

**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Religious Radicalization and Social Exclusion of Christian
 Community: A Case of Pakistan**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of terrorism, in promoting social exclusion among educated Christian minority in Pakistan. It also explains the violent behavior of community after the Youhanabad terror incidents, which resulted in lynching of two Muslim men. The studied focused on two core objectives; first to analyze the role of terrorism in elevating already existing social exclusion among Pakistani Christian community and to understand the reasons behind the mob behavior. Mob behavior itself was reflection of exclusion as the community or group no longer believes in the existing system. Qualitative research design was used and 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with random respondents of the Christian community who had passed their 10 years of examination or higher schooling than this. The collected data from these interviews was coded using NVivo software. Themes that emerged from coding were analyzed. It was found that terrorism specifically is not seen the reason of exclusion of Christian community. Community stated that terrorism has played fewer roles in social exclusion and they watched the terrorism as the collective problem of the whole Pakistani society; however, society at large level excludes minority population in many other aspects. The society did not treat them on equality basis. They often face discrimination in society. It was specifically found that most of the NGOs are working for Christian community inclusion and interfaith harmony but many are non-functional. It was also found that violent behavior by Christian community was random, sudden and not planned.

Keywords: Minorities, Pakistani Christian Community, Social Exclusion, Terrorism, Violent Mob Behavior

Introduction

Pakistan faced a wave of terrorism in last decade which resulted in loss of 70000 lives. Terrorists attacked armed force installations, Police stations, schools, mosques, shrines of Sufi saints and churches. Terrorism is although not a community specific problem, yet in presence of broader mechanisms of social exclusion minorities, might feel more excluded after acts of terrorism. This study investigated the social exclusion of community in Lahore after Yohanabad terror incidents. Social exclusion operates in society at various

levels. At social level it is common observation in society that minorities are segregated from mainstream. They are not allowed to enter into social fabric as majority does.

Minority is an ethnically, culturally, or racially different group which exist but it is inferior from a dominant cluster. Subordinate group of people in a specific geographical area is called minority (Simon & Schuster, 1979). Pakistan is a Muslim majority country, where 98% population follows Islam as their religion. Christian's community in Pakistan has faced the growing extremism and radicalization. The Christian community feels threatened despite they usually are not involved in criminal activities (Yaseen, et. al. 2018) & Karamat, et. al. 2019)

Social exclusion is a rupturing of the social bond. It is a process of declining participation, access, and solidarity. At the societal level, it reflects inadequate social cohesion or integration. At the individual level, it refers to the incapacity to participate in normatively expected social activities and to build meaningful social relations. In this study social exclusion of Christian community has been studied. This research has two critical focuses; one it explores the role of terrorism in social exclusion and secondly, it studies the violent behavior shown by community after terrorist attacks in Yohanabad Lahore.

The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees "fundamental rights, including equality of status, equality of opportunity and equality before law, social, economic and political justice, and freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship and association, subject to the law and public morality" to its citizens. Pakistan is a nation populated by more than one hundred seventy-seven million individuals, a mixture of different societies, ethnicities, dialects, religions, organizations and sub-sects. It was made on the standards of a majority rule country, which would guarantee that, "everybody has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or indirectly or through freely chosen representatives.

Various previous studies related to social exclusion found that unfortunately in Pakistan the situation of minorities is not good. There is no practical protection of religious minority's rights. They are still in the condition of under development and facing many problems by the majority groups (Varshney, 2003). Legally, Pakistan also has some minority specific laws. The state has consistently failed to intervene and protect its people against violence by cruelly motivated elements and the certainty of license has encouraged them to commit lawlessness.

Yohanabad Incident

On 15 March 2015 two suicide bombers attacked on two Churches in Yohanabad during Sunday prayers. These attacks resulted in death of eighteen persons which included 11 Christians and 7 Muslims. While eighty-five were injured. The terrorist sought to attack inside the Cathedral and Christian Church, however, security guards stopped them for checking, and as a result they started firing, and committed suicide attack. While the time of attacks in churches there were almost 12 people present for their prayers (Dunya News Paper Report, 16 March 2015).

Keeping in view the above incident and the situation of the country, our research focused to understand the role of terrorism in social exclusion of Christian community in Pakistan and to examine the mob behavior by Christian community after terrorist attack.

Material and Methods

This study employed qualitative tools of inquiry. It was conducted in Yohanabad Lahore, after terrorist attacks on church of the Christians community. This research employing the grounded theory method, explores the social exclusion of Christians due to terrorism and how this led to their violent mob behavior. The study examined the Christian community's views behind terrorism, exclusion and violent behavior. This research's epistemological view was of social construction of reality. It has been assumed in this study that reality is constructed through social interaction and does not exist outside social context. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used as tool for data collection. Theory based sampling technique was used and principle of saturation of data was followed. Considering the sensitivities involved in the research, the researcher strictly followed the ethical considerations of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and privacy. The process of data analysis was highly inductive, and theory was produced by interpreting the data collected. After a rigorous process of coding, thematic analysis technique was used to analyze the data. The information was recorded on paper as respondents did not allow audio or video recording.

Results and Discussion

After collecting qualitative data, the last step was to analyze the data. The researchers transcribed, interpreted and analyzed qualitative data by using in vivo coding technique and thematic analysis, which is commonly, used qualitative analysis technique. In this technique, the researcher pinpoints and examines different themes within data which can be seen as a category for analysis.

Three major themes emerged after cycles of coding and data analysis. One, Christians feel socially excluded from society as overall citizens. Two, terrorism is not responsible for increasing of social exclusion as it is seen by many as problem of every member of society. Third, the violent behavior by community after attacks was a random act and was not planned. It was out of fear and anger and does not reflected any planned activity. These three themes emerged after rigorous analysis of different questions asked during the in-depth interviews. These questions and themes are analyzed in detail below.

Terrorism as Source of Social Exclusion

In response to questions related to terrorist attacks 19 out of 20 respondents said that these are activities of terrorists and does not reflect the thinking of Muslim community. The respondents who considered it as specific attack on community have also accepted the fact that it's not only for Christian but also for the whole society and government's failure to protect society from terror attacks. It was also narrated by community members that these attacks did not convinced them to move away from Muslims or any other community. They also said in their response that law and order situation of whole country is debatable and poor. Some of them also felt affinity with Muslims as their worship places were attacked too.

All respondents discussed broader issues of law and order and related them to overall situation of the country. None of them considered that it was attack on minorities to cleanse them or to exclude them more in society. It was also considered by respondents as an attack on Muslim-Christian unity in Pakistan. One respondent said, and his exact words

were *"It was an attack on minorities by terrorists to afraid minorities and defame Pakistan on international level"*. If seen in context there is feeling among common Pakistanis that terrorism is used as tool against Pakistan, both for attacking physically and in media for defaming the nation as terrorist state. That idea is widely shared by both Muslims as well as Christians. Majority of respondents agreed to this notion that it is attack on Pakistan, and it is source of depreciation for nation (Henrard, 2000).

In a question related to security and feeling of being safe, majority said that they do not feel safe these days. The first reason is because of memory of heinous attack, second because of constant presence of law enforcement agencies which are looking for inside culprit and third because there is no concern of security for common people. The respondents widely shared the assumption that common people of all communities who do not have resources, have no safety of life. It was broadly seen as a problem of society and not a particular problem of Christian community. The bottom line of this whole discussion is that terrorism is not community specific problem and it has no role in increasing social exclusion.

Social Exclusion of the Community

In response to questions of social exclusion all agreed that a broader sense of marginalization is present in society. Christians are not welcomed into Muslim homes or encouraged freely mixing. Majority of respondents argue that in comparison with other communities the Christian community is less developed in the country. It was also reported, that they are treated like second class citizens in the country. One of the respondents said that *"they are depressed by majority and are not treated equally"*. In this regard they also blamed successive governments, who do not have priorities to remove this sense of underdevelopment from minorities. There is sense of exclusion in terms of rights as well. All the respondents agreed that they feel that their rights are not properly fulfilled, and minorities are treated differently in every sphere of life. Either it is social, economic or political; they often face the hateful attitude of the people. Third class jobs are attached with them like garbage collecting, cleaning of the city etc. One respondent further explained that *"they treated like Kammies" Kammies is a concept which mean a person whose life's purpose is to just server their Masters"*. These findings were also found in various previous studies as well. Studies found that minorities in Pakistan are under the condition of poverty and exclusion. Iftikhar Malik, (2007) concluded that in Pakistan minorities are disadvantaged politically, economically and socially. It was due to religious interpretations that keep the minorities under threats. This became the reason of lawlessness and Talibanization and militancy in Pakistan. It was concluded that the religious leaders make the Christian community as a second-class citizen (Salim, 2006).

Many of the respondents argue that they often feel pressure from majority of Muslims. Some of the respondents tell that Pakistan is the country of Muslim majority community. So that is why all decisions are made according to their needs. The study found that Christian community is politically, socially and economically depressed by structure of this country. Politically they are depressed by majority in the sense that there is less politically representativeness of minorities in assemblies of Pakistan. They think that quota system for jobs in Pakistan is not fair. Minorities must have more chances than quota system.

Minorities need more chances. But this quota system limits their chances of success (Malik, 2000).

Violent Behavior

Third theme related to social exclusion and sense of feeling anomie towards society by showing violent behavior was also derived from data. All respondents said that it was only an act of random mob and did not involve planned targeted activity. They also felt bad about those two Muslim men killed due to their protest. During interviews it was also explored that does any organization played role behind the protest, but it was found that there is consensus that it was random and chaotic affair. In fact, it was found that organizations working for betterment and inclusion are not working in the community.

Violent behavior shown by community members was not planned, nor desire of the community. It was not in the larger interest of Christians living in the country because they are regarded as peaceful community. Respondents also shared the idea that suspect or fake suspect who was killed should not have been killed. Exact words of one of the respondents was *"Killing of suspect on ground is not justice because it is the violation of country law. There is a proper legal way to deal with such type suspects"*. In light of this statement an argument can be build that it was random act and crowd behavior. However, cognitively the crowd was angry and thinking of revenge but it was under the dynamics of crowd. One can also epitomize that crowd behavior was reflection of broader mechanisms of social exclusion from society. The "Us vs them" feeling is present and concept of collective punishment was also employed (Muzaffar, et. al. 2017).

We can draw some conclusions from all this discussion that social exclusion is wide spread and religious minorities has sense of discrimination, alienation and exclusion. This situation however, does not stem from terrorism or violent behavior but is deep rooted in broader society. The issue needs to address that eliminates the social exclusion and also does not offend the majority as well. Further research on issue of exclusion and specific forms and natures of exclusion is needed that should focus on other communities in Pakistan as well.

Conclusion

Themes that emerged clearly indicated that social exclusion is present but not heightened by terrorism. Minorities feel that they are discriminated in every aspect of life. It was found that terrorism specifically is not seen by community as exclusive Christian problem. Community thinks that terrorism has played fewer roles in social exclusion; however, society at large excludes minority population. They are not accepted as equal members of society. It was specifically found that most of NGOs working for Christian community inclusion are non-functional. It was also found that violent behavior by Christian community was random, sudden and not planned. It was also a sense of feeling among Christians that there is role of government to discriminate minorities although this is on minor level. Study also found that there is no active role of non-governmental organizations in this incident. Unfortunately, the non-governmental organizations are not fulfilling their rights and duties of social inclusion and that they do not play any serious role in development of the conditions of minorities. Finally, the research suggests two measures to counter increasing social exclusion. One, it should be taught in syllabus that minorities are also part and parcel of Pakistani society. Second, there is severe need to educate common

people about Islamic values while behaving with people of other religions. Government must engage with religious leaders of both the majority and minority and use them as bridge between communities.

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