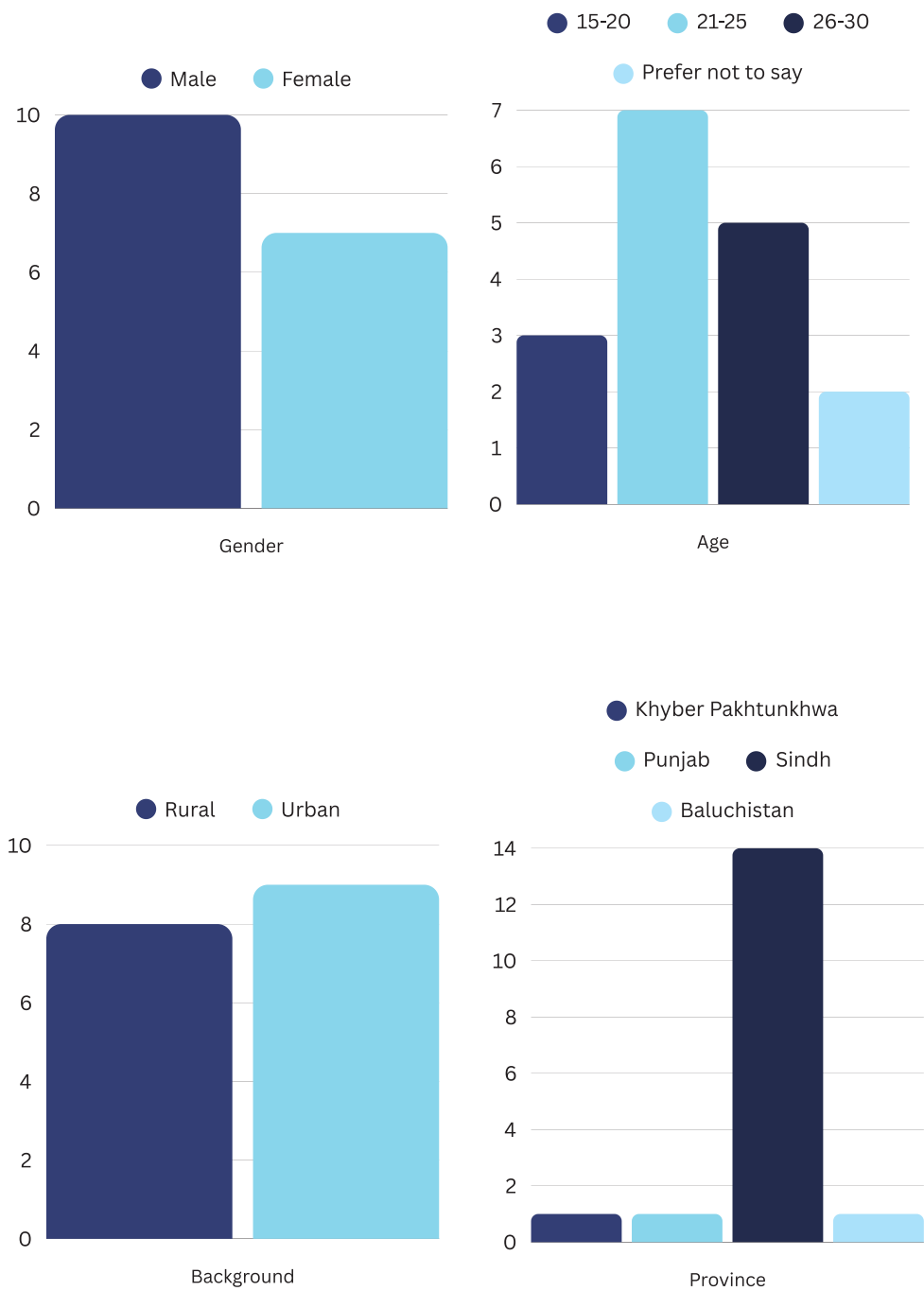
The participants seemed to be hopeful about the future of Pakistan. The youth of Pakistan is observant of the situation and extremism that is happening in the country but at the same time they are willing to learn and bring change. Despite the presence of extremist groups in some areas, people remain open to change and show a willingness to engage in dialogue with communities such as Hindus, Christians, and Ahmadis.

The main questionnaire was given to 17 participants in Sindh who showed active participation and were quite ambitious about the themes. It was kept in mind that the respondents have an equal number of males and females belonging to different age groups too. The survey consisted of various types of questions related to personal development, career opportunities, gender disparities, ethnic and social issues, religious diversity and interfaith harmony, role of media, constitution and parliament in Pakistan.

The participants were also connected to the Building Bridges social media platforms. Social media has now become a platform where voices raised together are heard and spread faster. Under the Building Bridges: Fostering Tolerance and Inclusivity among Youth banner, we aim to raise awareness about extremism and radicalization faced by the state and society of Pakistan. Social media consumption is now shaping the population worldview, which in turn deconstructs and reconstructs the social fabric of society. This shift offers a positive outlook for coexistence, as Pakistan is a country rich in diversity. Diversity, in turn, necessitates tolerance within society, which is essential for flourishing in the modern world.

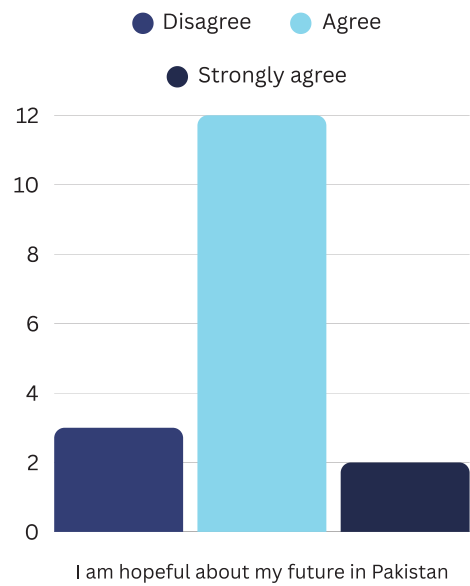
5.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILING OF RESPONDENTS OF MASTER QUESTIONNAIRE

Age, Gender and Background

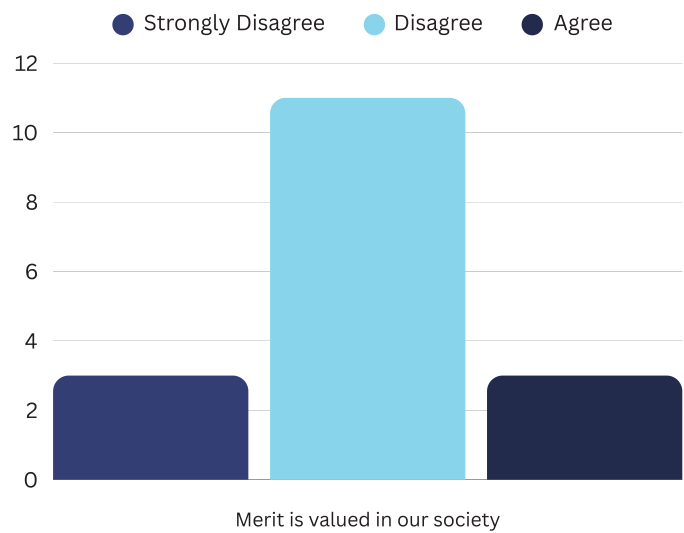


5.2 Personal Development and Career

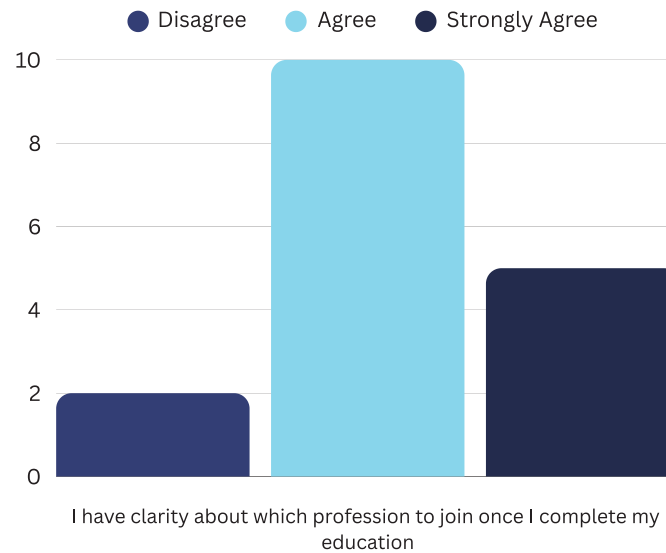
As part of an inquiry into how Pakistani youth perceive their future, participants were surveyed on their professional development and career aspirations. A key question specifically explored their hopefulness about their future within Pakistan. The responses indicated a mixed outlook: 3 respondents (17.6%) expressed disagreement, while 2 strongly agreed (11.8%) and 12 others (70.6%) agreed to some extent.



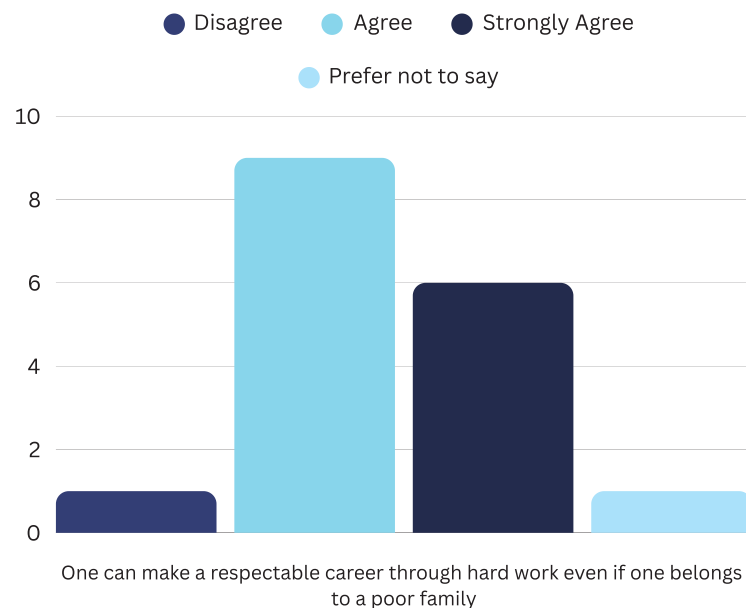
Participants were questioned on whether merit is valued in our society, acknowledging that the flourishing of any society hinges on this principle. The majority indicated a negative perception, with 11 individuals (64.7%) disagreeing and 3 expressing strong disagreement (17.6%). Only three participants (17.6%) agreed that merit is valued.



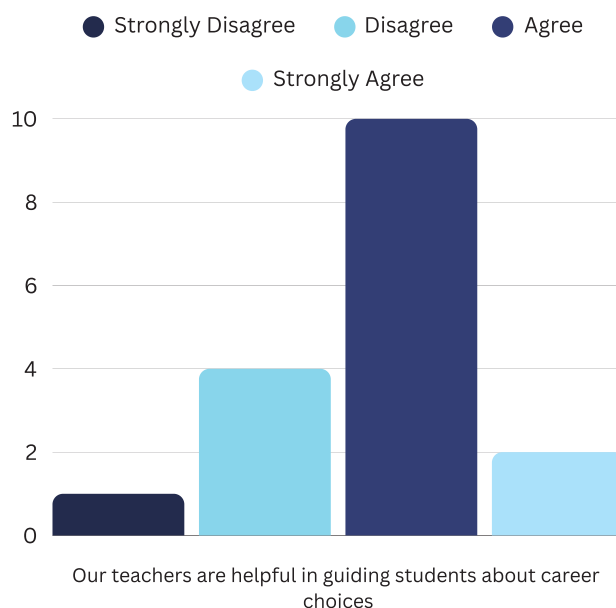
Within the master questionnaire, participants were asked about their career clarity, specifically regarding their future profession. The responses indicated a positive outlook, with 10 participants (58.8%) agreeing and five strongly agreed (29.4%) that they have a clear direction. Only two participants (11.8%) expressed disagreement.



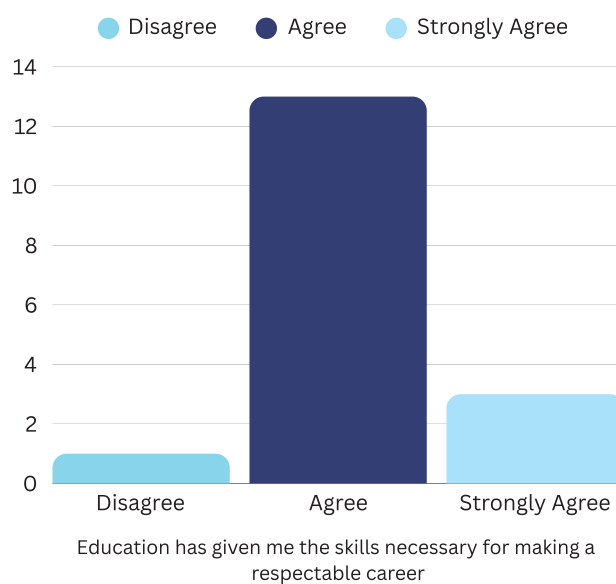
A key question explored participants' belief that career development is based on hard work, allowing anyone to succeed regardless of family background. A near consensus emerged, with nine participants (52.9%) agreeing and six strongly agreeing (35.3%). Notably, only one individual expressed disagreement and hopelessness regarding this perspective, and one participant chose not to respond.



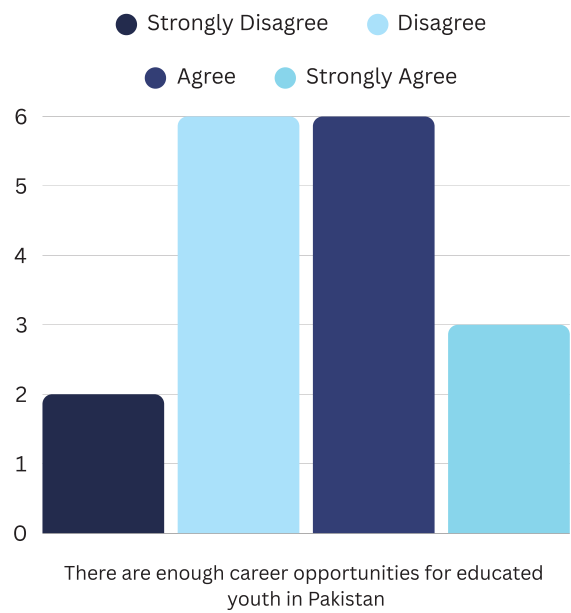
Participants were questioned about their teachers' role in career development. The responses largely indicated that teachers are seen as helpful: 10 participants agreed (58.8%), and 2 strongly agreed (11.8%). However, a segment expressed negative perceptions, with 1 participant (5.9%) strongly disagreeing and 4 others (23.5%) showing some level of disagreement.



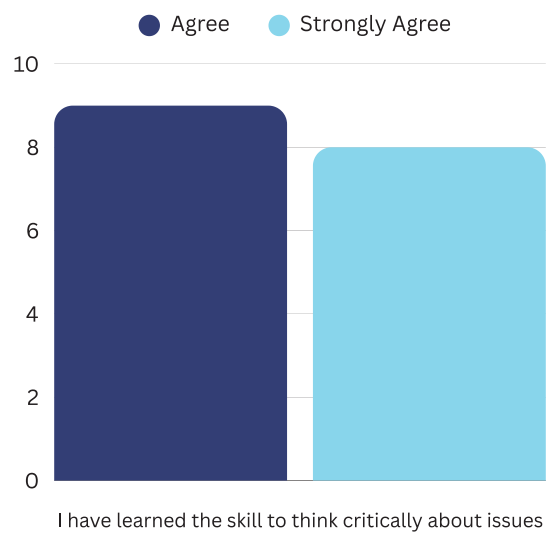
A question was posed to participants regarding the Pakistani educational system's capacity to provide career-essential skills. The vast majority held an optimistic outlook, with thirteen participants (76.5%) expressing agreement and three strongly agreed (17.6%) that the system is adequately developed. Conversely, only one participant (5.9%) indicated a negative perception.



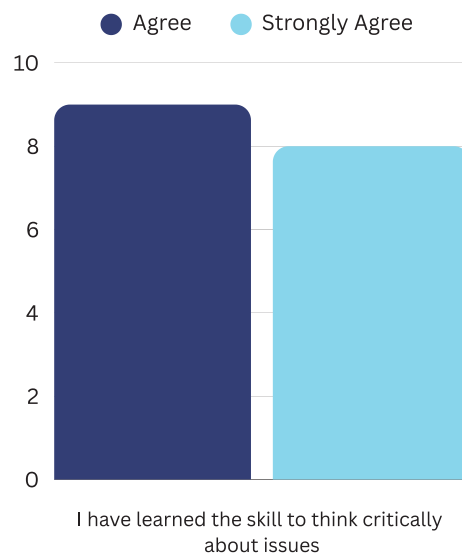
Participants were asked their opinion on the availability of sufficient opportunities for educated youth in Pakistan. The responses were evenly split: six participants strongly disagreed (35.3%) and two disagreed (11.8%), while six agreed (35.3%) and three strongly agreed (17.6%).



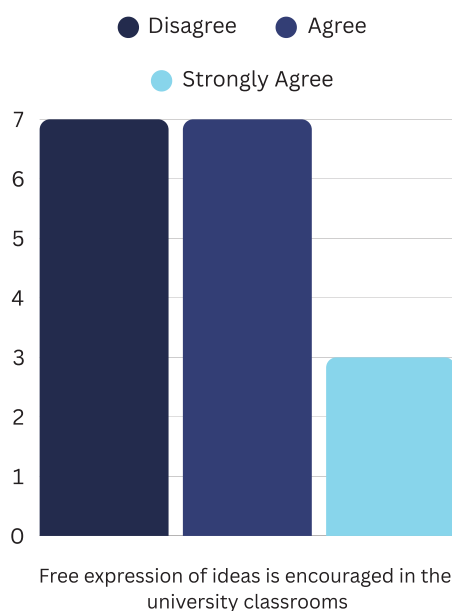
Participants were asked if they've learned critical thinking skills. The responses showed strong agreement: nine participants (52.9%) agreed moderately, and eight strongly agreed (47.1%).



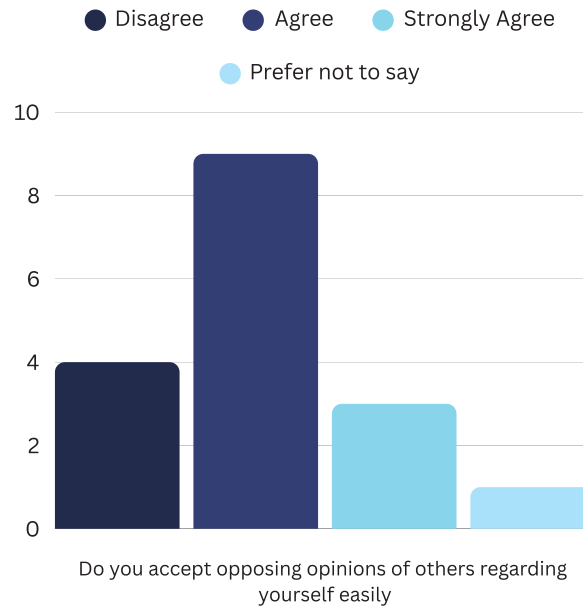
Emphasizing the discrepancy, a question in the survey explored participants' perceptions of whether university classrooms permit free expression of ideas and speech. The findings indicated mixed views, with seven respondents (41.2%) expressing disagreement, and ten (41.2% agreeing, 17.6% strongly agreeing) indicating agreement



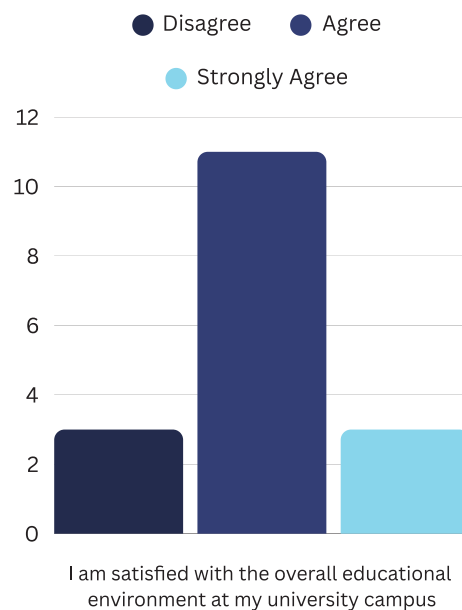
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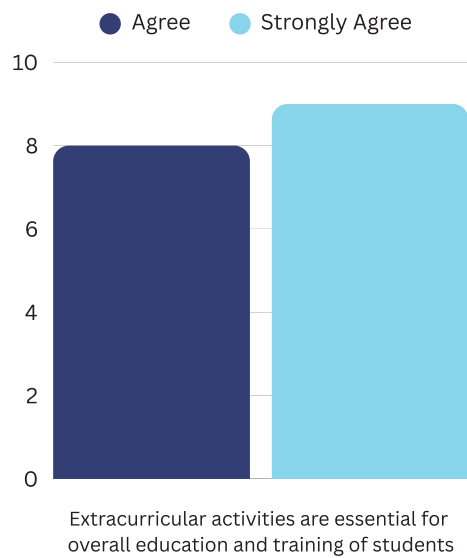
To gauge youth tolerance, a specific question explored participants' openness to accepting others' opposing opinions about themselves. A significant majority (12 out of 17 respondents) demonstrated a positive disposition, with 9 agreeing (52.9%) and 3 expressing strong agreement (17.6%). In contrast, 4 participants (23.5%) indicated disagreement, and one (5.9%) opted not to provide a response.



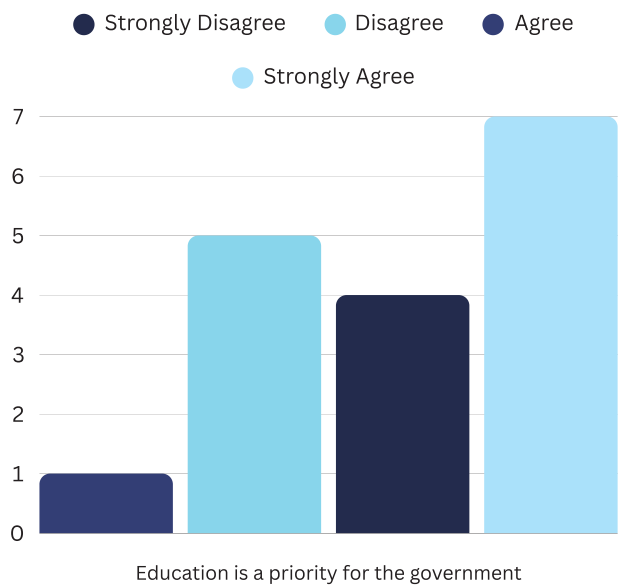
Regarding satisfaction with the university campus environment, participant responses largely indicated a favorable view. A combined 14 participants affirmed their contentment (17.6% strongly agreed, 64.7% agreed). In contrast, 3 participants (17.6%) conveyed dissatisfaction with their university campus.



There was unanimous agreement among all 17 participants on the importance of extracurricular activities for the holistic health and growth of young people. Participants highlighted that these activities offer both physical and mental benefits to students.

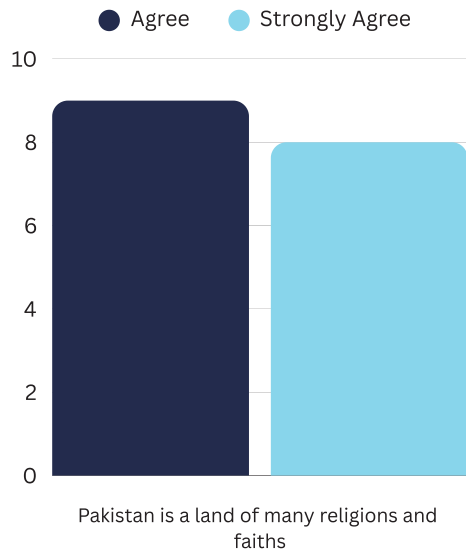


An analysis of participant responses highlights polarized views among youth concerning the government's educational policies. On the specific issue of education being a state priority, a notable segment demonstrated negativity where 1 strongly disagreed (5.9%) and 5 showed resentment (29.4%). Conversely, the majority affirmed this proposition, with 7 expressing strong positive sentiment (41.2%) and 4 indicating agreement (23.5%).

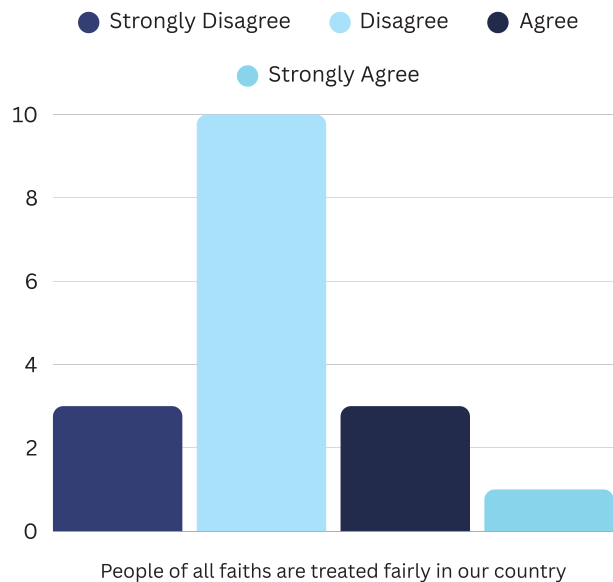


5.3 Religious Diversity

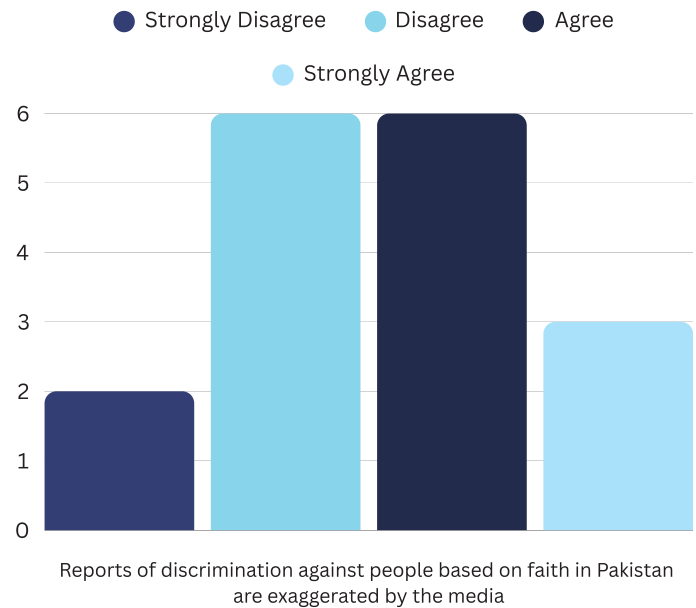
Questions regarding Pakistan's diversity were posed to participants to understand their views on diversity acceptance. A consensus emerged among all 17 participants (52.9% agreed, 47.1% strongly disagreed) who recognized Pakistan as a country characterized by its many religions and faiths.



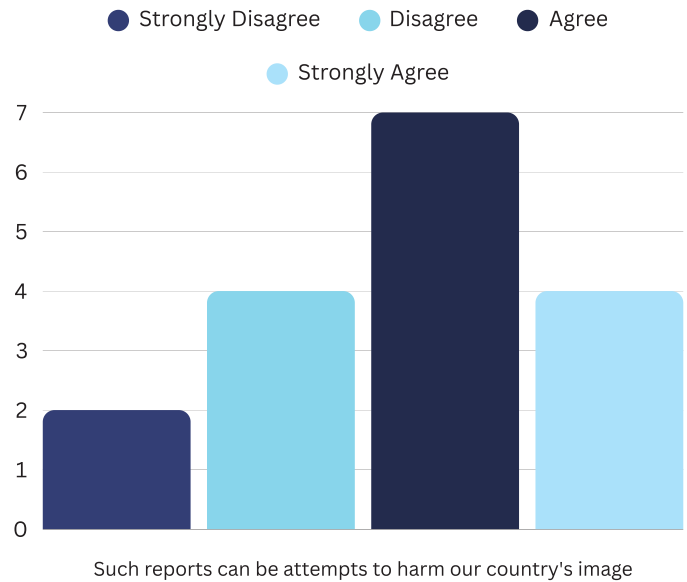
To gauge perceptions of religious equality, participants were questioned on whether all faiths receive equal treatment within the country. The predominant sentiment among respondents highlighted the presence of inequalities experienced by people of various religions. A notable three participants (17.6%) strongly disagreed with the premise of equal treatment, while ten conveyed resentments (58.8%). Conversely, only three agreed (17.6%), and one strongly agreed that equitable treatment is universal (5.9%).



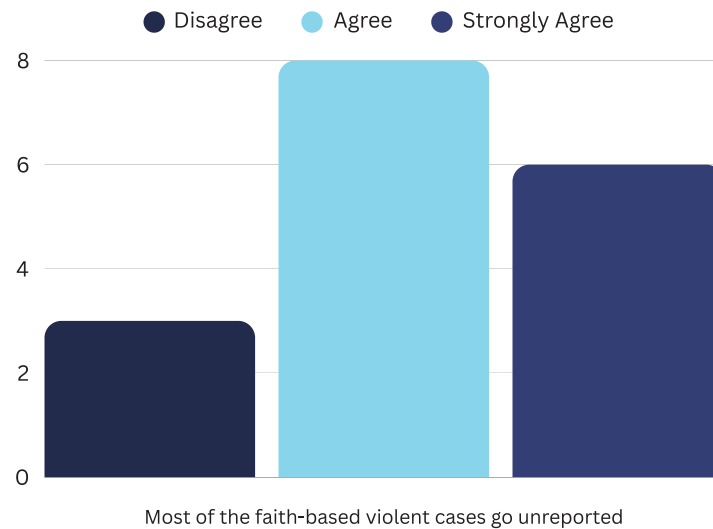
Participants were queried regarding their perception of media reports on faith-based discrimination, specifically whether they considered them to be exaggerated. A combined total of eight participants either strongly disagreed (11.8%) or disagreed (35.3%) with the notion of exaggeration. In contrast, nine participants, comprising six who agreed (35.3%) and three (17.6%) who strongly agreed, viewed these reports as exaggerated.



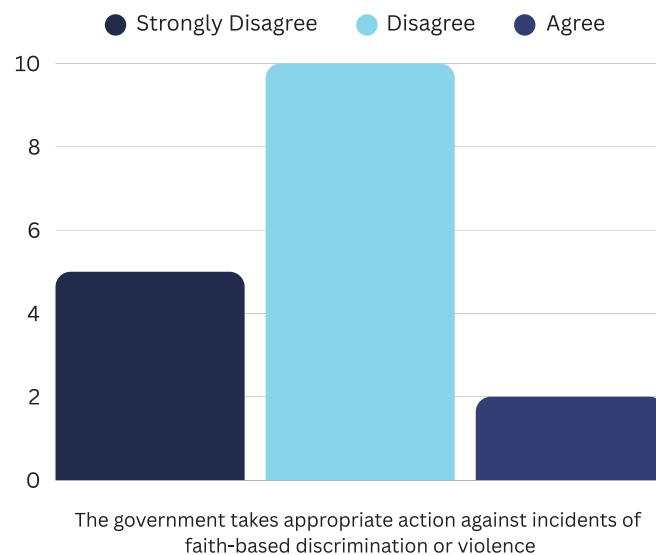
Participants were asked if reporting violence against communities and broadcasting it through media could potentially harm the country's international image. While acknowledging the importance of criticism for policy improvement and development, six participants disagreed (11.8% strongly disagreed, 23.5% disagreed) with this notion, while eleven agreed (41.2% agreed, 23.5% strongly agreed).



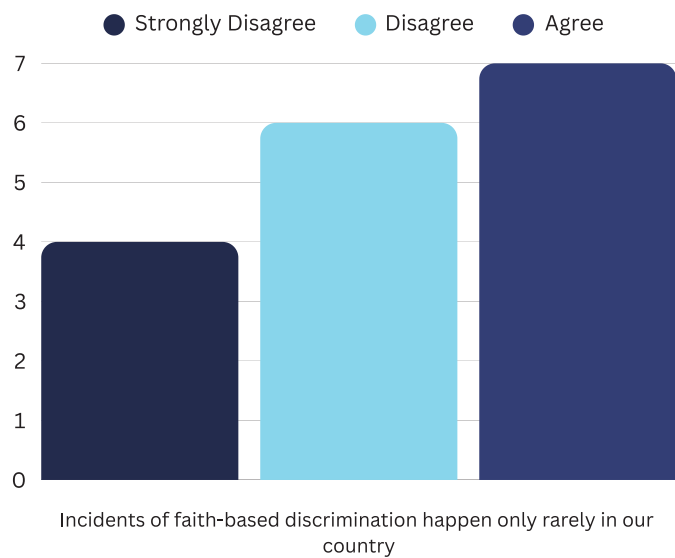
A question was posed to participants concerning the underreporting of faith-based violent incidents. Only three participants (17.6%) believed these cases were adequately reported. The overwhelming majority, totaling fourteen participants (47.1% agreeing and 35.3% strongly agreeing), perceived that most faith-based violent cases go unreported.



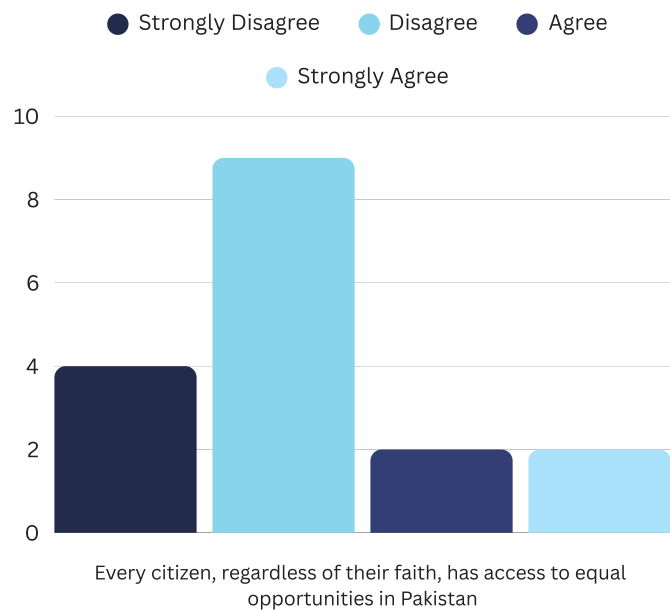
To assess perceptions of governmental responsiveness, participants were inquired whether appropriate action is taken against incidents related to faith-based discrimination and violence. A significant fifteen participants (29.4% strongly disagreeing and 58.8% disagreeing) expressed dissatisfaction with the government's measures. Conversely, only two respondents (11.8%) perceived the government's actions as adequate.



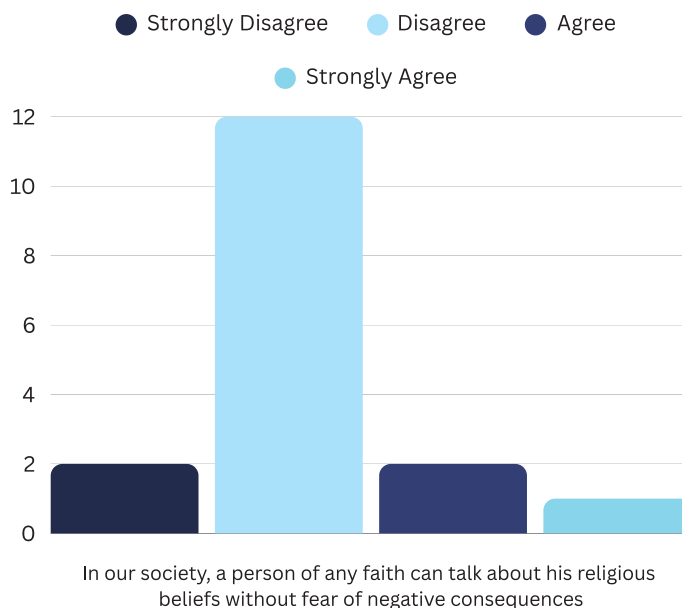
Participants were asked if incidents of faith-based violence rarely occur in Pakistan, a question aimed at understanding their acknowledgment of issues faced by minorities. Ten participants (23.5% strongly disagreeing and 35.3% disagreeing) indicated that such incidents are not rare, suggesting a direct observation of faith-based discrimination. In contrast, seven participants (41.2%) agreed that these cases are rare and happen only occasionally.



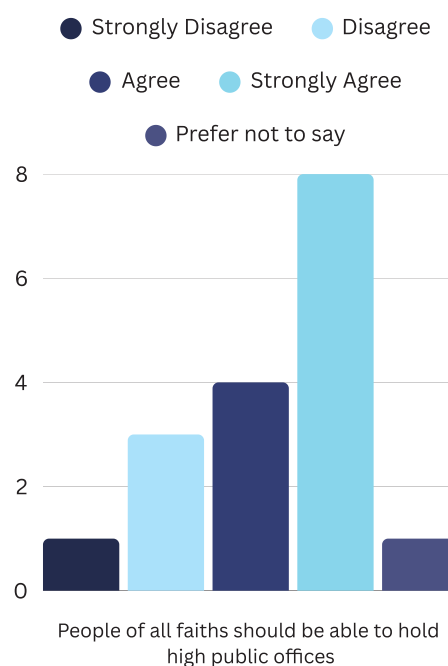
Participants were questioned regarding the equitable treatment of all citizens and their access to opportunities in Pakistan. A strong majority of thirteen participants (23.5% strongly disagree, 52.9% disagree) expressed disagreement with this premise, whereas only four concurred (11.8% strongly agreed, 11.8% agreed).



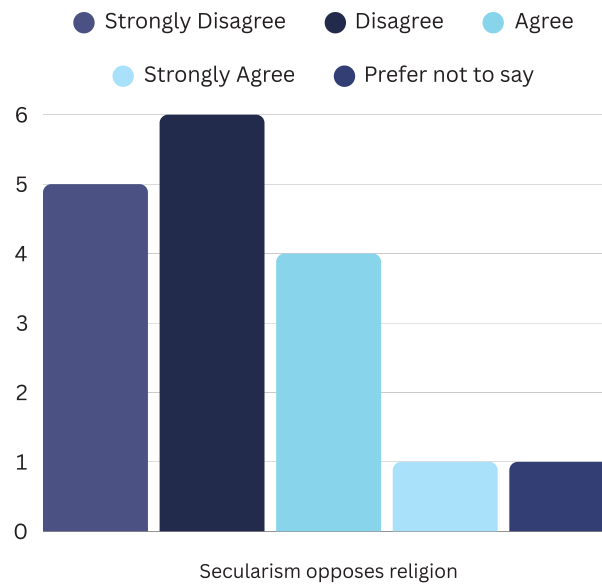
To gauge perceptions of religious freedom, participants were questioned on whether individuals of any faith could openly discuss their beliefs without fear of negative repercussions. The responses revealed a prevalent sense of apprehension, with a combined fourteen participants (11.8% strongly disagreeing and 70.6% disagreeing) indicating a lack of such freedom. Conversely, only three participants (11.8% agreed, 5.9% strongly agreed) held the view that individuals could speak freely.



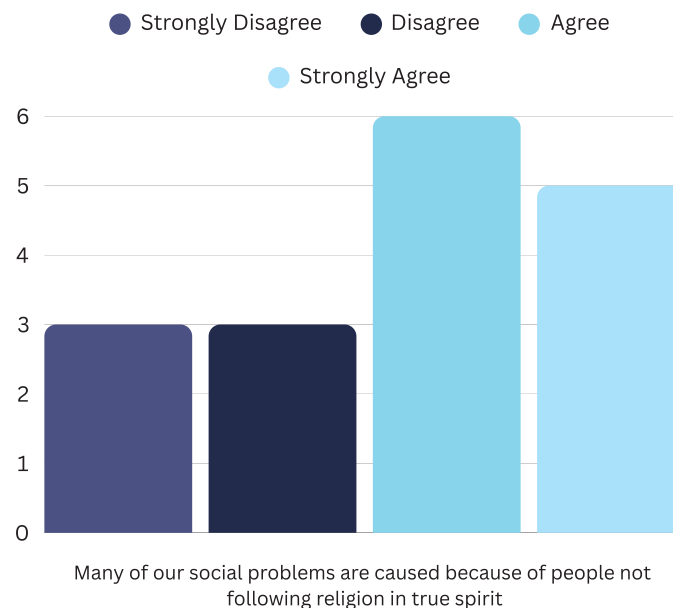
To gauge attitudes towards inclusiveness in public office, participants were questioned whether individuals of all faiths should be eligible to hold high public positions. A minority of four participants, comprising one (5.9%) who strongly opposed and three who disagreed (17.6%), expressed reservations. In stark contrast, a strong consensus emerged from twelve participants (23.5% agreeing and 47.1% strongly agreeing), affirming their support for such inclusivity.



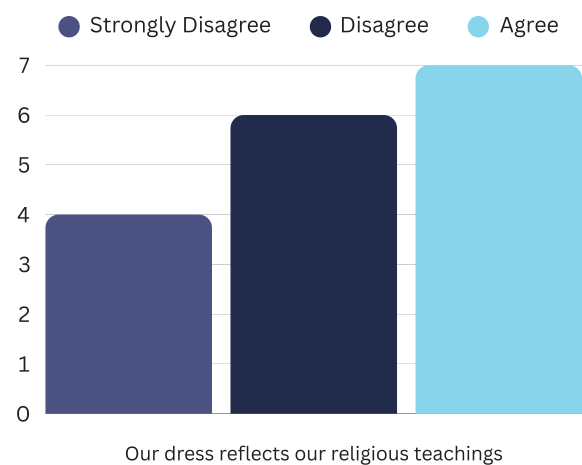
When asked if secularism opposes religion, the majority of participants disagreed with the statement. Specifically, 5 individuals (29.4%) strongly disagreed and 6 disagreed (35.3%), totaling 11 participants against the notion. In contrast, 4 participants (23.5%) agreed, and one strongly agreed (5.9%), while one individual (5.9%) abstained from responding.



Participants exhibited a divided perspective on whether social problems stem from a lack of religious observance. While 6 individuals (17.6% strongly disagreed and 17.6% disagreed) rejected this premise, a significant counter-group of 11 participants (35.3% agreed and 29.4% strongly agreed) concurred with the idea.

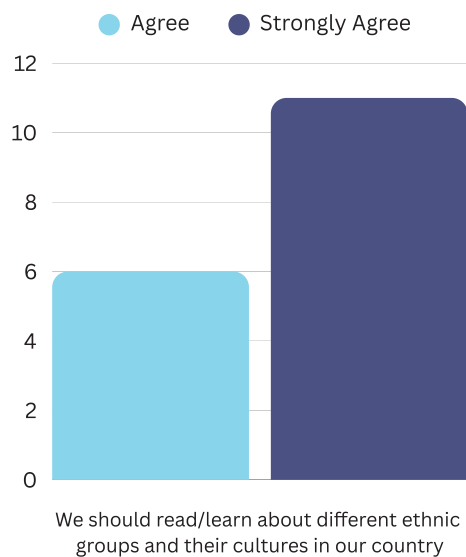


Participants' opinions were divided on whether dress code and personal dressing style signify religious affiliation and adherence to religious doctrines. Ten participants expressed disagreement with this proposition (23.5% strongly disagreed and 35.3% disagreed) whereas seven participants (41.2%) affirmed it.

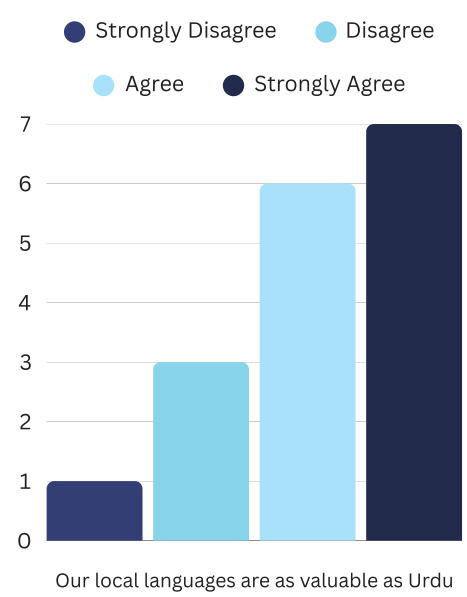


5.4 Ethnic Diversity in Pakistan

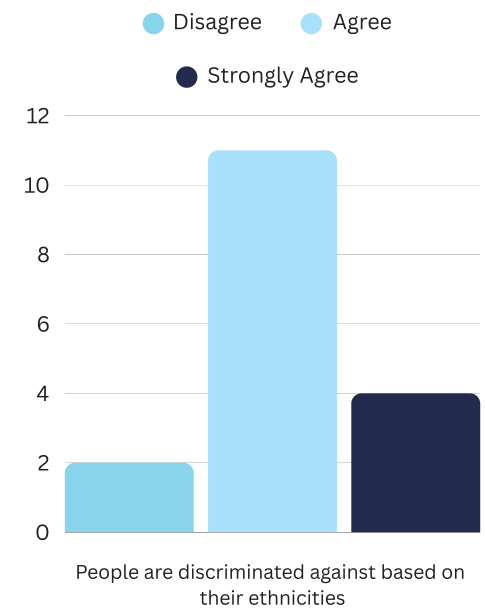
There was unanimous agreement among all 17 participants (35.3% agreed to some extent and 64.7% strongly agreed) regarding the importance of learning and engaging with different cultures, ethnic identities, and their values within our country to promote diversity and acceptance.



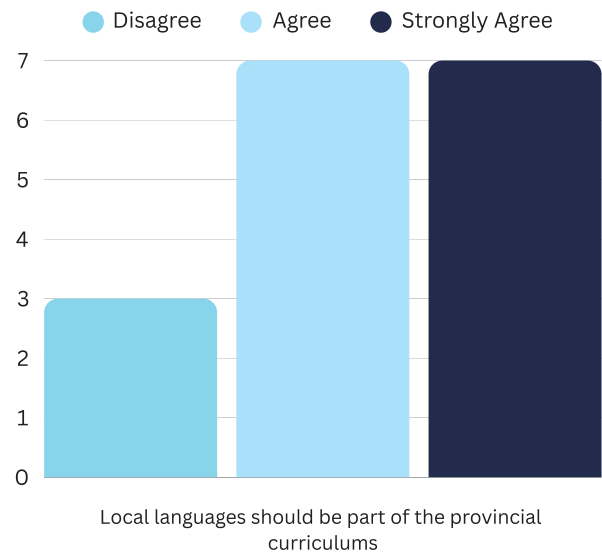
When participants were asked if local languages are as important as Urdu, views were somewhat divided, though leaning towards agreement. One participant strongly disagreed (5.9%), and three disagreed (17.6%), totaling four participants who felt local languages were not equally important. In contrast, six participants agreed (35.3%), and seven strongly agreed (41.2%), indicating that 13 participants believed in the equal importance of local languages compared to Urdu.



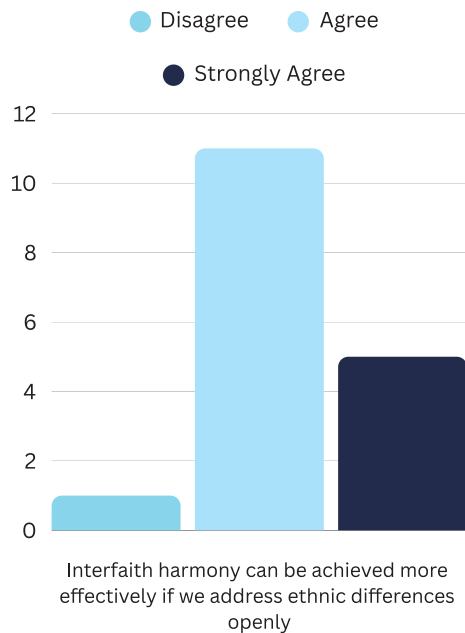
The survey revealed a strong consensus among participants regarding ethnic discrimination. Out of the total respondents, 11 affirmed the existence of such discrimination (64.7%), with an additional 4 expressing staunch belief in its prevalence (23.5%). Only 2 participants (11.8%) disagreed with this assertion.



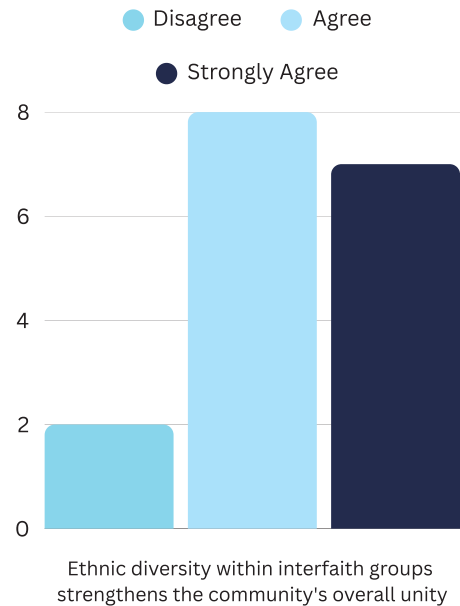
The integration of local languages into provincial educational curricula, a recurring debate with strong implications, garnered significant support among participants. When asked for their opinion, 14 participants (41.2% agreed, 41.2% strongly agreed) showed agreement with this proposal, while only 3 disagreed (17.6%).



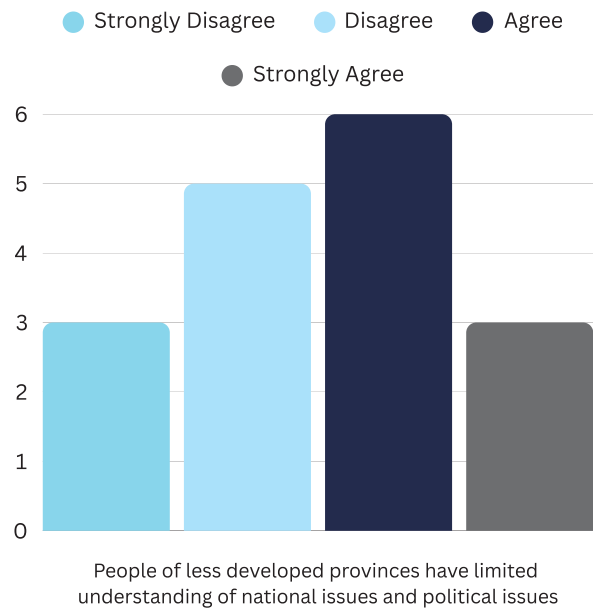
Participants' opinions were sought regarding the potential for enhanced interfaith harmony through the resolution of ethnic issues. The response indicated significant support for this connection, with 11 participants agreeing and an additional 5 strongly affirming the notion. Only 1 participant expressed disagreement.



When asked if ethnic diversity within interfaith groups strengthens community unity, participants largely affirmed this idea. Eight agreed (47.1%) and seven strongly agreed (41.2%), while only two disagreed (11.8%).

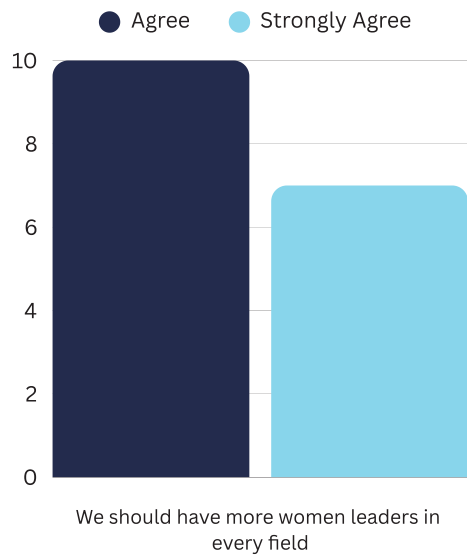


The perception that people in less developed provinces have limited understanding of national and political issues elicited a highly distributed set of responses from participants. Three strongly disagreed (17.6%), five disagreed (29.4%), six agreed (35.3%), and three strongly agreed (17.6%), indicating a lack of consensus on this point.



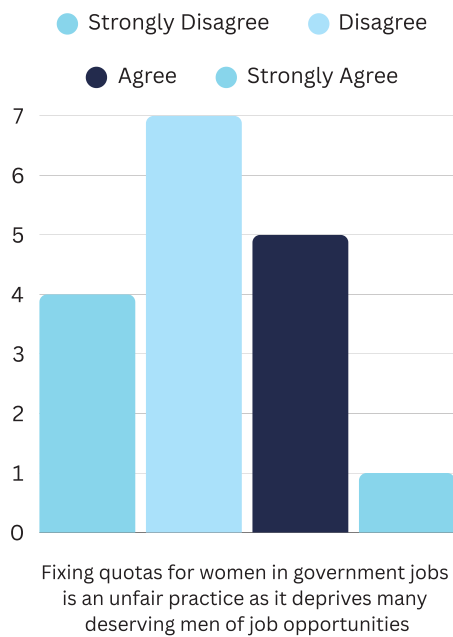
5.5 Gender Diversity in Pakistan

Participants were surveyed to gauge their opinions on gender equality, specifically regarding whether women should have more leadership roles and opportunities across all fields. All 17 participants responded affirmatively, with 58.8% agreeing and 41.2% strongly agreeing to this proposition.

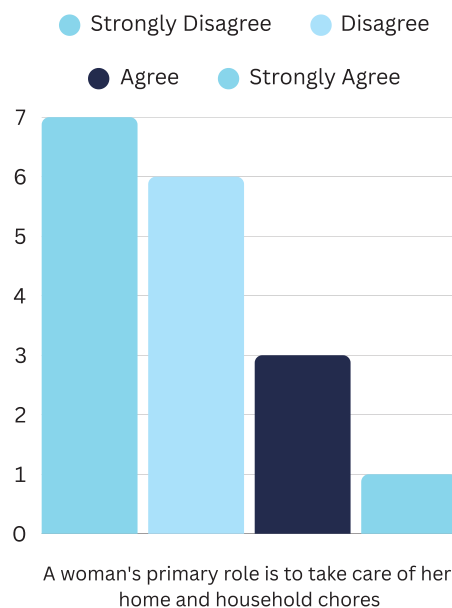


The survey investigated participant views on the abolition of the quota system. The proposition that fixed quotas for women in government roles constitute an unfair practice, disadvantaging deserving men, was met with considerable opposition. Eleven participants disagreed with this point (23.5% strongly disagreed, 41.2% disagreed). However, a minority of five participants (29.4%)

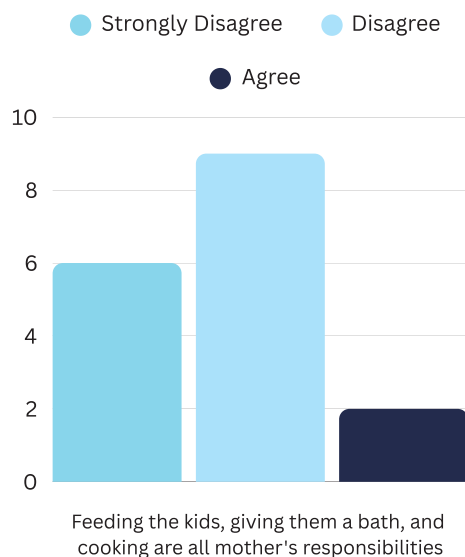
agreed, and one participant (5.9%) strongly agreed, suggesting a divided opinion on the perceived fairness of the quota system.



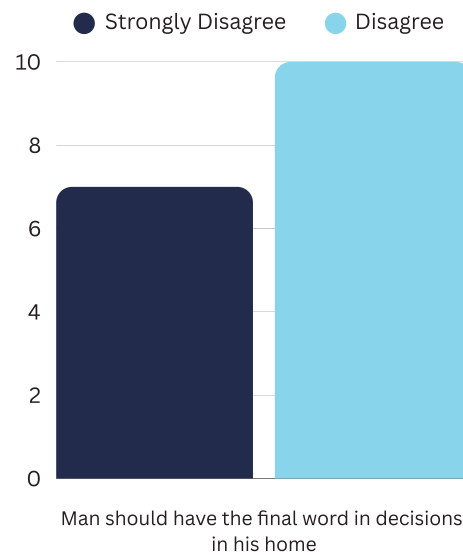
To ascertain traditional gender role perceptions, participants were asked if women's primary responsibility is home and household care. A strong rejection of this traditional view was observed, with seven participants (41.2%) strongly disagreeing and six disagreeing (35.3%). Conversely, four participants (17.6% agreed and 5.9% strongly agreed) seemed to have positive opinion about the statement.



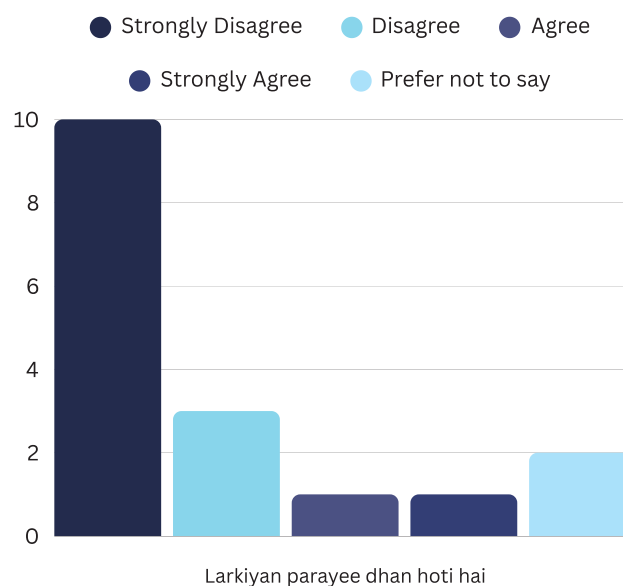
To gather opinions on parental responsibilities, participants were surveyed on whether child-rearing tasks like feeding, care, and meal preparation fall exclusively to mothers. A significant majority rejected this traditional view, with six participants (35.3%) strongly disagreeing and nine disagreeing (52.9%). In contrast, only two participants (11.8%) agreed with the assertion.



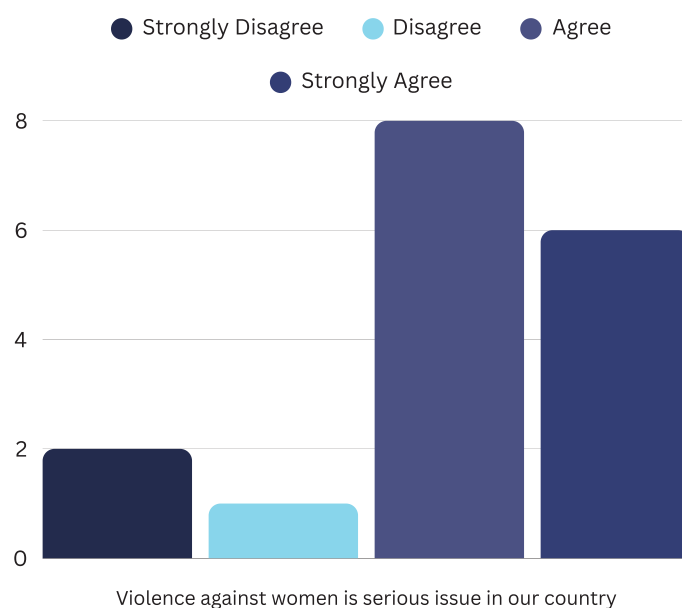
All 17 participants displayed absolute opposition to the idea that a man's say should be final in decision-making at home.



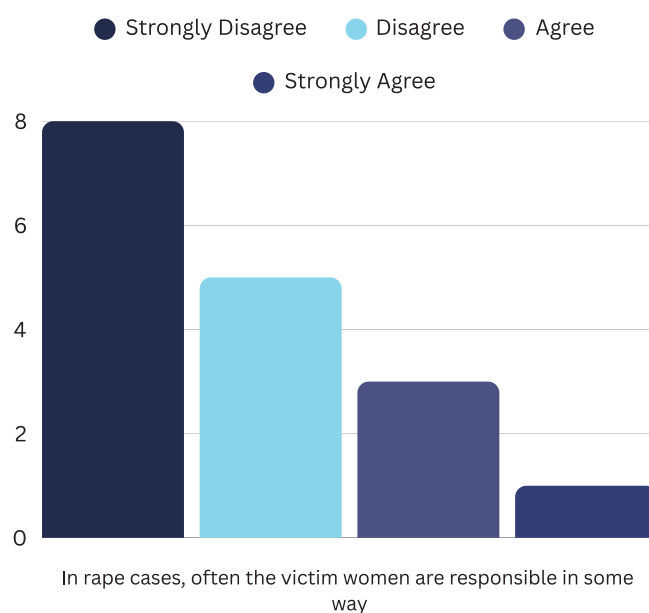
The survey investigated participant views on the cultural adage "women are paraya dhan," commonly used in the Indian Subcontinent. The responses indicated a strong rejection of this concept by 13 participants (58.8% strongly disagreeing, 17.6% disagreeing). In contrast, one participant (5.9%) expressed agreement, another strong agreement (5.9%), and two participants (11.8%) chose not to respond



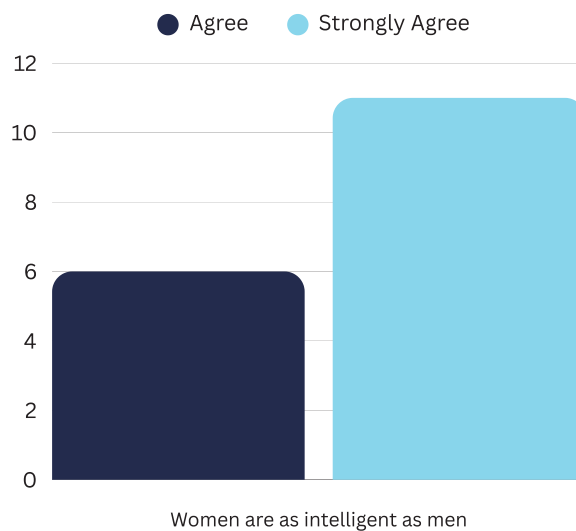
To assess perceptions of gender-based violence, participants were asked about the seriousness of violence against women in Pakistan. A significant proportion of respondents indicated high concern, with eight participants (47.1%) agreeing it was a serious issue and six (35.3%) considering it a grave issue. Conversely, three participants disagreed with this assessment.



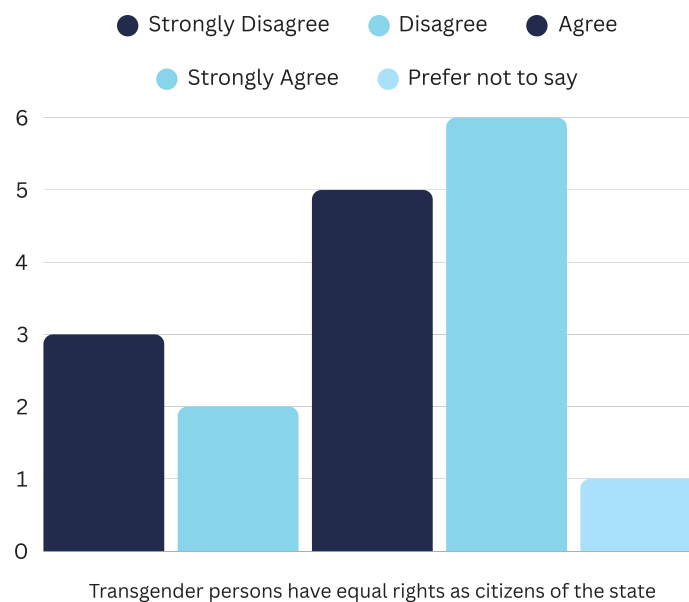
The survey investigated participant opinions on the highly contentious assertion that women are in some way responsible for the rape and sexual abuse they endure. The data revealed a pronounced rejection of this perspective by most respondents, with 8 participants (47.1%) strongly disagreeing and 5 registering disagreement (29.4%). Conversely, a minority of 3 participants (17.6%) agreed with this notion, and 1 participant (5.9%) indicated strong support for it.



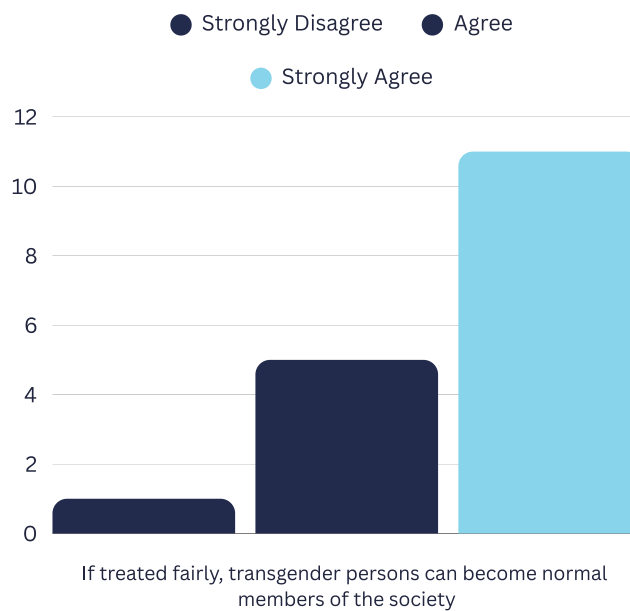
To assess perceptions of intellectual equality, participants were surveyed on whether women possess intelligence equal to that of men. There was unanimous agreement among all 17 participants on this point.



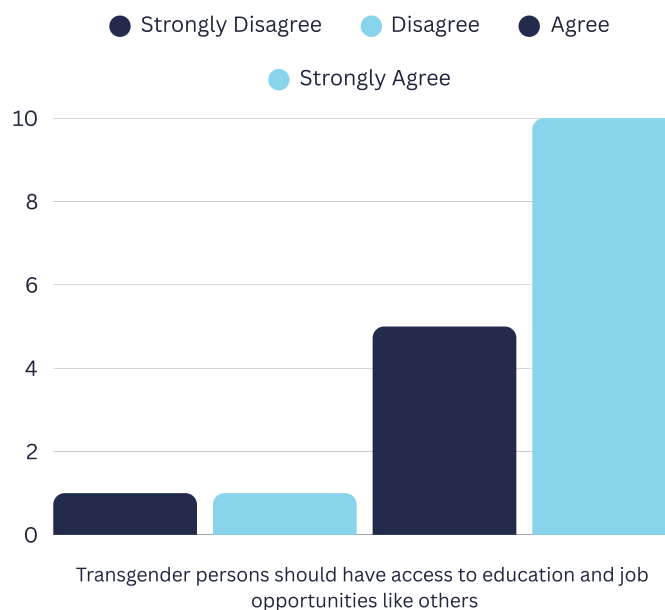
To gauge opinions on the rights of transgender individuals, participants were surveyed. Most respondents expressed support for equality: 5 participants (29.4%) believed transgender people should receive equal rights and opportunities, while 6 affirmed they should be treated as equal citizens of the state (35.3%). However, there was some opposition, with 3 participants (17.6%) strongly discouraging this idea and 2 disagreeing (11.8%). One participant (5.9%) chose not to respond.



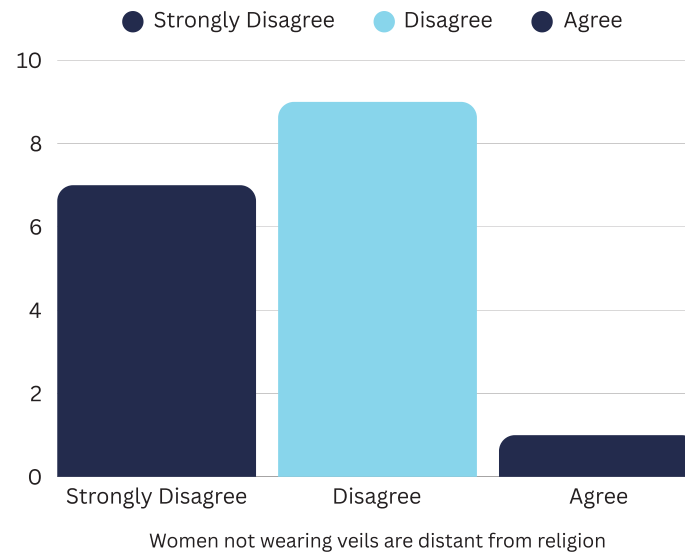
Participants were asked if transgender individuals, if treated justly, could become equal citizens and normal members of society. The overwhelming majority agreed: 11 strongly agreed (64.7%) and 5 agreed to some extent (29.4%), with only one respondent disagreeing (5.9%).



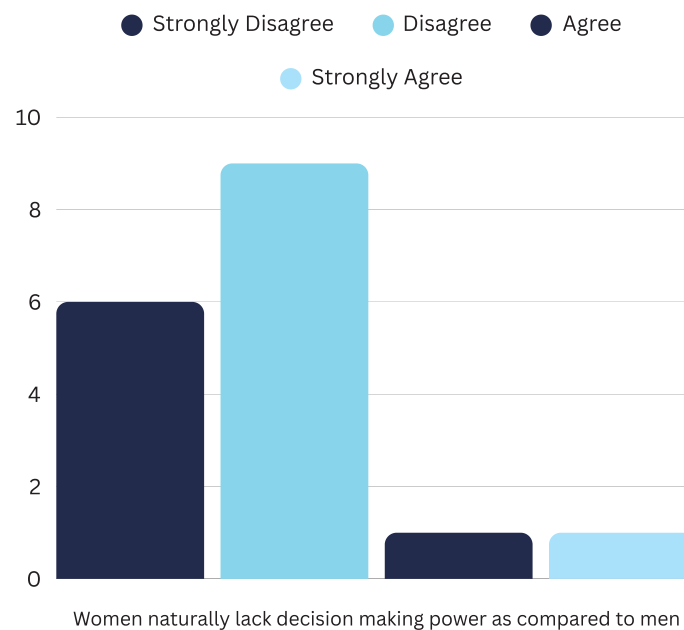
The survey investigated participant views on transgender persons' access to education and job opportunities. The findings demonstrated significant consensus in favor of these rights: 10 participants (58.8%) strongly concurred that basic rights should be afforded to transgender individuals, and an additional 5 participants (29.4%) expressed appreciation for this proposition. Conversely, 2 individuals registered disagreement.



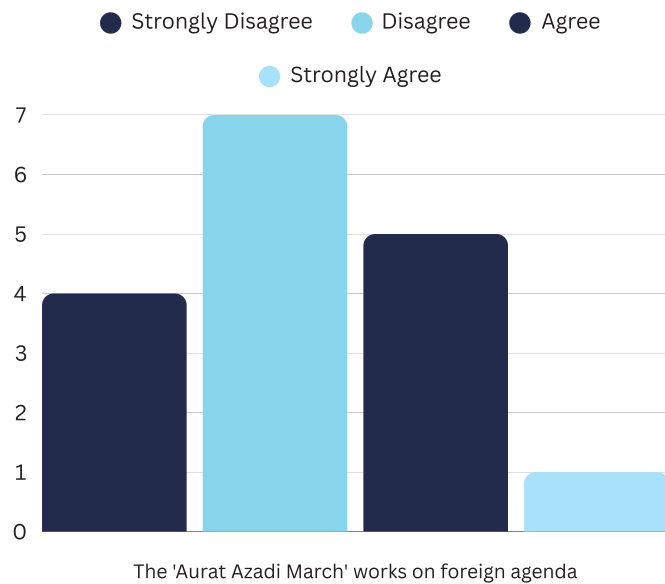
The survey investigated participant opinions on whether the absence of a veil indicates a woman's distance from religious principles. The findings revealed a strong consensus against this interpretation, as 7 participants (41.2%) strongly disagreed and 9 disagreed (52.9%). Conversely, only one respondent (5.9%) concurred with this viewpoint.



Participants were asked about the assertion that women naturally lack decision-making power compared to men. The majority disagreed with this perspective: 5 strongly disagreed (35.3%) and 9 disagreed (52.9%), while 2 participants agreed (11.8%).

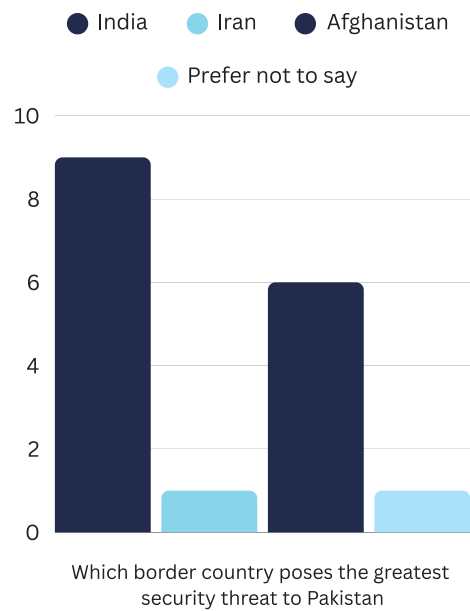


The survey investigated participant opinions on whether the Aurat Azadi March is influenced by or operates on a foreign agenda. The findings indicated a prevalent disagreement with this proposition, as 11 participants (23.5% strongly disagreed, 41.2% disagreed) registered their dissent. Conversely, 5 participants concurred (29.4%) with this view, and one expressed strong agreement (5.9%).

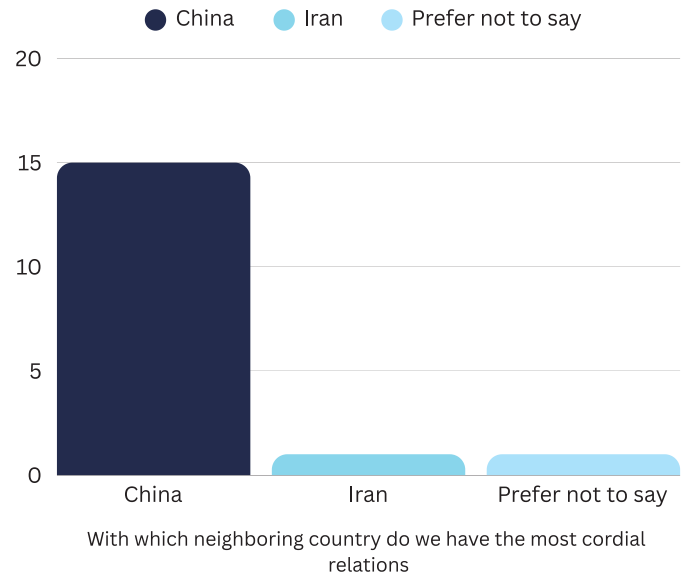


5.6 Cross-Country Relations

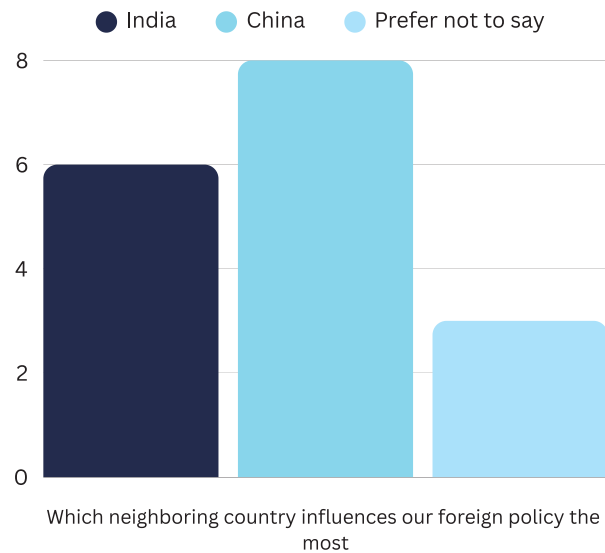
Participants were surveyed on regional politics, specifically asked to identify the country which is perceived as the greatest security threat to Pakistan. The responses revealed that India was overwhelmingly considered the primary threat,. cited by 52.9% of respondents. Furthermore, 6 participants (35.3%) named Afghanistan, 1 nominated Iran, and one individual chose not to share their opinion



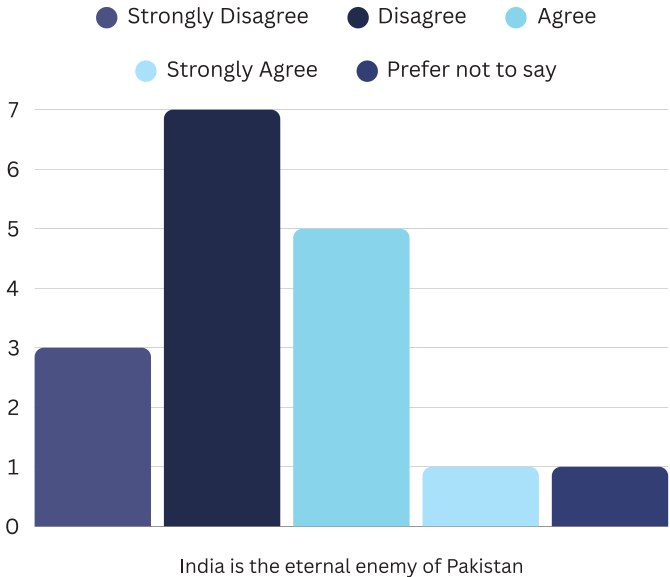
To gauge opinions on cross-country relations, participants were asked to identify the country with which Pakistan maintains its most cordial ties. China emerged as the clear dominant response, selected by 15 of the 17 participants (88.2%). One participant cited Iran (5.9%), while another chose not to respond.



The survey investigated participant perceptions of external influence on Pakistan's foreign policy at regional level. The findings demonstrated a divergence of opinion, with China being cited by eight respondents (47.1%) as the primary influencer, and India by six (35.3%%). A total of three participants (17.6%) opted to withhold their responses.

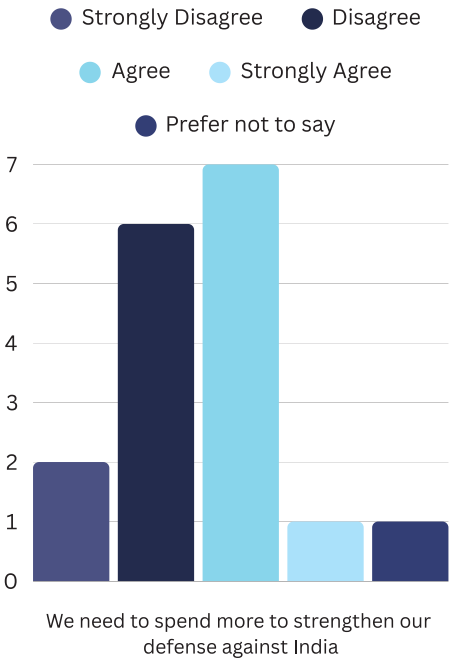


To gauge perceptions of the relationship with India, participants were surveyed on whether they view India as an enemy of Pakistan. The responses revealed a divided opinion: 3 strongly disagreed (17.6%) and 7 disagreed (41.2%), indicating a significant rejection of the "enemy" label by some. Conversely, 5 individuals (29.4%) agreed, and one strongly agreed (5.9%), suggesting this sentiment is held by others. One participant chose to abstain from responding.

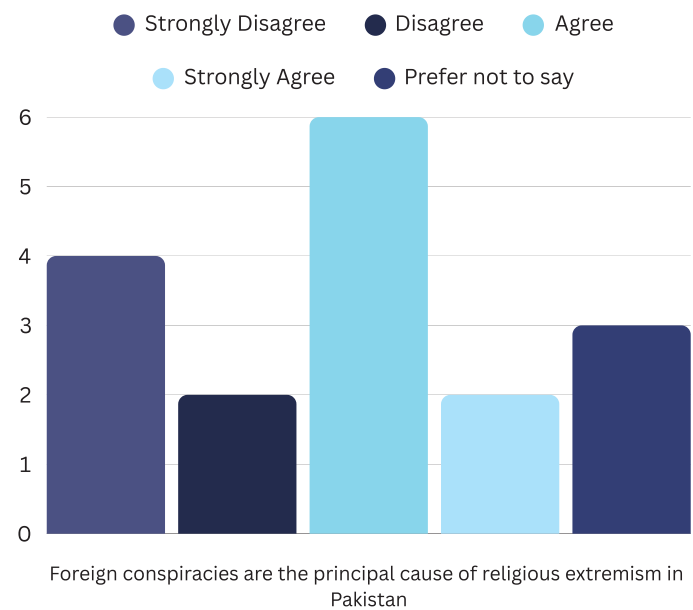


Considering the current deteriorating relations between India and Pakistan, a crucial question was posed to participants: whether Pakistan should allocate more resources to strengthen its defense against India. The responses revealed a mixed sentiment: 2 participants strongly disagreed (11.8%) and 6 disagreed

(35.3%) with increased spending, while 7 agreed (41.2%) and 1 strongly agreed (5.9%) with it. One individual opted not to disclose their view.

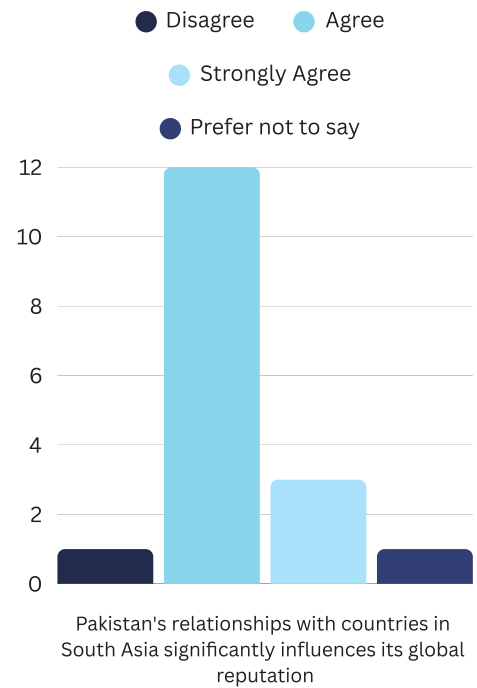


In the context of decades of extremism and terrorism affecting Pakistan, the survey explored common perceptions regarding its origins. Participants were specifically queried on whether foreign conspiracies constitute the principal cause of religious extremism in the country. The findings demonstrated a divided perspective: 4 respondents (23.5%) expressed strong disagreement, and 2 registered disagreements (11.8%). Conversely, 6 participants (35.3%) concurred with this proposition, and 2 indicated strong support for it (11.8%). Three participants (17.6%) chose to withhold their responses.

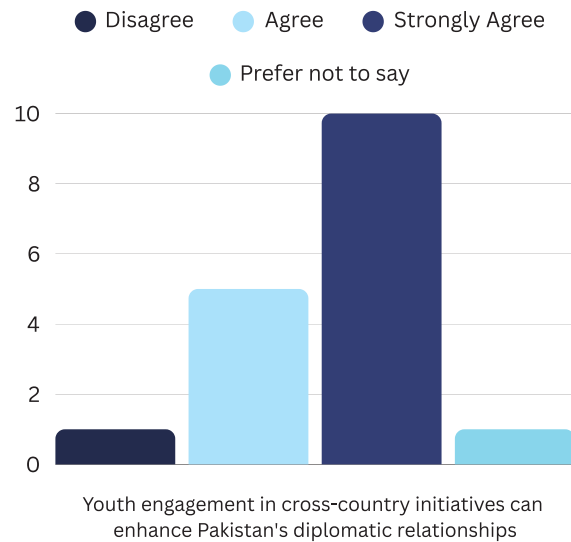


Regional integration plays a vital role in fostering national growth and development. When participants were asked if Pakistan's relations with South

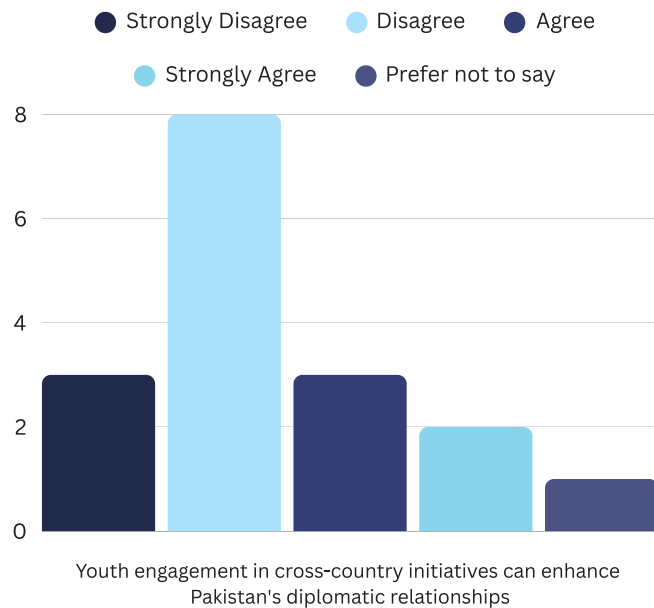
Asian countries influence its global reputation, a clear majority (15 out of the 17 respondents) affirmed this link. Only one participant disagreed, and one chose not to respond.



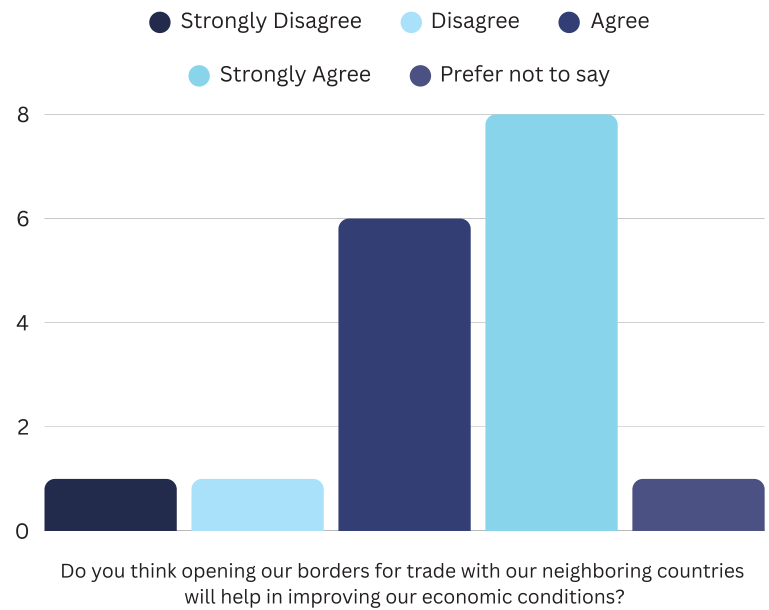
People-to-people connections are playing a pivotal role in the 21st century. To explore this, participants were asked if youth engagement in cross-country initiatives could enhance Pakistan's diplomatic relationships. A clear majority of 15 participants agreed, while one disagreed and one preferred not to respond.



Participants were asked if religious and cultural differences hinder the relationship between Pakistan and its neighboring countries. The majority, totaling 11 participants (17.6% strongly disagreed, 47.1% disagreed), did not see these differences as an impediment. Five participants (17.6% agreed, 11.8% strongly agreed), however, agreed with this perspective, and one preferred not to respond.

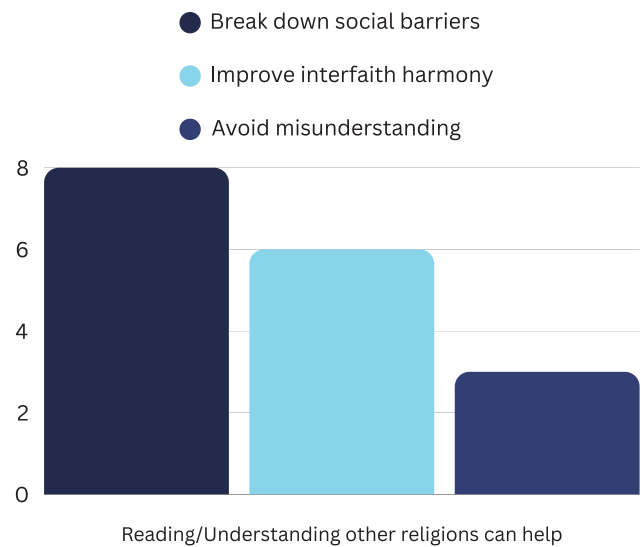


To gauge opinions on economic improvement, participants were asked whether opening borders and enhancing trade relations with neighboring countries could benefit Pakistan's economy. A predominant view emerged, with 8 participants (47.1%) strongly agreeing and 6 agreeing (35.3%), totaling 14 in favor of this approach. Only two participants expressed disagreement, and one opted not to answer.

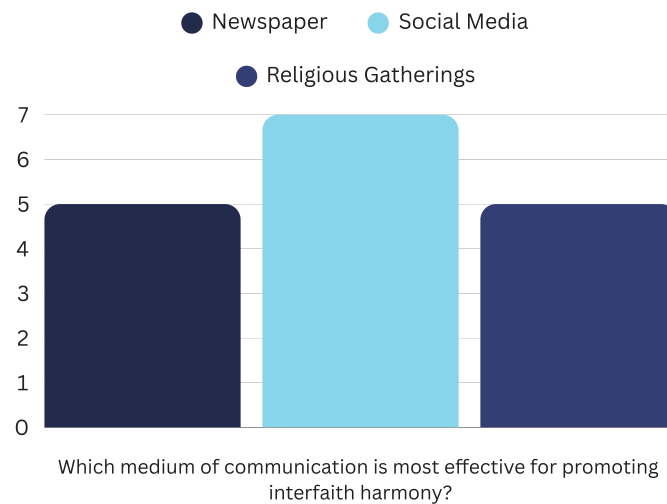


5.7 Interfaith Harmony

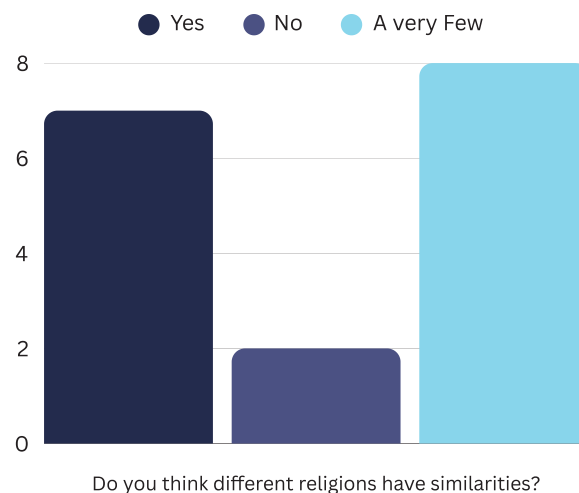
To analyze the level of tolerance among participants, they were asked if understanding other religions could help in building bridges. Responses indicated varied benefits: 8 participants (47.1%) believed it helps in breaking down social barriers, 6 stated it improves interfaith harmony (35.3%), and 3 suggested it could aid in avoiding misunderstandings (17.6%).



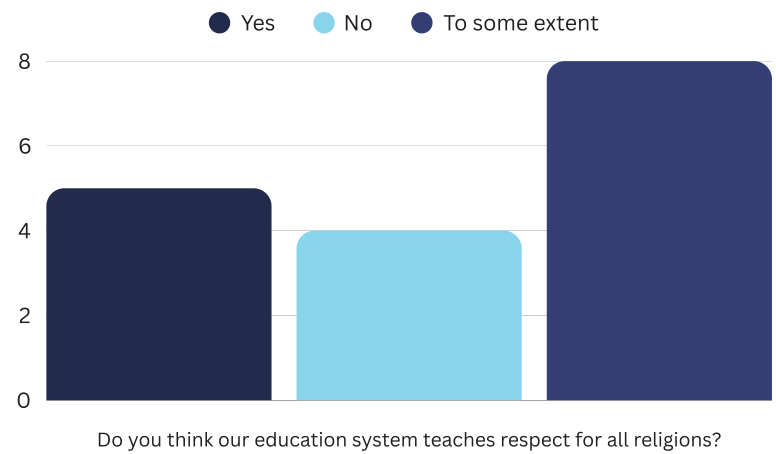
Participants were asked about the most effective communication medium for fostering interfaith harmony and tolerance among people, revealing diverse perspectives. Five participants (29.4%) advocated newspapers, underscoring the role of reading in enhancing understanding. A larger group of seven participants (41.2%) identified social media as key, citing its widespread usage. Additionally, five participants (29.4%) proposed religious gatherings as a means to promote tolerance.



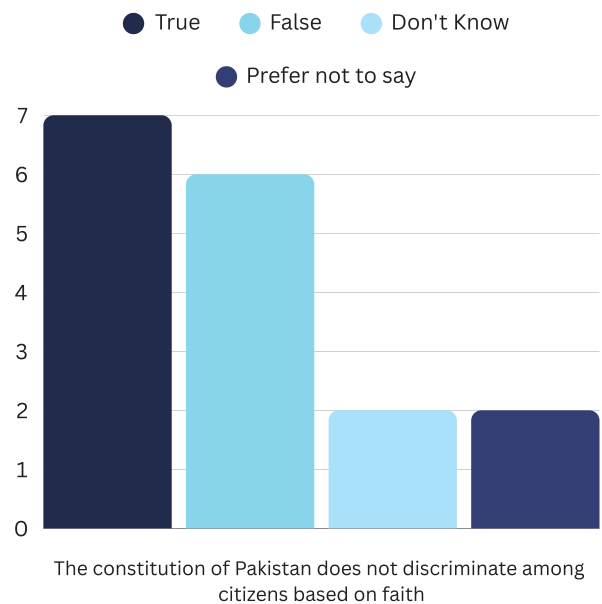
Participants were queried regarding the presence of similarities among religions. The preponderant response indicated an affirmation of such commonalities, with 7 participants (41.2%) providing an unequivocal "yes." A further 8 participants (47.1%) conceded the existence of similarities, but these are restricted in scope and are limited. In contrast, two participants (11.8%) expressed a negative view on this matter



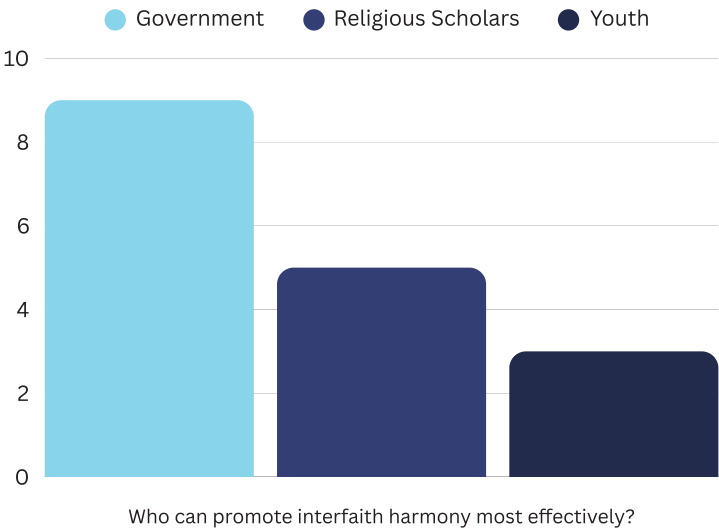
When participants were queried on whether the education system cultivates religious harmony, varied perspectives emerged. Five participants (29.4%) indicated an affirmative view. However, a plurality of eight participants (47.1%) perceived its contribution as being limited in scope. In contrast, four participants (23.5%) expressed a negative assessment of its role in this regard.



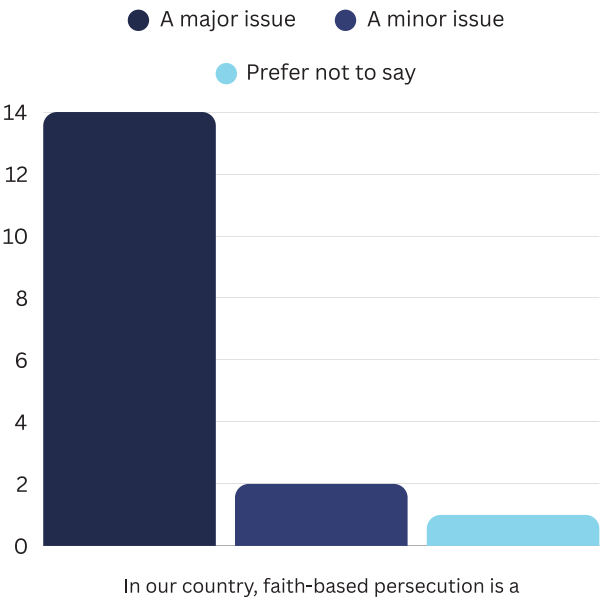
Participants were queried on whether the Constitution of Pakistan discriminates among its citizens based on faith. Seven respondents (41.2%) affirmed the Constitution's non-discriminatory nature, emphasizing its guarantee of equal rights for all citizens. In contrast, six participants (35.3%) contended that the Constitution has been unsuccessful in upholding equal rights for individuals of varying religious affiliations. Furthermore, two participants (11.8%) elected to provide no response, and two (11.8%) acknowledged a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding this issue.



to determine the most effective agents for promoting religious and interfaith harmony, participants were surveyed. The government's role was deemed most prominent by nine participants. Following this, five participants highlighted religious scholars, and three identified youth as the optimal choice in this endeavor.



To assess participants' understanding of interfaith issues, a question was posed regarding faith-based persecution. A significant majority of 14 participants (82.4%) identified it as a major issue. Conversely, two participants (11.8%) considered it a minor issue, and one chose not to respond.

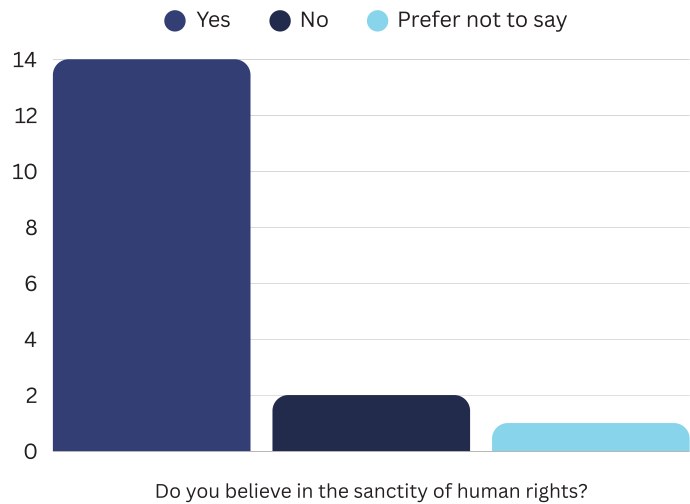


Paigham-e-Pakistan, a significant counter-terrorism narrative and fatwa issued by religious scholars, is considered an impressive step in de-radicalizing Pakistani society. Recognizing its importance, the program's folder included its key points, with the expectation that youth would read and analyze it within Pakistan's current scenario. When participants were asked about their awareness, 6 indicated knowledge of it (35.3%), 7 had heard of it but lacked detailed information (41.2%), and 4 had never heard about it (23.5%). Notably, despite varying levels of awareness, all participants were unable to articulate the actual contents

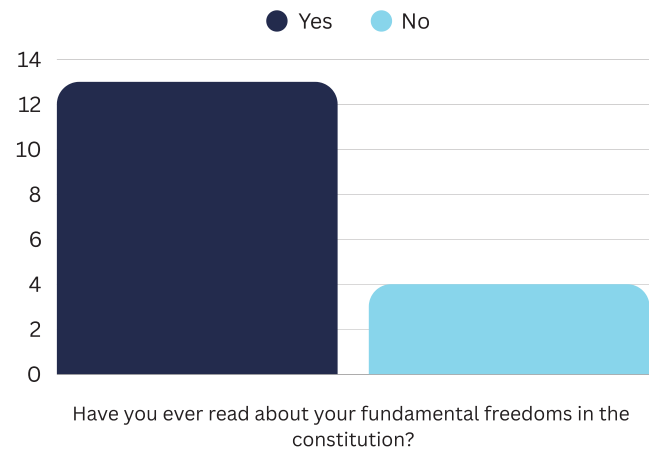


5.8 Constitution, Citizenship and Rule of Law

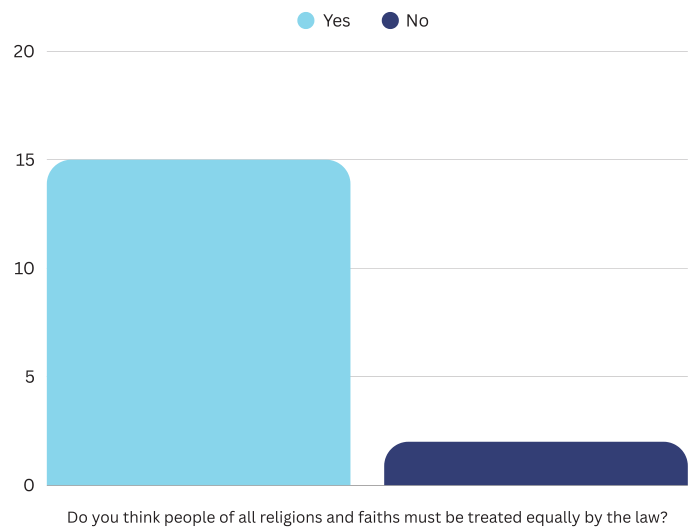
Participants were queried regarding their belief in the sanctity of human rights. A significant consensus emerged, with 14 participants (82.4%) affirming this principle. Conversely, two participants (11.8%) expressed disagreement, and one opted to abstain from providing a response



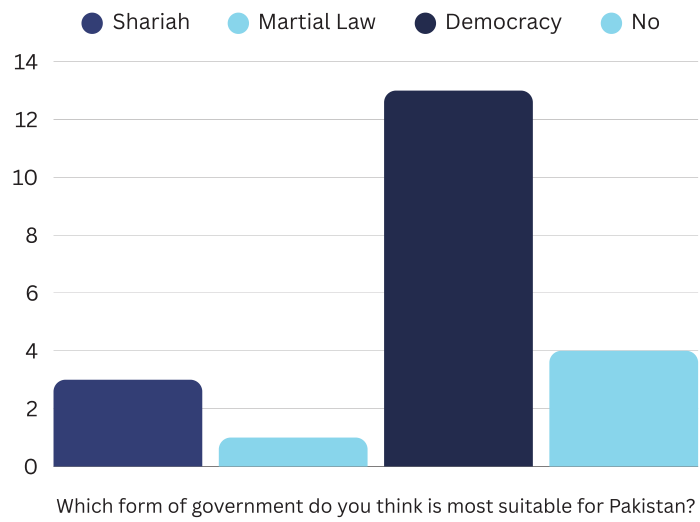
To assess awareness of constitutional provisions, participants were queried on whether they had read about their fundamental rights and freedoms as stipulated by the Constitution. A significant majority of 13 participants (76.5%) confirmed having done so, while 4 reported no such engagement (23.5%).



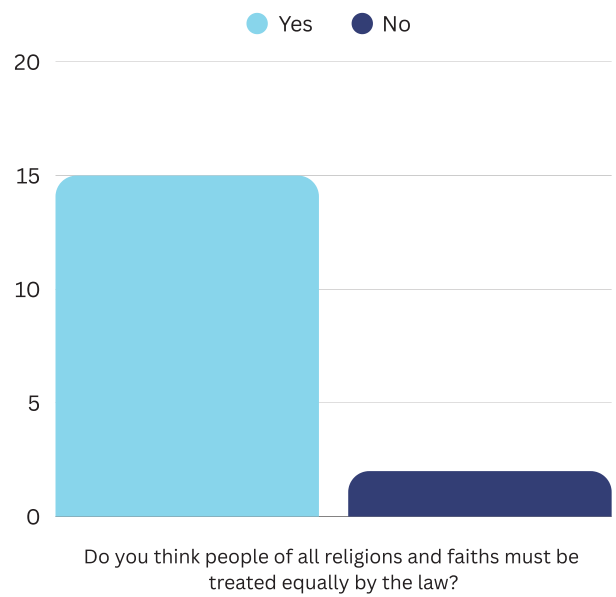
A clear consensus among participants 88.2% (15 out of 17) supported the notion that people of all religions and faiths must be treated equally by the law. Only 2 participants (11.8%) held a contrary opinion.



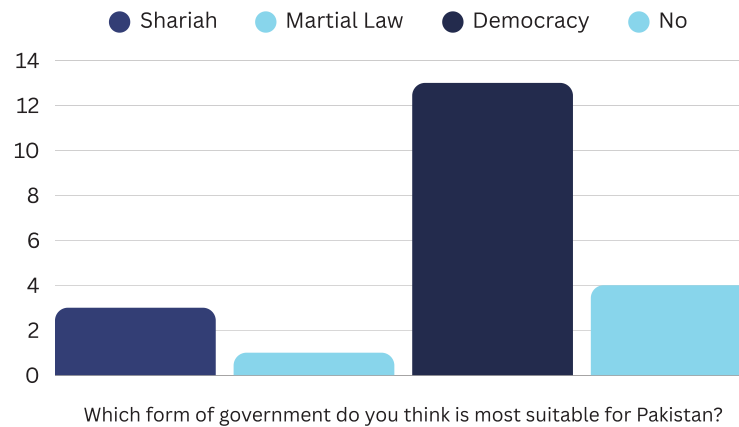
Participants were asked which form of government they believed would be better for Pakistan. A significant majority of 13 participants favored a democratic form of government. In contrast, 3 participants advocated for the implementation of a Shariah system, and 1 chose martial law.



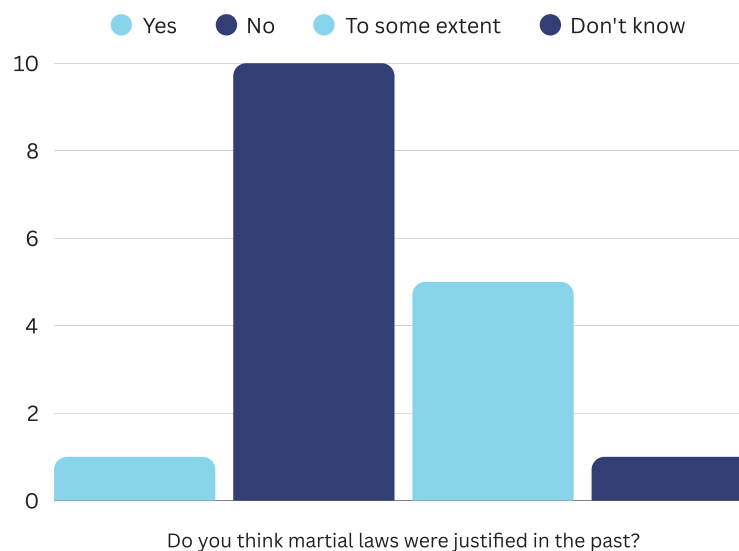
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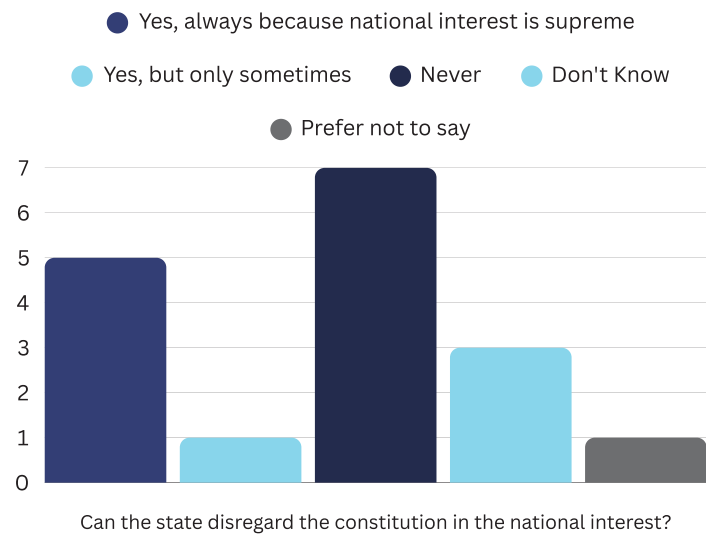
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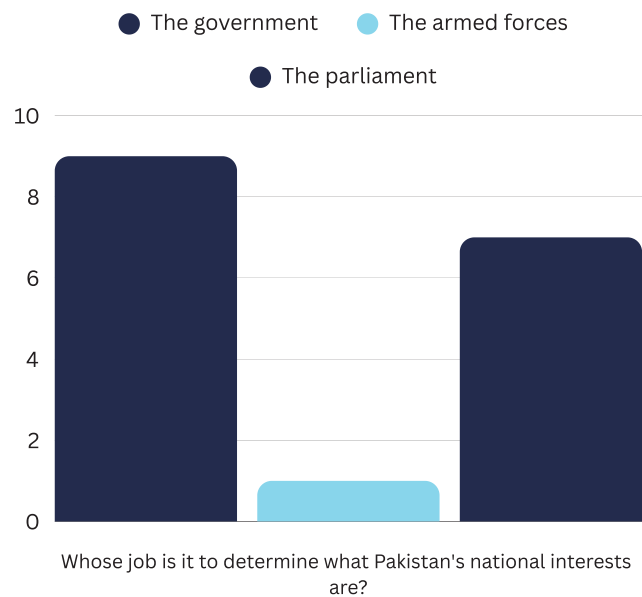
Participants were queried concerning their assessment of past martial law implementations. The predominant sentiment, expressed by 10 individuals, was that such measures should not have been implemented. In contrast, 1 participant considered them justified, and 5 perceived them as partially justified. Additionally, 1 participant reported insufficient knowledge to form an opinion on this topic.



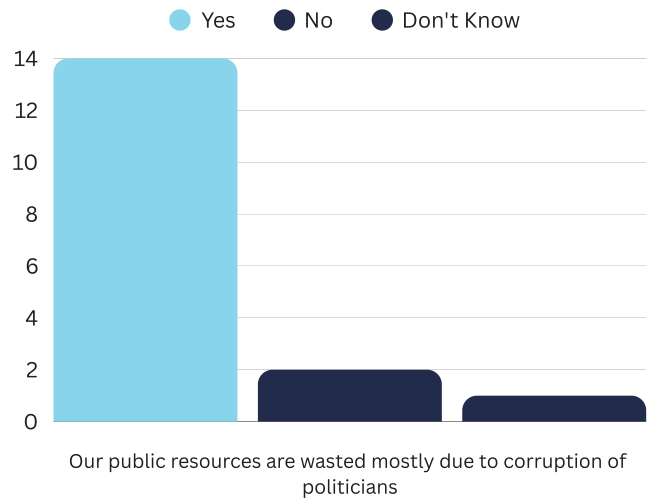
To understand views on constitutional authority, participants were inquired about the circumstances under which a state might disregard its constitution of national interest. A clear majority of seven participants unequivocally stated that the Constitution should never be disregarded. In contrast, five participants argued that national interest is supreme and should always override the Constitution, and one suggested a situational approach. Three participants indicated a lack of knowledge, and one chose to abstain from responding.



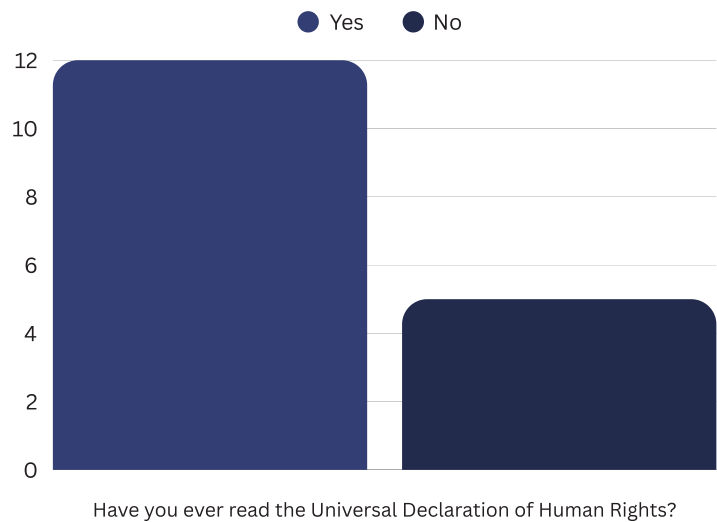
To ascertain perceptions on the locus of authority for determining Pakistan's national interest, participants were surveyed. While the government was identified by nine participants as having this responsibility, a significant number (seven) attributed it to the Parliament. One participant, however, indicated the armed forces as the relevant entity.



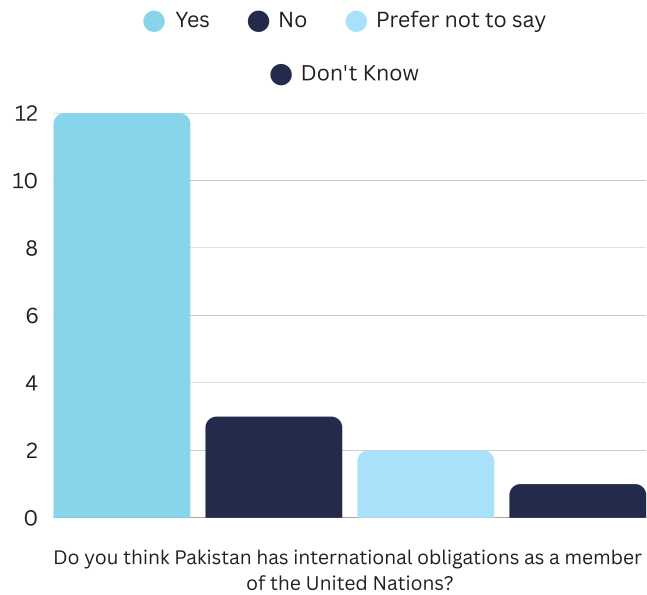
When asked if political corruption leads to wasted resources, an overwhelming 82.4% of participants affirmed this view. A small minority of two individuals dissented, and one participant chose not to respond.



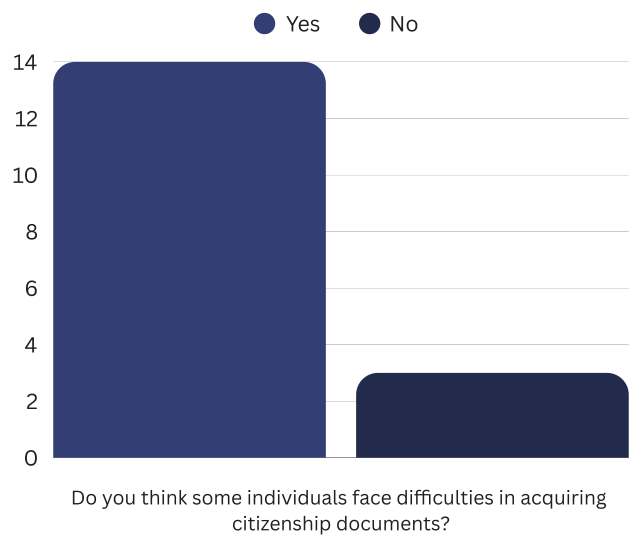
To assess participants' familiarity and engagement with human rights principles, they were surveyed on whether they had read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The findings revealed that 70.6% (12 individuals) had indeed read the document, contrasting with 29.4% (5 individuals) who had not.



With the aim of understanding participants' awareness of international laws and Pakistan's role within them, they were asked if Pakistan has international obligations by virtue of its UN membership. The survey revealed that 70.6% of respondents recognized these obligations. However, 17.6% (3 participants) did not, and 2 participants opted not to provide an answer

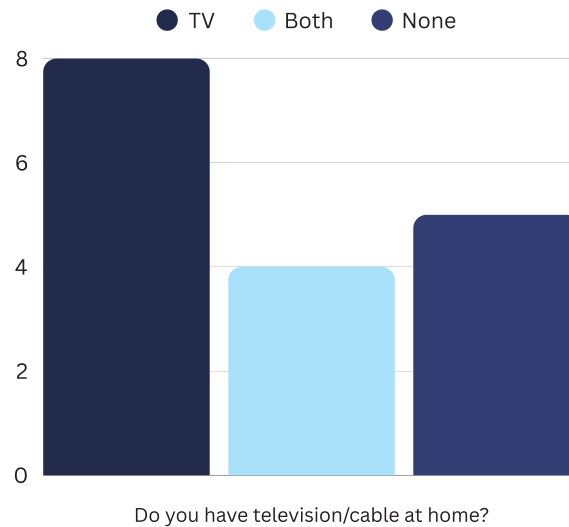


As part of an inquiry into the systemic issues faced by citizens, participants were asked if individuals encounter difficulties in acquiring citizenship documents. A strong majority of 82.4% (14 participants) affirmed this difficulty, while the remaining 3 participants disagreed.



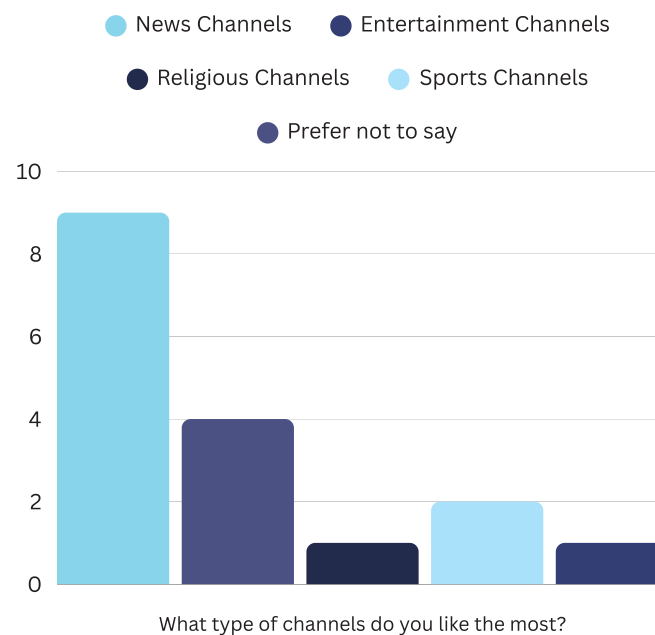
5.9 Role of Media

When asked about their household entertainment, 8 participants reported having television only, while 4 had both television and cable. Five participants indicated they had neither.

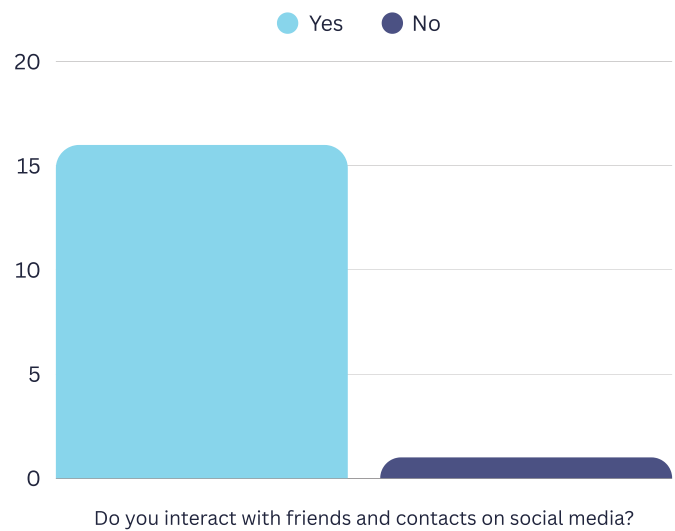


A survey on media consumption habits revealed that news channels are the most preferred category, watched by 52.9% of participants. Following this, entertainment channels were the second most popular choice, favored by 23.5% of respondents. The remaining preferences were distributed among other genres; 11.8% watch sport channels and 5.9% consume Religious Content.

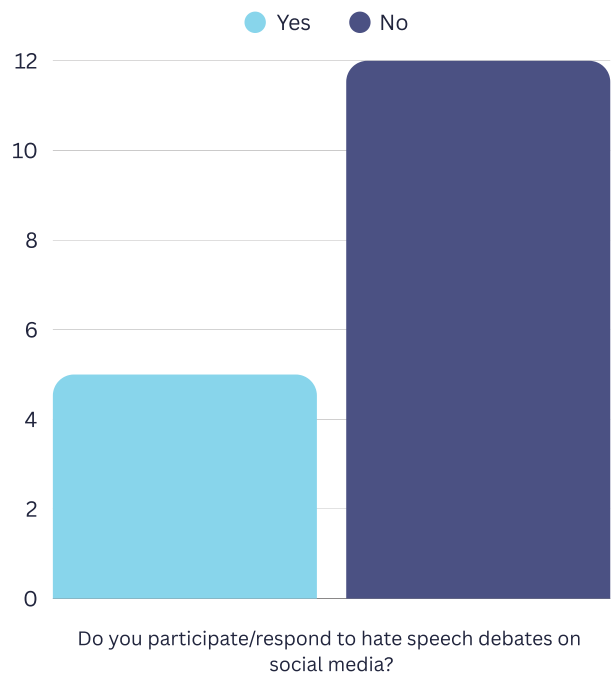
This data indicates a strong preference for informational content among the surveyed group.



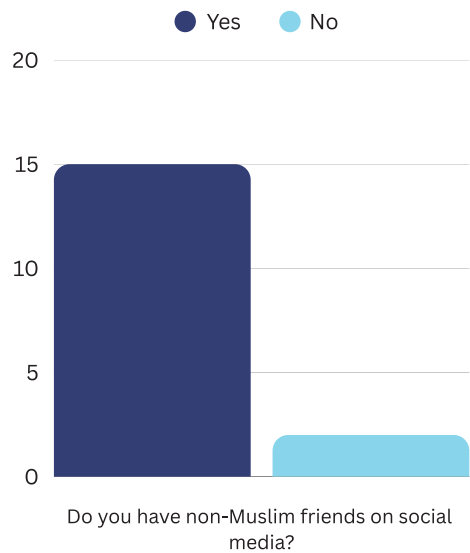
Participants were surveyed on their online interactions and social media habits with friends. The overwhelming majority, 16 individuals, confirmed they engage in online chatting and maintain online friendships. In contrast, one participant stated they do not.



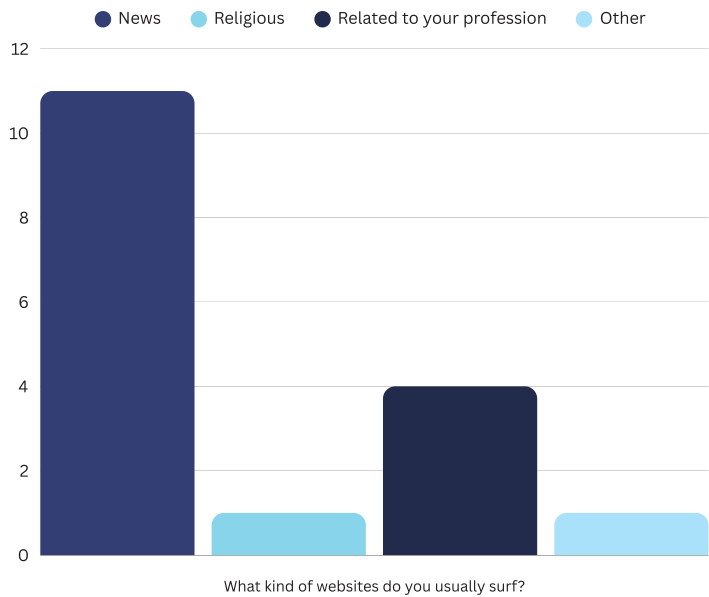
Participants were questioned about their interaction with hate speech encountered on social media and whether they had responded to it. A clear majority of 12 participants (70.6%) indicated they had not engaged in such debates or content, while 5 participants (29.4%) confirmed they had participated in hate speech discussions.



A total of 15 participants reported having non-Muslim friends on social media, with 2 participants stating they did not.



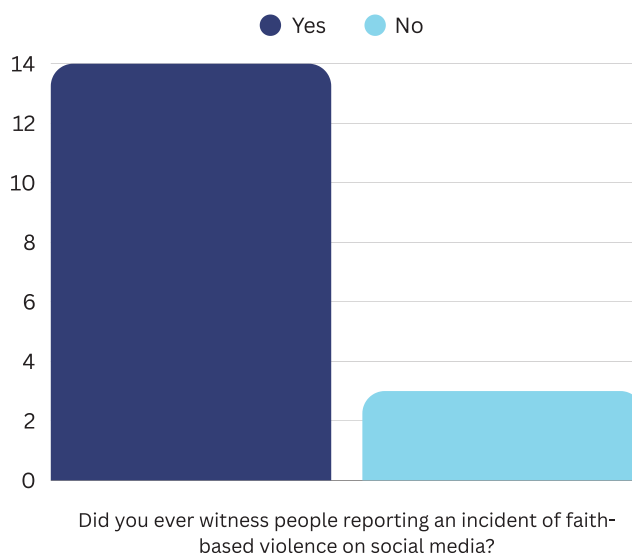
When asked about their usual web surfing habits, 11 participants reported visiting news websites, 4 focused on websites related to their professions, 1 accessed religious websites. One participant indicated they surfed other types of websites not specified in the given options.



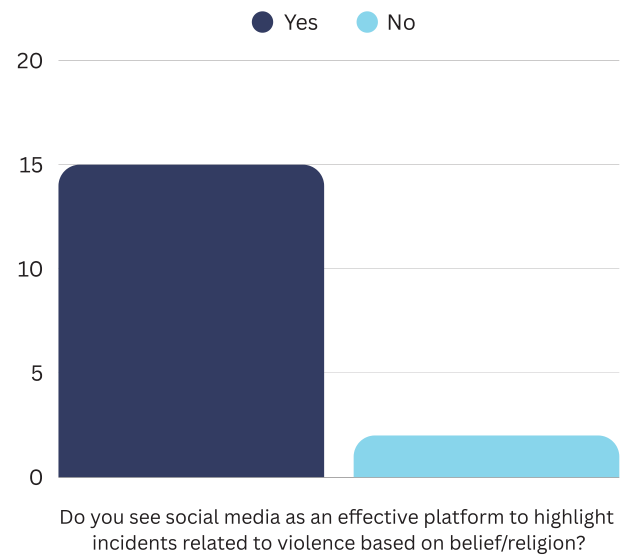
When asked if they had ever reported an incident of faith-based violence from their area on social media, 7 participants confirmed they had. In contrast, 10 participants stated they had not.



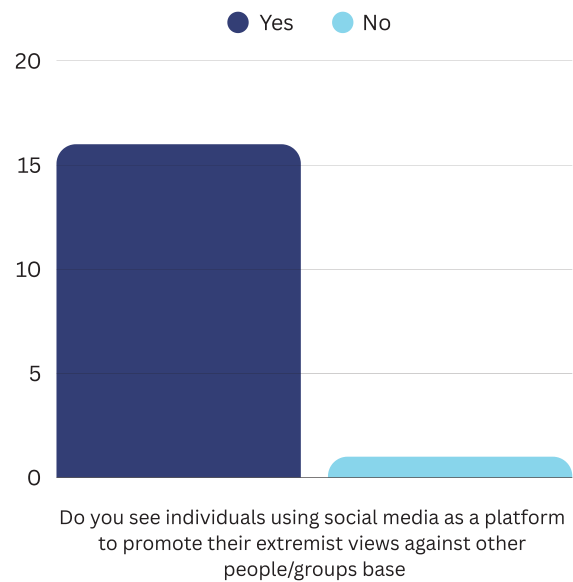
Participants were questioned about observing instances of faith-based violence being reported by others on social media. A strong majority of 14 individuals (82.4%) confirmed they had witnessed such reporting, whereas 3 participants (17.6%) stated they had not.



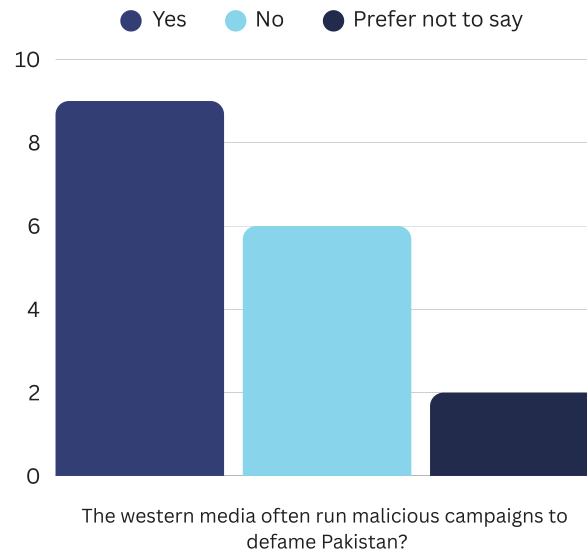
Participants were surveyed on their perception of social media's efficacy in highlighting social issues, specifically faith-based violent incidents. An overwhelming 15 individuals affirmed its effectiveness, with only 2 participants holding a differing opinion.



When asked if they observed individuals promoting extremist and radical views on social media platforms, 16 participants reported witnessing the spread of hatred against other communities and faiths. Only one participant indicated they had not.



Participants were asked for their opinion on whether Western media engages in malicious campaigns to defame Pakistan. A significant portion of respondents, 52.9%, concurred with this assertion. However, 6 participants stated that this was not true, and 2 chose to abstain from answering.



6. Comparative analysis

Pre-Workshop and Post-Workshop Survey Results

Introduction

The first dataset illustrates the responses of individuals prior to attending an interfaith workshop, whereas the second demonstrates responses post workshop attendance. With it we can measure how attitudes and understanding changed after the workshop when compared to responses before the workshop.

Gender Distribution

According to the pre-workshop survey, 32.7% of respondents are women and 67.3% of respondents are men, with 31.8% of respondents being men, 65.9% being women, and only one choosing not to reveal their gender. The post-workshop survey shows a Positive engagement and eager participation from female participants.

Age Distribution

Both surveys indicate a disproportionately high representation of younger participants. The demographic profile of the participants indicates that in the pre-workshop survey, 21.8% of the respondents belong to the age group of 15-20 years, 56.4% belonged to age group between 21-25 years, Followed by 16.4% in the age group of 26-30 years and 1.8% in the age group of 31-35 years. Meanwhile, 3.6% were of the age above 35.

The relative over-representation of younger participants points to two key implications: first, that younger individuals may have a heightened interest in social and interfaith topics, and second, that the workshop's outreach successfully targeted a uniform demographic.

The participants in post survey belonged to the following age groups:

20.5% from 15-20 age group,

47.7% of the 21-25 age group,

13.56% from age 26-30

2.3% were above the age of 30

15.9% chose not to disclose their age.

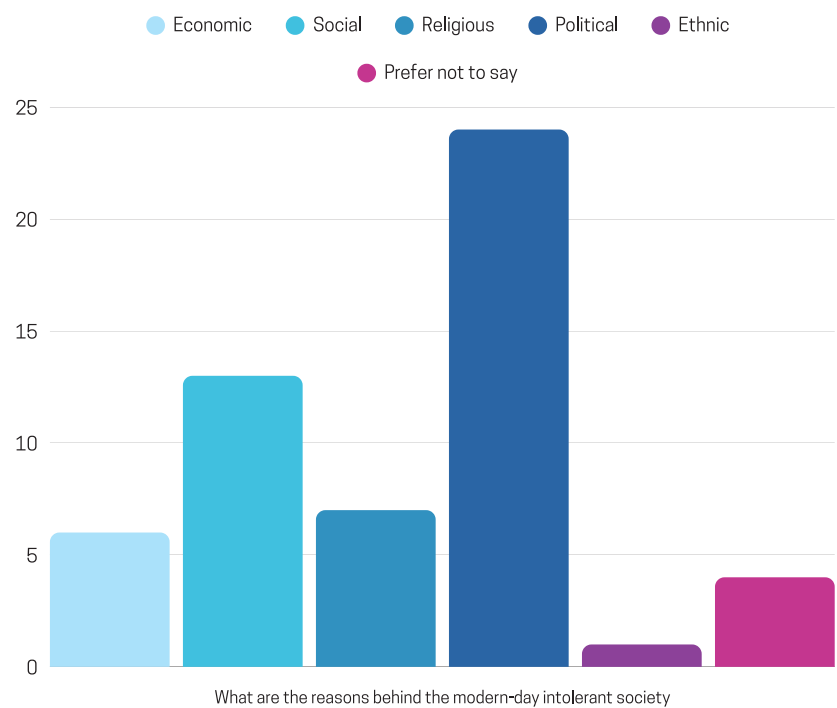
Urban vs. Rural Background

According to the pre-workshop survey, 58.2% of participants are from cities, and 40% are from rural areas. The post-workshop survey indicates a more balanced urban representation (43.2% rural and 54.5% urban). These variations, both surveys show a higher representation of people from urban areas, which may have an impact on opinions on topics like intolerance and interfaith discussion.

Perception of Intolerance and Interfaith Harmony

According to the pre-workshop survey, a significant majority of 83.6% of participants believe that intolerance is a serious social problem. The participants provided various explanations for the prevalence of intolerance in society.

The post-workshop survey, on the other hand, shows a more positive attitude, with 97.7% of respondents supporting interfaith harmony and 88.6% strongly believed in its beneficial effects. This change implies that the workshop was successful in encouraging a more positive outlook on societal harmony.



Media's Role in Interfaith Awareness

Both surveys acknowledge the media's role in promoting interfaith harmony. In the pre-workshop survey, 81.2% of respondents believe the media can highlight interfaith cooperation. Meanwhile, 23.6% participants stated that they come across the news regarding intolerance and interfaith disharmony. The data suggests that while participants already recognized media as a tool for fostering religious harmony, there is a dire need that media highlights these issues more frequently.

Social Media and Misinformation Awareness

To ascertain their media literacy habits, participants were queried on whether they verified the authentication of news consumed via social media. In the pre-workshop survey, 81.8% of respondents verify information before sharing it on social media. However, the post-workshop survey shows that 93.2% participants agreed on the importance of verifying information before dissemination. This marked increase suggests that the workshop effectively raised awareness about the dangers of misinformation and the importance of responsible media consumption.

Willingness to Engage in Interfaith Activities

According to the pre-workshop poll, 34.5% of participants have gone to official interfaith gatherings, and 61.8% have engaged in interfaith conversations. With 95.5% of respondents willing to suggest the workshop to others and 95.5% receptive to interfaith projects, the post-workshop poll shows a significantly higher openness to participate in interfaith collaboration. This notable rise indicates that participants' motivation to engage in interfaith activities was significantly impacted by the program.

Trust in Media for Reporting Faith-Based Violence

The pre-workshop survey highlights that 78.2% participants mostly use social media for information. In contrast, the post-workshop survey examines the perceived credibility of different media sources, with 34.1% trusting social media, 34.1% preferring electronic media, and 27.3% relying on print media.

Awareness of Legal Safeguards for Religious Freedom

The pre-workshop survey reveals that just 29.1% of participants know about the laws that support interfaith harmony, highlighting a big gap in legal awareness. On the flip side, the post-workshop survey indicates that 65.9% of people feel that Pakistan's Constitution offers enough protections for religious freedom. This difference suggests that the workshop did a great job of raising awareness about constitutional safeguards, but there's still work to be done to help everyone grasp interfaith policies more thoroughly.

7. Conclusion

A comparative analysis of pre- and post-workshop survey data reveals a significant positive shift in participants' attitudes toward interfaith harmony. Before the training, most respondents demonstrated a passive awareness of intolerance but had low personal involvement in interfaith activities and lacked knowledge about their legal protections.

Following the workshop, participants emerged with a greater sense of optimism and a stronger commitment to interfaith collaboration. They also gained a deeper understanding of legal protections and developed tools to combat misinformation. This analysis underscores how targeted training can be a highly effective tool for fostering tolerance and promoting social cohesion within a community.

Learning is a fundamental process that drives personal and societal change. The participants appeared highly satisfied with the "Building Bridges" initiative, finding that the workshops inspired them to reflect, innovate, and take action for both personal growth and the betterment of society.

A majority of 87.3% believe that through debate and dialogue people could build understanding about different religions and cultures. This could help create common ground for fostering tolerance in a society where 60 pc of the participants claimed that they have experienced biasness due to their religions.

Learning is a fundamental process that drives personal and societal change. The participants appeared highly satisfied with the "Building Bridges" initiative, finding that the workshops inspired them to reflect, innovate, and take action for both personal growth and the betterment of society.

Annexures

Annexure 1: List of the resource persons

Sr. no	Names of Resource Persons	Designation
1	Dr. Khalid Masud	Former Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology and Member of Shariat Appellate Bench of Supreme Court of Pakistan.
2	Dr. Syed Jaffar Ahmad	Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Sohail University, and Director of Institute of Historical and Social Research, Karachi.
3	Wusatullah Khan	Journalist, Columnist and Host.
4	Ghazi Salahuddin	Scholar, Author, and Journalist.
5	Jami Chandio	Executive Director, Center for Peace and Civil Society, Writer and Scholar.
6	Mujtaba Rathore	Executive Director, Islamic Research Institute of Social Sciences.
7	Farnood Alam	Columnist and Journalist.
8	Muhammad Amir Rana	President, Pak Institute for Peace Studies. Columnist and Senior Security Analyst.

Sr. no	Names of Resource Persons	Designation
9	Imran Mukhtar	Senior Journalist and Media Coordinator, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS).
10	Ali Raza Lashari	Assistant Professor at Shah Abdul Latif University (SALU).
11	Dileep Kumar Doshi	Advocate High Court, Islamabad and Human Rights Activist.
12	Veengas	Founding editor and journalist at The Rise News
13	Muhammad Murtaza	Project Manager, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS).
14	Hina Khaliq Taj	Research Officer, Pak Institute for Peace Studies.

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of Pak Institute for Peace Studies

Project Director: Muhammad Amir Rana
Project Concept: Safdar Sial
Report Author: Esham Farooq
Data Analyst: Esham Farooq
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About PIPS

Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) is an Islamabad-based research and advocacy organization. The Institute offers a range of consultancy services through a combination of independent research and analysis, innovative academic programs, and hands-on training and support that serve the following basic themes: Conflict analysis and peacebuilding, dialogue, prevent/counter violent extremism (P/CVE), internal and regional security, and media for peace and democracy.

PIPS conducts structured dialogues, focused group discussions, and national and international seminars to understand the issues listed earlier and also strengthen partnerships. The outcomes of PIPS research and planned events have extensively been reported in the mainstream media which adds to its credibility as an active and well networked civil society organization. PIPS policy reports and recommendations on security and CVE have frequently been cited in various works and included in state policy debates and documents.

Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) conducted a research study in 2024-25 under the title “Building Bridges, Fostering Tolerance and Inclusivity among Youth”. The program was particularly designed to engage Pakistan's youth from diverse backgrounds. The participants belonging to Madrassas, universities, media and social activists were engaged to improve in them, support for freedom of faith, and religious tolerance and harmony. It builds upon the philosophical approach that youth is part of a solution to challenges thrown by violent extremism and communal and sectarian discord.



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