Religious Minorities as victims to Terrorism: Socio-linguistic and Social bonds for reclaiming them in District Kohat, Pakistan

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Abstract

The fire of terrorism, ignited by 9/11, cast chronic effects on overall Pakhtun society, including the religious minorities who remained most hard-hit, as terrorist groups full of cut-throats fanatics, particularly in Pakistan, justified their brutalities through religion. Their fear of being shot, slaughtered, or victimized through hooting, verbal abuses, linguistic slogans, and physical attacks, pushed them to silence, seclusion, and sometimes leaving their jobs and abodes. The researchers witnessed the clouds of fear and mistrust looming large over their faces inside district Kohat, which is home to a plethora of diverse religious minorities. Although the intensity of terrorism has subsided now, yet the feelings of mistrust and avoidance survive between the majority and minorities. The researchers undertook this study to explore the factors that can restore minorities of Kohat to their previous pro-active social role and harmonize their relations and communication with the majority. Using the grounded theory method and adopting purposive sampling, the researchers interviewed 13 Christians, 7 Hindus, 6 Sikhs, and to answer some questions, 5 Muslim scholars were also interviewed. A semi-structured interview guide was used until the saturation of data. The basic factors working behind a lack of communication, contention, and mistrust were identified and categorized as harmony, pluralism, mutual respect, attachment, community response, community participation, and rapport.

Keywords: Terrorism, religious minorities, social bonds, intercultural communication

Introduction

Terrorism on the national or international level is closely connected to a series of crimes that lead to mainstream terrorism. Even when the surge of acute terrorism is yet to appear or it subsides, and when the desire to behead the members of opposing religious party mitigates, the after-shocks still survive in the

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form of hate crime, ritualistic crime, and vandalism that includes church and cemeteries desecration. Church desecration involves urinating or soiling of holy books or sacred items, defecating over them, pulling crucifixes down and destroying them, etc. Vandalism like this is often incited and prompted by hate crime (Dawn, 2004). Occult groups manifest their hate in the form of ritualistic crimes like, robbing graves, unclothing and disfiguring human corpses, and overturning or removing headstones. So the discontinuation or ending up of suicide bombing or firing activities of churches does not mean that terrorism has come to an end; rather the environment of implicit distrust and hate maintains, leading to ritualistic crimes, ultimately causing unrest in a society and a deficiency in its positive growth.

Terrorism has been a hot topic for sociologists and criminologists because it disturbs the whole socio-cultural set-up of society and has long-lasting and serious effects on the social bonds and the overall progress of society. It is an extreme form of crime in the legal sphere, a grave sin in the religious perspective, and an extremely disintegrative form of disorder in the society. Its extreme form in the shape of suicide bombing is a curse that is insurmountable for government machinery and rule of law (World Watch Monitor, 2017). The highest form of punishment that can be given to an individual is capital punishment which normally serves as a deterrent in dissuading a criminal from committing a serious crime. However, when a person is religiously and spiritually motivated and is ready to blow himself up then there can be no stopping to it.

Presently, religion is manifesting its force globally and religious identity is gaining importance; in such a situation, those states are highly exposed to the menace of internal instability and terrorism, in which religion becomes the base of discrimination (Pew Research Center, 2014). The attack over Afghanistan by the US-led coalition, without substantial evidence, was the cause of an extreme lash-back by some extremist groups. As America was outside the reach of the terror attacks, and a reaction had to be made to register their anger against western countries, especially America, for waging a war that was ill-justified in their view, against a poor and technologically backward Afghanistan, therefore, to quench their vengeance, the easy target that was accessible to them was the minorities related to these invaders. Since the religion of the majority in the US and most of the western countries is Christianity, therefore, the most vulnerable section of the population before extremists was Christian minority, and the next vulnerable were the Hindus and the Sikhs for their religious affiliation to India, which was very keen in propagating the charge of terrorism against the Muslims, especially of Pakistan.

As much as the scenario of violent extremism and terrorism was generated in many Districts across Pakistan, religious minorities were pushed into seclusion and marginalization. They suffered attacks on their places of worship, residence, and schools. Thus terrorism, which in itself is a serious crime, affected a large number of minorities across Pakistan. In light of this view, the present study was undertaken to identify the problem and bridge the gap by exploring those factors of social bonds between the majority and minorities that could bring religious minorities to the mainstream. The loopholes were identified and spaces for resolution of the problem were utilized and finally, recommendations were made in this connection.

Literature Review

Religious minorities in Pakistan are living in constant fear. Due to terrorism and extremism against minorities, most of them are vulnerable to and suffering from severe physical and psychological violence, such as segregation, bullying, teasing, insult and physical torture in different sectors of society including economic, education, and political sectors (Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2019; Hafeez, 2003). The recent literature also reveals that due to restrictions on religious freedom, religious minorities are subject to religious-based terrorism which includes communal attacks, terrorism, aggression, hostilities, and mass violence (Grim & Finke, 2011; Toft et al., 2011).

The societal pressure to eradicate religious freedom is mainly directed towards demolishing religious identity and discrimination based on religious identity which results in instability and violence (Pew Research Center, 2014). In such a situation, religious minorities are restricted to perform their religious practices and organizations that are not favorable to the majority group (Akaba & Fox, 2011). Sometimes states were also failed to overcome the pressure from the majority and become a partner with it by establishing such types of laws that restricted the actions of many belief groups that contradict their religious freedom (Saiya, 2016). Thus it is likely to happen that such restrictions provide a platform for faith-based violence, mainly terrorism and bloodshed. In such situation members of the majority or dominant group acted violently as they are favored by the state and certain political groups, thus making religious minorities alienate themselves from the mainstream (Saiya, 2014).

According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (2019), the violence against religious freedom in Pakistan includes:

i.   Sectarian violence
ii.   Blasphemy allegations
iii.   Hate speech

iv.   Conversion by force and forced marriages

v.   Biased educational system

Moreover, religious minorities of Pakistan such as Hindus and Christians are facing widespread discrimination. They are mainly perceived as dirty and untouchable by calling them abusive words as *"Chura"* or *"Kafir"*, which means unclean and infidel respectively. Christians are a target by certain extremist groups in Pakistan based on the idea that people of the 'West' are Christians and they are against Islam. Whereas Hindus are perceived to be the historic enemy of Muslims as they have illegally occupied Kashmir and killing innocent Kashmiris. Thus, both Hindus and Christian minorities are deprived of proper employment and residence. They only have the chance to work as sweepers or brick kiln labor (World Watch Monitor, 2017; United States Commission, 2017).

Similarly, along with discrimination and targeted violence, religious minorities are also suffering from ritualistic crimes, which are those acts of violence in which psychological, sexual or physical attacks are made repeatedly, along with the use of ceremonies and symbols in a systematic way across Pakistan (Gregory and Valentine, 2009). Cults or occult crimes are the names given to crimes that involve ritual violence; these are mainly committed by religious extremist groups. So it has to be noted that religious terrorism is intimately associated with ritualistic crimes, as both of them reflect each other's qualities and the presence of one does not signify the absence of the other (State of California Office of Criminal Justice, 1989).

Although very heinous in nature and irrational in approach, religious terrorism is still lauded by the people practicing it and ingeniously rationalized based on religious justifications. Irrespective of religion, region, and race, the acts of sacred terrorism are perpetuated, defended, and justified for achieving some goals that are unachievable through any other legitimate means. Over time, the scale of terrorism that an individual can inflict upon multitudes of human victims has increased many-fold, due to the availability and easy use of technology. In the present situation, it would be impossible to forestall terrorism without knowing and understanding the worldview, ideology, practices, and norms of behavior of the groups that perpetuate it. Some religions justify and encourage terrorist acts and some groups interpret their religious tenets so sternly that they consider blowing themselves up as the sole purpose of their lives. Therefore, the analysis of each faction's religious practices from its religious perspective is what makes us understand the incomprehensible deeds of violence (Dawn, 2004). Thus, social bonds between the majority and minorities have deteriorated due to persistent intolerance and religious-based terrorism across many areas in Pakistan.

According to Foucault (1982) language is a source of interaction that is used also to exercise control because the language has the competence of excluding. According to him, it leads to a power structure that separates those who have power and control and those who do not.

After the incident of 9/11, religious minorities are marginalized and live under the constant threat of terror because they are vulnerable to different surges of terrorism. Such an attitude has given rise to intolerance, threats, hooting, violent behavior, and the use of threat and coercion against these minorities. The main societal actors that target minorities include general masses and terrorist and extremist groups (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004). Minorities are mostly targeted because they practice beliefs that are different from those of mainstream society. Their culture is different because belief based negative stereotyping is attached to them, hence they are ignored and they live under a subordinate position (Brierley, 2000; Ogbu, 1992).

According to Olsen and Torrance (1996), whenever minorities perceive that the majority tends to be negative and intolerant towards them, they detach themselves from the mainstream society to avoid living under constant threat. Such disturbances also affect their interaction with one another. Rumbaut (1997) reported that they are likely to develop isolation and move towards their own ethnic or religious groups, who are more discriminated, threatened, or neglected. Gil et al. (1994) claimed such minorities' perceptions of prejudice and discrimination vary across generations, with second-generation being the most prejudiced one.

The religious minority is a socially constructed concept which depends on how minorities perceive themselves to be different from mainstream society. In any socio-economic ladder of a society, religious minorities mainly hold a weaker position and are dominated by another group due to their less number of individuals, powerless positions, and weak socio-economic status (Waters, 1997). Therefore, in many societies, majority groups tend to be the most advantaged ones concerning a variety of indicators such as political, social, cultural, educational and financial that are important for status-building and wellbeing as revealed by Fiske et al. (1999), Sidanius and Pratto (1999).

Governments' role is also not less significant because they also become a cause of materializing terrorism in their states, like, when, to control religion, governments impose restrictions on the institutions and practices of the minorities only (Akbaba & Fox, 2011) and, in so doing, they, advertently or inadvertently, cause an imbalance in the power and authority between the majority religious groups and the minority religious groups. Here, the minorities considering themselves on the receiving end and a disadvantageous position concerning the

majority religious groups may take recourse to violent behavior and terroristic acts against that state or the groups favored by the state. In the second case, governments again become the cause of terrorism, when they impose restrictions on the religious practices of all religious minorities and majorities, without preferring one over another religious group, leading to states becoming the target of religious terrorists, who blame that state as secular and corrupt, and in the next stage try to overthrow it by labeling it as illegitimate (Saiya, 2016).

Sometimes, minority religious communities are subject to institutional bias in the guise of discriminatory laws and official policies that restrict or ban their core religious practices vis-à-vis the majority group, whose religious practices are not banned (Marshall, 2007). They include restrictions of wearing religious dresses, implementation of discriminatory curricula without alternatives, strict laws on blasphemy, temporal confiscation of properties, binding identification of religion on official documents, and burdensome restraints over construction and maintenance of worship places (Kirkham, 2013). According to Ward et al. (2001) and Kasatkina (2003), the struggle for a better existence and the clash due to inequality among groups have increased the tensions among them, influencing their interpersonal relations, and resulting in negative opinions about one another. The important elements of these relationships are social ties, social norms, and admiration.

Beall (2002) explored that many people of religious minorities are targeted and ignored based on the idea of "who you are". This leads to antagonism and clash among different religious groups and sects, which dislocates many minorities. There are weak and negligible close social contacts among minorities due to dominant social stratification, inequality, and the majority's ignorant attitude. When the minority members step out to participate in the mainstream for changing their subordinate position, they are considered as a threat to the major socio-cultural system, resulting in mistrust and disharmony (Smelser, 1988). Hence, they cannot adjust themselves to the majority.

Every dominant group always exercises major control over power and resources. They tend to enjoy an equal share in both the material and the non-material aspects of society. They are politically powerful, economically well-off, heavily-protected, and abundant with desirable food, in possession of excellent housing facilities, health care, leisure, and education. Besides, a large number of minority members are left or forced to live as subordinate/lower groups in the form of unemployment, poor standard housing, disease, hazardous work, undue punishment, stigmatization, and defamation (Brown, 1991; Tilly, 1998).

Turner and Reynolds (2003) stated that different myths highlighting the ignorance and negative stereotyping of minorities are circulated. These are formed and legitimized through socio-cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and customary and cultural ideologies. Such ideas based on contrasting myths about a group leads to inequality, illegitimacy, and violation of human rights. It also disrupts social networking between groups, their neighborhood relations, and their everyday face-to-face interaction and narrows down the groups' participation in the mainstream society, such as in the socio-cultural and developmental activities, affecting friendship among members of different groups and they are living together as one unit (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004). So, it challenges the overall community members of a minority member/group.

Moreover, it has also been reported that in multi-cultural societies some of the cultures are often perceived to be the opposite of the others, a situation defined as "cultures in conflict". The mainstream culture exerts pressure over the minorities, which leads to a painful, unacceptable, and emotional choice to live in that society (Phinney et al., 1997). Therefore, minorities in these social structures can only merge themselves due to assimilation and sometimes due to acculturation. In the cases, their culture and identity are vulnerable to extinction.

Similarly, under-developed or negative group identities are found to be a source of poor psychological performance (Phinney et al., 1997; Romero & Roberts, 2003). Research studies conducted by Hyers and Swim (1998) found that a person who cannot develop strong intergroup experiences is more likely to face anxiety during intergroup contact situations. However, on the intra-group level, religious minorities live as organized groups sharing common experiences, cultural customs and traditions that promote a mutual sense of belonging, and which are maintained in a new host mainstream culture. Members of the religious minority group are mainly organized as one unit, having more social solidarity with the main aim to preserve their religious identity (Mier et al., 2010; Kasatkina, 2003; Wilson & Miller, 2003).

Manchanda (2009) and Human Rights Watch (2013) recommends that strong social bonds between the majority and minorities play an important role in coping with the challenges faced by minorities. The important social bonds include interpersonal relations, participation in daily social activities, interfaith harmony, and commitment to one another's religious values. These have significant effects on family life and set both material and non-material goals of every individual member of a minority group (Harter et al., 1998).

Methodology

This study was conducted in District Kohat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to explore those social bonds that can cement the religious minorities to the majority. The study was qualitative, which applied the grounded theory method for data collection and analysis. Creswell (2014) describes three components that researchers should include within a research framework; the paradigm, the research strategy, and the research methods. The researchers used the constructivist paradigm, which is a useful tool that allowed them to conduct a qualitative inquiry, by accepting that reality is socially constructed. This type of inquiry is based on "how individuals experience and construct reality" (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, the researchers involved themselves with the participants by observing and interviewing them in the field to get an insight into the social bonds between the majority and minorities.

According to Water (1997), the religious minority is a socially constructed concept which depends on how minorities perceive themselves to be different from the main-stream society. In light of this definition, the epistemology of this study was based on social construction between minorities and the majority. The researcher used the *Emic* approach to interact and communicate with the participants to understand their experiences about the phenomena as how they can be brought back to the mainstream.

The strategy of this research study was qualitative because the purpose of this study was exploratory. Marin and Marin (1991) also recommended that qualitative research methodologies are more suitable for studying minorities. Grounded theory was used for data collection and analysis in this study, as designed by Glasser and Strauss (1967) and modified by Charmaz (2006).

The Participants were selected purposively from the 32 unions of district Kohat. Among the minorities, only those minorities were selected that were sizeable in number and related to the topic. Out of the target population comprising the Christians, the Hindus, and the Sikhs, interviewing 13 Christians, 7 Hindus, 6 Sikhs, and 5 Muslim scholars sufficed to take the data to the level of saturation. Participant of the study belonged to social activists, Church staff, and political representatives.

The researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with the Participant as per the technique given by Cresswell (2014) and Charmaz (2006), a semi-structured interview guide was used for data collection. The Participants were asked to participate in a one-to-one interview session, lasting for approximately 30 to 45 minutes with the researchers. Apart from interviews, data was collected through field-notes and memo-writing also.

The answers were recorded by using a tape-recorder. However, the answers of those Participants who felt uncomfortable with tape-recording were

taken down in the written form. When this phase was over, their one-to-one meetings with the researchers were conducted for the clarification of the answers in the written form, without the help of a tape-recorder again.

This study used the Initial sample and theoretical sample as per the criteria given by Charmaz (2006).

As per the requirements of Initial sampling, the researchers started their data collection from Christian employees working at Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat. However, after collecting and analyzing the data from 3 Participants and to get new categories, the nature of Participant was changed which is known as theoretical sampling.

Till the saturation of data, 28 more Participants from each category were interviewed; they included Priests, Political activists, Supervisors of the employees, social workers, and educated members of Christian, Sikh, and Hindu including 5 Muslim scholars.

The demographic information is given in the following table;

Demographic Information	Number of Participants in each stratum						Total
Religious affiliation	Christianity	Hinduism	Sikhism	Islam			
	13	06	07	05			31
Age in Years	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	45-50	31
	05	04	6	09	05	02	
Educational Qualification	Primary	Middle	Metric	Intermediate	Bachelor	Master/M.Phil	31
	06	04	09	08	02	02	
Nature of employment	Regular	Contract	Contingent	Daily Wage	Private	Jobless	31
	13	05	02	03	8	00	
Marital status	Married	Unmarried					31
	23	08					
Locality	Rural	Urban					31
	10	21					
Nature of residence	Personal	Govt.	Rented	Any other			31
	10	07	12	02			

(Source: Filed Survey, 2019)

Research Ethics

The researchers followed and thoroughly observed important research ethics recommended by (Dooly et al., 2017). All the participants including Church

officials and representatives of religious minority groups were informed and granted permission from them before data collection. Every participant was given a "Consent Form" to study and sign it. The interviews were conducted in local languages i.e. Urdu and Pashto; all questions were simple, unbiased, and free of ambiguities. Confidentiality of the participants was ensured by assigning Pseudo-names to them in data analysis.
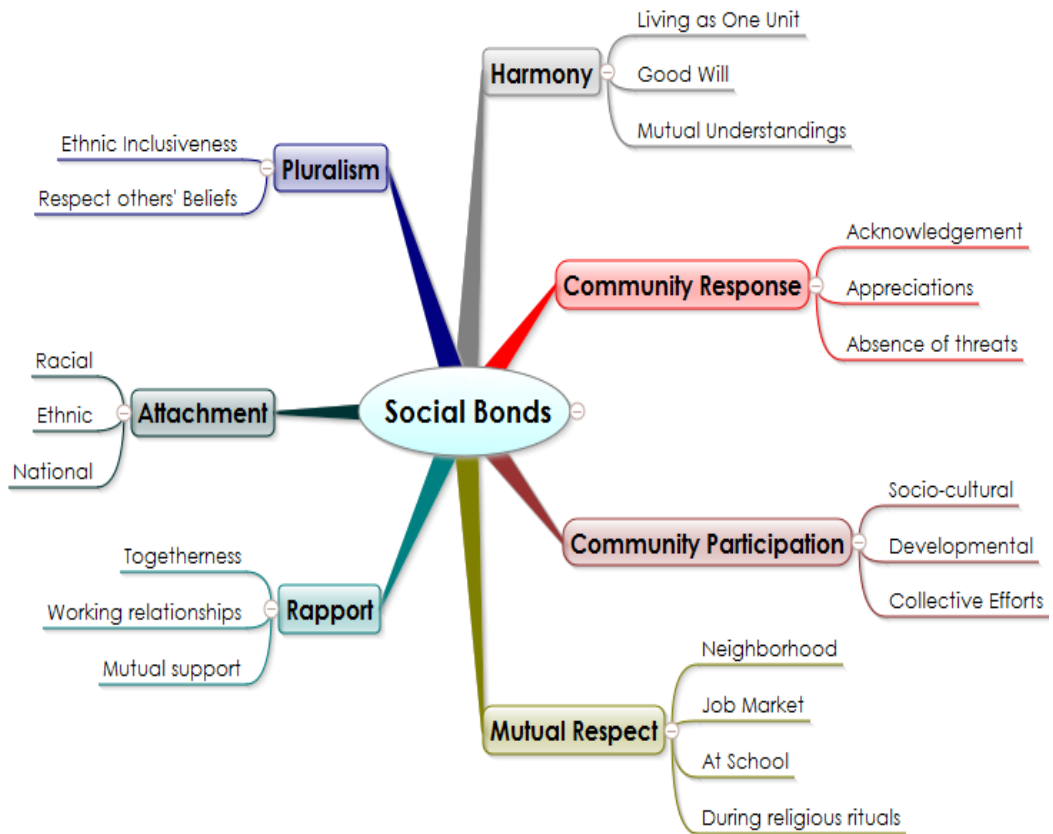
Data Analysis

Data analysis in this research was carried out in several steps, which included transcription and formulation of interviews, initial coding, adjustment of the coding scheme, a thorough review of coded transcripts, and framing an organizational scheme, as per the methodology given by Corbin and Strauss (2008). The recorded interviews were written and then explained in English language sentence by sentence. All interviews were thoroughly checked for accuracy by re-listening to their recordings. The coding process is given as under;

Initial coding→ Categories→ Constant comparison → Theoretical sensitivity →Theme

The researchers carried on the process of sampling and coding of the data to a point beyond which neither new categories were identified nor was there a chance for the emergence of variation in the existing categories. At the end of saturation, a set of categories and sub-categories were separated within the available data, as given in the following diagram;

Factors of Social Bonds

Harmony
- Living as One Unit
- Good Will
- Mutual Understandings

Pluralism
- Ethnic Inclusiveness
- Respect others' Beliefs

Community Response
- Acknowledgement
- Appreciations
- Absence of threats

Attachment
- Racial
- Ethnic
- National

Social Bonds

Community Participation
- Socio-cultural
- Developmental
- Collective Efforts

Rapport
- Togetherness
- Working relationships
- Mutual support

Mutual Respect
- Neighborhood
- Job Market
- At School
- During religious rituals

Thematic code: Social Bonds

Codes	Categories	Thematic code
• **Ethnic Inclusiveness** • **Respect others' Beliefs**	Pluralism	SOCIAL BONDS
• **Living as One Unit** • **Good Will** • **Mutual Understandings**	Harmony	

	Community participation
• **Socio-cultural**	
• **Developmental**	
• **Collective Efforts**	
	Community response
• **Acknowledgment**	
• **Appreciations**	
• **Absence of threats**	
	Attachment
• **Racial**	
• **Ethnic**	
• **National**	
	Mutual respect
• **Neighborhood**	
• **Job Market**	
• **At School**	
• **During religious rituals**	
	Rapport
• **Togetherness**	
• **Working relationships**	
• **Mutual support**	

Discussion and Analysis

The findings of the present study reveal that social bonds encompass the frequency of attachment of a person to his/her group and the mainstream society. The research findings reveal that there are two major types of social bonds: 'in-group' and 'out-group' social bonds. In-group social bonds are mainly belief-based and race-based, whereas out-group social bonds are based on nationality and geographical attachment. The individuals are more committed to their belief groups and their racial groups as compared to any other identities.

Moreover, both inter and intra-group relations are important; however, the presence of any form of social poison, such as religious intolerance or any other ethnic and racial differences can cause these relations to suffer from a total break-down. This research study has explored seven fundamental prerequisites for the establishment of powerful social bonds, which are as under;

Pluralism

One of the primary elements for developing strong social bonds between minority and the majority can be pluralism, in the study area. Pluralism provides

the basis for different groups to come close in contact and live with one another while at the same time practicing their own beliefs. It is both an individual as well as group attitude, which is based on the idea of tolerance and mutual respect towards one another's beliefs. Hence, the more the pluralism, the stronger will be the social bonds and vice versa. A respondent, namely Masih, explored,

> *"You know if we lived together and accepted one another both as human beings and as Pakistanis we could have easily brought welfare into our society. This will also promote pluralism in our society and every one of us will be able to live happily with his family."*

The statement was also confirmed by William, who said,

> *"I have many friends from the Muslims and the Hindus communities. We live like brothers because we always have good wishes for each other and cooperate in times of need. It is the beauty of our society."*

Singh responded that,

> *"We participate in majority's ceremonies of death and marriage when we are invited. I always try to cooperate with every group and invite each other on such occasions, it will increase understanding among us".*

Kumar also responded,

> *"It is very important for every one of us to accept and respect one another, especially in matters of religious beliefs. We should not blame or accuse each other because it will disturb our peaceful life."*

Scholars, such as Phinney et al. (1997) also argued that pluralism is an important aspect of any multi-cultural society because some of the cultures are often perceived to be opposite to one another, such type of situation is known as "cultures in conflict". The mainstream culture exerts pressure over the minorities which leaves them with a painful, in-avoidable, unacceptable, and emotional choice to live in that society. Similarly, the absence of pluralism or negative group identities is found to be a source of poor psychological performance (Romero & Roberts, 2003). However, compared to this study, those scholars had presented a different picture of pluralism.

Harmony

Harmony can be a useful source for bringing religious minorities into the mainstream of the target area. It will enable the majority and minorities to live peacefully as a single unit, which is a pre-requisite for living a peaceful life in every society. The absence of harmony leads to clashes between different groups in a society. It was also found that the area under study is a complex area, where

groups professing different beliefs reside together; however, religious minorities are not assimilated desirably and most of them get marginalized.

A respondent namely Daniel expressed,

> *"I feel that we are all Pakistani and the creatures of the same God. We must live like brothers because it is the only way to develop our country for our children. Certain extremist groups sometimes threaten us and use bad language against us. We feel fear in such a situation."*

Respondent Aaric said,

> *"We are all members of Pakistani society; we must accept one another and treat one another as brothers. We must greet each other and appreciate those who welcome and greet us."*

Joel also accepted,

> *"Yes, it is very necessary to accept one another, so that a friendly environment can be built among religious groups. This will create a friendship environment, where every one of us will be able to live a life free of fears and depressions. Our religions also teach us to live in peace with the people of other religions."*

Gill also said,

> *"We must invite one another's from different belief groups to one another's ceremonies so that our misperception about one another is dispelled"*.

Respondent Sadiq said,

> *"Islam emphasizes the giving of full rights to the minorities; we must work for them; we must accept them as members of our society and give them their due rights. Our Prophet (PBUH) has also forbidden us to treat any minority harshly. Hence, we are bound to treat them fairly."*

Hamid confirmed,

> *"Besides hatred, we must know the real teachings of Islam, which are based on respecting every other religious group. Islam orders peace and forbids every form of extremism against any member of the society."*

Earlier findings of Manchanda (2009), also affirmed that religious minorities tend to have good interaction with one another as well as with the majority group. But the conflicts, mainly of ideological nature, existing at the global level affect their mutual relationship seriously. However, the Pakistan Institute of Labor Education and Research (2009) explored that, religious minorities and scheduled castes are socially and physically excluded from

mainstream society. They are forced to live in segregated settlements; hence, the social bonds between them get weaker over time.

Community Participation

Research findings reveal that community participation is the involvement of different individuals in different activities inside a society. The participation of the minority groups in the welfare and other customary activities of a society depend on the degree of acceptance given to them and the extent of opportunities available to them. The study further explored that there is more in-group participation as compared to out-group participation because religious minorities are more connected to other minority groups than to the majority.

A respondent Majid opined,

"I believe in participation in our cultural activities is important for us all, as it leads to the creation of harmony and a peaceful environment in our area. We must also invite people of other religions to participate with us because they are also members of our society."

Respondent William,

"You know, there are other religious groups, such as the Hindus and the Sikhs, who also live peacefully in Kohat. We freely participate with one another, especially the Hindus and the Christians, because some of them have got converted and some have blood relations.

Singh expressed that,

"I would say, sometimes I think that it would be very cheerful if we could partake with each other. It is important to resolve all difficulties in interacting with other faith groups. If the response of the majority becomes good, it will bring the minorities closer to the mainstream".

Community Response

The response of different belief groups towards one another in a society is very important for establishing social bonds, especially the response of that group towards others which is in majority or a powerful position, in terms of money, political power, and religious affiliation. The study reveals that the response of those majority members who are well-educated, especially, those who are well aware of their Islamic knowledge about the minorities are more tolerant and friendly towards the minorities. However, religious minorities perceive a negative response, even sometimes a threatening response and ignorance, from those who are less educated and lag behind others in having true Islamic knowledge.

Interviewee Ibraham expressed,

"We feel safe here, but there are some extremist types of people who are spoiling the situation, for example, we feel afraid after Aasia Maseeh's

case. Therefore, it is necessary to understand that the whole group of any minority religion must not be held responsible for the action of one single person."

Participant Noel also said,

"In any religious based conflict situation, we felt threatened; our church was in danger and our children were also in danger. Such type of situation disturbs the peace of our society, although we are not involved in it, still, we feel frightened."

Merry also opined that;

"I feel worried whenever I observe any clash among majority or minorities. The friendly relationships between majority and minorities are important for the overall development of our society, especially for the well being of minority groups."

Treezer agreed that;

"I would say that the friendly response of majority encourages religious minorities to participate with them, and live with them like brothers"

Just like the above-mentioned literature, the existing literature reveals that minorities are subject to racial discrimination and prejudice; so far their survival in such a society has been difficult (Rumbaut, 1997). Minorities also perceive that some members of the majority group tend to be negative and intolerant towards them. Hence, they are likely to develop isolation and recoil towards their own ethnic or religious groups who are more discriminated, threatened, or neglected. Gil et al. (1994) claimed that such minorities' perceptions of prejudice and discrimination vary across generations, with the second generation reported as being the most prejudiced one.

Attachment

Attachment involves the psycho-social connection of a person with his group and with other groups. The present research study has explored that religious groups, such as the majority and minorities reflect a loose emotional bond. They show mutual attachment only in national aspects of identity; however, racial and ethnic attachments are based on intra-group identification. The response of religious minorities and the majority towards each other is very poor and is also based on belief-based rivalries and intolerance. It affects their regular mutual connection with each other and their intra-group affiliation, which leads to distress and separation of them from the mainstream society.

Respondent Daniel expressed that,

"We want to have strong bonds with other groups, so that we may live like brothers. Our group members respond to each other positively, but the response of the majority is not very good towards us."

Willaim also expressed that,

"We have always respected our neighbors though they do not belong to our community. Although we are not very strongly attached to them, still I consider them as my brothers and want to live with them peacefully. I cannot ignore the mainstream's culture; we follow it and do not violate its norms and values".

However, Participant Joel exclaimed with sorrow that,

"We are confined to our places of worship, still, we feel proud to be good Pakistanis. Minorities also want to work for this country and make it a prosperous one. Our commitment to this country as a nation is also necessary for its welfare."

Other Participant such as Yashwant felt that,

"We feel safer in our community, but there are certain outsiders who are mainly those extremists that spread hatred about religious minorities; then we feel insecure. In such situation we are unable to connect our self to the mainstream."

Another respondent Sadiq from the majority group expressed,

"Although, we are bound to give minorities their full rights and not to treat them harshly because Islam also orders us to be kind and friendly towards them, we have failed to provide them their full basic rights completely. We must enable them to work with us and welcome them to attach themselves to the mainstream. We must not ignore them."

Hamid disclosed that

"I have found that religious minorities are less attached to mainstream society. Most people are ignorant towards them and they do not allow them to take part in the mainstream arena. They are mainly ignored and discriminated against due to their beliefs. We must understand them, and allow them to join our society."

The above-stated findings also get a confirmation in the study done by Lease and Blake (2005), who reported that mutual attachment between both the majority and the minorities, provide different opportunities for learning social skills and norms that could be more friendly and favorable to live a happy and prosperous life.

Mutual Respect

The current study explored that mutual respect is an important ingredient of living together for minorities and the majority. It allows various individuals/groups to live peacefully, express their own culture and belief related practices without any fear. Mutual respect also enhances solidarity in the society due to which minorities can adjust themselves easily into mainstream society. However, the study area concerned, minorities face less respect, especially at their job places. There, they are subject to stereotyping and the absence of facilities due to their minority status.

Participant Malhaw confirmed,

> *"Nowadays, we cannot practice our rituals as freely as we used to do some time ago, due to the situation created because of certain intolerant groups. We are negatively stereo-types and targeted verbally, emotionally and physically. We cannot express our identity freely."*

Noel added that,

> *"People in our area do not care for religious minorities. We are confined to our colonies, people treat us unfairly. Our children cannot play freely in the grounds and can enjoy their activities at school."*

Gurmeet confirmed that,

> *"Our society can only be developed if we promote goodwill, appreciation, and kindness towards one another, irrespective of our beliefs. We must respect each other's beliefs and eradicate violence and extremism."*

Participant Masih responded that,

> *"We suffer loose talk from others in terms of bullying; there is no one to talk for us and stand with us. Everyone ignores us because of our belief differences. Therefore, we are unable to make our self a part of this society, we are treated like aliens."*

Kumar further added,

> *"Even we do not have a sitting place in the where work; whereas the other groups are provided with rooms but we eat our lunch in the lawn. Many people do not respect us and ignore us, thus our basic rights are violated in many sectors of the society."*

Some of the research studies also reveal those intolerant groups that are mostly unwilling to recognize the rights of those who are different from them and thus may curtail their freedom due to ignorance and lack of respect for minorities (Beal, 2002). It has also been observed throughout the history that majorities often had to exercise control and hold a dominant position over minorities with different beliefs. Religious intolerance entails the perception of superiority and ignorance towards people of other religious ideologies (Beal, 2002; Dinstein, 1992). Their

focus was more on intolerance and rejection; however, they did not mention harmony in their work.

Rapport

The research findings reveal that those members of minority groups feel more relaxed and committed towards mainstream that have a rapport with other groups. They can freely participate with them on different cultural and academic occasions. Members of the religious majority also feel friendly towards such minority members, like such ground-mates, class-mates, teachers, and medical technicians. Respondent Ibraham acknowledged,

"As you know, I am a college teacher, and being a minority member, I have very good relationships with my students. They respect me and are always friendly towards me. I play cricket with them and sometimes I also go on tours with them. I feel very happy while interacting with them.

Johnson opined that,

"I made many friends from majority group during my college time, I lived with them without any fears apart from myself, I have also observed that some of our group members have good relationships with their classmates and team-mates."

The literature reveals that there are weak or negligible close social contacts among minorities, due to the dominant social stratification, inequality as well as the ignorant attitude of the majority. When minority members go to participate in the mainstream to change their weak position, they are seen as a threat to the major socio-culture system, resulting in mutual distrust and disharmony. So, they cannot manage themselves along with the majority (Smelser, 1988). Ward et al. (2001) and Kasatkina (2003) suggested that the existing tension between the majority and the minorities can be controlled by bringing both the groups closer to each other for establishing interpersonal relations and forming positive opinions about each other. The important elements of these relationships are social ties, social norms, and admiration.

Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the factors of social bonds between the majority and minorities in Districts Kohat. It is observed that the phase of terrorism visible in the form of mistrust, mutual fear, and the desecration of sacred items inside worship places of the minorities, ritualistic crimes, and Vandalism prompted by hate crime has marginalized religious minorities. Such crimes against minorities were causing unrest among them, and a deficiency in their socio-economic development. The researchers hoped that the current heinous types of

terror-related crimes, like ritualistic crime, hate crime, and vandalism including desecration of worship places and cemeteries could be overcome if the dynamics of their religious beliefs were properly understood and addressed as given in this study finding. These issues have been brought to the frontline by the researchers in this paper in such a way that can help other researchers and policymakers to better understand these factors that bridge the gap between religious minorities and the majority.

The major factors of social bonding between minorities the majority found in this study comprised of harmony, community participation, community response, attachment, mutual respect, and rapport. These factors if acted upon will activate the paralyzed and deprived section of the population to re-participate actively in the business, trade, and overall development of the state and society. These reforms can further be made easily by convincing the masses through religious teachings, as the rights proposed have been guaranteed by Islam and as well as the constitution of Pakistan. Meanwhile, by bringing them back to the mainstream society, we would restore the distorted image of our country and religion to its original image of peace and fellow-feeling and make the minorities a productive and patriotic class of our society.

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