
The Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences



**Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Peshawar**

ISSN 1024-0829 (Print) ISSN 2958-7409 (Online)

THE JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Volume 32, No. 2, 2024



Editor
Faizullah Jan, Ph.D.

Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Peshawar

ISSN 1024-0829 (Print) ISSN 2958-7409 (Online)

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Office Assistant

Salah ud Din

Annual subscription

Domestic: PKR. 5,000.00

Overseas: US \$ 60.00

The Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Peshawar,
Peshawar, 25120, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

ISSN: 1024-0829 (Print) ISSN: 2958-7409 (Online)

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Original Article

Warmonger or Peacebuilder: Coverage of Taliban Militancy in the Pakistani Press

JHSS

1-24

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Vol. 32 (2), 2024

Bakht Rawan¹

Abstract

This study examines the role of national media, particularly the leading Urdu- and English-language press of Pakistan, under the theoretical perspectives of 'war journalism or peace journalism' in the transformation of the intra-state conflict, the Taliban conflict, in Pakistan. Unlike previous studies conducted on the Taliban, the present investigation, besides examining the agenda-setting and framing roles of the leading press in this intra-state conflict through content analysis, also investigated the structural constraints by employing focus group discussions with journalists who reported this conflict. A content analysis of 832 news stories, published in 481 editions by daily Jang and daily Dawn, indicates that the leading press of Pakistan gave significant coverage to the issue on the front and back pages. Nevertheless, it was dominated by war journalism frames. The focus group discussions revealed that journalists perceived the role of national media as warmonger than peacebuilders and inclined more to war journalism than peace journalism. They identified limited media autonomy, lack of training, absence of official media policy, and the government's indifferent attitude towards the conflict in the initial stages as some of the major structural constraints in doing peace journalism during the coverage of the Taliban conflict.

Keywords: National media, Taliban conflict, war & peace journalism, cultural constraints

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Introduction

The flames of intra-state armed conflicts engulf everything and make the nation bleed for decades to come. None of the warring parties wins such battles, while the ultimate losers and sufferers are the ordinary people. National identity is tarnished, infrastructure is ruined, and development halts for a long time. Human losses in intra-state armed conflicts occur in the same nation, whether the trigger is pressed by personnel of law enforcement agencies/military or the so-called insurgents. Shelling, bombardment, and killing of insurgents/separatists by government forces/military, as well as terrorist attacks on civilians, law enforcement agencies/army, and damaging government infrastructure by the insurgents, cannot be regarded as a wise way to resolve intrastate conflicts. Hence, peaceful ways for the transformation of such conflicts need to be contemplated.

The proponents of peace journalism consider mass media to be an important player in peacebuilding and the transformation of armed conflicts. “Peace journalism accuses war journalists of reporting war in an enclosed space and time, with no context, concealing peace initiatives and making wars opaque/secret” (Loyn, 2007, p. 1). Its exponents contend that media normally cover a conflict when it takes the form of violence (Galtung, 1998; Jakobsen, 2000; Kempf, 1999), whereas violence is the facet of conflict when the conflicting groups try to resolve the issue with the use of force. Hence, instead of waiting for the eruption of violence, the media needs to step forward and play its preemptive role in the solution of conflicts before conflicts ignite and turn into violence and destruction. Peace journalists are regarded as a part of the solution rather than part of the problem in conflict situations (McGoldrick, 2000). According to Lynch and McGoldrick (2005):

Peace journalism is committed to explore the root causes of conflicts and thereby enable the peace journalists to reckon the conflict objectively instead of blindly believing in accounts of the others who have vested interests in the conflict. It (peace journalism) “creates opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict. (p. 6)

In contrast to peace journalism, war journalism predominantly reports the bare facts of violence and detaches conflict from its broader context, both in time and space (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). Thus, war journalism portrays

conflict as a zero-sum game, where the narrative “us” vs. “them” is the predominant frame.

Some seminal studies conducted to investigate the media-war nexus are based on peace/ war journalism theory. Shinar (2006), while investigating Canadian and Israeli media reports on the Lebanon war, found that selected newspapers of both countries used a war journalism approach in their reports more than peace journalism. Ross (2004) investigated the Palestine-Israel conflict in the US media through a peace journalism perspective and found a preponderance of war journalism. Lea and Samuel (2009) viewed that Israeli media followed war journalism and relied on manipulation of content through the juggling of news coverage of the second Lebanon war and the Iranian nuclear threat. Similarly, Rizona and Panayotova (2021), while analyzing the contents of Al Jazeera, BBC, and CNN on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, found that all three network televisions were inclined more towards war journalism than peace journalism in their coverage. They also found that the war-peace framing of the issue was not the same in the selected television channels. Perez and Weissman (2006) investigated media reporting of the Iraq attack in the US newspapers in the context of peace and war journalism. The results indicated that war journalism was dominant as compared to peace journalism in coverage of the selected newspapers.

Moreover, the coverage was linked with foreign policy, so war was promoted as the only solution. Dimitrova and Stromback (2005), while examining media coverage of the Iraq war from the perspective of foreign-national policy, found that the war journalism perspective prevailed more. Newspapers of both countries favored some aspects of the war compared to others (p.414).

Izadi and Saghaye-Biria (2007) investigated the US media coverage of Iran and found that media reporting was propagandistic and reflected the US foreign policy interests. Lee and Maslog (2005), in their study on “War or peace journalism? Asian newspaper coverage of conflicts,” by examining print media coverage of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines conflicts, found that the selected newspapers were more inclined towards war journalism than peace journalism. Lee (2010), while investigating the Kashmir issue, a separatist movement in Indonesia, and the LTTE movement in Sri Lanka by applying a peace journalism approach, found that the three conflicts were mainly reported in war journalism fashion. Changkamol (2013) analyzed the conflict in South Thailand from the peace journalism perspective and found that the media in Thailand ignored the real causes and context of the

conflict and made an artificial link between al-Qaeda and terrorism and the demand of Southern Thailand.

Siraj (2008), employing Galtung's model of peace/ war journalism in his study of coverage of the Pakistan-India conflict in elite US newspapers, found that media coverage was generally tilted more towards war than peace journalism.

Other scholars have analyzed media coverage of the Taliban conflict in Pakistan from the perspective of war/ peace journalism. For example, Iqbal and Hussain (2017), while analyzing the news content of the two leading news television channels, i.e., *Geo News* and *Dunya News*, focused on the "escalatory" or "de-escalatory" nature of news coverage of the Taliban conflict. Their results showed that the coverage of the conflict (Taliban conflict) by *Geo* and *Dunya* television channels was "escalatory" (war journalism oriented). Similarly, Asmat-Ullah (2018), while analyzing coverage of the daily *Dawn* (a leading English-language newspaper of Pakistan) from the perspective of war and peace journalism theory on the Balochistan conflict, which is another intrastate armed conflict in Pakistan, found that the coverage was oriented to war journalism than peace journalism.

A review of the literature shows that although the advocates of peace journalism attach greater expectations with mass media in peaceful solutions and transformation of conflicts, as a matter of fact, mass media, in their coverage of conflicts, especially armed conflicts, usually inclined more toward war journalism than peace journalism. An overview of conflict studies in general shows that the new mass media, in general, have not been used for the lofty ideals of peace journalism. Moreover, some scholars cast doubts on the capability of peace journalism as envisaged by its promoters. For example, Hanitzsch (2007) argues that peace journalism portrays the media as an active player and the audience as a passive recipient of media messages for making their political decisions. He criticizes peace journalism for its lack of epistemological foundation. He claims that supporters of this new journalistic approach pursue an "overly individualistic and voluntaristic perspective," and they argue that a change in the attitude and behavior of conflict reporters will result in peace journalism, which, according to Hanitzsch, is an illusion. Shoemaker and Reese (2013), while discussing the various internal and external influences on media content, also contend that media messages are not produced in a social vacuum. Instead, various social, political, economic, cultural, and ideological factors besides journalists' own intrinsic factors play a key role in shaping media content. Lynch (2007) also pleaded in favor of considering the structural constraints, though they might not be considered the

only determining factors. Hanitzsch (2007) criticizes peace journalism for ignoring structural constraints affecting journalists' professional duties.

As far as previous studies conducted on conflicts in Pakistan are concerned, they either focused on political/social/cultural/economic aspects of the disputes or remained limited to the role of mass media only (war journalism or peace journalism) and ignored structural determinants of these conflicts. For example, Khan and Khan (2021), Azim, Mehmood, and Hussain (2018); Hussain & Lynch, 2018 Rasool (2012), and Orakzai (2011) all discussed the social, political, and economic causes of intrastate armed conflicts in Pakistan, but they did not consider the role of press/ media. On the other hand, other scholars looking at the role of media (peace/ war journalism) in the Taliban conflict (Iqbal & Hussain, 2017; Hussain, 2016; Siraj, 2008) kept their investigations limited to media content only and did not examine the structural constraints.

To fill these theoretical and methodological gaps in the literature, the present study has been designed to explore the role of media in the Taliban² conflict in Pakistan, an intrastate armed conflict, under the theoretical perspective of war and peace journalism by employing mixed methods (content analysis and focus group discussions). The rationale behind using the mixed method was to investigate the media's role as warmongers or peacebuilders (war/peace journalism) through content analysis and to examine the structural constraints faced by media men by employing focus discussions with journalists who remained associated with reporting the Taliban conflict.

Hence, the researcher designed the present study to examine the role of national mass media, especially the leading Urdu and English press, in the conflict in Pakistan. The researcher tried to address research questions like (1) how much coverage was given to the Taliban conflict by the leading Urdu- and English-language press of Pakistan? (2) What were the dominant frames (peace or war) in media coverage of the Taliban conflict? What were the perceptions of local journalists about the role of national mass media in the

² According to encyclopedia Britannica "Taliban are ultraconservative political and religious faction that emerged in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the collapse of Communist regime and the subsequent breakdown in civil order". Taliban here refers to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an outlawed terrorist organization operating in Pakistan. While the Taliban conflict means the intra-state armed conflict between Taliban and the government of Pakistan.

peaceful transformation of the Taliban conflict? What constraints did journalists face in objective and professional reporting on the Taliban conflict?

Theoretical Framework

The present investigation is based on Galtung's model of war and peace journalism as its theoretical framework. The model contained four categories of war journalism (violence, propaganda, elite, and differences) and four categories of peace journalism (peace, truth, people, and solution). Nevertheless, as we know later, other researchers (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Lee & Maslog, 2005; Fahmy & Neumann, 2012) worked on this model and added more categories. The researcher has adopted Lee and Maslog's (2005) nine categories of the war/peace journalism model in this study. It has been given as below:

Table 1

Indicators of war and peace journalism

War journalism	Peace journalism
Differences oriented	Solution oriented
Visible effects	Invisible effects
Elite oriented	People oriented
Here and now oriented	Causes and effects oriented
Propaganda oriented	Truth oriented
Two-party oriented	Multi-party oriented
Partisan	Non-partisan
Zero-sum-oriented	Win-win oriented
Use of demonizing language	Avoid demonizing language

This study employed a mixed approach using content analysis and focus group discussion techniques.

Content Analysis

The study analyzed both the front and back pages of daily *Jang* and daily *Dawn*, which are the most circulated Urdu- and English-language newspapers

in Pakistan, respectively. The time period of the study was from January 2005 to December 31, 2016. The population of the study was news stories published on the front and back pages of the selected newspapers regarding the Taliban conflict. Keeping in view the long period of the study (12 years) and to make the study manageable, the researcher used a constructed year sampling technique. He selected January from 2005, February from 2006, March in 2007, April in 2008, May in 2009, June in 2010, July in 2011, August in 2012, September in 2013, October in 2014, November in 2015, and December in 2016. In this way, he constructed one year. A code sheet was used as a data-gathering tool for the present inquiry. The code sheet was designed considering the extensive literature review and the findings of focus group discussions conducted before conducting the content analysis.

Topics

The researcher selected certain topics relating to the Taliban conflict for data collection. These topics were terrorism, anti-terrorism, displacement of local people, losses of property and lives, reconciliation talks, sufferings of the local community, rehabilitation process, cross-border involvement, enforcement of Shariah, military operation, legislation, condemnation, and madrassa.

Operationalization of the Concepts

Operational definitions are important for any study as they explain the ways and procedures to be followed in measuring the concepts; however, researchers in social sciences usually measure indicators of the concepts rather than measuring them directly (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

The concept of “role” in the present study was conceptualized from the war/peace journalism perspective. In contrast, war journalism was operationalized by using nine indicators of this phenomenon given by Lee and Maslog (2005). Similarly, peace journalism was also operationalized by using the nine indicators of the Lee and Maslog model for measuring peace journalism. The concept of “national media” in this study means the country's leading English and Urdu daily newspapers. Daily *Jang* is the most circulated Urdu-language newspaper, and *Dawn* is the most famous and widely circulated English newspaper in Pakistan. Hence, the researchers selected both of these newspapers for content analysis. Rules were designed to determine the presence or absence of any of the indicators of war and peace journalism in the coverage of the selected dailies during the study period.

Table 2

Code sheet and categorization scheme for newspapers on the Taliban conflict

Variables	Categories	Rules
1. Newspaper ID	1. English newspaper (<i>Dawn</i>) 2. Urdu Newspaper (<i>Jang</i>)	<i>Dawn</i> was coded as 1. <i>Jang</i> was coded as 2.
2. Page	1. Front page 2. Back page 3. Front & back pages both	Front page was coded as 1. Back page was coded as 2. Editions which carry news regarding Taliban conflict both on front and back pages were coded as 3.
3. Visibility of news	Ratio scale	Presence of the story was coded on ratio scale. The number of times news regarding Taliban conflict appeared on front, back and both front and back pages was coded as visibility of news.
4. Source of the story	1. Newspaper's own reporter/ correspondent 2. Monitoring 3. News agency report 4. press release/ handout	1. Newspaper own reporter/ correspondent was coded as 1. 2. Monitoring report was coded as 2. 3. News agency report was coded as 3. 4. Press release/ handout was coded as 4.
5. Peace frames	PJ1. Invisible effects of war PJ2. Solution oriented	1. News story containing information on Emotional trauma, damage to society and culture will be considered as having invisible effects of peace frame (peace journalism). This frame was coded as PJ1. 2. News story regarding solution of the conflict will be considered as having Solution oriented frame of peace journalism (PJ) and was coded as PJ2.

PJ3. People-oriented	3. News story mentioning common people as the sources of information and focusing on common people instead of the waring parties was considered as having people-oriented frame of PJ and was coded as PJ 3.
PJ4.Causes and consequences frame	News story mentioning causes and future effects of the conflict was considered as having Causes and Consequences frame of PJ and was coded as PJ4.
PJ5. Truth-oriented	News stories which expose untruths of all by verifying the contents/facts from different sources was considered as truth-oriented and was coded as PJ5
PJ6. Multi-party orientation	News story mentioning multi-parties including all stakeholders relating to the conflict was considered as having Multi-parties Orientation frame of PJ and was coded as PJ6.
PJ7. Win–win orientation	News story which did not mention gains/ defeats, were considered as win-win oriented frame of PJ. This frame (win-win orientation) was coded as PJ7.
	Stories that are not taking sides were considered as non-partisan and were coded as PJ8.

	<p>PJ8. Non-partisan</p> <p>PJ9. Avoid demonizing language</p>	<p>News story which avoided words/ phrases like terrorists, Kafir, criminals, anti-Pakistan, enemy of Islam, foreign agents, mercenaries, religious fanatics, foreign funded, fundamentalists, barbaric acts was considered as peace journalism's frame "avoiding demonizing language". This frame was coded as PJ9.</p>
7. War Frames	<p>WJ1. Visible effects of war: Casualties, dead, wounded.</p> <p>WJ2. Differences oriented: Report leads to the conflict.</p> <p>WJ3. Elite-oriented</p>	<p>News story containing information on visible damages to property, infrastructure, people, etc was considered as having visible effects of war frame This frame was coded as WJ1.</p> <p>News stories focusing on difference between the conflicting parties was considered as War journalism and was coded as WJ2.</p> <p>News stories focusing on leaders and elites as actors and sources of information and focus of the news story were viewed as having War journalism and they were coded as WJ3.</p> <p>News stories regarding the war arena only were considered as War journalism and were coded as WJ4.</p>

	<p>WJ4. Here and now</p> <p>WJ5. Propaganda-oriented</p> <p>WJ6. Two-party orientation</p> <p>WJ7. Partisan</p> <p>WJ8. Zero-sum orientation</p>	<p>News stories that promote one party's claims/ lies without validating through neutral sources or including the version of the other warring party of the conflict, were considered as having the "propaganda frame" and were coded as WJ5.</p> <p>News stories just mentioning the two parties' losses/ wins without referring to third party (common people of the area and impact on infrastructure/ culture, etc) were considered as having war journalism and were coded as WJ6.</p> <p>News stories showing positive bias towards one party and negative bias by using positive and negative words/ phrases for the other party were considered as having war journalism frame and were coded as WJ7.</p> <p>News stories focusing only on losses and wins of one party or the other were considered as war journalism framed and were coded as WJ8.</p> <p>News stories containing phrases like terrorists, criminals, Kafir, enemy of Islam, traitors, foreign agent, extremists, fundamentalists, religious fanatics, foreign funded elements, mercenaries, barbaric acts were considered as war journalism and were coded as WJ9.</p>
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	WJ9 Use of Demonizing language	
7. Topics of the Story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Terrorism ii. Anti-terrorism iii. Losses of properties and lives iv. Reconciliation Talks v. Sufferings and displacement of Local community vi. Taliban vii. Shariah viii. Madrasas ix. Missing persons x. Cross border terrorism. xi. Military Operation xii. Legislation/ condemnation 	
Visibility of frames	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. presence of indicators of peace Journalism frames 2. Presence of indicators of war journalism frames/ indicators. 	<p>The presence of peace journalism frames/ indicators was coded by using ratio level.</p> <p>The presence of war journalism frames is represented using ratio scale.</p>

Intercoder Reliability

In this study, two coders were involved in coding and entering data into the SPSS files. They were given training for this purpose. Moreover, before the final data entry by these coders, a pilot study was conducted on the coders to examine the intercoder reliability of the coding schemes. The researchers calculated the Cohen Kappa coefficient through SPSS to determine the intercoder reliability. The value of Cohen Kappa's coefficient was .90, which means excellent agreement/ intercoder reliability between the coders.

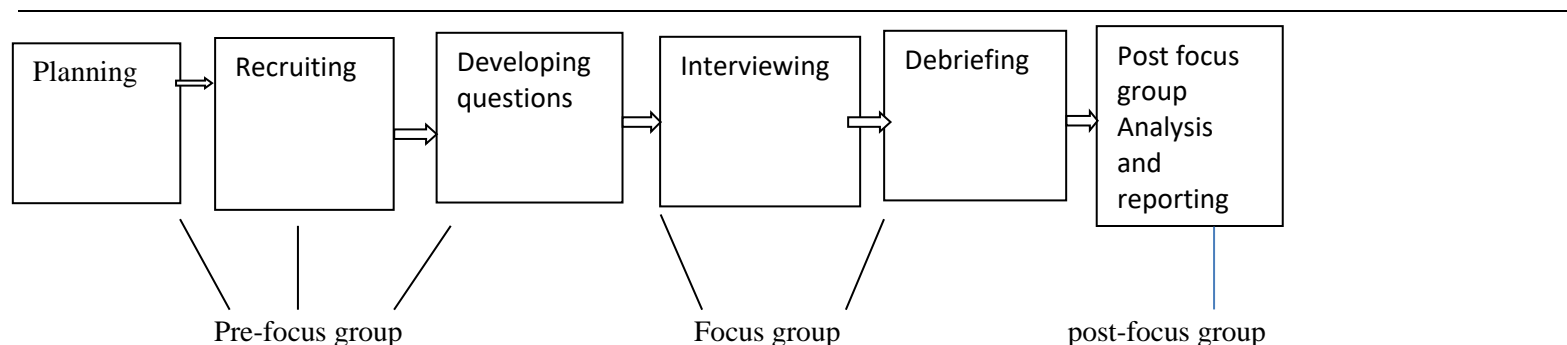
Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were solely conducted with local journalists associated with various local/national/ regional and international news media organizations to know how they covered this intrastate conflict? What problems did they face while reporting the conflict? Were they influenced by the conflicting parties? What were their perceptions about the role of national news mass media as warmongers or peacebuilders in this bloody intrastate conflict?

The population for the focus group was journalists registered with the Mingora Press Club. A purposive sampling technique was employed for the selection of the focus group participants. Members of the focus group were selected on the basis of their experience in the field of journalism. Those who had at least ten years of journalistic experience and had the opportunity to cover the Taliban conflict were selected.

Before initiating formal group discussions, the researcher distributed copies of a sheet among group members. The sheet contained questions regarding the respondents' basic demographic information. They were asked to fill it out and return it to the researcher. The researcher used a guide during the discussions, which contained the main questions and topics to be covered during the session. Besides note-taking, he also used a tape recorder to record audio tapes of various sessions of the group interviews.

Figure: 1
Analysis Map of Focus Group Discussion



Results of Content Analysis

Visibility of News on Taliban Conflict

To answer the first research question (RQ1) regarding the extent of coverage given to the Taliban conflict by the selected newspapers, the researcher analyzed the collected data and found that during the selected period of the study, both the papers published 730 editions, out of which 481 editions carried one or more stories per day whereas 249 editions did not carry any news story on the conflict. Table 02, given below, shows that a total of 832 news stories were collectively published in 481 editions by *Daily Jang* and *Daily Dawn*. These papers published one news story per issue in 258 editions, while 128, 73, 15, 04, 02, and 01 editions carried two, three, four, five, six, and seven news stories on the conflict.

Table 3*Visibility of news on the Taliban conflict in the selected newspapers*

Frequency of Taliban conflict news per day	# editions	Percent	Valid percent
1	258	35.3	53.6
2	128	17.5	26.6
3	73	10.0	15.2
4	15	2.1	3.1
5	4	.5	.8
6	2	.3	.4
7	1	.1	.2
Total	481 (832)	65.9	100
Missing system	249	34.1	
Total	730	100	

Valid= 832

Missing= 249

Analysis of the data on the placement of news stories on the conflict (Table 3) showed that the selected newspapers published 429, 131, and 272 news stories on the front page, back page, and both front and back pages in that order.

Table 4*Frequency distribution of placement of news on the Taliban conflict*

Frequency	Placement of News		
	Front Page	Back Page	F/B pages Both
1	165	92	0
2	57	16	54
3	36	1	37
4	8	1	6
5	2	0	2
6	0	0	2
7	0	0	1
	268 (429)	110 (131)	102 (272)

Front page n = 429, Back page n= 131, Front and back pages n= 272

Total N = 832

Indicators of Peace/War Journalism in the Coverage of Taliban Conflict

Comparative analysis of the collected data regarding coverage of the Taliban conflict for war and peace journalism indicators found press coverage of the conflict was predominantly war journalism oriented. Table 4 indicates that the cumulative frequency of the various war frames/ indicators was 3112 compared to the 1562 peace journalism frames in the selected newspapers' coverage.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Indicators of War and Peace Journalism in Coverage of Taliban Conflict

Peace Jour. Indicators	Sum	War Jour. Indicators	Sum
Invisible effects of war	237	Visible effects of war	329
Solution oriented	135	Differences oriented	413
People Oriented	219	Elite oriented	348
Causes and consequences	163	Here and now	316
Truth-oriented	175	Propaganda-oriented	387
Multi-party orientation	227	Two-party orientation	312
Non-partisan	164	Partisan	305
Win-win orientation	73	Zero-sum orientation	329
Avoid demonizing language	169	Use of demonizing language	373
<u>Total</u>	1562		3112

Analysis of Focus Group Data

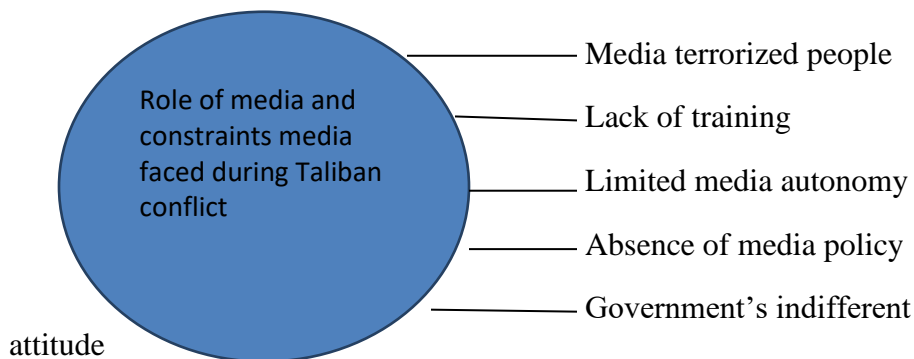
After transcribing the focus group discussions, the focus group data were analyzed through thematic analysis. A list of themes was created, and the same was displayed in the concept map of the focus group as well. Then, relevant comments and quotes from the focus group participants were collated under each theme. A descriptive summary of the focus group followed this process.

The researcher focused on perceptions of journalists regarding the role of the national media in the Taliban conflict as a warmonger or peacebuilder, the hurdles in access to information during the conflict, the influence of the warring parties in reporting facts, the role of media in projecting issues faced by the local community; and other relevant problems in reporting the Taliban conflict during the focus group discussion with local journalists of Mangora Press Club, Swat.

The following figure shows concept themes extracted from transcriptions of the focus group discussion.

Figure 2

Concept Map of “Role of Media” Extracted from Focus Group Discussions



Media Terrorized People

Members of the focus group expressed dissatisfaction with the media’s role during the Taliban conflict. One participant said, “I believe that some media persons played a negative role in this conflict by creating an atmosphere of fear, which was the agenda of militants, and the media promoted their agenda. They (the Taliban) wanted to terrorize people and the media by reporting the bare acts of terrorism that helped them achieve their objective. They showed dead bodies lying in the streets, along with horrifying captions. I think this type of reporting is not responsible journalism. Media, particularly local media, was involved in exaggeration as well.”

Another respondent observed, “I believe that 70 percent of the role of local media in this conflict was negative. Journalists had no idea how to report the conflict and what the consequences of their reporting would be. Local media reported the decapitated bodies, the beheading of people by the Taliban, and stories of bloodshed and destruction. I am confident in claiming that such media outlets did not even imagine the consequences of such reporting. The main purpose of such reporting was only to do business.”

Some participants viewed that the local media played their due role, and for this purpose even they (local journalists) sacrificed their lives and bore economic losses. One respondent said, “Local media in the conflict zones played their role very well. Some of our colleagues did not even leave Swat,

while common people migrated to safer regions as IDPs. They were performing their professional duties at the risk of their own lives.”

Another journalist said, “I own the cable network of Swat, and I gave a lot of coverage to local people’s issues and their problems during this conflict, although Taliban had destroyed my cable unit with bombs thrice.” Another respondent said, “Our four colleagues were killed in this conflict.”

One respondent said, “Local media not only informed the local population; rather, the national and international media were also dependent on us for news stories regarding this conflict.”

Untrained Local Media

Participants of the focus group observed that local journalists portrayed the Taliban positively during the Taliban conflict due to a “lack of professionalism and knowledge of the basic role of media. Even some of our colleagues suffered life losses due to unawareness of the tricks of conflict coverage. Local journalists were not trained in conflict reporting.” “I believe that this is the age of 5th generation war in which people’s perception is made through media. In this conflict, our journalists were not trained much so that they could tackle all the skills and demands of conflict communication”, observed another group participant. Another member responded, “Some journalists lost their lives while reporting this conflict. I think it was because of their lack of training in war reporting”.

The respondents expressed the need to train Pakistani journalists in conflict reporting. One respondent said, “Our journalists lack specialized reporting skills and techniques, especially conflict reporting. Hence, capacity-building training needs to be imparted to our journalists. Unfortunately, the government is not playing its role in building the professional skills of media persons.” “The media persons need full-fledged training on pre-conflict, during-conflict, and post-conflict phases. A group member remarked that such training will enable our media to play an important peace-making role in armed conflicts,” a group member remarked.

Limited Media Autonomy

The majority of the group members complained about the lack of freedom in covering the Taliban conflict. One group member remarked, “There was pressure from both the Taliban and the army.” Another said, “We were sandwiched between the Taliban and the army.”

Still, another member said, “Unfortunately, the situation at that time was very bad and challenging for the journalists. If the Taliban were mentioned as “martyred” in a news story, then the army got annoyed with us, and when the army personnel was reported as “martyred” then Taliban got displeased with the media.”

While narrating his own experience, one respondent said, “One day, the most notorious commander of the Taliban called me and asked me to stop CNN, BBC, Dawn News, and some other news channels from my cable network. I replied, “It is not possible I cannot shut down these channels because people pay me for these channels. He said, “Then prepare for a bomb blast.”

“In my opinion, the purpose of killing journalists was to pressure journalists to report according to their demands,” one respondent observed. “At the start of the conflict, both parties were not allowing the media to report freely. Both parties were censoring information that they didn’t want to publish. They wanted us to report what was in their own interests, said one respondent.

One respondent said, “There was no access to information for journalists”. Another respondent said, “This is the duty of media to stop extremism from spreading in the society and discourage conflicts, and government responsibility is to facilitate media rather than putting sanctions on media and cubing media freedom.”

Government Indifferent Attitude

The group members opined that although local media reported about the conflict well before it surfaced, the government should have paid more heed to such news in the pre-conflict period. One participant said, “Journalists reported about the activities of militants. They wrote stories and columns to inform policymakers that the Taliban’s narrative was getting accepted among the local people. But the local administration and government did nothing to stop them (Taliban) in the start.”

Another group member said, “We were sensing the threat of Talibanization in the region. We reported the growing popularity of the Taliban, particularly in Swat, in our news stories. Tribal areas of the country and Afghanistan were already under the influence of the Taliban. The government was supposed to take some steps to ward off Talibanization in the very beginning, but unfortunately, no action was taken.”

Absence of Official Media Policy and Counter-propaganda

Participants of the group discussion viewed that Mullah Radio of Maulana Fazlullah was constantly disseminating anti-state propaganda, but the government did not take any action against it. Fazlullah used his FM radio as a tool for preaching his religious views and making public opinion in his favor by broadcasting religious content embedded with his ideology. The echo of Fazlullah’s anti-state propaganda was constantly emanating from the loudspeakers of his Madrassa in Imam Dheri. Neither the law enforcement agencies nor PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) took timely notice of the sugarcoated propaganda of Mullah Fazlullah. In response to the Taliban’s narrative of enforcement of *Shariah* and blaming the government for an alliance with the USA and NATO against their Muslim brothers in Kabul, the government did not take any counter-propaganda measures timely. Even when the local media propagated the narrative of Fazlullah and TTP in the area, the government did not advise those media outfits. All these factors hint towards the non-existence of official media policy.

Discussion and Conclusion

Keeping in view analyses of quantitative data collected in the present investigation and their results, the researchers can conclude that the leading print media of Pakistan gave more coverage to the Taliban conflict. News regarding this intrastate conflict was placed comparatively more on the front pages than the back pages of both the Urdu and English press, which showed the agenda of the leading Urdu and English newspapers of Pakistan on the Taliban conflict. Nevertheless, they were tilted more towards war journalism than peace journalism. Hence, media (print media) coverage of the conflict could lead to conflict incitement rather than conflict resolution. They proved to be warmongers than peacebuilders in intrastate armed conflict situations.

Focus group discussion also revealed that Pakistan’s mass media were following war journalism instead of peace journalism in their coverage of the Taliban conflict. Considering these findings, the researcher concludes that

Pakistan media did not play a noteworthy role in either avoiding the Taliban conflict or de-escalating this bloody intrastate conflict. Journalists who covered this conflict revealed that they lacked proper training for such intrastate conflicts and were unaware of the consequences of their war-oriented coverage.

Nonetheless, for this inadequate role of Pakistan media in peace journalism, they (mass media) may not be held solely responsible; instead, some other outside media factors did not allow Pakistan print media to play a proactive role in avoiding this conflict, contributing to peacebuilding, and resolution of this conflict. These factors were control of media from both the warring parties for promoting their respective agenda, lack of access to factual information, and absence of official media policy on how to tackle the propaganda by the Taliban. More importantly, the government needed to take proper steps for the media agenda on the issue of the Taliban. It can also be concluded that other stakeholders, particularly the religious leaders who were essential actors in government policy in Afghan Jihad, were not taken into confidence for the policy shift towards Kabul and Taliban by the government of Pakistan. The media, public, and policy agendas were not on the same page at the beginning of the Taliban conflict.

The focus group discussions revealed that news sources from both sides forced journalists to portray them positively and serve their interests. Such findings challenge the assumptions of Herman and Noam Chomsky's propaganda model, which sees official sources as one of the filters of news. Chomsky's propaganda model shows that mass media are willfully dependent on official sources for news materials. Still, contrary to this assumption, findings of the present study indicate that mass media, especially in conflict reporting, are neither intentionally dependent on official sources nor the sources of information are limited only to official ones. Both the conflicting parties want positive portrayals in mass media, and for that purpose, they dictate the media and the reporters.

Keeping in view the results of content analysis and focus group discussion, it can be concluded that mass media cannot play the role of peacebuilder in intrastate armed conflicts until and unless they are given free access to information, professional liberty to journalists is ensured by conflicting parties, the government takes both preemptive and reactive measures against anti-state propaganda by state enemies, proper media policy in the pre-conflict stage is formulated, and proper capacity building of local conflict reporters is executed.

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Original Article

A Transient Life Behind the Mended Cloth Walls: The *Khanabadosh* of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

JHSS

25-38

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Vol. 32 (2), 2024

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to delineate different factors associated with the spatial mobility of the khanabadosh¹ community located in Changaryano Daag in the fringes of Hathian Bazaar, District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Empirical data for this micro-focused ethnographic research was collected through participant observation, key informants, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Khanabadosh, under study, is going through a transitional period of spatial mobility towards permanent settlement, which reflects the evolution of the given society from a mobile to a settled mode of life. Hence, through time some of them are permanently settled so far. The findings of the study show that there were multifaceted factors that pushed them to move from one place to another. Those factors include socio-economic, seasonal conditions, delinquency, illiteracy, and the issue of national identity cards.

Keywords: *khanabadosh*, spatial mobility, distinctive social group, assimilation

Introduction

Khanabadosh is a small community of dark-skinned marginalized people who reside in Changaryano Daag on the fringes of Hathian Bazaar in the district of

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¹ The word *khanabadosh* is derived from the Persian language, which is the composite of two words: *khana*, which means home, and *dosh*, which means shoulder. Literally, it means the people who carry their “houses on their shoulders” or “with houses on their back.” They are the people who do not have permanent places for houses, move from one place to another in search of life’s necessities and do not have permanent dwellings (Angelillo, 2013; Ali, 2019).

Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. They are known by different names. Across the world, in other countries, they are called gypsies (Berland, 1982; Okely, 1998). In Pakistan, they are given different names, i.e., *khanabadosh*, *pukiwas*, *jogiwal*, *tambuwal* (Berland, 1982), and *changaryan* (Ali, 2019). In the area under study, they identify themselves as *khanabadosh*, while the local people call them *Changaryan*. However, in this research, the term *khanabadosh* is used for them as they introduce themselves using the same term.

More reliable information about the total population of *khanabadosh* in Pakistan needs to be provided. The Dawn Newspaper 2015 reported their total population as seven million individuals (Dhakku, 2015). The Grass-root Organization for Human Development (GOHD) recorded their population as twelve million in Pakistan (Mehmood, 2020). In the area under study, 503 persons (including 123 males, 120 females, 140 males, and 120 female children) live in 90 nuclear families. They are in transition from spatial mobility towards permanent settlement. Based on a residence, they are classified into two categories, i.e., the permanently settled and spatially mobile. 17 families (119 persons including 25 males, 28 females, and 66 children) out of 90 have settled down permanently since they purchased personal lands and have constructed permanent houses in the area under study. They have national identity cards with permanent residential addresses of the area and reside on different streets with the local people. They almost have reciprocal relationships with local people and will amalgamate with them.

Contrary to those permanently settled, the remaining 73 families (384 persons including 98 males, 92 females, and 194 children) out of 90 were spatially mobile. They reside on the land of government reserved for the railway departments and personal plots of the local people, where each household pays a rent of eleven hundred rupees to the leaseholders and owners of the land, respectively. Some of them practice seasonal mobility, move to the hilly areas once or twice a year, usually for three or six months, and return to the Changaryano Daag.

However, only some constantly move to change their locality without any time bound and rarely return to the Changaryano Daag. The present study primarily concerns those who practice seasonal mobility and those who constantly move from one area to another. They are appropriately termed by the local people as *kada pa sar*.² They used to live in temporarily constructed tents and *chapars*³

² People who carry their tents on heads and moving from one place to another

³ *Chapar* is the modified form of a tent, which is relatively durable and protected. The *khanabadosh* usually pitch a tent and then build four walls almost six feet high around it,

including 46 tents and 27 *chapars*, usually on the bank of water near the roadside because they can go to another area at any time of the day. Since they live in *chapars* and *tambwan* (tents), they are also called by the local people *chupro wala* or *tambwano wala*⁴. Each tent or *chapar* is a nuclear family. Generally, married brothers preferred to live in the patronage of their father in adjacent tents or *chapars*, marked by boundary walls of multicolor-mended cloths. The extended tents/*chapars* of several families form a *dhera*, which can be translated as a camp.

Literature Review

There are communities of non-pastoral nomads or gypsies across the world, but little anthropological literature is available about them (Berland, 1983; Rao, 1986; Robertson, 2014). According to Salo (1986) and Hyden (1979), ethnographic research in Europe started early, but gypsies, in particular, came to focus only in the 1970s. Lewy (2001) opines that over the last few decades, research on gypsies has developed mainly in Europe. Different scholars identify them with other terms, i.e., “symbiotic nomads” (Misra, 1978), “trader nomads” and “professional strangers” (Simmel, 1950), “craftsman nomads” (Hubschmannova, 1972), “economic nomads” (Acton, 1974), “non-food producing nomads” (Rao, 1982), and *khanabadosh* (Berland, 1977). Salo and Salo (1982) investigated that the Romnichels gypsies of America have a variety of mobility patterns. Some families move across the country. Some are restricted to specific regions, while some have confined themselves to local areas. Some have bought personal lands and used them as focal points for their movements, with a wide range of intercultural changes in movement and settlement patterns. Montesino (2012) identified in Europe that the concept of spatial mobility among the gypsies was passed down for generations. The forefathers of some gypsies preferred spatial mobility for exploring new places, and still, some of them liked a mobile lifestyle. They also travel from one place to another to maximize the probability of earning opportunities.

Studies conducted on gypsies, particularly in South Asia, reveal that limited anthropological data is available about their culture. The same was stated by Birch (1971), Tapper (1977), Rao (1987), and Robertson (2014). Ruhela (1968) identified that the Gaduliya Lohar gypsies of India serve the agricultural communities. They frequently move from one area to another with their bullock carts to make farming tools for the farmer communities. Singh et al. (1998) investigated that the Cobra gypsies of the Kalbelia caste are living

generally of broken bricks, for the purpose of making it secure and stopping the air from coming inside.

⁴ A tent is known among the host community as *chupri* or *tambo*. Those who live in *chupri* or *tambo* are known as *chupro wala* or *tambwano wala*.

a nomadic lifestyle in the deserts of Rajasthan. They frequently change their location to exploit the resources, particularly in an arid environment. Therefore, they are guarded by tame dogs. They keep donkeys for the necessary transportation of tents and other goods for domestic use. They camp for a short time and start their journey towards another area by completely exploiting the available resources there. Rao (1982) identified that in Afghanistan, the gypsies serve the local population and are known as *Jats* (singular *Jat*). They are largely nonproducers and dependent on other human populations for their food. Their income is primarily associated with their women begging and daily wages.

In Pakistan, Berland (1982) suggests that there needs to be more literature about the culture of itinerant people, with a significant portion available about the pastoral communities. The lack of availability of enough information about the non-pastoral nomads or *khanabadosh* means that there is no clear understanding of their movement from one place to another. He investigated that the *khanabadosh* mostly live in areas with a large, settled population. They mostly depend on the resources of the settled population of the area. They usually move from one place to another to exploit the resources as per their inclination.

In the area under study, the *khanabadosh* have been living for many years. They move to other areas, particularly the hilly and cold areas. They prefer to live on the roadside, where water is available at their doorstep. They reside in temporarily constructed tents and makeshift *chapars* on the land of the government and host community. The reason behind temporary dwelling structures is the uncertainty of moving to other areas at a time. They travel to widespread parts of the country, mainly the hilly regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, by carrying their belongings and pitch tents to the area where they plan to stay.

In the current study, the researchers agree with Berland (1977), who suggests that the inequalities faced by *khanabadosh* are primarily due to their mobile lifestyle. Likewise, Ali (2019) identified that spatial mobility is one of the major reasons for minimizing the social status of the *khanabadosh*; therefore, the settled people avoid amalgamating with them. There is a saying among the local people that rolling stone gathers no moss. Hence, they exist as a distinctive social group within the larger community.

Methodology

This study was qualitative in nature. Various qualitative research methods were used to collect data, which comprised participant observation, eight key informant interviews, twenty-three in-depth interviews, and six group

discussions with forty-two respondents. This was a micro-focused study because there were 73 households of the spatially mobile *khanabadosh* in Union Council Hathian with a population of 384 persons. Therefore, all of them were studied. Data collected through different tools were cross-checked. To get entry into the field and to extend relationships to a maximum number of *khanabadosh*, we conducted two broad-based community meetings (hereafter BBCMs), i.e., one each with a male and one female.

Moreover, they were introduced to the purpose of the study, and they were actively involved in the whole inquiry. Considering the culture of the area under study, we hired and properly trained a female research facilitator. She collected information from the female respondents. Therefore, this enabled us to accurately describe the factors contributing to spatial mobility among the *khanabadosh*.

Discussion and Analysis

Research on the spatially mobile *khanabadosh* has produced some results, which are hereby described. Data illustrate that, contrary to the opinion of the host community, they do not travel aimlessly. Complex and multifaceted interrelations of socio-economic factors, seasonal conditions, delinquency, illiteracy, and the lack of national identity cards govern their movements.

One of the contributing factors to the spatial mobility of *khanabadosh* is to explore new areas where they come in contact with different cultures. It was identified that all of them know much about every place and the culture of its people because they extensively move across the country by watching the lifestyles and behaviors of different people. Therefore, they are known as good mobilizers in businesses by the local people because they can sell their stuff to the local people in any situation. One of the critical informants explicated in a group discussion that all his eight children were born in every new area, as his six brothers and three sisters were. It was identified that some of them could not stay in one place as they felt suffocated due to living in a given place for a long time. Most of the respondents, including key informants, expressed their views in in-depth interviews that they have inherited this tradition from their forefathers to move from one area to another.

The second reason for the *khanabadosh* movement is associated with *bad dua* (curse). It was identified during interviews with key informants and group discussions with the graybeard *khanabadosh* that their forefathers were cursed by their ancestors, that they would not see a settled life and would be roaming around to different places. Therefore, they move from one area to another. Misra (1977) identified the same in the case of Gadulia Lohar of India and Berland (1979) in the case of Qalandar *Khanabadosh* of Pakistan.

The third reason for *khanabadosh* mobility is *sharam* (shame), which is a condition of one's inferiority or worthlessness in a particular social situation. During conversations with the key informants and in-depth interviews, it was identified that they moved from one area to another due to shame. For example, if a married woman flees to get another marriage, it is considered *sharam*. In this situation of conflict, the respect of the woman's family is enormously affected, and resultantly, serious disputes occur, which are necessarily reported to the police to pressure the opponent. However, it was observed that most of such disputes were resolved informally by *jirga*⁵ through a tradition of imposing a fine on the accused party, which is known as *dan juram*. A woman's family members, including her father and husband, usually move to a strange and unknown area to hide the shame. Similarly, the members of the family of a man who abducted a married woman are expelled by the *jirga* from the camp.

The fourth reason for spatial mobility is stigmatization and the negative connotation the local people use for *khanabadosh*. Everywhere, the settled population stigmatizes and negatively connotes them (Powell 2008). Javed (2018) identified that the *khanabadosh* of Pakistan are discriminated against and stereotyped by the local people in their routine lives. In the area under study, the *khanabadosh* are stigmatized and discriminated against by the local people because of the involvement of *khanabadosh*'s women in earning, prostitution, thefts, drug addiction and trafficking, and gambling. Further, they are also stigmatized due to the unhygienic conditions of their camps and low caste. In routine lives, the settled population uses several negative connotations for *khanabadosh*, which indicate prejudice, discrimination, and opposition. In some instances, coercion is also used to oppress them. In these circumstances, they are compelled to quit the area.

The fifth reason for the spatial mobility of



Picture-01: A female *khanabadosh* has put a heavy load (*pund*) of bed sheets and cloths on her head by selling it among the settled population.

⁵ A council of elders that use to settle a dispute among the disputant parties (Ali 2019, p. 10).
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khanabadosh is *musafari*⁶. They shift to a new area to earn money, where the females start selling various goods and begging while a few males start small-scale businesses, praying and sometimes working on daily wages. Among them, females are primarily responsible for fulfilling the economic needs of the households; therefore, they are associated with outdoor economic activities. The males are economically dependent on females. The men usually engage in indoor activities, particularly domestic chores, caring for babies, and securing tents/*chapars*. During the socio-economic survey, it was identified that 88 out of 92, i.e., 95.65%, females worked to earn money to fulfill household needs while 72 out of 98, i.e., 73.47%, males, did not work to earn money. Instead, they were economically dependent on females. It is noteworthy that the



females regularly work to earn money, often six days a week, while the males rarely work to earn, particularly for a day or two a week. It was identified that most females visit the houses of the settled population in the peripheries by selling bedsheets, clothes, bangles, and other cosmetic items. As Okely (1998) identified that the gypsy females mainly contribute to economic activities by hawking various goods in the streets or door to door. Among the *khanabadosh*, 26 out of 98, i.e., 26.65%, males, occasionally worked to earn and begging. Males' earning activities are to sell *cheer*⁷; hence, they are known in the host community as *cheerwala*⁸ (Ali 2019). Some also sell ice cream and plastic utensils and collect rags by visiting nearby rural areas. Moreover, they also sell dogs, pigeons, cocks and quails, and gamble in the *dhera* (camp).

⁶ *Khanabadosh* move from one area to another particularly for exploiting the resources which they called *musafari*.

⁷ A sweet substance like a lollypop

⁸ A person who sells *cheer*

The sixth reason for *khanabadosh*'s movement is to receive *Ushr*⁹ and *Zakat*¹⁰, as well as *Sadaqaat* or *Khairat*¹¹ from the host community. As the wheat crop is ripened and threshed, the females and some male *khanabadosh* visit the houses of the host community, particularly of the farmers and landlords, to get *Ushr* and *Zakat*, and *Sadaqaat* or *Khairat* in the crops and other material things. In the meantime, a few males work in the nearby fields by harvesting and threshing the wheat in return in cash or kind. After local earnings, they move to hilly and cold areas where wheat and other crops are ready for harvesting. Generally, the crops are grown in hilly areas pretty late due to the cold weather and hence ripened later as well. Therefore, *khanabadosh* gets another chance to earn from *ushar*, *zakat*, and *sadaqat* or *khairat* in hilly, chilly areas.

The seventh reason for the *khanabadosh*'s mobility is the lack of availability of personal property. It was identified that they earn and spend daily. Due to extreme poverty, the *khanabadosh* are almost unable to purchase personal property like a plot or house. Therefore, they reside on the land of others. Javed (2018) posits that everywhere in Pakistan, the *khanabadosh* often live in the land of government. In the area under study, the *khanabadosh* are camped on the land of the government (railway department) and host community for which they pay a rent of eleven hundred rupees for a single tent or *chapter*. So, they move to another area when they are informed that they should vacate the land either by the government or the owners.

⁹ *Zakat* on the agricultural produces is known as *Ushr*. In Islam, Muslims are liable to give us on agricultural produce at the rate of ten percent if the land is rainfed and the rate of 5 percent if the land is watered artificially (Manzoor 1989, 374).

¹⁰ The word *Zakat* is derived from the Arabic language *Zakah*, which means purification. It is one of the five pillars of Islam. The Muslims who fulfill the necessary criteria of wealth (until one year passes on it), and it is obligatory for him/her to give it to the poor and needy Muslims (Manzoor 1989, 379).

¹¹ The two words *Sadaqat* and *Khairat* are used interchangeably. The word *Sadaqa* (plural *Sadaqat*) is derived from Arabic language which means charity. In Islam *Sadaqat* means, the giving of something to someone without getting anything in return, for the purpose to get the favor and blessing of Allah (Manzoor 1989, p. 441).

The eighth reason for the *khanabadosh's* movement is begging. They prefer to shift to those areas where opportunities for begging are more significant. Among them are two types of beggars: professional and unprofessional. Professional beggars are those who essentially rely on begging, while unprofessional beggars mainly work to earn money and rely on begging. There was 12 out of 88, i.e., 13.64%



Picture-06: A professional female *khanabadosh* with a newborn baby begging in a nearby bazar.

females, and 7 out of 26, i.e., 26.92% males, professional beggars. The females are primarily associated with outdoor economic activities; therefore, the professional female beggars, along with newborn babies and little children, visit bazaars, markets, hotels, and the houses of wealthy people for begging. The primary purpose of keeping newborn babies is to attract and get the sympathy of the people to give them money or other material things. The little children, either boys or girls, according to the males, accompany the females to get training in earning activities as well as to keep an eye on the females to protect them from developing extramarital affairs with members of the host community. Rao (1986) also identified in Afghanistan that among the Kowli gypsies, the females, along with their little children, beg for cash to fulfill their economic needs.

In contrast, the unprofessional female beggars sell various goods, particularly in the rural areas, by visiting the houses of settled populations where they also beg for foodstuff, i.e., grains, flour, and brown sugar, plus used clothes, dry bread, or cash. They justify begging because of increased poverty, low income, and the main responsibility to fulfill the household needs of females. It is worth mentioning that they sell the aforesaid material things in the local market because they need cash to meet the daily needs of the households. This is a general observation that the majority of the *khanabadosh* females indulge in prostitution, which is one of the reasons that the host community considers them inferior and avoids amalgamating with them rather than pushing them to quit the area.

All of the professional male beggars are aged. They used to visit the houses of the settled population in rural areas and beg for foodstuffs like flour, grains, brown sugar, etc., which they sold in the nearby markets as they needed cash

to fulfill their needs. They also begged cash to pay transportation expenses during visits to different localities.

The ninth reason for the spatial mobility of the *khanabadosh* is arranging circuses for the entertainment of local people and to earn a livelihood. Javed (2018) posits that the *khanabadosh* customarily arranged circuses to entertain the settled population in various parts of Pakistan. Berland (1982) observed the same in the case of Qalandar *khanabadosh* of Pakistan. In the area under study, few of the *khanabadosh* are associated with arranging circus to entertain the people of the settled population. To earn more, they preferred to travel to widespread areas by arranging a circus to entertain the people where they started temporary residence. When they realize that the local people no longer require their services, they quit the place and move to another area.

The tenth reason for their spatial mobility is to enjoy friendly weather. Hence, they move to the hilly and cold areas in summer and return to plain areas as winter arrives. Generally, they live in makeshift tents and *chapars*, suitable for low summer temperatures and cold weather in winter. When the summer began, due to high temperatures, they started moving towards hilly and cold areas, particularly Malakand, Dir Lower and Upper, Shangla, Batagram, and Kohistan Districts. Similarly, in the winter season, due to extreme cold in the hills, they return to plain areas where the temperature is relatively normal.



Picture-08: The structure of a makeshift tent of the *khanabadosh*

The eleventh reason for *khanabadosh's* movement is delinquency. After committing any crime particularly related to theft, drug trafficking, quarrels, etc., they move to another area for protection from the enemy, police, and other security agencies. Dyer and Choksi (2006) state that they are often involved in criminal activities and perceived as a “threat to the established social order.” In the area under study, the *khanabadosh* are popularly taken as professional thieves by the host community. Generally, the members of the host community warn their children to remain inside their houses as *changaray* (*khanabadosh* female) may kidnap them. As Okely (1998) states that the gypsies are best known for child kidnapping and thefts among the host community. Besides,

extreme poverty, limited social relationships with the local people, and lack of national identity cards are the main reasons for delinquency among the *khanabadosh*. Therefore, after thefts or committing any other criminal act, the *khanabadosh* left the area within no time by shifting to another area.

This is a general observation that disputes are shared among the *khanabadosh* for which they are stereotyped and negatively connoted by the local people and police. It was identified that they almost resolved their disputes informally through *Jirga*. The intra-community disputes are easy to resolve, but the disputes with the local people are rare and difficult to resolve because the local people are dominant in the area under study. Therefore, in the case of a dispute with the local people, the *khanabadosh* are pressured and expelled from the area. During a quarrel, the researchers identified a case where a *khanabadosh* male struck the head of a local person with a steel rod and seriously wounded him. Initially, the case was reported to the police to pressure the opponent, but later on, it was resolved through *Jirga*. According to the decision of *jirga* the culprit's family paid medical expenses and was expelled from the area. It is, therefore, concluded that disputes are also a major factor of spatial mobility among the *khanabadosh*.

The twelfth reason for the *khanabadosh*'s movement is illiteracy. Dhakku (2015) suggests that education is a main factor in reintegrating Pakistan's gypsies, but in the area under study, 84.97% of them were illiterate. Only 15.03% are found literate up to the primary level. Generally, the children of *khanabadosh* start earning at an early age. Since women are responsible for outdoor economic activities, they visit rural areas with their female children to sell bedsheets, clothes, bangles, and other cosmetic items. The male children stay there with males to assist them in

domestic chores, caring for the younger siblings, and security of the tents/chapters. It was found that the children of permanently settled *khanabadosh* are almost attending formal schools, while the children of those who are not permanently settled are not attending formal schools. One of the



Picture-09: A group of *khanabadosh*'s children in a nearby government school, along with the School Head Teacher and key informant

critical informants shared during a group discussion that formal schooling requires the daily presence of children in schools while they do not have permanent dwellings; therefore, they did not enroll children but rather involved them in earning and domestic activities. Thus, this lack of education among them catalyzes the tendency of mobility from one area to another.

The last reason for *khanabadosh*'s movement was the lack of national identity cards. Javed (2018) identified that enough *khanabadosh* are not registered with Pakistan's NADRA (National Database and Registration Authority) department. In the area under study, it was identified during the socio-economic survey that 20% of the *khanabadosh* are not registered with the NADRA department due to several reasons, particularly socio-economic, lack of awareness, and cultural traditions. Therefore, they move from one area to another and prefer to reside in those areas where there are fewer checks and balances on them by the police and other security agencies.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to explore the factors that contribute to the spatial mobility of *khanabadosh*. The factors that contribute to the spatial mobility of *khanabadosh* are socio-economic, seasonal conditions, delinquency, illiteracy, and lack of national identity cards. The findings of this study can serve as a baseline for research on other similar groups of *khanabadosh* who exist in other regions of Pakistan. Because of spatial mobility, their social status is low; hence, *khanabadosh* exists as a distinctive social group within the larger community of the settled population. However, a trend of transition is witnessed among mobile *khanabadosh*, and like their other permanently settled fellows *khanabadosh*, they are inclined to get permanently settled to attain economic prosperity and see their children in schools.

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Social Acceptance of Folk Artists: Conceptualizing Hegemonic Masculinity in the Pashtun Culture

JHSS
39-55

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Vol. 30 (2), 2022

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Abstract

This study showcases the prevailing Pashtun norms in society regarding the social acceptance of Pashtun folk artists. It also examines the pressure of social hegemonic masculinity on Pashtun folk artists' personal and professional lives. The research approach was qualitative, in which ten professional folk musicians, specifically drummers (called tabla nawaz in Urdu), were selected through purposive sampling from Islamabad Bazar (commonly known as Chitrali Bazar) and Kabari Bazar in Peshawar city. Connell's (1995) framework on masculinity is used to analyze Pashtun's hegemonic masculinity and its influence on folk artists. The study findings indicate that in contemporary Pashtun society, folk art and artists are discouraged on both theoretical and practical levels. Theoretical discouragement manifests in the lack of granting them their deserved cultural position, while practical discouragement is evident in the absence of protection for their rights as artists. The rise of radicalization and conservative interpretations of the Pashtunwali has restricted the presence of folk artists in public. Consequently, folk artists, in general, and folk musicians and instrumentalists were ridiculed, alienated, and subjected to derogatory language because their profession was perceived as effeminate. These attitudes caused a decline in the number of musicians, which led to the loss of the positive influence of art in society. It was concluded that societal views place the category of tabla nawaz at the lowest hierarchical level in both social stratification and levels of masculinity.

Keywords: folk artists, social acceptability, hegemonic masculinity, Pashtunwali

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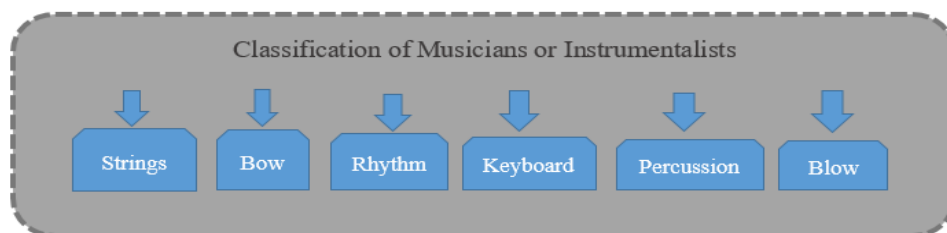
Introduction

The social acceptance of folk artists is a complex phenomenon in Pashtun society. It directly and indirectly impacts their personal lives, mental growth, and professional development as permanent members of Pashtun's³ ethnic identity. Farigh Bukhari, in his book "Sarhad Key Lok Geet" (Folk Songs of the Frontier), defines a folk artist as an "Olasi funkar" who plays traditional Pakhtun music or sings folk songs. Pashtun's ethnic identity and pride are ingrained in their folklore and folk culture, which is referred to as "Olasi Adbiyat" or "Olasi Poha" in the Pashto language (Momand & Şahrai, 2006; Dinakhel & Ul Islam, 2019). A folk artist is defined as an individual who plays musical instruments or sings traditional songs to preserve the folklore of an ethnicity. As a broader category, folk artists can be further divided into sub-categories (Bukhari, 1987; Khattak, 2010; Enevoldsen, 2004; Nasiri, n.d).



The instrumentalists or musicians in it can be further classified into sub-categories (Yousaf, 1989).

³ Pakhtuns/Pukhtuns/Pukhtoons and Pashtuns are linguistic variants used for the same ethnicity. The difference in pronunciation of the "kh" and "sh" sounds is because of the two different dialects spoken in the northern and southern districts, respectively, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The current research prefers 'Pashtun' spellings.



Theoretically, this classification has no hierarchy; however, in Pashtun society, folk artists who play percussion instruments (drums) face social alienation compared to the rest of the categories. Consequently, exploring the social adjustment issues of folk artists who face social exclusion in the Pakhtun society is crucial. Also, there needs to be more academic research on the impact and pressures of hegemonic masculinities on the personal and social lives of these folk artists. Therefore, for this study, the term ‘folk artists’ refers to male instrumentalists or musicians of Pashtun ethnicity who specialize in playing *tabla* or drums, a percussion instrument living in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Folk Artists and Pashtunwali

Pashtuns, also known as Pushtun, Pakhtun, or Pakhtun, are the same ethnic group primarily residing in Afghanistan and Pakistan (David, 2013). They are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, comprising around forty-two percent of the population (Abdurahmonov, 2021). The Pashtun population in Pakistan is at least twice that of Pashtuns in Afghanistan (Belokrenitsky, 2022). Pashtunwali is an unwritten constitution of conventions and practices that is dually applicable in every sphere of life for both men and women. Its fundamental principles include *sharam* (honor), *gherat* (courage), *haya* (modesty), *melmasitiya* (hospitality) (Khan & Amina, 2011), *drund nazar* (self-respect), *wafa* (loyalty), and *badal* (revenge) (Spain, 1985; Rzehak, 2012). Kakar (2004) argued that in Pashtun society, honor (*izzat*, particularly related to women) is highly valued, and a person without honor is not valued in Pathan society. This honor is protected through the principles of *namos* (respect), *gherat* (honor), *nang-o-namos* (chivalry), *badal* (revenge), and bravery (Benson et al., 2014). Shaheen (n.d.) states that in Pashtun society, the concept of honor is highly valued and often attached to women compared to men. Every Pashtun man is strictly vigilant regarding his honor and never wants his women to be humiliated openly at any cost (Anderson, 1975). Any Pashtun who does not follow the code of Pashtunwali in its spirit is considered deviant. This code constitutes an integral aspect of Pashtun culture and is

essential in molding notions of masculine identity among Pashtuns (Rzehak, 2012).

The social exclusion of folk artists is also due to the prevalence of social stratification among Pashtuns. They are socially stratified into class and caste-based divisions or professional or occupational stratification (Grima, 1993). Profession-based stratification includes *kulal* (potter), *mochi* (shoemaker), *naai* (chef), and *dum* (musicians/performer), etc., which clearly shows that musicians are at the bottom of the hierarchy, and *tabla nawaz* ranks at the lowest status within musicians. Therefore, the word *dum* is considered offensive, and most practicing Pashtuns take it as abuse, which is why it is disparagingly used. The dilemma is that mainstream Pashtun society does not recognize folk artists as Pashtun and their profession as masculine (Enevoldsen, 2004). The Pashtun society generally associates singing, dancing, and music with women, and men who perform such activities are socially alienated (Khattak, 2005).

Historically, *hujrah* (a male guest place) is an important and basic institution of Pashtun culture, and with *hujrah*, the Pashtun norms are complete (Spain, 1985). *Hujrahs* have always given importance to folk music and artists in the past, but now the culture is gradually transforming and becoming more rigid towards folk artists. Landlords and aristocrats had always patronized folk artists. They would provide them with money, food, and shelter to free them from economic problems. This generosity of socially affluent people allowed folk artists to concentrate on music and art (Nasiri, n.d). Saeed (2005) narrates that music and dance can be spiritual experiences for some people, and they help them express themselves through music and dance.

The plight of folk artists in Pashtun society in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was greatly affected when Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) succeeded in forming a government (2002-2007) in the former North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The party had enormous political clout but, sadly, was against music and art, considering it to cause immorality and corruption in society. According to an author, “in many areas of Peshawar (provincial capital), musicians and drum beaters were arrested through police” (Khan, 2014: 306). Many folk artists were compelled to leave their homes and seek asylum in other countries (Sardar Ali Takkar and Haroon Bacha are the prime examples), which were less hostile to them. A few who could not relocate changed their profession (Sisario, 2008).

Besides MMA, the rise of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, also known as the Pakistan Taliban) annihilated music production in the region. As the TTP

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gained influence over more and more territory, including Peshawar, streets fell silent, which once reverberated with all forms of music, such as *qawali* (a form of spiritual singing), folk, or contemporary music. Artisans making musical instruments, and their workshops were shut down as well as threatening musicians and killing them was the new social order (Khan, 2021). Hyder (2016) reports that, gradually, music revival became possible in Peshawar, where the Pakistani Taliban had banned musicians. The past experiences of many folk artists and musicians changed their perspective, and it was difficult for them to trust and rejuvenate their profession. However, after the 18th constitutional amendment, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa set up the Directorate of Culture (DoC) to manage arts and culture in the region. In this regard, a cultural policy 2018 was drafted to protect, promote, and revive the diversity of Cultural heritage in the province. However, the policy did not meet the expectations of singers and artists, and they were disappointed. They called it a “mere eyewash” and referred to 2018 as a “gloomy year for artists” (Shinwari, 2018).

Expectations from Pashtun Men

Dominant masculine roles are essential in the gender division of roles in all modern and traditional societies (Worell, 2002). In the Pashtun society, there is a strong link between different concepts like masculinity, masculine expectations, and gender inequality due to socioeconomic differences (Aurat Foundation, 2016a). Folk artists are the marginalized segment of Pashtuns, evident from the expected roles and responsibilities assigned to Pashtun men. In general, the expectations of Pashtun society are different for both males and females; a man should be the dominant, and a woman should be passive. This division of expectations leads to power relationships in the family and society. In Pashtun society, folk artists are assumed to care less about their expected roles. The masculine expectations in Pashtun society are the center of gravity and a vital factor of the social and economic inequalities, and these inequalities lead to dominance or subjugation in gender relationships. Folk artists have very few economic resources; therefore, they are subjugated to wealthy people. The rich people do not consider themselves equals and essential parts of society, often referring to them as “*naai*” and “*dum*” (chef and musicians), which manipulates their social and cultural identity (Ghaffar, 1983; Brittan, 1998).

Social prestige and respect are fundamental dimensions of the human mind and personality grooming. Men’s dominance, aggression, and masculinity are often linked and vary based on social, cultural, and professional differences. It is commonly observed that poor men and economically weak people have

low social status, and the same is true for folk artists because their profession is strongly condemned by the Pashtun society (Khan, 2014). There is a misconception among Pashtuns that every Pashtun man carries natural masculine characteristics, such as aggression, toughness, physical strength, courage, independence, violence, and fearlessness. The socio-biological account of the personality and the human body affirms that men's bodies are the bearers of natural masculinity, including tendencies like domination, assertiveness, independence, aggression, hostility, and competitiveness (Connell, 1995).

The Pashtun society is strongly patriarchal, where masculinity is associated with aggression, dominance, strength, power, courage, and control over others, particularly women, children, and dependents. From birth, male and female children are socialized in different ways, which leads to their masculine and feminine identities later in life. Pashtun men are expected to provide for their families and protect their virtue, honor, and good social reputation. Being hyper-masculine is necessary for maintaining social respect and position in the Pashtun society, which is deeply connected to a man's financial and professional status. In a patriarchal society, being a man means being dominant, controlling, sound, and composed socially and economically, with authority over the immediate surroundings regarding reputation and respect (Aurat Foundation, 2016b).

Theoretical Framework of Hegemonic Masculinity

R.W. Connell's (1995) theoretical framework is based on the social scientific analysis of masculinity. Her notion of hegemonic masculinity encompasses authority, physical toughness, strength, heterosexuality, and paid work. Therefore, Pashtun society tries to maintain the status and social position of being a "*nar saray*" (hegemonic masculine) and suppress or marginalize the "*na saray*" (subordinate masculinity). *Nar saray* is expected to be dominant and independent in almost every aspect of Pashtun society. *Peghoray* (taunts) and *be-sharam* (coward) are terms a *nar saray* uses for a *na saray* to marginalize and contest his masculinity.

Pashtun men feel stigmatized and threatened because of pressures of masculinity when these terms are being used for them. As a result, Pashtun society categorizes folk artists under the category of *na saray* due to their less control over their women's bodies and their earnings. The social fabric of Pashtun society indicates that women's earnings outside the home challenge men's power and authority, which is why women are discouraged from economic activity in the public sphere. According to the orthodox

interpretation of Pashtun society, *nar saray* enjoys a privileged position due to their admired masculine traits. In contrast, *saray* or *na saray* is controlled and dominated by *nar saray*. Pashtun society views artists and performers as morally corrupt individuals who do not uphold the values of honor and respect toward their female family members. Some professional folk artists, musicians, and performers train their female family members to become professional artists to earn money. This behavior indicates a disregard for the code of Pashtunwali, which is one of the reasons why Pashtuns hold them in contempt.

Research Methodology

Qualitative methodology was employed to study comprehensively the socio-cultural phenomenon of Pashtun artists—undiscovered areas of the issue under discussion (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The qualitative research method provided rich data to study nuances of the pressures of masculinity embedded in their perceptions and experiences faced by the marginalized section of Pashtun folk artists. The population of the present study was Islamabad Bazar (also known as Chitrali Bazar) and Kabari Bazar in Peshawar city. After collecting the data, thematic analysis was carried out by developing codes, creating initial themes from the codes, refining them, and defining and identifying them before producing a final report (Braun & Clark, 2006). The rationale for studying a single musician category is based on the plethora of social and economic issues musicians encounter, particularly *tabla nawaz*. Therefore, this study attempts to surface the problems of musicians as folk artists and their social acceptance in Pashtun society from the lens of Connell's hegemonic masculinity.

Data Findings and Discussion

The status of Pashtun folk artists in Pashtun society has been associated with many factors. However, a multidimensional thematic analysis is presented below.

Impact of Pashtun Hegemonic Masculinity on Folk Artists

The Pashtun ethnic group holds a particular notion of masculinity, where biological males (*saray* in Pashto) are not considered masculine unless they conform to the normative standard. In other words, the Pashtun society considers dominant and assertive men as the epitome of masculinity.

“In this society, men who dominate and suppress women and force their women to do purdah (veil) are recognized as masculine.”

Conversely, society looks down upon folk artists for their leniency towards women who do not observe purdah (veil) strictly. Folk artists are also criticized for not confining their women to their houses. In Pashtun society, only men are expected to be breadwinners, and the fact that female family members of folk artists also support their families economically is seen as a violation of cultural expectations of men. The artists claim they earn and provide for their female family members but do not order them to observe purdah (veil). They are labeled as “emasculated and effeminate men.”

“People taunt us for using the money earned by our women, and even if we do not use their money, society will still treat us in the same way.”

In the more conservative interpretation, men restrict women to their homes as they are believed to be the keepers of honor. Any harm to a woman's honor, defined by strict observance of dominant gender norms, is taken very seriously. Families that fail to keep their honor lose all respect. Society blames folk artists for their perceived lax attitude towards their women, who have no control over their bodies and choices. The selected folk artists claimed that their women never danced in public, but they had examples of artists who performed dance routines and were called *kanjars* (an offensive term). Patriarchy is deeply rooted in Pashtun society and culture, where men consider themselves justified in exercising masculine power in cases of violence against women.

In Pashtun society, a man should be economically and professionally sound in order to be respected. All professions considered masculine are considered the right professions. A profession is a means of subsistence and carries significant meanings. Most of the time, a profession becomes a major part of a person's identity. In Pashtun society, nursing or singing would be considered feminine professions, and men in these professions are considered deviants. Conversely, Pashtuns consider policemen honorable and masculine because they undertake a fearless job. Folk artists are viewed as entertainers indulging in a womanly activity to entertain others.

Public Perception of Musicians

Public perception has been an essential yardstick for measuring the social acceptability of artists, particularly folk artists, who are often viewed as culturally inappropriate and socially alienated. They are criticized and ostracized regardless of their skill or civilized demeanor. As per the dominant opinion, typically, people consider this profession as a feminine profession, and the association of men is often stigmatized and labeled as ‘pimp.’ A participant expressed in a complaining tone.

“People do not differentiate between kanjars (a highly abusive word for a male who allows his women to dance in public) and sazinda (musicians) which is why they put us in the category of kanjars. Also, when we play music with singers, then people look at us as men, but when we play music with a dancing girl, we are seen as emasculated men.”

This classification of social acceptability undermines artists and places them in a culturally disapproved category. Faisal et al. (2020) study highlighted that many people have a narrow-minded view of artists and their work. They need to recognize that art is a profession that provides for one’s livelihood. Some participants in the study believed that artists were engaged in immoral activities, such as drug use, theft, and association with unsavory individuals. Unfortunately, such immoral behavior is often associated with music and dance in Pashtun society. This leads to the use of highly offensive terms like “kanjar,” “dala,” or “barwa” (which means “dancer” or “pimp”) to refer to artists. A research participant shared,

“Those people who do not differentiate between music and dance as distinct art forms, they call them pimps instead of artists.”

The double standards in Pashtun society are that men are expected to work and support their families. If a man fails to do so, society blames him. However, a folk artist is always caught in a catch-22 situation because he works to provide for his family. Still, patriarchal society does not encourage him and ridicules both him and his profession.

Folk Artists: Cultural Extinction?

Artists highlighted that government policies and bureaucracy are responsible for the social alienation of the artists. The closure of Nishtar Hall (a place known for organizing cultural events) in Peshawar reiterates the government's verdict that artists corrupt society. Therefore, they should not be accommodated in the public sphere. The MMA government in KP was particularly hostile towards art and artists compared to the other provincial governments. Jairazbhoy's (1993) article states that Pakistan did not promote music due to the presence of religious fundamentalism. A participant narrated an incident in the MMA era about his shop in the following words.

“We don't get respect from our profession, people only respect wealth, not an artist. I had a music instruments shop at Dabgaree Bazar, but these merciless people burnt it down; my little children were crying to see the shop burning.”

A few research participants said that they watched a shop in flames, and the angry mob who had torched the shop also obstructed the fire brigade while the police stood as calm spectators. Later, the police refused to lodge the First Information Report (FIR) against the culprits. They further explained that everybody took part in setting fire to the musical instrument with such zeal that even if someone was an infidel, they considered it a sacred duty. One of the shop owners even fell at the feet of the miscreant's leader and implored him to spare him and have mercy, but he refused to listen and kicked him to the ground. According to the report compiled by the Center for Peace and Cultural Studies, almost 1000-1500 music shops and centers were destroyed to purify society from the dirt of music and musicians (Buneri et al., 2014).

Folk artists expressed that sometimes the government favors an artist based on party affiliation. Some specific artists were also awarded prizes, but they were all singers. The government never gives musicians recognition. A few participants recalled that General Musharraf, the ex-president of Pakistan, was very fond of folk music. Whenever he visited Peshawar, he would invite musicians and singers to the governor's house or Fort Bala Hisar. An artist said,

“The provincial government never recognized our profession; the national government gave us awards and sponsored our trips to foreign countries.”

Those artists who worked at Pakistan Radio and Television said they did not enjoy performing at the government stations because of meager income, which is also given after a prolonged delay. On the contrary, private radio and television management efficiently clears artists' outstanding dues. An old *tabla nawaz* recalled

“During Bhutto’s regime, an accomplished artist would be given a job, but today, I was fired from Abasin Arts Council, where I worked as a tabla teacher.”

A few artists shared that Nishtar Hall is built for cultural activities, but the government lends it primarily to political and religious events. Government policies have deprived so many people of their sole means of earning without realizing that they do not have any alternative to sustain them. Historically, hujra culture used to protect them socially and economically, but now people only invite them occasionally (Buneri et al., 2014).

The Relegation of Folk Artists to Low Status

In Pashtun society, artists, particularly musicians, have been relegated to low-class status for several reasons. They are not seen as central to upholding Pashtunwali norms and are considered unimportant. According to Pashtuns, power and dominance are the primary features of a masculine man, which they perceive folk artists as lacking. Ghani Khan (2014) identifies the double standards of Pashtun society and laments that while Pashtuns historically and culturally love singing and dancing, they also hate musicians. Generally, artists belong to an inferior and shameful class (Nasiri, n.d.).

‘Naai’ refers to professional musicians in contemporary Pashtun society of lower social or economic class and caste. Their primary duty is to spread the message of somebody’s death and marriage, among others. Due to this role, they were relegated to a low position because *naai* men perform at marriage ceremonies for money, whereas *naai* women are expected to do domestic work for wealthy people to earn their livelihood. Another reason for their alienation is the acute poverty they live in. They are not substantially paid for their work; therefore, their economic life is declining. The majority of the artists shared that because of no or low-paid work, they remain economically dependent. Moreover, due to the artists’ poverty, people were not very forthcoming in lending money, worsening their economic hardships. Though poverty is trouble for a man, it is considered a curse for a man who earns from a feminine profession.

Those artists who are in this music profession by lineage faced the double brunt and agony of Pashtun society. These folk artists could not change their profession due to the Pashtuns' anti-artist attitude. Changing professions requires learning new skills, financial support, and time, which they could not afford. Therefore, they were compelled to keep their identity as musicians. A research participant shared, "It was almost impossible for folk artists to quit and switch to another profession because people don't like it."

Extremism and Folk Artists

The gradual destruction of the folk music profession in Pashtun society can be attributed to several factors. One of the major reasons is the growing extremism, where all sorts of music were attributed to sinful activities. This created a repulsion against the profession during the MMA's regime. As a result, anyone who wanted to advance in society would think twice before choosing music and art as a profession. In recent years, due to religious extremism, Pashtun society has become even more aggressive towards music and musicians. Singers and musicians have been targeted and, in some cases, even lost their lives in different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Unfortunately, hujras (male guest houses) are being ideologically converted into religious preaching and teaching places rather than depicting the real cultural and social image of Pashtun society. As presented by Faisal et al. (2020), the Taliban after 9/11 were extremely against musical activities and musicians, and they "kidnapping them, imposing religiosity on them assaulting and destroying CD shops, threatened production houses, closing music schools, and studios and desecrating Sufi shrines" (9268).

Another major reason for the alienation of folk artists is the wave of intolerance that has swept through some groups in Pashtun society. The perception that art is sinful is gaining ascendancy in some groups among Pashtuns. Society associates folk artists with immorality and sexual laxity, often giving them the same names as they would call a prostitute. In contemporary Pashtun society, extra-religiosity has played a vital role in condemning folk artists and musicians. Pashtun society has become so intolerant that it refuses to accept folk artists as human beings worthy of equal treatment and respect. Thus, dominant masculinity or mainstream masculinity has also played a significant role in damaging folk artists.

Demonstration of Pashtun Masculinity and Folk Artists

The primary data conceptualizes that the quest for masculine power endorsed by culture becomes a crucial component for men in the patriarchal society of

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the Pashtuns. The notion that men should be physically strong and emotionally composed is learned from family, friends, and society. In any case, a boy or a man is not expected to be moved by any emotional feeling and stay impassive because shedding a tear, even in grief, would label him as a coward. For instance, expressing a feeling of pain is associated with weakness because men are not admired if they express their feelings. This type of socialization and reinforcement of masculine norms creates a version of masculinity that is culturally approved (Aurat Foundation, 2016b; Victor, 2006) but, overall, very harmful to society.

In the Pashtun society, men are under social pressure to act like “masculine men”; therefore, men are expected to maintain physical fitness and mental agility. To act weak, emotionally, or non-conformist of Pashtun norms could be a threat to self-esteem and can bring a bad name to the demonstration or expression of manhood. The “ideal man,” according to the code of Pashtunwali, is required to be wise, rational, content, and independent to act and can exert his influence over others, particularly women. Pashtun society values and respects men who adhere to the norms of Pashtunwali and live according to the given standards of modesty, bravery, and masculinity.

Three terms are used: *saray*, *nar saray*, and *na saray*. *Saray* is a biological man. *Nar Saray* (masculine man) represents Pashtun’s hegemonic masculinity, which elevates the social status and prestige of a man who adheres to it. *Na saray* refers to the weakest masculinity, which is undesirable and unappreciated. Folk musicians usually should “fall into this category of individuals who do not conform to Pashtunwali.”

Furthermore, those men among folk artists who permit their female family members to perform publicly are also called *dala* (pimp); who permits their female family members to perform publicly, and it can never be compared with *nar saray*, a Pashtun ideal (Aurat Foundation, 2016b). Eisler and Skidmore (1997) set a standard of masculinity, stating that a man should be able to cope with masculine pressures, be physically strong to protect women and be emotionally sound when making decisions. Given this standard, folk artists need to meet the expectations of Pashtunwali.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that the social acceptance of folk artists is an issue of human rights. Folk artists’ integration, respect, and social acceptance in Pashtun society and art preservation are closely associated. Social acceptance of folk artists refers to Pashtunwali’s core values, which equally apply to

everyone in terms of respect and worth to humanity regardless of their profession and gender roles. This study focused on the impact of hegemonic masculinity on the personal and social life of folk artists. However, society puts artists in the “unmanly” category due to their profession. Folk artists often feel alienated from others and may be compelled to leave their profession. The rise of extremism both in Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly after 9/11, had made their lives miserable. Pashtun society patronized art and artists in the past, but now art is sometimes viewed as sinful. As a result, many folk artists leave the music profession without many opportunities to earn a living and meet their needs.

This anti-artist attitude is unique to Pashtun society. In most other societies, artists enjoy honor and respect. But Pashtuns look down upon the artist as feminine men. The masses should be educated through different media to reshape their concept of masculinity. A version of masculinity that oppresses certain groups is known as hegemonic masculinity, and this dominant form of masculinity must be reconsidered to combat social alienation not only for artists but for all professions that are unjustly stereotyped.

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Original Article

Bhutto's Political Strategies: A Challenge to the Prospects of Leftist Politics in Sindh

JHSS

57-71

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Vol. 32 (2), 2024

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Abstract

Former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a prominent figure in Pakistani politics and the founder of the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), introduced a unique blend of socialism, Islam, democracy, and nationalism in his electoral campaigns during the late 1960s. He progressively succeeded in instrumentalizing nationalist rhetoric, ethno-national politics, and social and economic policies to reach the corridors of power. Bhutto's political narrative and program policies absorbed the Leftist narrative and effectively hampered the prospects of radical movements in Sindh. On the other hand, the Left-wing political forces found themselves in a state of decline, unable to withstand the political power of Bhutto's government. Consequently, Leftist groups in Sindh were increasingly losing their battleground and never posed a serious threat to Bhutto's dominance. This research investigates the factors that contributed to Bhutto's successful weakening of Leftist politics in Sindh. This paper explores Bhutto's journey to power and the intelligent, diplomatic strategies to diminish the political influence of the Left in Sindh.

Keywords: Bhutto, nationalism, politics, Left, Sindh.

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Introduction

In Pakistan, the general population is poor and powerless, while state institutions have been ineffective. Being a client of a patron is the sole method to receive public sector positions, protection from powerful government licenses, and other perks. It is understandable and intuitive why the public would not favor a candidate who lacks patronage connections or cannot provide jobs. Scholars have often attributed the decline of Leftist parties to patronage and landed politics. The patronage politics seriously undermine the prospect of Leftist parties rising and attaining power. Leftist parties often aligned with forces such as the National Awami Party (NAP)² and the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD)³ that challenged the status quo and military interests. Hence, these parties did not find favors with the military elite. A slew of research on Pakistan illustrates how a landed class achieved its grip over the political system even during the first years of independence. It explains why the class still maintains its influence over state institutions today. The Leftist parties in Sindh called for the redistribution of the land owned and controlled by a powerful feudal class. Left-wing parties tried to mobilize the least potent section of rural society against the most influential people, those who control local state institutions while maintaining a close connection with the most powerful institutions. The leadership of Left-wing parties came from the lower middle class with no connection to patronage networks; the party also lacked any strong organization, sufficient human resources, and capital.

Bhutto (1928-1979) came from the landlord cum political family of rural Sindh. He started his political career by joining the Cabinet as a member under Iskandar Mirza's presidency. During Ayub Khan's martial law, he held various administrative posts, including as a foreign minister. It was the same period when Leftists and nationalists of Sindh were struggling against the military regime of Ayub Khan and the One-Unit Scheme. The NAP was already formed

²The NAP was formed in 1957 as a coalition of Pakistan's various nationalist and Leftist organizations. NAP was the country's first Left-leaning party. However, other groups, such as the Communist Party, the Azad Pakistan Party, and Ganatantri Dal, were older left parties than the NAP. Participants came from all regions of Pakistan, including nationalists and politicians of Bengali, Pashtun, Baloch, and Sindhi origin. Mian Iftikhar Din, G. M. Syed, Bacha Khan, Ghaus Bux Bizenjo, and Moulana Bashani were influential NAP leaders. NAP self-identified as a socialist democratic party aimed at regional autonomy and democracy reforms. Several socialists from Punjab and Sindh also attended the NAP (Shah, 2015).

³The MRD formed with the collaborative efforts of nationalists, rightists, and Leftist parties following the ousting of the Bhutto government in 1981.

by regional Leftists and nationalists in 1957 to challenge the One-Unit Scheme in West Pakistan. Because of the heavy crackdown by the military regime of Ayub Khan, the NAP disintegrated and splintered into pro-Moscow and pro-Peking groups in the late 1960s. According to Khan, (2014) the split of the NAP provided an excellent opportunity for Bhutto to effectively use the socialist narrative to promote his party, which he finally established in 1967. The political assembly of the people during 1967-1968 around the socialist narrative of “*roti, kapra, aor makan*” (bread, cloth, and shelter) showed Bhutto that the objective conditions for a socialist movement were good.

Leghari (1979) argued that the Leftist movement failed to take advantage of the conditions conducive to radical politics. For Khan (2014), the Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) filled the gap because of the failures of the NAP. Such a rapid rise in mass politics had not been seen in the checkered history of Pakistani politics, and the NAP squandered the opportunity. Even worse, the prominent Leftist leaders, including J. A. Rahim from Karachi and Mubashir Hassan from Lahore, joined the PPP and provided legitimacy to it. Instead of the NAP, the PPP was quickly recognized as the actual Leftist party among the masses. Because of the economic and political change promised by Bhutto, people believed him to be an agent of social transformation. Bhutto never intended to bring socialism to Pakistan, even though he rose to socialist ideas.

Leghari (1979) has referred to the comments of Professor Khalid Hussain and identified three types of group members in the PPP. First, feudal lords made up the majority; they were opportunists and had little faith in socialism but joined the party because it was rising. Second, petty-bourgeois Leftists believed in socialism and thought that the PPP would bring socialism to Pakistan. Third, the scientific socialists believed that the PPP would achieve little, yet they argued that little is better than nothing. However, the conditions were conducive to the rise of Bhutto rather than socialism. Bhutto used the term “socialism” as a political strategy. People wanted social change and hoped for the end of the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan. Hence, no other leader or party except Bhutto attracted the masses on socialist lines. On the other hand, socialists such as Leghari were suspicious of Bhutto’s commitment to socialism. One of the reasons for this suspicion was Bhutto’s feudal background.

Bhutto was born in Sindh and recognized the significance of Sindh as the focal point for his political support. Bhutto consolidated his power base strategically and marginalized the Left-wing political parties in the province. His appeal to socialism, democracy, and ethnicity resonated with various groups, including socialists, Islamists, feudal lords, the business community, and Sindhis. This

multi-faceted approach allowed Bhutto to solidify his support and hinder the future prospectus of Leftist groups in Sindh. During Bhutto's tenure (1972-1977) as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the hope of workers and the radical Left movement gradually faded. Bhutto's government aimed to mold the workers according to his vision, which often deviated from the radical aspirations of the Left. The Bhutto administration adopted repressive measures, such as widespread arrests and dismissals, curtailing Left-wing parties' influence. Bhutto's rules and policies diminished Left-wing political parties' prospects in the province. Over the years, there has been a notable decline in the influence of Left-wing political parties in Sindh. The legacy of Bhutto's rule and his successful marginalization of the Left movement have impacted the province's landscape. The Left-wing parties of Sindh suffered badly and declined under the guise of the Bhutto political narrative. Despite occasional efforts, the Left-wing parties have failed to rally broad public support and effectively challenge the dominant political parties in the region.

Methodology

This research proposal employs a qualitative and inductive approach to investigate the impact of Bhutto's political narrative on Leftist politics in Sindh. Both primary and secondary sources, including books, journal articles, research theses, newspaper essays, and online resources, will be used to explain the subject matter.

Electoral Politics 1970: Bhutto's Hegemony Over the Left

According to Butt (2017), three political actors played important roles before and after the 1970 elections. The first was Pakistan's army, which had been in power since 1958 under Ayub Khan and then Yahya Khan. These two dictators were suspicious of and did not trust politicians. The second was the PPP, which surprised many observers with its outstanding electoral performance in the 1970 general elections. The third was the Awami League (AL), headquartered in East Pakistan and headed by Mujib-ur-Rahman. The AL was unwavering in its conviction that East Pakistan deserved more autonomy. In October 1970, General Yahya Khan announced the general elections and pledged to devolve authority to newly elected members and civilian leaders. For Rashiduzzaman (1970), all political parties welcomed the announcement except the NAP (Bhashani, 1978). However, some members of the Bhashani group decided to participate in the elections, as they argued that the National Assembly could be an appropriate forum for the NAP to address populist concerns. Later, Bhashani recognized elections under these conditions: First, seats must be reserved for representatives of workers and peasants in the

National Assembly. Second, provinces must be given autonomy as conceived by the Lahore Resolution of 1940. Third, the government must constitutionally acknowledge the fundamental rights of the workers and peasants. These demands could not be met before the polls. Hence, Bhashani remained undecided about his party's participation in the elections.

The general election was conducted on December 7, 1970, in East and West Pakistan. The main contesting parties were the Awami League (AL), the PPP, the NAP, Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), and various factions of the Muslim League (ML) and Jamiat-i-ul-Ulema (JU). Bhutto and Mujeeb were prominent political figures from West and East Pakistan. Bhutto was popular in the West for his socialist and nationalist stand, while Mujeeb was popular in East Pakistan for his six-point program.⁴

The critical point is that no Leftist leader could win a single election seat. Left-wing groups needed to be more cohesive, organized, and unpopular among Sindhis and Pakistanis alike. The split of the NAP into pro-Peking and pro-Moscow factions before the election was a significant setback. The NAP's split undermined the widespread opposition and disappointed Leftist organizations. Bhutto had sensed this political vacuum and set up his own political party, the PPP, in 1967. Several disillusioned communist factions left the NAP and allied with Bhutto. On a socialist narrative, the PPP mobilized all segments of society. For Khan (2014), the NAP's split allowed Bhutto to organize communist groups in Punjab and Sindh. Hamyatullah (2015) argues that the NAP (Wali Khan group) blamed Bhutto for the disintegration of Pakistan's Leftist forces. Wali Khan alleged that Bhutto was a counter-revolutionary force, aided and abetted by colonial powers to distort socialist

⁴ First, the system of government will be federal and parliamentary; It will choose the main governing body from Commonwealth states using voting by universal adult franchise. The number of representatives in the Central Executive Council will depend on the population of each province. Second, the federal government would be responsible solely for defense and international affairs, with federating states deciding on all other issues. Third, introduce two distinct currency systems for East and West Pakistan that can easily be exchanged between the regions. Alternatively, a monetary system with the requirements of creating a central reserve system could be established, forming both East and West Pakistan reserve banks. Fourth, East Pakistan would be responsible for taxes and revenue collection. At the same time, the portion of collected income required for national defense and foreign affairs will be allocated to the central government. Fifth, East and West Pakistan would have separate accounts for foreign currency revenues, with each side empowered to develop commercial relations with other nations. Sixth, East Pakistan would have its military or paramilitary forces to ensure the national security (Karmaker & Manaker 2023).

ideals. However, Bhutto moved forward, and his political and ideological narrative cultivated a picture of him as a popular leader. Bhutto capitalized on the anger of the middle class and parts of the lower class against the Ayub government. As a result, the PPP offered an alternative to the people and filled the political vacuum left by the NAP (TA, 1973).

Despite being internally divided and disorganized, the NAP contested elections in Sindh. The NAP could only field six candidates in the national and provincial assemblies and failed to win a single seat at the national and provincial levels.

Results of National Assembly, 1970

Party	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Baluchistan	West Pakistan	East Pakistan	Total
AL	-	-	-	-		160	160
PPP	62	18	1	-	81	-	81
PML(Q)	1	1	7	-	9	-	9
CML	7	-	-	-	7	-	7
JUI (H)	-	-	6	1	7	-	7
MJU	4	3	-	-	7	-	7
NAP (W)	-	-	3	3	6	-	6
JI	1	2	1	-	4	-	4
PML (C)	2	-	-	-	2	-	2
PDP						1	1
Independent	5	3	7		15	1	16
Total	82	27	25	4	138	162	300

Source: (Baxter 1971)

Results of Sindh Assembly, 1970

Party	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Baluchistan	West Pakistan	East Pakistan	Total
AL	--	-	-	-	-	288	288
PPP	113	28	3	-	144		144
PML(Q)	6	5	10	3	24		24
NAP (W)			13	8	21	1	22
CML	15	4	1	--	20		20
MJU	4	7	-	-	11		11
JU (H)	2		4	2	8		8
PML(C)	6	-	2	-	8		8
PDP	4					2	6
JI	1	1	1		3	1	4
Others	1	1		2	4	1	5
Independent	28	14	6	5	53	7	60
Total	180	60	40	20	300	300	600

Source: (Baxter 1971)

These elections were one of the major causes of the events in 1971 that led to establishing an independent Bangladesh (East Pakistan). However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to go into detail about the separation of West and East Pakistan. The PPP won 18 out of 25 of Sindh's National Assembly seats and 25 out of 28 in the provincial legislature. The NAP's abysmal electoral defeat demonstrated that the Leftists had no future in electoral politics. The fragmented Left could not sustain itself despite Bhutto's political and electoral strategies. Bhutto attracted all segments of society, including nationalists, socialists, and religious groups. The ultra-nationalist party, the Sindh United Front,⁵ founded by Ghulam Mustafa Sayed, praised Bhutto and his electoral victory. Even Palijo (2006), head of the Awami Tahreek (AT), lauded Bhutto's ability to mobilize the masses. Palijo even showed confidence in the PPP, which would bring economic reforms for the poor. Such praise from the rural Sindh's Leftist party exposed the Left's weakness in opposition to Bhutto's political acumen. Mir Muhammad Talpur, the ex-head of the Sindh Hari Committee (SHC), joined the PPP because of its pro-peasant standpoint (Solangi, 2007, n.d.). In urban Sindh, the Tufail Abbas faction of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) supported Bhutto. Vice President Hafeez Qureshi resigned from the NAP, alleging the party abandoned its support for the nationalities. Hence, Leftist groups were either disbanding or joining the PPP.

Bhutto's Vision: Absorbed Leftist Narrative

Bhutto held numerous government positions from 1958 to 1966 and was also a part of Ayub Khan's cabinet. He was foreign minister from 1963 to 1966. Although he was close to the government and the military, he publicly criticized Ayub Khan's foreign policies in general and the Tashkent Agreement⁶ in particular. He used the flaws of the Tashkent Agreement to

⁵ G.M. Sayed was the leader of the Sindh United Front (SUF), founded in 1967 in opposition to the One-Unit Scheme. The SUP sought maximum provincial authority while limiting federal government authority in such areas as currency and foreign affairs. The Sindhi language is recognized as the province's official language. The restoration of agricultural land grabbed under the One-Unit Scheme. The SUP was renamed *Jeay Sindh Mahaz* (JSM) in 1972 (Amin 1987).

⁶ Following the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962, the United States hurried to provide India with a heavy supply of weapons. In order to restrain China, the United States began pressuring Pakistan to accept Indian rule. However, Pakistan rejected American pressure and bluntly informed her that normalizing India's relations was not conceivable unless fundamental differences between the two nations were resolved. Bhutto, the Foreign Minister at the time, 65

mobilize the masses against the government. For example, Bhutto sought to include a commitment to finalize a solution to the Kashmir problem, which Ayub declined (Altaf 2019, p.19). The political opposition was at its peak between 1968 and 1969 in both East and West Pakistan. Bhutto's political savvy, using powerful slogans such as "*roti, kapda aur Makan*" (food, clothing, and shelter) and numerous mass-based initiatives helped him establish himself as a popular leader in Sindh and West Pakistan. The people were convinced that the time had come for a new progressive party in West Pakistan. Because of Bhutto's rising popularity, he received an invitation from all political parties to join them. A Bengali Marxist, Jalaludin Akbar Rahim,⁷ Mairaj Muhammad Khan⁸ from Karachi, and Mubashir Hassan⁹ from Lahore, approached and encouraged Bhutto to set up his socialist party instead of joining existing parties (Khan, 2014, p. 338).

In addition, the PPP's progressive and Leftist components contributed to the party's reputation as a socialist party in Pakistan. Bhutto's socialist discourse became a source of inspiration for the people during and after the election campaigns. The working class and peasants alike saw Bhutto as a redeemer. The political background of these people was embedded in the politics of socialism and Marxism. Bhutto outwitted the Left, infused his party with socialist rhetoric, and embraced disillusioned communist members. The recruitment of the communist cadre benefited Bhutto by securing the backing

was instrumental in rejecting American pressure. As a result of Pakistan's developing ties with China, the United States has suspended arms aid to the country. On the initiative of the USSR, Pakistan and India signed the 'Tashkent Declaration' in January 1966. Bhutto saw through the Russo-Indian deception and expressed dissatisfaction with the deal. He publicly condemned the arrangement after resigning (Zaman & Aman, 1973, 38).

⁷Jamaluddin Abdur Rahim was one of the PPP's founding members. He was a Bengali communist who drafted the People's Party's Interim Constitution. The Interim Constitution's fundamental principles included the following: full authority to the people; democracy as our government, socialism as our economy; and Islam as our religion. Because of his influence, Bhutto's Islamic Socialism included the nationalization of businesses, labor reforms, and reorganization of Pakistan's health and education systems (Chengappa, 2002).

⁸Mairaj Muhammad Khan was associated with National Students Federation (NSF) during his studentship in mid-sixties. He resigned NSF and Joined Bhutto's Pakistan People Party and became the minister in Bhutto's Cabinet in 1971. However, he quit the PPP in 1973 due to a disagreement with Bhutto, claiming that Bhutto had compromised his socialist philosophy (Khan, 2009).

⁹Dr. Mubashir Hassan was A founding member of the PPP. He was an economist who helped shape the PPP's manifesto. He was instrumental in organizing the PPP and rallying the populace throughout the nation. He was elected to the National Assembly in 1970. He served as finance minister in Bhutto's government from 1971 to 1974 and quit the PPP over policy disagreements with Bhutto (Gabool, 2020).

of trade unions (Khan, 2014). Bhutto gave important portfolios to famous Leftist figures such as J.A. Rahim, Mubashir Hassan, and Meraj Muhammad Khan. For example, Mubashir Hassan was named finance minister while J. A Rahim was appointed an industrial production minister (Burki, 1988). Eventually, Bhutto accommodated prominent Leftist figures in the country and found a solid foundation to propagate socialism.

Bhutto's Political Strategy: From Socialism to Islamic Socialism

Bhutto took the stage when the global Left was rising across the world. He claimed that the PPP would transform Pakistan into a socialist state because socialism, he believed, was the only system capable of eradicating class distinctions. Syed Akmal Hussain Shah (2018) explained that, unlike the NAP, the PPP succeeded in connecting the people with its socialist narrative. Ordinary tenants and working-class people were convinced that the PPP would abolish feudalism and end exploitation. The NAP and the political Left had imploded intellectuals were invited to conferences and political gatherings to promote the party's philosophy and its programmatic policies. Pakistan's population has different social and economic compositions, including feudal, tribal, religiously conservative, and liberal. Such divergent socioeconomic characteristics require a well-calculated political program accommodating major power stakeholders and a larger population.

Islamic socialism attracted the poor and lower sections of the population that usually did not participate in the electoral process and political campaigns (Chengappa, 2002, p. 28). Amin (1987) explained that Bhutto believed in neither Islam nor socialism. While sympathetic to socialism, he was not fully committed to it. Bhutto came from a feudal family, and the landed aristocracy played a crucial role in his rise. Although he introduced land reforms, he never truly challenged the system of landholdings that pushed peasants into permanent dependency. He introduced the idea of Islamic socialism for political reasons. He rightly knew that a large section of Pakistan's population was conservative, traditional, and religious. Thus, anti-religious and anti-traditional socialism would not work in Pakistan. Bhutto successfully rallied the people via various political strategies. He promised to abolish feudalism and bring economic reforms to ease financial pressures. In one of the most politically charged speeches, Bhutto stated, "Islam is our religion, democracy is our policy, and socialism is our economy" (Abbas, 2015).

In reaction to the popularity of socialism and the PPP, religious groups and parties underscored the anti-religious doctrines of socialism. Bhutto recognized that he could not achieve political power only by evoking socialist

rhetoric. Hence, he attempted to reconcile the disparities by coining the phrase “Islamic socialism.” Although Bhutto was not religious, he effectively used the religion for political purposes. He stated that Islam, in its true spirit, was socialist, as Islam did not believe in the social classification and division of human beings. Islam propagated equality, and so did socialism. Bhutto endorsed the combination of Islam and socialism by Masawat-i-Muhammadi (Prophetic Equality) (Sayeed 1975). Against this endorsement, the clerics issued a religious edict declaring socialism un-Islamic and labeling Bhutto a non-believer.

Like religious scholars, Marxists argued that Islamic socialism would not solve the country’s economic problems (Shah 2016, p. 168). Leftists such as Leghari and Palijo questioned Bhutto’s commitment to socialism. They argued that aligning socialism with Islam showed that Bhutto did not know about socialism. To defend Islamic socialism, Bhutto drew support from the writings and speeches of Muhammad Iqbal and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan (Chengappa, 2002).

The PPP maneuvered the compatibility of socialism with Islam, recognizing that widespread support could not be gained while challenging religion in Pakistan. Bhutto’s idea of achieving equality through socialism and Islam proved a politically successful strategy as many of the populous, primarily peasants and workers, responded to Bhutto’s speeches. The masses supported Bhutto in the hope that he would redistribute land among peasants and nationalize industries (Shah, 2016). To garner support from the religious parties, Bhutto agreed to incorporate several Islamic injunctions into the constitution of Pakistan of 1973 (Choudhury, 1974). For example, the constitution states that every law should adhere to the principles of Islam as outlined in the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah. No legislation should be framed that contradicts the basic tenets of Islam. In contrast to earlier constitutions, the 1973 constitution has many Islamic laws and regulations. Pakistan was officially named the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and Islam was declared its official religion (Rabbi & Badshah 2018).

Bhutto’s Feudal Pir Alliance: The Left Marginalized

According to Rashid (1985) , the feudal lords have remained the masters of the people’s fate through electoral politics since the foundation of Pakistan. They infiltrated the PPP, which advocated for a socialist reform of the country. They have continued to dominate the party and its government. Along similar lines, Ewing (1983) writes that in Pakistan, the origination structure of shrines is traditionally maintained by hereditary living *pirs*, spiritual advisors. The

PPP maintained control over local religious and mystic institutions and their leadership structures. The government's relationship with ordinary people was mediated through the *pirs* and powerful landlords. The government's support for the shrines ensured the ruler's legitimacy among the people. Governments did not outlaw them, as Ataturk did in Turkey, to advance the cause of secularism. They also did not demolish them, as Saudi Arabia did, for the opposite motive of reverting to a more fundamentalist view of Islam.

Besides the popular support of the masses, Bhutto efficiently used the feudal lords and *pirs* to mobilize the masses. Landlords who were not favored during the Ayub administration supported Bhutto. In return for their support, Bhutto allocated electoral tickets to the most notable landlords, such as Darya Khan Khoso, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, and Mumtaz Ali Bhutto. Alongside the support of the landed aristocracy, *pirs* in Sindh also supported Bhutto. For example, *pir of Ranipur*, Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani, and *pir of Hala*, Makhdum Talib Ul Mola, joined the PPP (Shah, 2016). Based on their shared interests, Bhutto's partnership with the landowner and *pir* families was inevitable. Under these circumstances, the collaboration with leftists was uncomfortable.

The image of the PPP as a socialist party received endorsement when several leftists joined it. Leftists provided popular legitimacy to the PPP. The PPP used the participation of leftists and its image of being a socialist party to its larger political ends. The PPP's political strength in Sindh was bolstered by the involvement of *pirs* and feudal lords. Feudalism grew in strength after the rise of the PPP, putting more challenges to the leftist parties in Sindh. Communist groups had to oppose feudal and *pir* dominance at the regional level and the ascent of Bhutto at the national level. Leftists were fragmented, disorganized, and scattered. The SHC could not sustain its political existence in the face of landowners' growing dominance (Hussain and Mohyuddin, 2014).

Conclusion

Ironically, the country gained independence from colonial control, but the methods and instruments of colonial power remained in place. The Pakistani people were defined by their religion and ethnicity. Ethnic and religious diversity, socialism, and other alternative philosophies were ruled out as viable options. Pakistan has never been a suitable place for the ideals of the left. The Pakistani state has accommodated all sorts of ideologies, including rightist, religious, and nationalist, but not leftist ideology. The leftists used local

politics as a reductive strategy and tried several times to galvanize the people, but they could never overturn the current order.

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Consumers' Willingness to Pay for Biodegradable Shopping Bags

JHSS

73-86

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Vol. 32 (2), 2024

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Abstract

Plastic pollution has become a challenging issue worldwide, causing adverse impacts on the environment and ecosystem. Single-use plastic shopping bags and bottles are the main reasons behind plastic litter. These non-degradable bags create market externalities that can be internalized through different techniques. This study estimates the users' willingness to pay for biodegradable bags using the contingent valuation method. Data from 360 respondents were collected in a market survey through a designed questionnaire. Three market areas of Peshawar city were selected, which many consumers visit daily. Willingness to pay depends on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the consumers. The Tobit model with marginal analysis yields significant results. The results show that the marginal change in the willingness to pay of an individual decreases with the increase in income. The marginal Willingness to Pay remains the same for respondents of all education categories. There is a downward trend in marginal willingness to pay when the family size of the respondent increases. 38% of the respondents were not using degradable bags. 35 percent strongly agreed on an awareness campaign. The study recommends that there should be a subsidized price on each good quality biodegradable cotton bag in shopping zones.

Keywords: Biodegradable bags, Consumerism, Contingent Valuation

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Introduction

The pursuit of economic growth and development has potentially deteriorated the global environment, and the situation might get worse if the negative environmental impacts have yet to be taken into consideration. Each country is installing more and more industries and factories in the race for development. These industries contribute to carbon emissions, hazardous chemical waste, and solid wastes as a free good to the environment that leads to rapid change in global climate over time (Jalil, Mian, & Rahman, 2013).

Plastic shopping bag consumption is rapidly increasing among consumers and retailers on a global level. Plastic shoppers are available free of cost for consumers in the market, but from an economic point of view, it is a market externality and has a huge collective social cost of disposal (Dikgang & Martine, 2010). A polythene bag has not only adverse effects on human health but is also hazardous for the environment, agriculture, and ecosystem. Landfills of plastic litter cause a reduction in land fertility and blocking of drainage systems due to litter during floods are common problems in developing countries (Gupta, 2011). At the same time, some of the countries tried to reduce the consumption and production of poly bags by making legislation and introducing alternatives. UK, South Africa, Kenya and other countries like Ireland impose charges of 0.15 euros on the consumption of each bag. Denmark had imposed a levy of 22 Danish kroner (DKK) per KG on the production of polythene bags. India and China have introduced policies to change the behavior of consumers through field experiments by providing incentives for using biodegradable bags (He, 2010).

In reducing the use of these non-degradable bags, researchers focus on market-based instruments used by different countries like indirect tax, charge system, subsidies, incentives, etc. At the same time, some provide alternative solutions like paper bags, cloth bags, and jute bags with minimum prices. Among alternatives to plastic bags, jute bags are the most popular in markets. Plastic bags are made of crude oil and natural gas. Both resources are non-recyclable in nature, which means that the supply of plastic can be limited. On the other side, jute bags are made of jute crops that can be produced year to year and it is a long-term phenomenon. Jute bags are degradable, eco-friendly, and have the same strength compared to poly bags (Pave & Supinit, 2017).

The environmental protection policy of Pakistan bans all hazardous substances that violate the National Environmental Quality Standards (EPA, 1997). After the 18th amendment to the constitution, environmental issues

were handed over to the provinces. The same policy is followed by the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KPEPA, 2014). There are 60 small units in KP producing plastic bags, and also the illegal supply of these bags comes from other provinces and neighboring countries. Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa announced to ban on the use and production of polythene bags in the province as it causes choking of drainage systems and environmental issues (DAWN, 2016).

Typically, plastic bags are commonly used among consumers because they are convenient. However, they are non-degradable items made of oil and natural gas, creating litter problems and air pollution as externalities. Recognizing the issues with polythene bags, Bangladesh introduced degradable jute bags as an alternative with the same strength and capacity. Biodegradable bags are environmentally friendly and naturally decomposable. They can be degraded by natural microorganisms like bacteria, algae, and fungi. Plastic bags cannot be disposed of and remain in the environment for thousands of years, harming agriculture and the ecosystem. Various types of degradable products and additives, such as D2W, can be mixed with polymers to make plastic bags degradable. These products can be produced through biological processes or chemically synthesized procedures using natural fats, starch, etc.

Research Objectives

1. To estimate the willingness to pay of the consumers for bio-degradable bags.
2. To determine how various socioeconomic and demographic factors, awareness campaigns, and behavioral attitudes affect their willingness to pay.

Literature Review

Willingness to pay is the maximum amount that a person is ready to pay for a product or service. The market forces determine the price of the market goods. But non-market goods have no market price, and it can be calculated with a person's willingness to pay. Consumers belonging to different income classes have different willingness to pay for different goods. It depends on the price of a commodity and the socioeconomic characteristics of the individuals.

The United States generated 11 million tons of plastic, and 26.7 million tons of waste was recycled in 2003. Most of the recycled waste consists of

beverage containers, soda pop, and milk. The environmental green industry contributed 147.8 billion dollars in 2002 and employed approximately 2 million people. A conjoint analysis was carried in by comparing hypothetical and non-hypothetical experiment auctions in two different cities of the United States (US) to obtain consumers' willingness to pay for bio-degradable plant containers. Results of the linear mixed model estimation showed that survey participants were willing to pay for biodegradable containers. Mixed Probit model and ordered probit model were also used and found that willingness to pay is different for different containers (Yue, 2010).

Petroleum-based plastic, known as expanded polystyrene, is commonly used in food containers. It contains chemical materials and has a long and inefficient recycling process. In 2009, Americans used approximately 2.07 million tons of disposable plates and cups, with 710000 tons made from expanded polystyrene. Forty-four percent of polystyrene was found in the stomachs of marine species, leading to its classification as the fifth largest hazardous material. A study investigated consumer preferences and their willingness to pay for alternatives to plastic food containers. People's perceptions were analyzed based on their socioeconomic characteristics using conjoint choice models. The results from 244 respondents revealed that only 11.06 percent preferred biodegradable food containers.

Another study (Dunn, 2012) has calculated the mean willingness to pay for grocery bags and consumers' willingness to accept to use of reusable bags for all shopping trips. A hypothetical tax has been imposed on plastic bags, and respondent's preferences were investigated through the dichotomous choice contingent valuation method. During the survey, respondents were asked if they have to pay for the consumption of plastic bags by showing them some bid values as a tax on plastic grocery bags to determine their willingness to pay, and willingness to accept was determined by providing them the choice of reusable bags. 700 respondents were interviewed from different local markets of Utah in the western US. The probit (Censored regression) model was used to estimate willingness to pay for reusable bags, and the results show that willingness to pay for plastic bags was \$0.33 per bag and Willingness to accept the reusable bag was \$0.12 per reusable bag; therefore, the paper suggested that \$0.12 of subsidy should be provided to a household that will switch their behavior towards reusable bags.

A similar approach has been used (Zaharah, 2014) to estimate consumer's preferences and willingness to pay for biodegradable shopping bags in Malaysia by using the contingent valuation method. Willingness to pay is

estimated as a function of income and the price of biodegradable bags. This model is based on Van Ravenswaay and Hoehn (1991) approach. Gender (male), income, age, and price level were the significant variables, and consumers were willing to pay an additional 3.53 RM for each biodegradable bag. The study recommends that policymakers should revise the price of degradable bags. Imran (2015) has estimated the social willingness to accept the demand for cotton bags and paper bags in Islamabad at Abpara and Sunday markets for both retailers and consumers. Data from 150 sample sizes was analyzed using the Logit model using the contingent valuation method. The study found that both shopkeepers and consumers are willing to change the tradition of plastic bags into cotton and paper bags.

Based on the literature review, it is clear that the said issue should be extensively analyzed to make policymakers aware by providing evidence. This study has also adopted CVM to estimate WTP plastic bag users' WTP but also investigated the environmental sensitivity and awareness of the respondents through open-ended semi-structured interviews.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Contingent Valuation Method

Ciriacy-Wantrup (1947) introduced a contingent valuation method to obtain market value for non-market goods. Plastic bags are a market externality and can be internalized through different techniques like the Pigouvian tax on consumers used in different developed countries. But here, this study will adopt the Contingent valuation method to deal with the environmental issue. The contingent valuation method is used when the preferences of the individuals cannot be determined in the market, and as a result, hypothetical questions determine an individual's preferences (Sawyer, 1996). In this method, individuals are asked to rank their preferences or state their willingness to pay for alternatives to environmental hazards to achieve betterment in environmental resources.

The CVM method has been used extensively in the fields of health economics, cultural economics, and transportation safety economics and also in environmental economics (Zaharah, 2014). The Model used (Zaharah, 2014) also helped to design the empirical model of this study.

$$WTP = f(Y, P)$$

WTP = willingness to pay

Y= Income (rupees)

P= price (rupees)

In the case of willingness to pay, (McFadden, 1995) used the Random utility model is assumed to be a utility function. It explains that the utility of an individual from good j (U_{ij}) is the function of observed characteristics of the individual; good that is consumed and unobserved error term. The indirect utility function becomes

$$U_{ij} = U_i(Y_i, X_i, eit)$$

Y_i is the income of the individual, X_i is the observed characteristics, and it is an error term.

In the Contingent valuation survey, individuals have a choice to improve the quality of the environment. Let's suppose T_i is the cost of a good quality environment. Individual WTP will change due to a change in utility from goods that are consumed. Individuals will agree on the amount for a quality environment if that individual's utility becomes greater than the existing utility.

$$U_{ij}(Y_i - T_i, X_i, eit) > U_{ij}(Y_i, X_i, eit)$$

Individuals agree on maximum willingness to pay for a quality environment the equation becomes as below

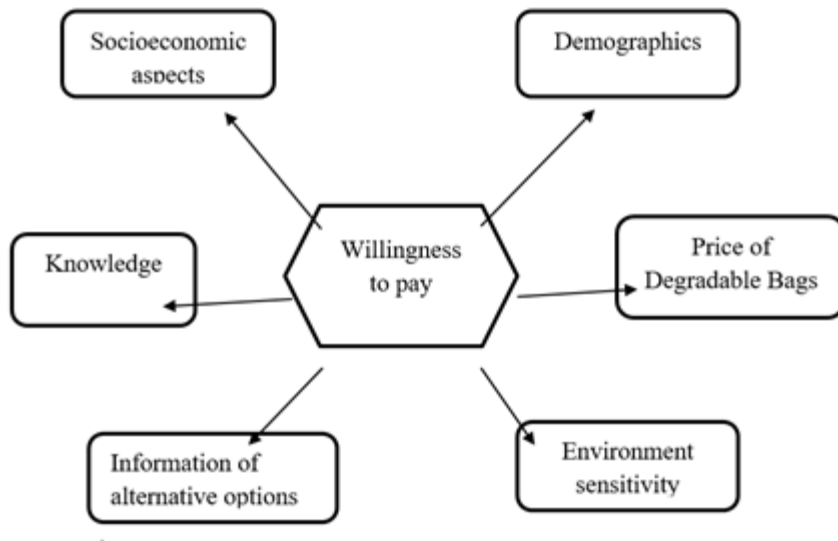
$$Max\ price = U_{ij}(Y_i - T_i, X_i, eit) > U_{ij}(Y_i, X_i, eit)$$

Generalizing the equation

$$WTP_i = \beta_i X_i + eit$$

X_i represents the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the individual because the willingness to pay (WTP) can be calculated based on socioeconomic and demographic factors. This study utilizes various socioeconomic indicators, demographic data, information on alternative resources, market visits, and knowledge factors to determine the willingness to pay for biodegradable shopping bags.

Conceptual Framework Model



Empirical Model

The econometric model is given below.

$$WTP_{it} = \alpha + \beta x_{it} + \mathcal{E} \quad \text{if } RHS > 0$$

$$= 0, \text{ otherwise}$$

Where WTP_{it} is the willingness to pay for bio-degradable bags of individual i at time t , and x_{it} is the vector of independent variables with β coefficients, i.e. (Age, Education, Income, knowledge, Information, family size, occupation, and marital status, price of degradable bags and environment sensitivity) and \mathcal{E} is an error term.

The study used the Tobit model for econometric analysis. Other researchers used Probit or Logit models because of the nominal dependent variable, but here dependent variable is in continuous form with zeroes. Therefore, the Tobit model seems most appropriate. Secondly, during data collection, some respondents were unwilling to pay for biodegradable bags, and their willingness to pay remains zero. To censor such observations, the Tobit model is useful for analysis.

Primary data from consumers in different markets was gathered through face-to-face interviews through a questionnaire containing close-ended and

multiple-choice categorical questions. Consumers of various ages, religions, and occupations were asked directly how much they would pay for biodegradable bags as an alternative to typical plastic bags. Face-to-face interview was a difficult task to convince someone to give their time for an interview, but to achieve full knowledge, it was necessary to ask all questions. Initially, some questionnaires were filled out by consumers. Still, it was noticed that the questionnaire was complicated for them because most respondents did not understand the concept of Willingness to pay terminology.

Table 3.1: *Variables of the Study*

Variables	Type	Definition and Measurement
Willingness to Pay (WTP)	Continues (Outcome)	Willingness to pay is the amount for each biodegradable bag is measured in rupees and it is continues bid value.
Age	Continues	Age of the respondent
Income	Continues	Monthly income of the respondent
Occupation	Nominal	1 if unemployed; 2 if government employee; 3 if private job; 4 if self-employed.
Education	Continues	Education of the Respondent
Family Size	Continues	Number of family members
Marital Status	Dummy	0 unmarried; 1 married
Gender	Dummy	0 Female; 1 Male
Knowledge		It is the knowledge of the respondent about hazardous impact of plastic bags on environment. 0 if no knowledge and 1 if having knowledge. Knowledge is supposed to have significant impact on willingness to pay.
Information	Dummy	If consumers having information about biodegradable bags than its value is 1 if not, then zero.
Environmental Sensitivity	Dummy	If respondent were involved in environmental activities like participation in environmental seminar, campaign, tree plantation drive or any other green activity than he or she is considered environmental sensitive, and he care about environment. A person with environment sensitivity has value is 1 otherwise zero.

Results

Table 4.1 *Marginal Analysis*

variables		Margins	Delta meth St. err	z	P> z	95% Co. Interval	
Occupation	Unemployed	34.71	2.89	11.99	0.00	29.06	40.42
	Govt.	36.02	2.72	13.22	0.00	30.68	41.36
	Private	34.40	3.28	10.47	0.00	27.96	40.84
	Self	36.80	24.67	3.46	0.00	30.97	42.63
BDB max price	Not willing	19.45	2.54	7.66	0.00	14.47	24.43
	Willing	41.68	1.50	27.78	0.00	38.34	44.62
Marital Status	Unmarried	36.26	2.47	14.64	0.00	31.41	41.11
	married	35.10	2.43	14.44	0.00	30.34	39.86
Info	No info	37.45	2.07	18.06	0.00	33.38	41.51
	Have info	34.40	1.74	19.74	0.00	30.98	37.81
Knwl	No Knwl	27.28	3.13	8.71	0.00	21.14	33.42
	Have Knwl	37.63	1.43	26.18	0.00	34.82	40.45
Envr. Sen	Don't care	24.75	2.86	8.63	0.00	19.13	30.36
	Care	38.75	1.46	26.52	0.00	35.89	41.62

In marginal analysis, the probability values of z statistics for all variables are less than 0.05; it means that all the variables are strongly significant at a 5 percent level. In terms of occupation, the marginal change in willingness to pay for biodegradable bags showed mixed results for the occupation variable having four categories. If a person is unemployed, the marginal change in WTP is 34.71 rupees, but when the respondent is a government employee, the marginal WTP increases, which is evident from the more significant coefficient of 36.02. If we move from government employee to private employee, marginal change in WTP decreases to 34.40 rupees as it is also decreased in average analysis with having a negative sign. There is also an

increase in marginal WTP from 34 rupees to 36 rupees when an unemployed person changes to self-employment, which is the highest coefficient.

Respondents who were not willing to the bid price between 30 to 120 rupees per BDB but somehow were willing to below-bid price and were found with a marginal change in WTP of 19 rupees. There is a significant change in marginal WTP from 19 PKR to 41 PKRs for those consumers who were willing on the maximum price of BDB. Unexpectedly, respondents who were found with no information about biodegradable bags showed a marginal change in willingness to pay 37 rupees. However, it decreases to 34 rupees for respondents having information about BDB as compared with the respondents having no information about bio-degradable bags. The marginal willingness to pay of unmarried respondents was 36 rupees per biodegradable bag. Still, there was a one rupee decrease when the marital status of the individual changed from unmarried to married, so the marginal willingness to pay married respondents was 35 rupees for biodegradable bags. It is not controversial because a married will respond according to his or her social status.

Knowledge about the harmful impacts of plastic bags is an essential variable to trigger the willingness to pay consumers. The marginal change in WTP of respondents with no knowledge is 27 PKRs. When the response of the consumers changed from no knowledge to having knowledge, there was an incremental change of 10 PKRs from 27 rupees to 37 rupees. Environment sensitivity is the new variable that can possibly capture the respondent who cares about the environment. During the survey, respondent was asked about their participation in environmental activities. Consumers who didn't participate in any environmental activity were found with 24 rupees marginal willingness to pay. Marginal WTP changes from 24 to 38 rupees for respondents participating in environmental activities.

Table 4.2 *Education category*

S.no	Education	Margins	Delta meth St. error	z	P> z	95% Co. Interval	
1	0	35.82	6.11	5.85	0.00	23.83	47.82
2	4	35.78	4.48	7.97	0.00	26.98	44.58
3	8	35.74	2.91	12.25	0.00	30.02	41.45
4	12	35.70	1.58	22.47	0.00	32.58	38.81
5	16	35.65	1.48	24.06	0.00	32.75	38.56

Education has a significant impact on willingness to pay for environmentally friendly biodegradable bags. There are five categories of education, starting from uneducated, then there is incremental change of 4 classes. The marginal change in willingness to pay for uneducated respondents is 35 rupees. Marginal incremental change in willingness to pay remains the same for all levels, i.e., 35 PKRs for all levels of education. It shows that education has a negligible impact on Willingness to Pay for Biodegradable Bags.

Table 4.3: *Income categories*

S.no	Income	Margins	St. error	z	P> z	95% Co. Interval	
1	0	37.63	1.84	20.44	0.00	34.02	41.24
2	60000	35.69	1.28	27.84	0.00	33.18	38.20
3	120000	33.75	1.83	18.41	0.00	30.16	37.35
4	180000	31.82	2.92	10.88	0.00	26.09	37.55
5	240000	29.88	4.14	7.21	0.00	21.75	38.01
6	300000	27.94	5.41	5.16	0.00	17.33	38.55
7	360000	26.00	6.70	3.88	0.00	12.87	39.14
8	420000	24.07	7.99	3.01	0.00	8.39	39.74
9	480000	22.13	9.29	2.38	0.01	3.90	40.35
10	540000	20.19	10.60	1.90	0.05	-.58	40.98
11	600000	18.25	11.91	1.53	0.12	-5.08	41.60

Income is the main variable in the regression model. In the above table income of the respondents is divided into 11 groups having an incremental of 60000 rupees. The marginal change in WTP for BDB of the respondent having zero income is 37 PKRs. When the income level changes from zero to 6000, the marginal change in willingness to pay goes downward from 37 PKRs to 35 PKRs. For all respondents of all income groups, a change in marginal willingness to pay is found with a downward trend of 2 units. This result is opposite to other studies as incomes increase, willingness to pay for biodegradable bags also increases (Zaharah, 2014).

Table 4.4: *Age categories*

S. No	Age groups	Margins	Delta meth St. error	z	P> z	95% Co. Interval	
1	18	36.09	2.67	13.51	0.00	30.85	41.32
2	28	35.83	1.57	22.77	0.00	32.75	38.92
3	38	35.58	1.38	25.75	0.00	32.87	38.29
4	48	35.33	2.32	15.16	0.00	30.76	39.89
5	58	35.07	3.61	9.72	0.00	28.00	42.15
6	68	34.82	4.97	7.00	0.00	25.07	44.57

In the above table, age has six categories, and marginal change in age shows that a slight decrease in WTP occurs when we have a 10-year shift in age factor. The marginal change in willingness to pay is 36 rupees when the respondent is 18. Marginal change in WTP decreases to 35 PKRs when the respondent's age changes from 18 to 28. There is a decrease in marginal willingness to pay as age increases, but the age factor also has opposite results. Older people were found with more WTP as compared with younger..

Table 4.5: *Family Size Categories*

S.no	Family size groups	Margins	Delta meth. St. error	z	P> z	95% Co. Interval	
1	2	36.97	2.75	13.44	0.00	31.58	42.37
2	6	35.88	1.33	26.79	0.00	33.25	38.50
3	10	34.78	2.09	16.59	0.00	30.67	38.89
4	14	33.68	3.92	8.59	0.00	26.00	41.37
5	18	32.59	5.89	5.53	0.00	21.03	44.14

From the above table, families with two members have a marginal change in willingness to pay PKR 36. There are five categories of family size, with a difference of 4 in each category. Family size increases from 2 to 6 members, then the change in marginal willingness to pay decreases from 36 to 35 rupees. Similarly, there is a decrease of one-unit change in marginal willingness to pay as family size increases from one group to another.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concluded that the average willingness to pay is between PKR 30 to 40 for bio-degradable shopping bags. Employed people are more willing

to pay the premium for using bio-degradable bags. Income remains the main variable in WTP, and marginal change in WTP decreases with increased income. The aims of the study were also to check the awareness about biodegradables among consumers and to make them aware of negative effects of plastic bags on society. During the interview, 139 respondents out of 360 agreed with the ban on plastic bags, including 126 strongly agreeing with the ban decision. Most of the respondents consider awareness to be a key factor for the adaptation of bio-degradable bags.

Based on the findings, it is strongly recommended that biodegradable cloth bags should be provided to retailers at subsidized prices to initiate cloth bags as an alternative to plastic bags. Also, there is a dire need for awareness regarding the hazardous impacts of plastic bags on the environment and human health. Policymakers should aware general people about plastic bag alternatives through different strategies like print media, social media, and market campaigns, especially seminars and awareness drives in educational institutions, schools, and colleges.

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Countering Violent Extremism by Christian Community: A Case of Yuhanabad Mob Violence

JHSS

87-106

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Vol. 32 (2), 2024

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate the mob violence and killings of Christians in Yuhanabad, Lahore, in the context of religious intolerance based on the blasphemy allegations resulting in suicide attacks. This article explains the crisis state by looking at Christian victimization. The purpose of this study is to decipher the type of mob violence in Yuhanabad. This categorization is based on the liability system and the organizational level. Within that framework, three theoretical viewpoints are examined. First, a thick-and-thin view of religion is needed to understand the rising radicalization and the resulting attacks on minority Christians. Second, the deliberate targeting of Christians and ensuing sectarian strife through the well-planned framework of violence and oppression. Third, the deliberate process of scapegoating demonstrates the plurality in-and-out group discourse leading to the castigation of, and persecution of, minority Christians. The study attempts to comprehend the sociological concept of mob violence as a marginalizing mechanism, which was examined at Yuhanabad. In this study, lynching by mobs is interpreted as a process of marginalizing Christians.

Keywords: Violent Extremism, Christian victimization, Mob Violence, Church Attacks, Minorities.

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Introduction

In recent years, the situation has gotten worse for Pakistan's numerous religious minorities. Religious minorities, including Hindus, Christians, and Ahmadis, have endured discrimination for a long time. The difficulties of truly "belonging" in Pakistani society and taking part in the country's political life, notwithstanding Reports on the situation, indicate modest signs of improvement. The condition of minorities on the ground continues to deteriorate and degrade. Based on People's yearly ranking of Minority Rights groups under Threat, Pakistan has regularly performed well in international (MRG) comparisons since 2008 (Saleem, 2014).

Being one of the ten most populous nations in the world, the most severe kind of violence is referred to as violence. The circumstances with which minorities must cope show signs of being filled with hate speech and references to laws against blasphemy, and escalating violence towards religious sites pertaining to religious devotion. Numerous occurrences, such as the, serve to illustrate this point. In the month of September of last year, two bombs were detonated at the All-Saints Church in Peshawar—the worst attack on the Pakistani people in modern history. The Pakistani Christian community and the allegations against it In May 2014, 68 attorneys were accused of blasphemy. (Walsh, 2013). Recent incidents have also demonstrated that even the most fundamental freedom of movement may be abused. Restricting the activities of some religious organizations' doctor's murder in May 2014 made this very clear evidently; this is because he's an Ahmadi (Press, 2014). As a result of the suffocating surroundings, it has become increasingly difficult for many religious groups, and they find it challenging to maintain a sense of security in their communities where they have frequently spent time, and without fear for their safety their entire existence (Pakistan, 2018).

Therefore, it is not uncommon for them to have been pressured and threatened by different radical elements and groups to migrate to a more secure area of the nation overseas, as evidenced by the huge number of Pakistani migrants. Every year, a large number of Hindus leave for India. Unlike the vast majority of Sikhs and Hindus who came to India during the British Raj, most Christians at the division lived in the newly established Pakistan. In accordance with the United States Census Bureau's 1998 estimate, Christians account for around 1.59 percent of the population. 100 percent of Pakistan's population lives in poverty (Saleem, Searching for Security: The Rising Marginalization of Religious Communities in Pakistan, 2014). In actuality, this is the precise. There's no way to know for sure. However, estimates range anywhere from 2

to 3 million people are expected. Some people identify as Christian. Localities in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, such as Peshawar, have a population of roughly 70,000, with the majority being Pakistani. Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, and other cities in Pakistan are home to a significant number of Christians. Punjab has a large number of tiny Christian towns (Peoples, 2018).

More than any non-Muslim faith group, Christians have made substantial contributions to Pakistan's social development, as evidenced by the construction of educational and medical facilities, health care providers, and hospitals in every state. Christians have experienced discrimination similar to that experienced by other religious minorities. Prejudice and persecution are widespread in Pakistan. (Talbot, 2021a) As a result of this issue being mostly ignored, unable to exert control over the most basic of human needs institutions erected by the Christian faith group. Since 2001, there has been an increase in acts of violence, and bias against the number of Christians is rising. (Talbot, 2021b) Seen as being a part of the 'West' in some way, Christians have been persecuted for many years due to their religious convictions. Accused of being the brains behind the US-led invasion of Afghanistan and the enormous human suffering that is also a result of large-scale operations in other nations, Muslims are the majority in these areas. There has been no decrease in recent times in the level of violence.

Religious extremists have been aiming to conduct a social and economic boycott on Christian agents, as well as mob violence and violence against the broader public, to bring about a total persecution. Christians wrongly accused of blasphemy or mob assaults are disproportionately targeted. The purpose of social banning is to induce fear and prevent victims from embracing the humiliation and oppression brought on by blasphemy accusations and violent acts. Protest movements have been used to increase tension and terror among Christians. (Malik, 2002). It manifests as disruption or restriction of essential services, as well as public threats and mob violence. Several of these cases involved hate propaganda propagated by groups and people in cities and rural areas across the country, an issue not recognized, much alone addressed, by federal regulations. The frequency of such incidents is alarmingly increasing, indicating rising Islamist radicalization, intolerance, and violence across Pakistani society. The marginalization of Christians as "disbelievers" or even "enemies of the state" is another kind of mass violence. Derogatory statements and language are routinely used in such claims. In Pakistan, religious extremists use societal isolation not only to threaten Christian beliefs but also to push people to flee the nation. Several municipal authorities are attacking

and threatening Christians, “openly urging that they leave the nation” and “launching mob attacks on them.”

Literature Review

Defining violence is complicated because it is difficult to acknowledge the scan feature without focusing on one nationalistic or hegemonic definition, which is a double-edged sword. As a result of these difficulties, Mary Jackman has developed a broad yet culturally neutral meaning of the term. “Actions that impose, threaten, or cause damage,” she says, constitute violence. She adds that violent actions can be “corporal, worded, or verbal” and that the injuries can be “corporal, psychological, material, or social,” as well as physical. Violent acts can take numerous forms, including ear-piercing, industrial mishaps that might be prevented, individual persecution, group oppression, as well as assault and murder. This definition challenges the popular belief that violence is always aberrant. It also acknowledges that people’s perceptions of violence are heavily influenced by their cultural context (Jackman, 1994 a).

Religion is frequently held up as a reservoir for inner and social harmony, and for good reason. What is the best way to comprehend its raging currents? Modern theorists were confident that religion would either fade in importance or become a cornerstone of universalistic culture, supporting a genuine community of men based on an uneven tendency over the centuries toward cultural variety and freedom. As a result, religion received little attention in the grand narratives of modernity despite its role as a flashpoint for violence. However, as the catastrophes of 9/11 have all too vividly demonstrated, such an interpretation of historical evolution is altogether too optimistic a perspective.

Religion and violence seem frequently intertwined in the tapestries of history, as a little moment’s reflection demonstrates. A wide range of religious traditions have sanctioned violence in particular instances, and others were embroiled in the processes of violence. In the classical civilizations, Zoroastrianism converted prior combat stories into a doctrine of everlasting apocalyptic battle between good and evil. At the same time, ancient Judaism formed a confederacy in the midst of a time of war with the Persian Empire. It had its martyrs in the early days of Christianity, and the medieval Roman church had its crusades and inquisitor (Cohan, 1993). The tight relationship between authoritarian rule and religion, as well as the notion of jihad /holy

war as a vehicle of reformation, infuse Islam's political system with an inexhaustible reservoir of violence.

There is a lot of debate on the relevance and character of severe violence in religion. Religious violence, according to Mark Juergensmeyer, may be characterized by the pursuit of a battle that cannot be accomplished but in which loss is nonetheless unfathomable (Hall, 2003a).

Terrorism, according to Brian Jenkins, is just violence done for its own sake. There is no suggestion in either Juergensmeyer or Jenkins that symbolic violence does not have a purpose. Even solely symbolic aggression can legitimize physical violence, as Juergensmeyer and S.N. Eisenstadt both assert. Terrorism has far-reaching consequences, and they're not merely symbolic. Rather, terrorists' acts can have a significant impact on the dynamics of a wider system (Hall, 2003 b). For example, lynch mobs were a powerful tool for white supremacists in the US South, even. However, the number of lynchings was modest compared to the black population. A "logical" genocide against a minority in India is aided and abetted by even seemingly spontaneous riots in India. Even though planes were used as weapons of mass destruction in the 9-11 terrorist attacks targeting the World Trade Center towers, Pentagon, and White House as symbols of global capitalism, the attacks killed hundreds of innocent civilians. They sparked a lengthy military response from the United States government. Violence may have both symbolic and other effects on its perpetrators (McVeigh, 1999).

Sociologist Rene' Girard has provided a very detailed overview of the issues of mob violence and extremism in any civilization. A process for scapegoating is described in detail in the book *The Scapegoat*; the topic being addressed was extreme violence, which he describes as "acts of violence directly perpetrated by a mob of killers, like the persecution of Jews during the Black Death." Generally speaking, the procedure of scapegoat violence occurs in three stages. The first step is stereotyping the problem, the second phase is the character of the allegation, and the third stage is choosing a victim to be accused of the crisis. A brief summary of these three steps will establish the focus of the conversation. In the first phase, the citizens of a society grieve the disappearance of previously recognized cultural distinctions. There is a sense of loss of culture and values and a dialogue about it (Girard, 1987 a). A rising worry is expressed about the deterioration of society's old-fashioned social structure. At a time when society is experiencing some real difficulties, this rhetoric of crisis magnifies and finds a mimic multiplication. These include the spread of epidemics, the occurrence of natural disasters (such as floods,

earthquakes, famines, and other natural disasters), the emergence of violence in society, civil war, religious extremism, etc.

Overall, a societal “crisis” is implied. In the second stage, a society mourns the loss of ideals and is on the brink of disaster, accusing someone of being to blame. Logic implies that the members are too responsible if a society is disintegrating or controlled by violence. However, they would not take responsibility for this, instead looking for scapegoats and blaming others. Since human links are destroyed in the process, Girard argues that the objects of such connections cannot be wholly unaware of the phenomenon. Not taking responsibility for their acts, individuals always point the finger at the community or those who appear to be harmful for obvious reasons. Thus, in this second degree of accusation, heinous crimes, sexual offenses, and blasphemy/desecration are the principal charges against those held accountable. Finding victims who are ‘weak’ in every aspect is crucial. In this sense, “weak” and “minority” are interchangeable.

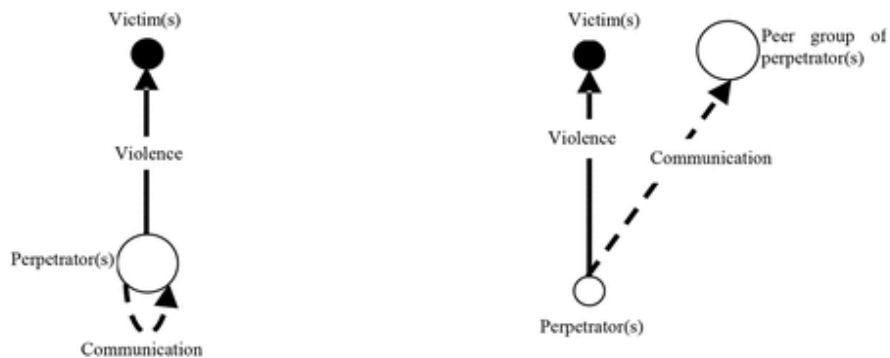
Some of the segments of society that are attributed with the above accusations (offenses, religious expletives, sexual transgression) and, as a result, cause social crisis (inflation, job loss, and persistent violence) are individuals or groups of people that are punished by protestors that represent the vast majority throughout. Persecutors always believe that a small group of people, or even one person, may cause immense harm to the entire community.

In this way, Rene’ Girard’s theory aids in understanding the scenario. This circumstance shows a scapegoating process by a large group of disenfranchised people. In Pakistan, picking victims is crucial. Minorities are underrepresented within a group. Petty criminals, religious minorities, and women are among the victims in Pakistan who have been ostracized by society. Victims are chosen based on their social class, the act’s unpredictable nature, and the effect of gossip (Girard, 1987 b).

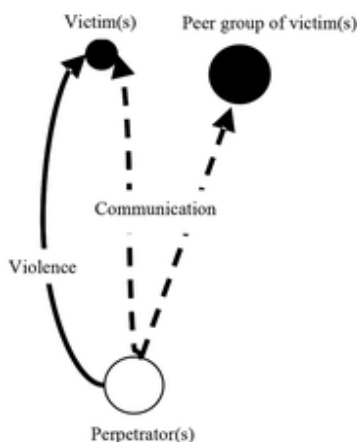
Victims identify with a social class. True, the great majority of victims are from the most underprivileged groups. Girard identified the ‘poor’ as a prospective social sacrifice and classified them as such. Poverty exposes a person’s weakness, and vulnerability invites more vulnerabilities. Even if the poor are products of society, they must face the wrath of their creator due to their social status. Also, being affluent signifies a group of potential victims in a Girardian system because one’s minority position. Pickpockets, phone snatchers, and store looters claimed the most victims in Pakistan. They

undoubtedly represent the lowest social strata. As has been noted, victims of various forms of mob lynching were disproportionately poor.

Collective identity-building intergroup violence Social identity-building intergroup violence



Intergroup violence as social control



Source: The space goat: Book by René Girard

Some theories explain a deep connection between religion and violence and analyzing violence as sacralized action sheds light on the symbolic structures of conflicts. On the other hand, there are many ways in which religion is linked to violent conflict, and our model doesn't include all of those avenues. Religion, at times, appears to be an ideology that is asserted or a social cleavage across which other conflicts are mapped. When violence happens inside the context of religion, however, the cause may be elsewhere. There is no barrier separating religion from other complex realities, and many social events leading to violence — such as attempts to control people — exist both

within and outside of religion. Religion is more than metaphorical currency; it is also used to convey profoundly held societal objectives, such as nationalism, anti-colonialism, or civilizational conflict, throughout diverse historical developments (Hall, 2003 c).

Research Methodology

With the ultimate objective of producing a comprehensive explanation of countering violent extremism by the Christian community targeted against them by the Muslim majority on the premise of religious distraction, this study is heavily reliant on qualitative research techniques. Secondary information from a number of sources was used to construct the majority of the research, which was complemented by interviews with prominent victims. A full analysis of the available literature is provided through secondary and third-party sources, such as peer-reviewed academic publications (both domestic and foreign) and books. Information on victims' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences that is not numerical was acquired through surveys; on the other hand, the case studies will draw on both secondary and primary data from a number of sources. The study brought Individual and community perspectives to light through data collection and analysis processes developed specifically for it. These tactics include conducting structured questionnaires geared towards the victims of such attacks, who are primarily Yuhanaabad residents, and conducting focus groups with the victims of such attacks.

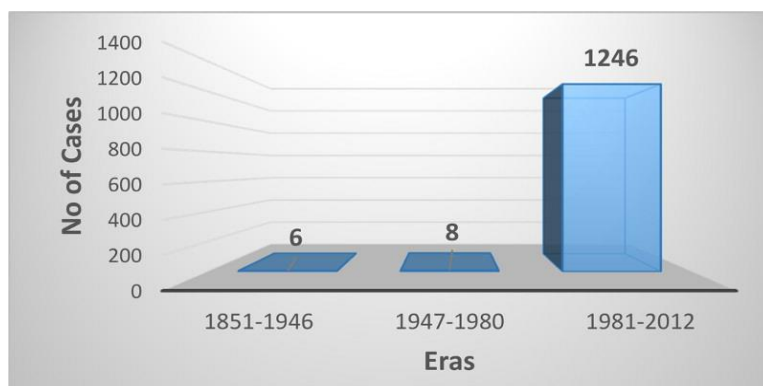
When doing qualitative research, interviews are often employed because they provide participants with a unique opportunity to share their opinions about their social life. As part of the project, the interviews were taped and transcribed. Pseudonyms were used in order to safeguard the anonymity of the participants. The information gathered from the interviews was compared to secondary information gathered from secondary sources in order to discover similarities and discrepancies.

Many pieces of literature have been written and discussed that demonstrate a distinct relationship between religion and violent behaviors. The extent of violent activities is not only studied in detail; we also have a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between religion and violence. Both the range of insights offered by various analytic techniques and the diversity of empirical relationships between violence and other factors are discussed. To date, there has been a pronounced disparity between the investigation of violence and religion. In addition to major comparative and general analyses, several excellent case studies have been published. Despite this, our

conceptions of social dynamics linking religion and violence are still in their infancy.

Analysis and Discussion

The restricted atmosphere created by fundamentalists has made it difficult for many religious groups to live in peace and safety in areas where they have commonly spent their lives. As a result, people are frequently forced to relocate to safer locations within the country or outside to prevent further persecution. Religious violence is resurging. Violent sectarian and religious disputes have increased dramatically during the last decade. Causes include Islamic radicals actively fighting worldwide jihad, power conflicts between Muslims and minorities, particularly Christians in Pakistan, religious intolerance, mob victimization related to religion, terrorism, and harassment of minority women for breaching religious norms.



Religious bias violence is easier to explain than categories. Tactics vary from intimidation, harassment, and jail to terrorism and outright warfare. It usually arises when the fundamental values that define a group's identity are seriously questioned. Communities that identify as "in-group" vs. "out-group" increase extremism, sometimes helped by fundamentalist religious leaders.

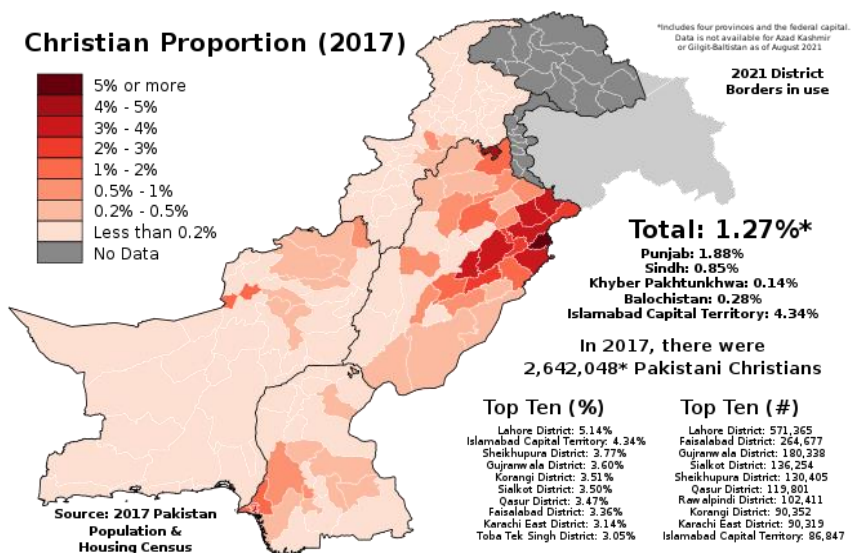
Certain people feel they have the capacity to regulate themselves while the authorities stand on the sidelines, especially those participating in blasphemy trials, public prosecutions, and mob violence. To hide their conduct, mob violence participants took advantage of the hostile climate toward minorities. A striking element of this phenomenon is that a disproportionate majority of victims are religious minorities.

Pakistan ignores several international legal responsibilities, including the right to life and liberty, personal freedom, conscience, religion or belief, freedom of speech, equality before the law, prohibition of discrimination, and prohibition of arbitrary detention. Law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges often use vague legislation, resulting in hearings that consistently violate the right to a trial and the presumption of innocence. Various laws allowed charging people who didn't want to commit a crime, including mentally ill people or minors, even if they knew or agreed to it.

Impunity for atrocities committed in the name of religion

Pakistani authorities have consistently failed to provide proper protection for religious minorities against religious-based violence over several decades. Even though certain governments have pledged to bring offenders of faith-based offenses to justice, these pledges have not been followed through on in the case of crimes perpetrated against non-Muslims. The inability of the state to combat impunity for such crimes is interpreted as implicit support, and this has led to an increase in religious intolerance as well as an increase in overt acts of violence and discrimination against minority groups.

Christian persecution has an influence on individuals on an individual level, yet, in many circumstances, it also has an influence on the greater community on a broader scale as a result of the persecution. Certain assaults are sometimes completely needless, yet in other circumstances, the actions of one group member result in an attack on the entire community as a kind of retaliation against that one member of the group. Violence against Christians in Pakistan is undoubtedly one of the most heinous and, tragically, one of the most prevalent kinds of persecution that the country has to offer. Extremism and terrorism are being used to further the persecuted Christians in Pakistan on a big scale. (International, 2016).



Several of the most horrible attacks on churches and their congregations, as well as attacks against their families, are conducted by extreme Islamic terror groups operating in the name of Islam to inspire fear and send political messages to predominantly Christian countries. Furthermore, these terrorist organizations are regularly affiliated with and even supported by the Pakistani state, which shares a shared ideology with several groups that operate under the name of al-Qaida in the Middle East. For example, in the instance of Youhanabad, mob violence is perpetrated by extremists who have developed a continuous dread of depreciation in their community and property. However, the extreme organization enjoys widespread backing, which it uses to provoke radicalization and consequential attacks on minorities.

A question for religious clerics and the role of media

When it comes to curbing religious extremism, religious leaders frequently get a bad rap for not doing enough. Entire religious groups are accused of complicity when they fail to denounce every act of extremism openly. This is a travesty of justice. Indeed, huge numbers of people of religion are actively aiding the impoverished and oppressed and promoting peace in the wake of conflict. They may be enlisted through their religious institutions, such as their synagogues, mosques, and synagogues, or by international humanitarian organizations and missions. Even though religious leaders are usually accused of igniting sectarian conflict, they often endeavor to accomplish the exact opposite, such as mediating peace deals and advocating nonviolence.

In Pakistan, religious minorities face a variety of types of discrimination, from political and economic constraints to outright violence. Together, these disparate types of prejudice serve to strengthen and perpetuate one another. Similarly, in Pakistan, religious prejudice is intertwined with other forms of oppression. Media coverage in Pakistan has expanded dramatically in the last two decades, as has the number of sources it may draw on.

Discrimination against minorities in the media is very pronounced. Organizational tactics, including posting stickers on buses, scribbling on walls, and handing out booklets, have been used to incite hatred against people of color. Clergy openly exhort their followers to murder and harm minorities at conferences around Pakistan. Even while the media frequently covers such anti-Semitic rhetoric, neither the integrity of the words nor the perspective of Ahmadis is ever questioned. “Organized” conversions to Islam. The media depict Christian groups as “agents of the West,” anti-Pakistan, and adversaries of Islam. The government does not protect discrimination and intimidation against these populations. These types of insurgencies give rise to mass genocide by the religious fundamentalist who are being properly brainwashed by their religious scholar, promising them a great sign of virtue and blessing in reward for the attack.

After the Christ Church incident, Asifa Bibi’s main concern was protecting the rest of her family. Victimization of the Christian community in such a systematic and standardized manner develops a horrific scenario related to their safety. Suffering in Pakistan as a religious minority is an example of how difficult it can be to live as a Christian.

She said:

“My main concern was for the well-being of the rest of my household. The safety and security of my family was the main concern as the riots began to explode. I was under a great deal of stress, and as a result, I suffered bodily issues. The most difficult challenge over the first several months was securing food.

Talking about the financial cycle for his family, she further added,

“We managed to arrange for our requirements and afterward chose to work to fulfill both ends of the spectrum... As a result of the fact that one of my sons was working and the other was a car mechanic, we had some

money saved. This was our method of surviving... I don't have a job... Nonetheless, I have become weaker... We haven't been able to get back on our feet. The two of us are trying to stay afloat, both financially and mentally" (Bibi A., 2021).

According to the Christians in Pakistan, the primary reason for their continued deterioration is because the official itself is one of the primary causes of oppression and persecution. Islamist radicals, in collaboration with officials at all levels, aggressively encourage abuses of the human and constitutional rights of Christians in Pakistan. It is necessary to characterize the persecution of Christianity in Pakistan as an act of internalized state-sponsored terrorism in this context. The persecution of Christians is widespread and may be found across Pakistan, from the capital to the provinces, and in both urban and rural locations.

As opposed to persecution of Christians in other parts of the world, persecution in Pakistan is organized and systematic; it does not consist solely of irregular, episodic operations carried out by a small number of individuals or groups. Oppression must be regarded as comprehensive because it affects all aspects of professional and personal life, including the social, economic, and political sectors. It is the goal of the offenders not only to eradicate Christianity from the country but also to destroy Christian communal and cultural life, as well as the educational opportunities and economic conditions available to them. In Pakistani culture, social and cultural aspects demonstrate how discrimination and prejudice against particular religious communities, such as some Islamists, have become deeply rooted.

A variety of laws, constitutional changes, and legislative actions established in Pakistan during the previous few decades have served to increase discrimination against religious minorities. As a result of this bias, which gives religious minorities a weaker position at the institutional level, it has a significant influence on the everyday activities of members of religious minorities and also their capacity to engage in Pakistani politics. While Pakistan's Constitution promises equal protection under the law to all people, religious minorities' involvement in the government's political sphere is severely restricted.

Mobs have assaulted Christian settlements several times, and when they have failed to kill a particular individual, they have instead set fire to entire settlements, leaving the remainder of the community too afraid to venture

outside their borders for fear of being attacked again—religious teachings in mosques, which give people the power to murder, often infuriate extremists. Islamist nations like Pakistan, where Christianity is the majority religion, have a history of forcing people to give up their Christian beliefs completely. As a result of their acts, religious extremists often use violence and intimidation to attain their goals.

Following the death of her husband, Naima Bibi main concerns were the safety and security of his family in order to survive

She said:

“I was completely unprepared for what transpired. I was concerned about the well-being of my young children... I had to deal with a great deal of pressure... Due to my family’s dire financial circumstances, I began working at a factory to make ends meet (Bibi N., 2021 a)

Adding about the financial circumstances, she further added:

However, I was forced to quit since no one was available to watch over my small children, and my first worry was their well-being. Members of my husband’s family work as day laborers and contribute financially to our household. The incidences have completely wrecked our lives as people who are disguising their true identities because of them” (Bibi N., 2021 b)

Even if protecting others’ rights is a legitimate rationale for governments to restrict certain human rights, such as freedom of speech and expression and the ability to proclaim one’s religious beliefs publicly, it excludes safeguarding the religious sensitivities of others. The state failed to ensure the safety of its citizens besides leaving them on their own (Saleem, 2014,b).

People with a mob mentality won’t bother checking the facts of the situation. The mob mentality takes precedence over reason (Carey, 2021). Violent vigilantism is legitimized by using laws as a shield. Even though Muslims make up the bulk of those killed in such assaults, members of religious minorities make up a sizable minority. There are several sorts of gang violence: persons accused of blasphemy being shot.

MPA Punjab Assembly Rameesh Singh Arora spoke on the role performed by the Pakistani government in the aftermath of the violent attacks on Churches in Yuhana and when people were attending Sunday mass prayer.

He said:

“I wasn’t personally involved in delivering help to the victims, but as a member of the ruling party, I can describe in great detail the exact procedures done by the administration. As part of the ongoing Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), the government registered the victims’ relatives, encouraged the development of their talents, and provided interest-free loans to the widows of the victims.”

While talking about women’s empowerment, he further added,

“It’s also worth noting that at the time, a distinct government agency was set up to concentrate on women’s empowerment, and this department collaborated closely with civil society to help widows of victims cope emotionally. Personally, I’ve taken part in several lectures and debates at colleges across Pakistan to help promote Christian-Muslim cooperation, and I’m confident that most Pakistanis are quite tolerant and have no problems coexisting peacefully with minorities” (Arora, 2021).

Although launching such an effort is a commendable move, the state failed to fulfill its primary role of providing a safe haven for all of its citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation. It has nothing to do with the federal or state governments. Even though religious minorities in Pakistan are legally protected, several regulations are misinterpreted or ignored, and as a result, they have done nothing to alleviate the terrible conditions that religious minorities face. There may be a policy of divide between Muslims and non-Muslims continuing in the current environment, as well as a promotion of a nationalist ideology defined by religion that excludes people. There are also allegations that religious groups exerted pressure on police to pursue blasphemy charges in other cases. Finding a lawyer willing to represent someone guilty of blasphemy has always been extremely difficult due to the inherent risks. Because religious clerics hold such sway in society, they have the power to foment uprisings and incite violence against marginalized communities.

As a result of their social isolation and the potential for physical harm, Christian minority are less likely to take part in day-to-day activities and socialize with others. Getting involved with people outside of their neighborhood makes them uncomfortable. Dr. Ayra mentioned this during an interview,

She said:

“Families in distress must participate in productive activities such as expanding their social network, going for a daily walk, exercising, and eating healthfully. They require social contact to express their sadness and loss (Ayra, 2021 a).

While talking about the multi-culturalism and acceptance in society, she further added:

“Changing one’s environment can be a useful cure, and seeking psychiatric assistance can help prevent depression from erupting. However, people’s attitudes against Christians cause them to be depressed to a greater extent” (Ayra, 2021 b).

Conclusion

In order to ensure the long-term security of the state related to minorities as a whole, Pakistan’s ability to protect its mixed culture and safeguard the interest of all religious organizations will be critical. This will be true not only for the safety of its minorities but also for the long-term consistency of Pakistan as a whole. However, while the contemporary persecution of numerous religious minorities is somewhat motivated by Pakistan’s previous past, it is also an unmistakable indictment of the country’s administration and regard for fundamental human rights. The targeting of members of these groups, as well as pervasive prejudice against them, which is sometimes assisted by the apathy or deliberate backing of authorities, has also contributed to the continuous degradation of Pakistan’s security. As a result, the country’s destiny is highly determined in great portion by the country’s ability or inability to accommodate members of all faith communities as equal citizens. Although the Christian minority in Pakistan faces similar challenges to other religious minorities, the reality of their plight stands in sharp contrast to Pakistan’s political leadership and international accords that the country has signed. Because of a variety of causes, Christians in Pakistan are among the most

persecuted religious minorities in the world. When taken as a whole, the ramifications of these changes are rather obvious. As a result, the flood of neo-fundamentalism has managed to grow so strong in contemporary Pakistan, and the properly constituted authorities become so vulnerable the former can easily overwhelm the latter on issues of ‘taking law in their hand’ – which heats up in the end to a majority notion, whipped up by the neo-fundamentalism, that those who do not acknowledge the doctrinal premises of their own neo-orthodox perception of Islam.

Recommendation:

- 1- Defining hate speech in the media and enforcing laws that makes it a criminal, such as section 153-A of the PPC, should be the top priorities. Collaborate with PEMRA to keep an eye out for hate speech being spread through electronic media.
- 2- Guarantee that officers quickly respond to situations of prejudice; police monitoring or reform should be implemented. Law enforcement officers should also get sensitivity training regarding minority and gender problems in order to increase their ability to deal with forced conversions and other forms of exploitation.
- 3- Ensure that all citizens are represented equally and that minorities are not kept isolated from the rest of the community. Allow non-Muslims to take positions at all levels of government and repeal provisions like Articles 41(2) - 91(3) of the Law that restrict non-Muslims from being head of state or prime minister. Constituents should be able to create minority political parties or propose a minimal number of candidates.
- 4- Provide proper access plus security to sites of religious worship, among other things. Ascertain that the necessary state entities safeguard religious places for all groups, allowing them to peacefully practice their religion in an environment that is free of danger. In addition, authorities should repeal discriminatory rules governing the building and maintenance of religious structures and structures of worship.
- 5- Meet the obligations imposed by international treaties to which Pakistan is a party, including but not limited to Bringing Pakistan’s legislation into compliance with the many international accords that the country has signed that encourage religious freedom. Check to see

that the laws that actually protect religious freedom are being enforced as effectively as possible.

- 6- Increase the representation of minorities at the federal and regional levels. Advocate and encourage the effective participation of minorities by international norms and standards. Create systems that enable minorities, particularly women from underrepresented groups, to participate in decision-making and execution. Implement systems that provide minority representatives a unique role – such as consulting and particular voting privileges – in considering any legislation that significantly impacts minorities' civil and political rights.
- 7- Law enforcement agencies can benefit from training and awareness-raising events, as well. Police and judges should be made more aware of minority rights and prejudice so that they can respond more effectively in the event of violent attacks or other rights violations, with special emphasis paid to the needs of minority women. In order to build a comprehensive picture of institutional shortcomings, it is necessary to investigate and monitor victim reporting, registration, and subsequent processes.
- 8- Organize in collaboration with civic society to foster interfaith dialogue and minority engagement. Collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activists to encourage dialogue and trust-building activities amongst religious groups. Conduct seminars on political engagement for religious minorities to improve their involvement in politics and their understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities.
- 9- Working closely with minorities to combat discrimination is essential; by offering training, legal counseling, advocacy platforms, and other types of aid to religious minority members, particularly minority women, we may assist them in taking action against injustices, bad depictions, and human rights violations.

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Usage of Matrimonial Groups on Facebook: A Case of Pakistan

JHSS
107-123
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Vol. 32 (2), 2024

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Abstract

Marriage is a significant part of any cultured society. The technological evolutions of social media have increased the popularity of online matrimonial services. The current research aims to investigate the effectiveness of matrimonial groups among youth using Facebook. For this purpose, the data for this study was collected from three Facebook matrimonial groups through an online survey method. The study design is quantitative, and the sample size is 367 youth members between 20 and 29. Descriptive statistics were applied to determine the effectiveness of matrimonial groups among youth. The study results determined that these matrimonial groups actively help registered members find a life partner. Users are satisfied with the matrimonial services as these groups provide real-time interaction, are reliable, ensure confidentiality, and are easy to navigate. Of the 367 participants, 256 agreed they would get their life partner through these matrimonial groups. These results evidence that user satisfaction positively correlated with the effectiveness of matrimonial services. Therefore, it is recommended that matrimonial groups should improve search optimization tools, payment options against services, and quick responses to the query. This is the only research that explores the effectiveness of online matrimonial services. Future

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research can be conducted with different research designs and a bigger population for deeper insights.

Keywords: Matrimonial groups on Facebook, users, Pakistan, social media matrix, uses and gratification theory, usage pattern, effectiveness, satisfaction.

Introduction

This is an information era where information is just a click away. Social media has become necessary for interactive communication among individuals or the general public (Yousaf et al., 2019; Manning, 2014). It has the fastest expansion because people can connect, express, and share happenings with minimum cost and less time (Yu & Kak, 2012; Hatgine et al., 2021). Among other social media networks, Facebook is the most extensive social networking and advertising platform used by approximately 2.9 billion individuals monthly, accounting for 36.9% of the world population (Lua, 2022). It caters to a vast population and fulfills their social, economic, cultural, political, domestic, and religious information needs. It is estimated that 49.2 million Pakistani uses Facebook daily, and they ranked among the top ten Facebook user countries after India (416.6 million), United States (240.0 million), Indonesia (176.5 million), Brazil (139.0 million), Philippines (91.0 million), (Mexico 78.0 million), Vietnam (75.9 million), Thailand (58.5 million) and Japan (55.8 million) respectively (World population review, 2022).

Marriage is a lifelong commitment (Chia, Too, & Khor, 2021) and is considered a significant part of any cultured society that cannot be overlooked (Pal, 2011). For decades, finding a suitable life partner has remained challenging (Chia, Too, & Khor, 2021). In Western societies, marriage is an individual concern, but this is the reverse in Asian countries, as it is considered the reunion of two families' relations (Al-Dawood et al. 2021). A novel trend to find a suitable partner through virtual channels has emerged in recent decades. Specialized matrimonial websites and groups provide a platform to choose suitable life companions. These e-matrimonial websites and groups are considered substitutes for *Rishta* aunties (Conventional matchmakers). The matrimonial groups quickly pop up in the Facebook browser if search word "Rishta" with an amazing number of members (Al-Dawood et al., 2021). Khalid (2022) highlighted that these matrimonial groups have been popular among youth, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. (2022) also highlighted the growing trend of relationships and marriages from online interactions through social media platforms. Harms (2013) reported that couples who met through online interaction have happier and longer marriages.

Pal (2011) and Rajadesingan et al. (2019) highlighted that nationally and internationally, the regimes of conventional matrimonial affairs are trending into virtual communities where information is accessible, shareable, and verifiable smartly. This virtual matrimonial emergence is often criticized, too, but apart from its traditional means, a particular class of people prefers using electronic media as a spouse-seeking agent for a faster spread of information to a larger audience. Bajnaid and Elareshi (2018) shared that Facebook matrimonial groups have a safe setting that allows spouse seekers to communicate while maintaining their religious commitments. Lupa-Wójcik (2020) described social media as a creative form to initiate discussions and exchange of content, where brides and grooms interact with each other based on their matrimonial information provided by the candidates. These groups maintain individual information (candidate profile), i.e., photographs, family interest, age, location, caste, current work, etc. Facebook matrimonial groups show the connection with people with a nominal registration fee. The matchmaking groups on Facebook are created by matchmaking companies, followed by a massive group of people. Most matrimonial groups on Facebook take it as business to earn money and charge users when “Rishta” is done between two families. These groups are also a source of satisfaction for people who select a partner and suggest their surroundings (Rajadesingan, et al., 2019).

Matrimonial activities are enriched with cultural practices worldwide (Shako, 2004). Titzmann (2013) highlighted the evolution of media and its expanded usage, changing the matchmaking structure and choices of a suitable partner. He highlighted the active intervention of youth in their future planning. This revolution has transformed arranged marriage into digital matrimonial websites and groups to seek a suitable partner. This emergence of matrimonial activities through social media gained the attention of youth worldwide. (Kamal, et al., 2022 and Rabia, et. al, 2020). Face-to-face communication between marital partners has decreased, resulting in a firm reliance on communication technologies (Kamal et al., 2022). The matrimonial websites and groups are connective agents for brides and grooms. (Shako, 2004; Patnayakuni and Seth, 2009 and Al-Dawood et al., 2021). Sharma et al. (2020) highlight that matrimonial websites/groups provide suitable matchmaking options based on the preference of the spouse seeker. The research findings of Seth (2011) indicated that people prefer online matrimonial sites because they are simple to use, search, match, and interact with. He stressed that the sense of fulfillment of matrimonial group members increases more if they see more potential matches on their search results page and with controlled privacy information, which is positively correlated with customer satisfaction. Bajnaid and Al-Saggaf (2017) stated that we live in a gendered society, and seeking

online information is more accessible than in conventional (face-to-face) settings. Bajnaid et al. (2018) endorse that online chats and networks carry more information than face-to-face interaction because an online environment enables more intensive interaction than conventional meetings.

Al-Dawood et al. (2021) highlighted the matrimonial challenges in non-western countries where parents have the authority to find a suitable spouse for his/her child. The study indicates that parents like their involvement in protecting their children from any potential technological harm and keeping themselves intact with conventional matchmaking obligations. Annand (1965) and Plakhina and Belyakova (2020) stated that personal knowledge is limited due to technological advancement, and if matrimonial knowledge expands to a more significant number of people, the probability of finding a suitable partner will also be increased. Pal (2011) stated that online matrimony groups provide trustworthy information with an economical registration fee. He highlighted that developing an inclusive information system for potential marriage information seekers at the national, regional, and local levels is needed. Shako (2004) expressed that matrimonial websites play a moderating role. The youth between the age of 20-35 use it mostly, particularly the males. The finding reported the likelihood of social and religious norms positively affecting users' behaviors and decisions, similar to the findings (Bajnaid & Elareshi, 2018). (Rajadesingan et al. 2019; Viridi, Chugeja & Parwar, 2022 and Krishnan, Hemamala, & Krishnan, 2022) stated that a bride/groom can directly search for partners consistent with their required profile criteria. Moreover, along with different positive aspects, this digital communication does not discover the actual behavior of the bride and groom.

The above literature shows a boom in online matrimonial activities. No related study could be found on social media or Facebook usage for marriage purposes. All the literature on matrimony was mostly on matrimonial websites from India. Therefore, this study is based on Pakistani matrimonial groups on Facebook. This research study aims to explore the usage pattern and effectiveness of the matrimonial groups on Facebook. To meet the objectives of the study, the theory of "Social media matrix" and "Gratification theory" are considered for theoretical underpinning. The prior theory supports the media doing activities to get traffic on the website (Kasper et al., 2015). At the same time, the latter theory supports a prospective belief of media users toward any particular motivation Vinney (2021).

The study assumed that the more the youth interact on Facebook matrimonial, the more compelling these groups are. If the users are satisfied with matrimonial groups, which gender uses more? As far as the researcher knows, this study appeared unique as we did not find any study investigating

Facebook matrimonial groups, particularly in Pakistan. Considering the significant increase in matrimonial groups and popularity among youth, the current study is designed to explore the Facebook matrimonial group usage pattern and its effectiveness on youth in Pakistan. This research addresses the following research objectives;

- a. To investigate the usage patterns of matrimonial groups on Facebook among youth in Pakistan.
- b. To examine the effectiveness of matrimonial groups on Facebook in Pakistan.

Method

The study design is quantitative. A cross-sectional survey method using an online survey was conducted to investigate the usage of matrimonial groups on Facebook in Pakistan. The cross-sectional survey method is appropriate to get relevant data from participants participant at one point in time, to assess the prevalence of attitude and behavior toward any particular issue (Olsen & StGeorge, 2004; Kesmodel, 2018; Wang & Cheng, 2020). A structured questionnaire was prepared to collect data from the study participants. The questionnaire consists of 24 items categorized into three sections, including demographic information (2 items), general questions (6 items), and survey questions (16 items). The survey questions were analyzed on a five-point Likert scale: “strongly agree =5, agree =4, Neither agree nor disagree = 3, disagree =2, and strongly disagree =1”. The designed questionnaire was sent to the panel of experts for review. After finalization, questionnaire items were entered into Google Forms, and a link was established to initiate data collection. The member using Pakistani matrimonial groups on Facebook was the population of the study. The youth/adults (male and females) aged 18-29, using Facebook matrimonial groups, were selected as the study population. The data for this study was collected from three matrimonial groups on Facebook, including Two Rings Official Global, Everlasting Companionship, and Soul Wonders. These groups were selected because these three groups ranked among the top 10 matrimonial groups offering their services in Pakistan.

The study sample size was determined using the Krejci and Morgan sampling method table (Krejci & Morgan, 1970). The total known population of the selected three Facebook groups was 8000, and by using the Krejci and Morgan formula, a sample size of 367 was determined. After getting consent from group admins, the study questionnaire link was posted on the selected matrimonial Facebook group. Facebook Messenger was also used to get the data from the group participants on time. The researchers carefully screened the collected data, and ethical considerations were ensured for this research.

The screened data was coded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To gain real insights from study participants. The data analysis was performed. Descriptive statistics were applied to determine the effectiveness of Facebook matrimonial groups in Pakistan.

Results

The current research explores the effectiveness of Facebook matrimonial groups among youth. Keeping the study objectives in view, a descriptive analysis is performed. The data for this study was collected from both genders (males and females). The study sample consisted of 367 participants using Facebook matrimonial groups. The demographic results indicated that 207 (56.40%) and 160 (43.59%) males and females participated, respectively. It is evident from the results that males used this group more than females, which supports the finding of Shako, 2004. This present study has taken the age group from 18 to 29, in which a family's dependent childhood turns into an independent, responsible, mature person in society who can get married as per law in Pakistan. The results determine that 98 (26.06%) of the participants belonged to the age groups of 18-23. Whereas most of the group's participants, 296 (78.72%), fall in the age group of 24-29, using Facebook matrimonial groups indicated in Table 01. In brief, males use these groups more, and the majority of the study participants fall between the ages of 24 and 29.

Table 01:

Demographics of survey participants

Gender	Frequency	Age Group	Frequency
Male	207	18-23	98
Female	160	24-29	296

The

participants were asked for their preferred information medium to seek a suitable spouse. The results indicate that the majority of the participants, 281(76%), prefer online matrimonial groups, followed by family/friends 50 (13.6%), Parents 25 (6.8%), Print media 6 (1.6%), and broker/agents 5 (1.4%) respectively. The results in Table 02 support the findings of Mehmood (2022) and Khalid (2022), highlighting the popularity of online matrimonial groups among the youth.

Table 02:

Preferred approach to search for a prospective groom/bride

Items	Broker/ Agent	Newspaper Classifieds	Family/ Friends	Parents	E-matrimonial groups
Frequency	5	6	50	25	281
Percentage	1.4	1.6	13.6	6.8	76.6

The E-matrimonial groups were selected based on their popularity among the youth using Facebook in Pakistan. Table 03 results showed that out of 367 youth members participating in the survey reported that Two Rings Official (Global) is famous among youth 171 (46.6%), followed by Soul Wonders 94 (25.6%) and Everlasting Companionship 75 (20.4%), respectively.

Table 03:

Youth awareness about matrimonial groups

Items	Two Rings Official (Global)	Everlasting Companionship	Soul Wonders
Frequency	171	75	94
Percentage	46.6	20.4	25.6

The results in Table 04 indicated that the majority of the study participants were registered in Two Rings Official 172(46.9%), followed by Soul Wonders 93 (25.3%), Everlasting Companionship 73 (19.9%), and others 29 (7.9%).

Table 04:

Profile registration on Facebook matrimonial group

Items	Two Rings Official (Global)	Everlasting Companionship	Soul Wonders	Others
Frequency	172	73	93	29
Percentage	46.9	19.9	25.3	7.9

The participants were asked how they got information regarding Facebook matrimonial groups. The results indicated that friends 164 (44.7%) and social networks 135(36.8%) were the biggest sources of information for them. 50 (13.6%) participants get the matrimonial group information from family, followed by other sources 14 (3.8%). On the other hand, TV/radio 4 (1.1%)

was the least used source of information for study participants, as shown in Table 05.

Table 05:

Information received about Facebook matrimonial groups

Items	Friends	Family	Tv\ Radio	Social Networks	Any other source
Frequency	164	50	4	135	14
Percentage	44.7	13.6	1.1	36.8	3.8

The participants were asked about factors influencing them to prefer matrimonial groups over websites. The results in Table 06 indicated that prompt matrimonial service was the key influencing factor for participants. On the other hand, the authenticity of the information 78 (21.3%) and easy navigation 67 (18.3%) were likely factors that influenced the preference of groups over websites. While confidentiality of information 35 (9.5%), access to database full information 22 (6.0%), and free of cost 30 (8.2%) were the least influencing factors to prefer Facebook matrimonial groups.

Table 06:

Influencing factor to choose the matrimonial groups on Facebook over websites

Items	Prompt Service	Authenticity of information	Easy navigation	Confidentiality of information	Availability of a vast database	Free of cost	Others
Frequency	133	78	67	35	22	30	2
Percentage	36.2	21.3	18.3	9.5	6.0	8.2	5

The participants were asked how frequently they use Facebook matrimonial groups. The results indicated that most use matrimonial groups daily, as shown in Table 07. While 36(9.8%) of participants use it once a week, followed by not regular users, 16 (4.4%) and 8(2.2%) check when any matrimonial group notification pops up on the screen, respectively. This supports the finding of Pingle & Kaushik (2022) that e-matrimonial services offer huge. Database of potential matches that are equally convenient and secure.

Table 07:*Frequency to use matrimonial groups on Facebook*

Items	Everyday	Once a week	Once a month	Not Regularly	notification pops up on the screen
Frequency	296	36	11	16	8
Percentage	80.7	9.8	3.0	4.4	2.2

Effectiveness of Facebook Matrimonial Groups

An item-level analysis was also performed to determine the effectiveness of Facebook matrimonial groups among youth in Pakistan as shown in table 08. The Facebook groups entitled Two Rings Official, Everlasting Companionship, and Soul Wonders were selected for data collection. The data normality was checked and internal consistency among items was determined through Cronbach Alpha = .893. The item score is above the cutoff threshold of 3.0 to 3.5. The results indicated that participants strongly agree with the statement that the anonymous confidentiality of female participants is ensured ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .917$), followed by item 09, information of male and female participants remained confidential ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .938$). While participants agreed that their parents significantly support them in finding a suitable partner through online matrimonial groups ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .895$), and as happy users, they recommend others to register in Facebook matrimonial groups ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .931$), the groups do not disclose information to unregistered users ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .931$), registration guidelines are easily understandable ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .876$), participants profile updated on time ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .914$), respectively.

Moreover, the participants seemed to slightly agree with the statement that the Facebook matrimonial groups are a timely and reliable source ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .919$), allowing me to easily contact prospective alliances suited anywhere in Pakistan ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .924$), restrict my sharing of my profile photograph ($M = 3.71$, $SD = .949$), and allow me to interact in real-time ($M = 3.72$, $SD = .800$) receptively.

The study participants seemed to disagree with the statement that Facebook matrimonial groups provide multiple options for paying for their services ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .969$). Whereas the participant results highlighted the concern that needs the attention of group admin like optimization to search profile of suitable partner ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .943$) and the on-time response to the candidate by the service providers ($M = 3.63$, $SD = .901$)

Table 08:*Effectiveness of Facebook matrimonial groups*

#	Items	MPI	S.D
1	The matrimonial groups on Facebook are a reliable source.	3.70	.919
2	These groups allow me to interact with members in real-time.	3.72	.800
3	The service personnel responds to my quires on time.	3.63	.901
4	Do matrimonial groups on Facebook provides me with multiple options for payment for the services?	3.50	.969
5	The matrimonial group on Facebook allows me to easily contact prospective alliances situated in any region of Pakistan.	3.74	.815
6	These groups on Facebook provides easy instruction to register me easily.	3.78	.876
7	Matrimonial group members give me a timely update on interest received from prospective alliances	3.70	.924
8	Matrimonial Groups on Facebook update my profile changes within 24 hours.	3.74	.914
9	Matrimonial groups on Facebook ensure that my information remains confidential	3.84	.938
10	Matrimonial groups on Facebook do not disclose my information to unregistered users.	3.76	.931
11	The Groups on Facebook restrict sharing my profiles with photographs.	3.71	.949
12	Are females allowed to post anonymously?	3.89	.917
13	Do parents play part in finding proposals through online matrimonial groups?	3.79	.895
14	Are you recommending others register themselves in online matrimonial groups/pages?	3.76	.931
15	The matrimonial groups on Facebook are easy to navigate and provide the required information	3.74	.998
16	The Matrimonial groups on Facebook allow me to search through my profiles that cater to my needs.	3.50	.943
MPI= Mean Per Item, SD= Standard Deviation			

Figure 4.1 below is analyzed in table 08 by taking the analysis of the Mean score per item (MPI).

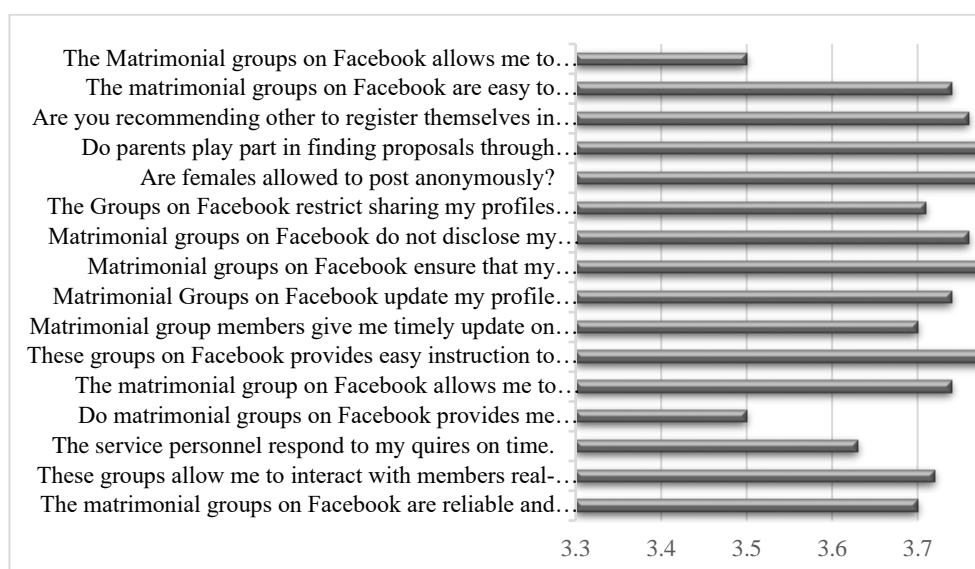


Figure 4.1: Mean Score per item

Find a suitable partner through these groups

The participants were asked if they got a suitable partner in life by using these matrimonial groups. The results in Figure 4.2 indicated that out of 367 survey participants, 265 (72.2%) agreed they got their life partner by using these matrimonial groups on Facebook. At the same time, 42 (11.44%) did not get a life partner through Facebook groups. At the same time, 60 (16.3%) remained neutral. Overall, the results show that most participants found these groups a good matchmaking source.

Users' experience while using these groups

It is evident from the results that 254(69.2%) of the participant's experiences were positive, and only 113(30.8%) were experienced negatively, as shown in Figure 4.3. These results indicate that members of Two Rings Official, Global Everlasting Companionship, and Soul Wonders have good experiences using these groups on Facebook.

Finding and Discussions

Matrimony is a prestigious tradition enriched with religious and cultural practices worldwide. Since the last three decades, the social context of marriage has changed from the preceding years. (Coontz, 2005). While the emergence of electronic media has introduced the concept of a global village, access to information is quick for all masses. The usage pattern of the users of matrimonial groups indicates that most male members are a part of these groups. As far as their age is concerned, the age group of 24-29 years use these groups more. This finding supports (Shako, 2004) that the youth between the age group of 24-35 seriously spend time in matrimonial groups for spouse seeking. It is also found that youth prefer matrimonial groups over family and friends, which does not support Al-dawood's (2021) finding that parents like their involvement in the decision-making process. The participants agreed that matrimonial groups allow interaction with a candidate in real-time. This means that online interaction is more comfortable for the users; within no time, they get the whole bio-data of the person. Thus, these matrimony platforms have made it easy for people to connect rather than the old way of greeting families repeatedly. Through the online matrimony platform, users check their profiles. If it suits you, then further proceedings will take place. The study of Bajnaid and Al-Saggaf (2017) investigated the same phenomenon for youth living in Saudi Arabia and found that finding a suitable partner through matrimonial sites does not encounter all social standards of marriage, i.e., behavior (Rajadesingan et al., 2019 and Viridi, Chugeja & Parwar, 2022). Still, it is easier to get information through online interaction than face-to-face meetings.

Moreover, the services of these groups on Facebook are satisfactory for the members as these groups respond to all the queries of their members and ensure the upgradation of their profile within 24 hours. Moreover, most survey members using online matrimonial groups on Facebook agreed that they found their life partners from this online interaction, which indicates the trustworthy nature of matrimonial groups toward their users. This result is in line with the findings of (Khalid 2022) and (Mehmood, 2022). Furthermore, the findings indicated that matrimonial groups allow members to make easy contact in any location in Pakistan and that the group members receive a timely update on interested candidates. This result supports the findings of Sharma et al. (2020) that matrimonial service quality is the most preferred parameter for searching and matchmaking options. Bajnaid and Elareshi (2018) find that Saudi and Western users restrict photos to be added with the profiles on matrimonial websites, while the current study shows that it is the choice of females to post their profiles anonymously or not. (Al-Dawood et al. (2021) reported that Saudi Arab parents see the usage of technology in finding the future life

parents of their kids through online websites, while our study results indicate that youth prefer matrimonial groups over parents and family. The present study finds that matrimonial groups on Facebook allow users to search through profiles that match the user's criteria for spouse-seeking. The users add their requirements for the person they are looking for, which supports Al-Dawood et al. (2021) finding that Saudis and Western users of matrimonial websites plan to portray when creating their profile, as well as the traits they want in their life partners. According to Pal (2011), information systems and the services of famous Indian online matrimony seem to affect the user positively. Whereas the present study also shows the positive experience of users. This means that the effectiveness of online matrimony platforms gains group members' trust by providing them with the right platform according to their needs.

The study results highlighted the factors enforcing youth to use online matrimonial groups/sites for spouse seeking because of prompt services, information authenticity, easy navigation, confidentiality of information, and a vast pool of spouse seekers, etc., indicating that social media is being more adopted by the youth and to use these matrimony platforms in finding the proposal through any location of the country. Krishnan, Hemamala, & Krishnan (2022) also find that people prefer using an online matrimonial site over conventional ones because of characteristics such as simplicity of use, search, match, interaction, convenience, and website features, similar to the findings of the current study. Furthermore, users' happiness with online matrimony services can be increased with customized search and user-friendly websites to seek potential matches. Thus, online portals must guarantee they create a confidentiality strategy for their customers when they expose users' personal information because trust positively correlates with customer satisfaction. In the current study results, we found that the privacy policies of these groups are being administered strictly. The information is not disclosed to any unregistered person; females can post anonymously, and males and females can post their profiles without pictures. This means that privacy is maintained between the members of the groups, and that's the reason users' trust is being gained, similar to the findings of Bajnaid & Al-Saggaf (2017) and Pal (2011).

Conclusion

It is concluded that social media platforms are famous among youth, and they frequently use them as active members. The results show that the matrimonial groups have established a strong emergence among youth seeking spouses per their requirements. The study findings prove that these matrimonial groups are reliable, allow real-time interaction, make contact with prospective potential

users easy, and ensure privacy policies and strict information control for unregistered users. Whereas there is a need to improve search optimization tools and payment options against matrimonial services and to be an efficient service provider, the admins of matrimonial groups should respond to queries promptly. The study insights will be helpful for researchers, e-matrimonial companies, related stakeholders, and members of matrimonial websites. The scope of this study can be broadened by conducting this research in other southern regions or comparing countries that provide matrimonial services. A qualitative inquiry on the same topic can also be designed.

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Gender, Power, and the Politics of the 'Hijab' in *Hijabistan*

JHSS

125-143

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Vol. 32 (2), 2024

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze how patriarchy, like gender, is socially constructed through the perpetuation of patriarchal ideals. Using Sabyn Javeri's short story collection Hijabistan (2019), this research explores how patriarchal institutions like family, clergy, and culture instill patriarchal values in the minds of the people. The analysis also includes how the concept of 'hijab' is depicted as a symbol of societal norms and expectations that not only segregate genders but also limit their agency. Through content analysis and textual interpretations based on the theoretical frameworks from Kate Millett's Sexual Politics (1970) and Judith Butler's Gender Trouble (1990) the study tries to explore how patriarchy and gender performativity is used for gaining and sustaining power dynamics at home and in society. The research finds that 'hijab is one of the most powerful tool patriarchy uses to subjugate women however, the study also finds that Javeri has shown the sparks of resistance among females through her protagonists in the stories. The characters are shown opposing this concept of 'hijab' as a symbol of their servitude. This research aims to contribute to the understanding of how radical feminist discourses interact with sociocultural and religious beliefs in Pakistan, highlighting the implications for family structures, social norms, and individual well-being.

Keywords: Feminism, patriarchy, politics of hijab, self-identity, women emancipation

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Introduction:

Feminism is a profound and far-reaching struggle that pursues not only the liberation of women but also their self-determination in regards to their bodies, economic independence, life choices, sexual freedom, and emancipation from diverse forms of oppression. While recognizing patriarchy as the primary cause of women's discrimination and oppression, Radical feminists focus on the 'most intimate enemy at home' i.e. man (Butler, 1990). This study is grounded in radical feminist theory, which posits that patriarchy is the primary cause of women's oppression and discrimination (Millet, 1970). The concept of patriarchy is understood as a system of power and domination that perpetuates gender-based violence, discrimination, and oppression. The study also draws on Judith Butler's gender performativity theory, which argues that gender is not an inherent trait but rather a social construct performed through cultural and social norms (Butler, 1990). This theory is used to analyze how the 'hijab' is used as a tool of patriarchal control, perpetuating gender norms and expectations.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the development of radical feminist theory, providing an in-depth analysis of how patriarchy operates in Pakistani society and its impact on women's lives and experiences. By amplifying the voices and experiences of Pakistani women, this research provides a platform for their stories and perspectives to be heard, challenging dominant discourses that perpetuate gender-based oppression and discrimination. The study's findings have important implications for social change, highlighting the need for policies and interventions that address gender-based violence, discrimination, and oppression in Pakistan. Moreover, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex ways in which power operates to perpetuate gender-based oppression, shedding light on the ways in which cultural and social norms are used to control and regulate women's bodies and lives. Ultimately, this study has the potential to inform and shape feminist movements and initiatives in Pakistan and beyond, working towards a more just and equitable society for all.

Literature Review:

The Concept of Veiled Women in Literature

The idea of 'Veiled Woman' in literary traditions denotes a woman who is either actually or symbolically veiled, most often pointing at her oppression, repression, or limitation due to culture and religion. Such a picture usually occurs in works of fiction set in places where veiling is standard—in the countries of the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa. One of the most

common allegories in literature, with reference to patriarchal norms and values, is that the veil hides everything: the appearance, identity, thoughts, emotions, and desires of the woman. That could well symbolize the defying nature of the woman against such social norms and even an inner contradiction that she develops between the desires approved by society and her own.

Riaz (2012) contends that the veil has the potential to be used as a politically strategic tool, giving women the ability to block out male gaze and assert their own chastity. However, Riaz points out that within a community, patriarchal, feudal, and geographical factors have an impact on how the veil is perceived. While Mohanty (1988) criticizes Western discourse on the veil, contending that it tends to stereotype ‘Third World Women’ as a single, homogenous group, ignores historical and regional contexts, and disregards the discursive exploitation that is less obvious but no less important. The veil can be empowering for women in the Islamic context, according to Jadoon (2015). She points out that the veil gives a woman a private space where she is protected from male gaze and her family’s honor.

Aboulela’s novel *Minaret* (2005) portrays the veil as a metaphor for the Arab woman’s positive and negative experiences, representing the struggle to maintain religious faith in a non-Muslim or non-practicing Muslim environment; Al-Sudeary (2012) compares representations of the veil in the English works of comprador intellectuals with those found in Arab texts in order to come to an understanding of what these differences mean with respect to the power/knowledge dichotomy of modern-day oculacentric society. Whereas, Toossi (2015) examines the semiotic complexities of the Muslim veil as a defining feature of Muslim female subjectivity. The paper mentions the deployment of the veil by Mohja Kahf and Princess Hijab in ways that do not conform to familiar perceptions among Muslims and non-Muslims.

Furthermore, Ali (2021) discusses the concept of the veil in Islam as depicted in Randa A. Fattah’s novel *Does My Head Look Big in This?* (2006). The paper provides insights into the broader implications of the veil beyond just a piece of clothing, probing into its significance in the context of religious beliefs and societal norms. While, Zuhur (2022) asserts that hijab and niqab have become widely adopted by Cairene women, Egyptian women, and Muslim women worldwide. The paper also highlights the discourse on the veil in contemporary Cairo, suggesting ongoing discussions and debates surrounding its practice.

Riaz (2012) contends that the veil has the potential to be used as a politically strategic tool, giving women the ability to block out male gaze and assert their own chastity. However, Riaz points out that within a community, patriarchal, feudal, and geographical factors have an impact on how the veil is perceived. While Mohanty (1988) criticizes Western discourse on the veil, contending that it tends to stereotype 'Third World Women' as a single, homogenous group, ignores historical and regional contexts, and disregards the discursive exploitation that is less obvious but no less important.

Zuhur (2022) asserts that hijab and niqab have become widely adopted by Cairene women, Egyptian women, and Muslim women worldwide. The author claims that efforts have been made to discourage the niqab, with bans and rules against veiling in certain locations in contemporary Cairo, which resulted in a small unveiling movement, indicating a shift away from veiling. The paper also highlights the discourse on the veil in contemporary Cairo, suggesting ongoing discussions and debates surrounding its practice.

As such, the debate on the veil becomes an ongoing debate that is challenged and contested by different feminist and, indeed, Western perspectives. However, critical attention must be directed at the context and the many social variables dictating the experience of the women putting on the veil. This study, therefore, engages critically with the discursive exploitation determining our perception of the veil.

Female Autonomy in Islam and Literature

The issue of female autonomy in Islam has always been central debate, with literature analyzing it from any possible view, and especially from the radical feminist perspective. The radical feminists express that it is through the traditional, cultural, and religious norms by which women are oppressed, and their freedom is curtailed in many ways.

Arimbi (2009) focuses on the writings of the most prominent Indonesian Muslim women writers and their representation of gender in Indonesian Muslim culture. According to her, literature seemed to give women the ability to lay a claim over their own lives and establish their own perspectives. For Imtiaz and Haider (2011) the problem of violence is male dominance, and it ritualizes women's minds and bodies so that they can be oppressed further. They view this as the influence of gender equality and how women are being used in literature. Moreover, Anjum (2020), in her work, considers the phenomenon of women's activism and political engagement in modern Pakistan, particularly in Karachi, to properly learn how perspectives and experiences of women seem to reflect such notions of feminist ideology

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and nationalism. Her study includes interviews with women from both liberal and conservative organizations.

Anjum (2020), in her work, considers the phenomenon of women's activism and political engagement in modern Pakistan, particularly in Karachi, to properly learn how perspectives and experiences of women seem to reflect such notions of feminist ideology and nationalism. This paper focuses on intricate perspectives about the role of female independence in reference to Islam in Pakistan. According to Saeed and Leghari (2019) Islam assures the protection, respect, and dignity of a woman with her rights and freedom. The authors also emphasized the adverse consequences of radical feminist ideals such as the advocacy of open relations and gay and lesbian rights for women's rights and freedom. The authors criticize and condemn the west for drawing negative influences related to the status and respect of women, and the most destructive are its radical feminist's influences on the Islamic ideologies which are considered as a complete code of life offering salvation and mercy for mankind.

Radical feminist writings, in general, tend to provide a critical review of how traditional patriarchal norms in Islamic societies tend to hinder women from exercising their free will over their lives and making decisions pertaining to the lives of their own. The present research highlights how radical feminist ideals are considered applicable in Muslim cultures and what impact they can have on such societies.

Women's Representation in Pakistani English Fiction

One vital area that Pakistani women writers have touched on is the portrayal of women in fiction in their home country. Such writers believe that literature may also carry strength and authority to upset gender boundaries, even to rebel against the male-dominated society. They show the need for freeing and empowering women by presenting them as one form of exploitation and injustice toward women in Pakistani society. These writers depicted the lives of Pakistani women according to the norms of social, economic, and religious realms that depict traditional to modern expectations as restrictive (Siddiqi, 2016). Feminist writings have exemplified patriarchal resistance in Pakistani English literature. They have also highlighted female characters challenging and resisting the practices of patriarchal norms and values.

While referring to the detailed analysis of how Pakistani English writers portray women, Rida et al. (2022) elaborate on the kind of empowered women despite hailing from patriarchal backgrounds. Rida claims that writers like Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Saadat Hassaan Manto, Hina Faisal Imam, Zulfiqar Ghous, Mohsin Hamid, Muneeza Shamsi, Mohammed Hanif, and Bapsi Sidhwa, have enriched the Pakistani English literature with their service to the feminist cause and of movement by focusing on the effects of British Imperialism and also bringing forward new concepts related to women's rights. Furthermore, Nabi, U. R., Tabassum, M., & Akhter, S. (2022) studied the pejorative condition of Pakistani women in the light of two novels: *The Holy Woman* (2001) by Qaisra Shahraz and *Slum Child* (2010) by Bina Shah, examining both the communal and gendered subalternity of women and their struggle for selfhood in the male chauvinist society of Pakistan. This paper looks at the issues like dispossession of identity, lack of choice, and social standing disguised as honor.

For Fatima (2020) Pakistani society has a variety of customs, laws, and social norms, therefore, patriarchs from such a society take the opportunity and give themselves the mandate to oppress women with the religious customs and traditions as the reason to justify their dominance. Virginity of a woman is an honor in this society. Jalal (1991) further explains that women fall victim most of the time to the array of abuses that are given legitimacy by religious and customary laws. Tyson (2006) brings in the patriarchal power structure that gives the men the liberty to look into and rule the world and, at the same time, oppress women into objects.

Dar (2013) has given a feminist review of the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* (2000) by Bapsi Sidhwa, where he points out the subjugation and exploitation that women have to be exposed to in a patriarchal society; further, he points out the contrast between masculine discourse. In the majority of the cases, the women suffer pain and humiliation most of the time, while the men almost always use them to show their power and satisfy their egocentric tendencies. Likewise, Parveen and Qadir (2019) found that the selected short stories from Shahraz (2013) deviate from the conventional depiction of women and show women breaking free from societal norms. Even being tied down by traditions and norms, the female characters work unpretentiously to redesign their own selves in order to reach the threshold of emancipation and empowerment. Neerja (2020) has done a similar kind of study, following the depictions of women in Pakistani literature, more precisely in the novel *The Pakistani Bride* (2008) and *Water* (2006) by Bapsi Sidhwa. The author denoted the low place of women in Pakistani society and the barriers they encounter in their lives, induced by the patriarchal system. The paper underlines the significance of

women's self-emancipation and importance of making their decisions by themselves, without being dependent on others.

While extensive research exists on women's resistance to patriarchal norms in Pakistani literature, less attention has been given to exploring the intersections of gender, power, and the politics of the hijab in Pakistan. Although the hijab is a widely debated symbol both within and outside Muslim societies, few studies specifically address how it functions as a marker of autonomy, empowerment, or resistance in Pakistani society. Further research is needed to investigate how the hijab, as an element of women's identity, interacts with cultural, religious, and political dimensions within Pakistan. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the role of the hijab in relation to power dynamics, gender identity, and social politics in Pakistan, highlighting how it might serve as both a tool for empowerment and a site of contested meaning in the broader context of feminist discourse and cultural practices.

Discussion and Analysis

Patriarchy and the Politics of 'Hijab' in *Hijabistan*

According to Jorden and Hepworth (1995), women writers in Western prose fiction have a long history of presenting feminist ideas and articulating women's viewpoint, often in opposition to the dominant misogynistic voice of the novella tradition. Their contributions established a dialogical counterpoint that influenced the rise of novelistic discourse. However, similar efforts have been made recently by female authors in the Asian countries as well. For instance, in the short story collection, *Hijabistan*, the author depicts the protagonists' experiences along with the prevailing attitudes and behaviors to develop a deeper understanding of the exploitative nature of patriarchy and its detrimental impact on women's lives.

Millett, like her fellow radical feminists, challenges the notion of male dominance being biologically determined, contending instead that gender identities are shaped during early development through societal and parental constructions, "Because of our social circumstances, male and females are really two cultures, and their life experiences are totally different – and this is crucial" (*Sexual Politics*, 1970, p. 31). "The Urge" (*Hijabistan*, 2019) reflects similar ideology, an account of a young Pakistani girl's experience being forced to wear an 'abaya' and a headscarf as markers of her gender and devotion to Islam. Her family uses her 'hijab' requirement to control her body and limit her libido in an attempt to protect her virginity. Nonetheless, the story shows how this young girl starts exploring her sexual, physical, and

material urges in a very patriarchal environment. As she reaches the age of thirteen, she is made to wear an ‘abaya,’ which symbolises confinement and limitations on her mental, physical, and emotional development. However, the protagonist, who is very ambitious and sensual, gives in to her desires and continues to defy patriarchal boundaries by taking advantage of every available chance.

When her mother asks her to wear ‘abaya,’ she uses the terms like “dark garment” and “all-encompassing” for the garment, perpetuating hatred for the hijab (p. 13), which also indicates how women are exploited in the name of religious obligations, to which she is entitled right from her teenage. Furthermore, the author portrays the girl’s (protagonist’s) mother as a conduit for reinforcing patriarchal attitudes, as she considers it ‘fortunate’ for her daughter to be required to wear the ‘hijab and abaya’ (The head covering scarf and long gown to cover the body), thus emphasizing the notion of women’s inferiority to men and their requisite submissiveness. The following lines, for instance, from the protagonist’s mother indicate such philosophy:

‘You are lucky,’ Amma told me later that day. ‘Nowadays, girls in Pakistan get away with so much. In our days, it was a baggy shuttlecock burkha thrown over our heads, with just a few tiny holes to peer through. And then, before we could even learn to walk without tripping on them, we were packed off to the husband’s house. (The Urge, Hijabistan, 2019, p. 13)

The preceding dialogue highlights the gendered experiences and societal expectations that are entrenched within a patriarchal framework. Her portrayal of the ‘burkha’ is a powerful illustration of the physical and societal obstacles that have kept women from attaining complete independence and mobility. Likewise, the reference to young girls being sent off to live with their spouses is a criticism of the deeply ingrained patriarchal traditions and practices that have inhibited women’s independence and self-governance. When she marries, she experiences the gloomy reality of the romanticized notions (fancy cloths, jewelry, makeup, loving husband, etc.) around marriage, as she is forced by her husband to wear the headscarf, abaya, vest, leggings, and long shawl on top of several layers of clothing—even in the blazing heat—because her husband has strict control over her body. Furthermore, he confines her within their room, employing locked doors and obstructed windows and stairways to restrict her movements and prevent her from establishing communication other than her husband. Through the depiction of the husband’s deep-seated fear of the protagonist ‘flashing someone else’, the author exemplifies a sense of male entitlement and ownership over women’s

bodies, epitomizing the objectification and commodification of women within a patriarchal framework (p. 21). The story establishes Millett's view that the family, as the preeminent institution of patriarchy, not only mirrors but also perpetuates patriarchal structures within society, effectively establishing and regulating behavioural norms: "... expectations the culture cherishes about his gender identity encourage the young male to develop aggressive impulses, and the female to thwart her own or turn them inward" (*Sexual Politics*, 1970, p. 31).

The protagonist's mother, in her belief that the husband 'loves her too much' and wishes to shield her from the gaze of other men, perpetuates the notion that a woman's worth lies primarily in her physical appearance and reinforces the prioritization of men's desire over women's autonomy and agency (p. 21). This mindset also reflects Millett (1970) argument that the process of socialization, whereby individuals acquire learned behaviours, operates so effectively within the patriarchal system that the use of force is rendered largely unnecessary, as the story reflects how women themselves perpetuate the devaluation of women within patriarchal systems.

Furthermore, the description of the scene when the protagonist gives birth to a baby girl while being alone and locked up in her room in a pool of blood, and found at the last moments of her delivery by her husband, seem atrocious. The husband calls a midwife immediately seeing his wife in this condition. The midwife wraps the baby girl tightly in a piece of cloth and 'handed the parcel as if it was something repugnant' (p. 21); her comment is very significant at this moment as she says, "The first one doesn't matter, ... But the second-born must be a boy. Remember, a boy is a provider. A boy will bring you status. A girl is a liability" (p. 21). The midwife's (who herself is a woman) treatment of the newborn baby reflects a similar devaluation of female life. While her remark that 'the first one doesn't matter' and the emphasis on the importance of a male child over a female child reinforces the societal bias. Similarly, her remark that 'a girl is a liability' is a commentary on the deeply rooted patriarchal thought system that sees women as burdens or inferior to males. The continuance of violence and discrimination against women may be aided by this devaluing of girls and women.

The lines also highlight the gendered expectations and inequalities portrayed within Pakistani society. The perception that women are dependent on men for their worth and social position is perpetuated by the emphasis on the second-born child being a boy, who is considered as a provider and a source of status. This again is a stark criticism on marginalization of women and the gendered power gap.

Likewise, in “Radha” (*Hijabistan*, 2019), the author describes the situation of a female sex worker who is subjected to patriarchal tyranny. Radha, who comes from a close-knit family, has abandoned her pre-medical studies in order to support her family; when it comes to financing her education, Radha’s mother puts her boys’ academic goals ahead of her own, forcing her to work part-time jobs. The narrative in the story suggests that it is the patriarchal oppression that led Radha to choose a career in sex trade as she is forced into this field by an older model who serves as her mentor for her. According to Dworkin (1981) and Brownmiller (1975), women usually participate in sex work because of external pressures or uncontrolled circumstances rather than out of their own free will. Sex work is seen as an exploitative industry driven by patriarchal forces. As Walby (1990), claims that patriarchy is an unjust system that controls various aspects of women’s lives, including reproduction, sexuality, finances, labor, and respect. It is also reflected in the portrayal of Radha’s circumstances, in which her mother feels that a suitable marriage of her daughter will restore her social status and respect in society.

In “The Lovers,” another story from *Hijabistan*, the perpetuation of patriarchy by females who have been raised and restricted by patriarchal structures is starkly evident. The narrative follows a young girl living in London with her family, whose life is disrupted by the visit of her Pakistani aunt and her family. The aunt imposes her self-proclaimed pious ideals on the family, warning the mother to monitor her daughter’s behavior, lest she “run off with a foreigner.” The aunt’s solution is to enforce the girl to wear a headscarf, but when she is later discovered holding hands with a boy in a store, she is swiftly sent back to Pakistan. The aunt’s reaction, “Who knows what shame-vame she would have brought to the family’s honour?” (p. 51), reveals the superficiality and triviality of patriarchal ideals, which are often perpetuated by females themselves in such societies. This perpetuation suggests that living in strict patriarchal societies has stripped these women of their sense of self-identity, freedom, and assertion.

The story perpetuates the internalization of patriarchal values, as the Pakistani aunt enforces her niece to wear a headscarf, reinforcing the control over her body perpetuating gender stereotypes. The aunt’s concern about the family’s honor, defined by the girl’s chastity and modesty, highlights how patriarchy relies on the complicity of women in their own oppression. The narrative illustrates how women, like the aunt, collude in perpetuating patriarchal values, reinforcing the system’s power dynamics.

In “Coach Annie” from the collection *Hijabistan*, Javeri critiques the patriarchal norms that govern physical appearance, particularly the disparate standards for men and women. The protagonist, a young Pakistani girl living in Yorkshire, suffers from eczema that causes hair loss and facial scarring. Her mother, ashamed of her appearance, forces her to wear a headscarf to conceal her baldness, perpetuating the notion that female baldness is shameful and repugnant. The girl’s eczema and baldness make her a curiosity and nuisance to society, and a source of hatred for her family. Her mother’s insistence on hiding her baldness under a headscarf is presented as a symbol of the girl’s femininity and piety, even though she doesn’t regularly practice her prayers. This irony highlights the superficiality of societal beliefs, where physical appearance is prioritized over religious devotion. The author mocks how the headscarf, worn out of necessity, is touted as evidence of the girl’s religious devotion, exposing the flaws in our understanding of faith and identity. As Javeri (2019) writes:

She couldn’t gloat enough about how we were all going to heaven thanks to her virtuous daughter, how proud she was of me for wearing the hijab and embracing God’s will, of my big, big sacrifice. I usually stared blankly while she babbled away, wondering how slapping a piece of cloth on one’s head could guarantee free entry into the pearly gates. And why she didn’t wear one herself if it was, indeed, so special. (Coach Annie, *Hijabistan*, 2019 pp. 137-138)

This also highlights a common misconception among people - the belief that they will be granted paradise based on the good deeds of others. Many assume that a man is responsible for ensuring that the women and children in his family fulfill their religious obligations, and that mothers will be rewarded by God if their daughters are pious and obedient. However, this thinking is misguided and overlooks the importance of individual responsibility and personal accountability in one’s spiritual journey.

“Coach Annie” through the lens of Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1970), shows patriarchal control over women’s bodies, as the mother’s insistence on hiding the girl’s baldness under a headscarf reinforces societal beauty standards. This control is further underscored by the disparate gender roles and stereotypes presented, where male baldness is normalized, while female baldness is deemed shameful. The objectification of women is also apparent, as the girl’s value is tied to her physical appearance, perpetuating the notion that women’s bodies are sites of shame and control. Moreover, the narrative illustrates the internalization of patriarchal values, as the girl accepts her mother’s insistence on wearing a headscarf, validating her femininity.

Ultimately, the text exposes the superficiality of societal beliefs, highlighting the flaws in our understanding of faith, identity, and gender roles, thereby reinforcing Millett's arguments on the pervasive nature of patriarchy.

The story also comments on how patriarchy shapes women's relationships with their bodies, identities, and sense of self-worth, often leading to the internalization of oppressive norms and values. As the girl in "Coach Annie" feels, "...my hair never grew back. Instead, the hijab grew on me. It became an extension of me. A part of me. It kept me grounded. Reminded me that God was watching out for me. I was no longer just the odd-looking girl with the wrong skin, wrong colour, wrong hair. Instead, I was that Muslim girl" (p. 138). The hijab's transformation from a piece of clothing to an 'extension' of the protagonist's body highlights the ways in which women's bodies are sites of regulation and surveillance under patriarchy. Furthermore, the girl's internalization of constant divine surveillance and judgment underscores the pervasive nature of patriarchal norms that even manipulate religion as a means of subjecting women. The trade-off between individuality and a socially accepted label, as seen in the shift from 'the odd-looking girl' to 'that Muslim girl,' demonstrates how patriarchy shapes women's identities and sense of self-worth. Ultimately, her embrace of the hijab as a means to feel 'grounded' and accepted illustrates the insidious nature of patriarchal socialization, which often prioritizes religious and cultural identity over personal autonomy and agency.

Similarly, in the story titled, "The Girl Who Split in Two" (Hijabistan, 2019) the character of Abu Jihad is introduced in these words, "... I look up to see Abu Jihad's tall frame approaching. Two guns slung casually over his shoulders, he walks slowly, the crowd parting to let him pass. He is known for his ruthlessness." (p. 81). The main subject of this story is Abu Jihad, who is characterised as having a tall build and carrying two rifles over his shoulders. The usage of masculine pronouns and the mention of weapons are consistent with long-standing social norms that men should be physically strong. Abu Jihad's presence inspires respect and causes the crowd to part for him, illuminating the gendered presentation of authority and control.

Butler emphasises that gender is formed through social practices and performances rather than being purely determined by a person's outward appearance or biological traits (*Gender Trouble*, 1990). In this situation, Abu Jihad embodies the ideal of what it is to be a man, as seen by his tall stature and demeanour, among other manly characteristics (*Hijabistan*, 2019). Abu Jihad exemplifies the ideal of what it means to be a man in this scenario, as evidenced by his tall stature, temperament, and other macho traits. Another

example from the same story describes how women are commonly treated in our societies:

‘Subhan Allah,’ Abu Jihad strips me with his eyes as he praises to God. His pupils burn through my black niqab and set alight my toe-length abaya. I feel naked. He rubs his fleshy lower lip with his thumb and says, ‘Get closer, sister.’ Here, everyone is a sister or brother. The word is like the local currency – useful but of little value. (p. 82).

Abu Jihad is depicted in these lines as stripping the narrator with his eyes. In patriarchal countries, the male gaze is frequently associated with power dynamics, which emphasises how objectifying and intrusive it is. It illustrates how gendered expectations and conventions influence and how people perceive and relate to one another. In addition, Abu Jihad’s usage of the pronoun ‘sister’; to refer to the narrator and other people in the van emphasises how gender is socially constructed and how language shapes gender identities and relationships (p. 82). The phrase ‘sister’ is compared to local money, implying that while it is widely accepted and utilised, its value has decreased. This can be seen as an illustration of how gendered terminology and identities can confine people to predetermined roles and relationships. As Butler asserts, “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (p. 25).

In the same story when Abu Jihad tries to bully a young French boy who is also travelling in this van, he calls the boy ‘Lucy’. He says, “‘So Brother Lucy, you kill a man yet? No? You start with chickens.’ The passengers snicker. Liam turns a deep shade of red. ‘No guts, huh, Lucy boy?’” (p. 83). By claiming that Liam resembles Lucy, a name generally associated with femininity, Abu Jihad casts doubt on Liam’s manhood. Abu Jihad attacks Liam’s gender identity to establish his supremacy over him. Liam is made fun of by Abu Jihad when he suggests killing a man and starting with chickens, suggesting that using violence and acting aggressively are necessary for establishing one’s manhood. The snickering of the other passengers and Liam’s embarrassed response serve to further enforce traditional gender standards and the pressure to uphold preconceived ideals of masculinity.

In the eleventh story titled, “The Malady of the Heart”, (*Hijabistan*, 2019), Javeri depicts the power dynamics and gendered expectations that exist within the institution of marriage. In this story the protagonist wants a divorce from her husband because she feels she does not love him, her mother tries to counsel her, “Twenty-five years have I been married to your father. Never

thought of leaving. Not even the times when he left me.’ ... ‘He always came back. Men always do.’ (p. 96). The mother’s statement reflects a societal expectation that women should persevere and stay faithful to their marriages despite abandonment or abuse. Despite his departure, she claims that she never thought about leaving her husband, which suggests that she has accepted the relationship’s unequal power dynamics. Men are considered to be free to leave and return at any time, and the statement ‘Men always do’ supports this idea of male privilege and entitlement in partnerships. This claim is in line with Butler’s criticism of gendered norms and expectations that uphold traditional gender roles and promote uneven power relations (1990). The mother’s conviction that men would eventually return serves to further reinforce the belief that wives should wait for and accept their husbands’ decisions, regardless of how they behave. This illustrates how gender roles are established and how society pressurizes women to put the stability of marriage before their well-being.

In another instance, the protagonist struggles to break free from societal expectations and norms associated with gender roles:

All I knew was that I was no longer the Zara who grew up on a steady diet of fear. Fear Allah. He is watching you. Fear the society – people will talk. Keep your mouth shut – even the walls have ears. ‘I want to leave my husband,’ I said, silencing the voices in my head. (p. 100)

This picture shows how femininity is constructed in society to be defined by adherence to social norms and religious observance. The narrator’s admission of her metamorphosis and self-doubt emphasises the influence of social constructs of gender on one’s self-perception. The narrator’s internalization of limiting signals, such as social gossip and the fear of religious obligations, demonstrate the pervasive influence of gendered norms and expectations on women’s behavior and decision-making. Her pronouncement, ‘I want to leave my husband,’ expresses her desire to break free from the constraints of a typical gender role within marriage and assert her autonomy (p. 100). This claim contests the gender-specific expectations and roles that patriarchal societies place on women.

Conclusion

These stories offer a powerful indictment of patriarchy and its perpetuation of gender-based oppression and discrimination. Through their

exploration of the ways in which patriarchy operates, these stories offer a crucial feminist critique of dominant discourses and power structures. Through a meticulous analysis of the text using the lenses of patriarchy and gender as a social construct, the analysis demonstrated how these pivotal radical feminist concepts are woven into the fabric of this literary work. One of the prominent themes highlighted is the patriarchal control exerted over women's bodies, evident through restrictions on clothing choices and limitations on movement enforced by family members, husbands, and clients in the case of sex workers. The stories depict that gendered inequalities and expectations, prioritize men's desires over women's autonomy and agency. Women are often depicted as commodities, objectified for men's pleasure or labor, which reinforces patriarchal ideals and marginalizes them in various aspects of society. The narratives also depict instances of resistance and challenges to patriarchal norms. Javeri shows the struggle, protagonists make initially to survive in suffocating environment, although ultimately succumbing to the patriarchal control. In all her stories in *Hijabistan*, Javeri depicts the struggle, these women make to assert their self-identity and autonomy against all odds. Although none of them is shown achieving any success at the end, but it seems like Javeri has tried to show a beacon of hope in their resistance to deeply ingrained patriarchal control.

The psychological implications in *Hijabistan* as depicted by the author are profound, with a significant impact on identity, self-worth, fear, and anxiety among women. The enforced wearing of the hijab, as portrayed in "The Urge, The Lovers, and Coach Annie" denotes a broader societal control that distorts women's sense of individuality and autonomy, leading to a loss of self-worth. This is compounded by internalized misogyny, where women, such as mothers and aunts, perpetuate patriarchal norms, creating psychological barriers to recognizing or resisting systemic discrimination. Additionally, the extreme actions of characters, by reflecting deep psychological trauma and hopelessness from sustained abuse, the author underscores the need for mental health support and recognition of the psychological dimensions of gender-based violence. Likewise, the clergy and religious ideologies are depicted in the stories as a perpetuator of patriarchy resonating the ideas of a male god who is completely unconcerned about the plight of women and positing that religion is one of the biggest contributors to the oppression of women, as expressed by Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970). Characters like the uncle in "The Urge", or the spiritual healer in "Melody of the Heart" or Abu Jihad in "The Girl Who Split into Two" all reflect the depiction of God as exclusively male reinforcing gender hierarchies, marginalizing women and excluding them from divine representation and authority. Characters navigate their religious beliefs

alongside societal expectations and personal desires, highlighting the complexities of reconciling religious faith with individual autonomy.

The findings have illuminated a more unique dimension of the subject matter, vividly portraying both the struggles and resilience of individuals, while simultaneously questioning the deeply ingrained cultural and religious principles that define the essence of the Pakistani ethos. The analysis foregrounds the double function of the anthology as both a feminist discourse campaigner and a prospective challenge to the central values in Pakistani society. *Hijabistan* provocatively deals with the issues such as sexual independence, the demolishing of societal and religious taboos, and the deconstruction of traditional family and gender roles.

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Profile of Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi's (TNSM's) Combatants in Post-9/11 Afghanistan: A Socio-Demographic Analysis

JHSS
145-159
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Vol. 32 (2), 2024

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Abstract

This study examines the profiles of combatants who participated in the post-9/11 Afghan 'jihad' from Dir, Pakistan and explores the associated psychological and economic conditions affecting their families. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through unstructured interviews and analyzed thematically. The research includes detailed tables profiling combatants based on age, education, sect affiliation, and family structure. Key findings reveal that a majority of combatants were illiterate, unemployed, and affiliated with the Deobandi sect. The study also highlights that most combatants' families remain uncertain about their loved ones' status, leading to unresolved grief and psychological distress. Additionally, the research provides insights into the economic hardships faced by the families, such as high unemployment rates and large family sizes. This comprehensive profiling of combatants, coupled with the examination of family conditions, offers valuable insights into the socio-economic and psychological dimensions of the post-9/11 Afghan Jihad's impact on the local population.

Keywords: US invasion, Afghan Jihad, TNSM, combatants, profiles, impact, Dir

Introduction:

The prolonged conflict and instability in Afghanistan following the U.S. invasion in 2001 had significant regional implications, with particularly adverse effects on Pakistan. The war in neighboring Afghanistan led to

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widespread destruction in Pakistan by stunting economic growth, disrupting the social fabric, and exerting political pressures. Beyond the direct impacts of radicalization and religious extremism, the conflict and subsequent terrorist attacks on Pakistani civilians have caused extensive human suffering. The decades-long war has not only inflicted severe hardship and poverty on Afghans but also adversely affected the living conditions of people in Pakistan, especially those residing near the Pak-Afghan border (Rabi, 2012). Importantly, the war contributed to the reactivation of dormant Jihadi organizations such as Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM), which mobilized thousands of combatants to fight alongside the Taliban against U.S.-led NATO forces in Afghanistan in 2001 (Dawn, October 28, 2001).

Following the U.S.-led NATO invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the leadership of TNSM organized protests and staged demonstrations in Dir and various other parts of the Malakand Division. On these occasions, TNSM leader Sufi Muhammad delivered incendiary speeches to incite public sentiment in favor of 'Jihad.' He appealed to the tribesmen to fulfill what he framed as a religious duty by joining the Taliban in their fight against the USA (Chawla, 2019).

As a result, thousands of tribesmen from Dir and other districts of the Malakand Division were mobilized for 'Jihad' against U.S. forces (Burke, 2001). Although the exact number of TNSM fighters is unclear, estimates suggest that between 10,000 and 30,000 activists crossed into Afghanistan. According to the TNSM spokesperson, the number was closer to 30,000, while other sources place it around 10,000. On October 27, 2001, a convoy of TNSM volunteers, led by Sufi Muhammad and consisting of over 300 vehicles—including buses, pick-up trucks, and cars—departed from the TNSM headquarters in Maidan, Lower Dir, en route to Bajaur Agency to cross into Afghanistan. The volunteers were armed with a variety of weapons, including swords, Kalashnikovs, rocket launchers, missiles, hand grenades, and anti-aircraft guns (Dawn, 2001). TNSM spokesman Qazi Ihsanullah warned, "We will resist if the authorities try to stop us. The Jihad (Holy war) will start here." Consequently, the government did not intervene and allowed the convoy to proceed to Bajaur. The caravan set up camp in Laghary, a village in Bajaur located only eight kilometers from the Afghan border, with plans to cross into Afghanistan the following day (Rahmanullah, 2012).

Given the lack of adequate resources such as weapons and food supplies, the Taliban leadership instructed TNSM activists to wait for a signal from Mullah Muhammad Omar before crossing into Afghanistan. However, the TNSM leadership decided to proceed independently, asserting that they would not rely on the Taliban as they possessed the necessary food and essential items.

They stated their intention to serve as a reserve force in Afghanistan (Toru, 2005).

On October 28, 2001, a convoy of combatants comprising 100 vehicles, led by Dr. Ismail, crossed into Afghanistan. Upon arrival, they were received by Taliban officials and escorted to Asadabad, the capital of Kunar province. The remaining combatants crossed the border in smaller groups. While the majority of the fighters entered Afghanistan through Bajaur, approximately 1,200 crossed via passes in Upper Dir (Dawn, 2001).

Upon reaching Afghanistan, the TNSM combatants received some training in Asadabad and Jalalabad before being deployed by the Taliban leadership to various battlefronts. Approximately 1,000 TNSM fighters were sent to Mazar-i-Sharif to join the Taliban in combat against the Northern Alliance (NA). Additionally, hundreds of TNSM combatants were deployed in southern Afghanistan, particularly in Kandahar, while the remaining forces were positioned as reinforcements on various fronts, including the northern province of Kunduz (Thomas, 2013).

Despite the ground efforts by the Taliban and their allies, including TNSM, they were unable to withstand the heavy air strikes from U.S. aircraft, which ultimately led to the collapse of the Taliban regime on December 7, 2001. After the fall of their government, the Taliban, well-acquainted with warfare and harsh conditions, swiftly retreated along shorter routes to the border areas with Pakistan, where they sought refuge with sympathetic local tribes (Thomas, 2013).

The TNSM combatants faced significant challenges due to their lack of experience, insufficient geographical knowledge, and inadequate ammunition. In several instances, combatants attempted to surrender but were either killed in U.S. air strikes or captured by NA forces. Among the 1,000 TNSM fighters deployed in Mazar-i-Sharif, only a few survived; the majority perished in air strikes on an abandoned school building known as Sultan Razia Girls' School, where they had taken shelter (Struck, 2001). According to a senior ethnic Pashtun commander, approximately 160 TNSM combatants were executed in southern Afghanistan on November 28, 2001. Many others were killed in Kunduz while fighting against NA forces. Subsequently, on November 16, 2001, the NA forces admitted to killing more than 600 TNSM fighters across various parts of Afghanistan. Those combatants captured alive were imprisoned in private sub-jails, and a few were handed over to their families in Pakistan in exchange for large ransom payments (Ayaz, 2003). Additionally, some TNSM fighters were handed over to U.S. forces and sent to Guantanamo Bay prison. Many others have been detained in various jails in Afghanistan,

and about 3,000 have gone missing, with no information available about their location or status (dead or alive) in Afghanistan (ICRC, 2002).

For the past two decades, the families of these combatants have made relentless efforts to locate their missing relatives, repeatedly appealing to relevant authorities but with little success. Despite their persistent attempts, including petitions to the government of Pakistan and other concerned bodies, their efforts have largely been in vain, leaving them without answers about the fate of their loved ones. For a long time, these families remained hopeful that their loved ones would eventually return from Afghanistan and rejoin them (Izharullah, 2015).

The following tables provide profiles of the combatants and detail the psychological issues their close family members have been enduring for an extended period.

General Profile and Analyses of the Combatants' Lives Before Going to Afghanistan:

The following tables provide an overview of the combatants' backgrounds, with a particular focus on variables such as age, profession, education, political affiliation, religious beliefs, and family size. This data facilitates the identification of shared characteristics and underlying factors that influenced these individuals to engage in 'Jihad' in Afghanistan. The analysis of these variables aims to shed light on the socio-economic and ideological contexts that contributed to their participation in the conflict.

0.1 Age					
Age group		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-30 years	6	24.0	24.0	24.0
	31-40 Years	5	20.0	20.0	44.0
	41-50 Years	3	12.0	12.0	56.0
	Above 50 Years	11	44.0	44.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table indicates that the largest proportion (44%) of combatants were over the age of fifty. This high prevalence of Jihad participation among older individuals can be attributed to their perception of Jihad as a religious obligation, which aligns with the broader phenomenon of heightened religious commitment observed among elderly individuals due to increasing existential

insecurity with age (Pew Research Centre, 2018). Additionally, this trend may be linked to the combatants' previous experiences of Jihad during the 1980s against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, as suggested by interviews with some respondents (fathers of the combatants), who referenced their past involvement in the conflict against the Soviet forces.

Another contributing factor was the leadership of Sufi Muhammad, a veteran of the Afghan Jihad who had previously led numerous contingents of Jihadis from Dir. Despite the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR in 1991, which brought about significant changes in global politics—such as the end of the Cold War, the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower, and a major shift in international relations—Sufi Muhammad disregarded these altered geopolitical realities (Friedman, 2013). He once again personally visited various parts of the Malakand Division, urging tribesmen to participate in Jihad against U.S.-led NATO forces in Afghanistan. Due to their prior trust and confidence in Sufi Muhammad, many tribesmen from the area responded positively and accompanied him to Afghanistan.

The next age group with a significant number of combatants (24%) was between 18 and 30 years old. The participation of youth in Jihad can be attributed to their susceptibility to the influence of religious clerics who used Jihadi sermons and militant rhetoric to incite them. This exploitation of their emotional vulnerabilities is evident in instances where many combatants in this age group joined the TNSM caravan impulsively, often without informing their elders. Conversely, the number of combatants in the 30-50 age group was lower, likely due to their greater emotional stability and resistance to being easily persuaded to join the conflict.

0.2 Education					
Qualification		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under Matric	7	28.0	28.0	28.0
	Intermediate	1	4.0	4.0	32.0
	Illiterate	17	68.0	68.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table presents the educational qualifications of the combatants, revealing that the majority (68%) were illiterate, while only 28% had education below the matriculation level. The data demonstrates an inverse relationship between educational attainment and participation in Afghan Jihad; as educational qualifications increase, the proportion of individuals joining the conflict

decreases, and vice versa. This trend underscores the influence of education on cognitive processes, highlighting how illiterate individuals, lacking the ability to critically assess the arguments of religious leaders, are more susceptible to their rhetoric.

Furthermore, the data points to illiteracy as a significant contributing factor to terrorism and militancy, not only in Dir but across Pakistan (Anwar, 2017). Unfortunately, illiteracy has been exploited by various factions within society for their vested interests. Individuals lacking education are more likely to accept and believe, without question, what is presented to them in the guise of religion by their religious leaders. This exploitation underscores the broader societal implications of illiteracy in providing environments conducive to extremism and radicalization.

1.2 Political Affiliation					
Political Affiliation		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ji	20	80.0	80.0	80.0
	ANP	3	12.0	12.0	92.0
	PPP	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

The table illustrates that the majority of combatants (80%) were affiliated with Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP), while only 12% and 8% were associated with the Awami National Party (ANP) and Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), respectively. The high prevalence of Jihad participation among combatants affiliated with JIP can be linked to the party's prominent role in supporting the Afghan Jihad during the 1980s. Jamaat-e-Islami, aligned ideologically with General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq—a military dictator and President of Pakistan from 1977 until his death in 1988—actively supported his Afghan policy. The party employed various methods to promote the Afghan Jihad within Pakistan, particularly in the tribal regions (Ahmad, 2012).

To galvanize support for Jihad, JIP's religious clerics delivered pro-Jihad sermons in mosques, trained individuals across the country, and consistently published and distributed Jihadi literature to attract the masses. Additionally, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan was framed as an act of aggression by 'infidels' against Islam, thereby urging people, in the name of Islam, to participate in Jihad against the Soviet forces (Ahmad, 2012).

Maulana Sufi Muhammad, the founder of TNSM, had previously served as the district *Amir* of JIP in Dir on two occasions. Like Sufi Muhammad, who eventually left JIP by denouncing the democratic and electoral processes in Pakistan as contrary to Sharia, many of his followers followed suit. The

consistent electoral successes of JIP in Dir over the decades can be attributed to the groundwork laid by the party throughout those years (Sultan-i-Rome, 2012).

0.9 Religious Education					
Religious Education		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	25	100.0	100.0	100.0

Surprisingly, all combatants (100%) had never attended any religious seminary and lacked a clear understanding of the religion for which they were purportedly fighting. This superficial grasp of religious tenets was subsequently exploited by religious clerics. As a result, these individuals were initially mobilized to Afghanistan under the guise of religious duty and later persuaded to combat Pakistani security forces during Operation Black Thunder Storm in 2009 (Afridi, 2016).

The table underscores that the lack of education was a primary factor leading many individuals from the area to join militant organizations. Furthermore, it highlights how religious and political leaders in the region have long exploited this illiteracy to further their own agendas.

1.1 Religious Sect					
Religious Sect		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Deoband	22	88.0	88.0	88.0
	Ahli-Hadees	3	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

The table reveals that the majority of combatants (88%) adhered to the Deobandi sect, while only 12% were affiliated with the Ahli-Hadees sect of Islam. The Deobandi movement originated in the late 19th century as a response to British colonial rule in India. Its popularity and expansion in the region can be traced to the involvement of leaders from the then North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in the Ulema's struggle against British rule. The sect gained further prominence with the establishment of numerous Madrasas across the erstwhile NWFP, including Dir, during the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s (Roy, 2002).

During the same period, Saudi Arabia funded several Ahli-Hadees mosques and Madrasas in the area, yet the number of Deobandi followers remained significantly higher than their Ahli-Hadees counterparts in the region. Sufi Muhammad, the leader of TNSM, also belonged to the Deobandi sect (Haroon, 2008).

0.3 Profession					
Employment		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unemployed	15	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Foreign Employment	4	16.0	16.0	76.0
	Labourer	4	16.0	16.0	92.0
	Others	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Education is a critical determinant of both individual and national economic stability (Ozturk, 2008). The table indicates a high correlation between illiteracy and unemployment, with both metrics showing similar percentages (68% illiteracy and 60% unemployment). The high rate of unemployment among combatants, standing at 60%, created a fertile environment for recruitment into terrorism and militancy. This significant pool of unemployed individuals in Dir provided militant groups with a substantial reservoir of potential recruits for their operations.

0.4 Marital Status					
Marital Status		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	23	92.0	92.0	92.0
	Unmarried	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

The table shows that a significant majority of combatants (92%) were married. This high rate of marriage is intertwined with the previously discussed factors, including illiteracy and economic hardship. Despite the purported motivation for fighting against the U.S.-led NATO forces in Afghanistan being framed as Jihad, many of these individuals, upon returning to their home country, subsequently took up arms against their fellow Muslims under the guise of religion. Consequently, it can be concluded that the primary drivers for joining TNSM and similar groups in Dir were a combination of illiteracy, poor economic conditions, and religious fervor.

0.5 No. of Spouse					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	One	20	80.0	80.0	80.0
	Two	3	12.0	12.0	92.0
	Un-married	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

The table indicates that the majority of combatants (80%) were monogamous, whereas only 12% were bigamous. Despite polygamy being a prevalent practice in tribal areas, the high proportion of combatants with only one wife can be attributed to their poor financial status. The economic constraints faced by these individuals likely limited their ability to support multiple spouses, thereby influencing their marital practices.

0.6 Total Children					
Number of Children		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-3 Children	3	12.0	12.0	12.0
	4-6 Children	10	40.0	40.0	52.0
	Above 6 Children	9	36.0	36.0	88.0
	Married but No children	1	4.0	4.0	92.0
	Unmarried	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Education plays a crucial role in reducing birth rates by raising awareness among the populace. Research indicates that both lack of education and unemployment contribute to overpopulation, as unemployed individuals often spend more time with their families. Furthermore, low educational attainment is a significant driver of overpopulation, as uneducated individuals may believe that having more children will enhance family income through increased labor (Murray, 2015). This perspective overlooks the potential benefits of investing in the education and well-being of fewer children, who may become more professionally successful and contribute more to the family's economic prosperity.

The table reflects the impact of inadequate education and unemployment on family size, showing that 40% of combatants had between 4 and 6 children, while 36% had more than 6 children (Khan, 2013). These factors—combined with a mindset favoring larger families—rendered combatants particularly susceptible to recruitment by militant organizations. The involvement of these individuals in militant activities might have been mitigated if the government had provided better educational and economic opportunities (Terwase, 2018).

0.7 No. of Male Children					
No. of Male Child		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-3 Sons	10	40.0	40.0	40.0
	4-6 sons	10	40.0	40.0	80.0
	Above 6 sons	2	8.0	8.0	88.0
	Married but no Children	1	4.0	4.0	92.0
	Unmarried	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

The table reveals that a significant proportion of combatants (40%) had 1 to 3 male children, while an equal percentage (40%) had 4 to 6 male children. Many of these surviving children are now young men in their twenties who face a range of social and economic challenges. This demographic of young men requires targeted intervention and support from the government to address their needs and integrate them as responsible citizens. Without such support, there is a risk that these individuals may become vulnerable to recruitment by militant organizations, similar to their parents.

0.8 No. of Female Children					
No. of Female Children		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-4 Daughters	17	68.0	70.8	70.8
	4-6 Daughters	2	8.0	8.3	79.2
	Married but no children	1	4.0	4.2	83.3
	No female children	2	8.0	8.3	91.7
	Unmarried	2	8.0	8.3	100.0
	Total	24	96.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.0		
Total		25	100.0		

The table indicates that the majority of combatants (68%) had between 1 and 4 daughters. The number of female children is notably fewer compared to their male counterparts. Within these families, female children are particularly vulnerable. As daughters of combatants, they are often required to observe strict *parda* (veil) and remain largely confined to their homes. In adherence to family honor, early marriages for these daughters are frequently arranged.

1.3 Certainty Regarding the Death of the Relatives in Afghanistan					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	28.0	28.0	28.0
	No	18	72.0	72.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

The majority of respondents (72%) were uncertain about the fate of their family members in Afghanistan at the time of the interview. Only 28% reported having been informed of the death of their relatives by TNSM, though they remained skeptical about the accuracy of this information. Many families expressed continued hope for the return of their loved ones from Afghanistan, despite the passage of two decades.

This uncertainty about the combatants' deaths has impeded the closure of grief for their families. The persistent hope for their return underscores the ongoing rawness of their sorrow. For instance, some respondents described instances where female relatives, such as mothers and wives, would experience sudden feelings of suffocation at night and begin speaking about the missing combatants. The enduring social and economic hardships faced by these families have led to significant psychological distress (Menhas, 2019).

Several respondents recounted the plight of widows suffering from psychological disorders, who have been using anti-depressants to manage episodes of anxiety and depression brought on by prolonged mourning (Wakalat, 2019).

1.4 Source of News					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	TNSM	7	28.0	28.0	28.0
	Don't Know	18	72.0	72.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Linking the information from the table with the preceding details provides a deeper understanding of the emotional impact on the combatants' families. The table reveals that a significant majority (72%) of the families were uncertain about the fate of their relatives in Afghanistan. This uncertainty has profoundly affected their ability to achieve closure and has perpetuated a state of unresolved grief.

The lack of definitive information about the deaths of their family members has left many families in a state of suspended mourning, with ongoing hope for their return despite the passage of two decades. This continued uncertainty

exacerbates their psychological distress, contributing to issues such as anxiety and depression, as reported by respondents (Menhas, 2019; Wakalat, 2019). By correlating these findings with the previous data, it becomes evident that the persistent ambiguity surrounding the combatants' fates significantly influences the emotional and psychological well-being of their families.

1.5 Information Received About his Death					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Information received in Less than 1 Year	4	16.0	16.0	16.0
	Information received in 2-5 years	3	12.0	12.0	28.0
	No information received up-till now	18	72.0	72.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

The last three tables are interconnected and provide a clear picture when analyzed together. They show that 72% of families still lack definitive information about their relatives who went to Afghanistan in 2001. This ongoing uncertainty has contributed to unresolved grief and significant psychological distress. The data highlights how the lack of clarity regarding the combatants' fates has exacerbated emotional suffering and psychological issues, as noted in respondents' experiences of anxiety and depression (Menhas, 2019; Wakalat, 2019).

Conclusion:

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the profiles of combatants from Dir who participated in the Afghan Jihad post-9/11 and the subsequent socio-economic and psychological impact on their families. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of combatants were older, illiterate, and unemployed, with a predominant affiliation to the Deobandi sect and connections to political parties like Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan. The lack of formal education and economic opportunities made these individuals highly susceptible to militant recruitment, as they were easily influenced by religious rhetoric and promises of fulfilling religious duties through Jihad.

The study also highlights the profound and ongoing psychological trauma experienced by the families of combatants, mainly due to the uncertainty surrounding the fate of their relatives who went missing in Afghanistan. Many families continue to grapple with the grief of loss without closure, leading to severe psychological issues such as anxiety and depression among the widows and other close relatives. The results underscore the need for targeted

interventions, including education, economic support, and mental health services, to prevent future generations from falling into similar paths and to support the families still coping with the long-term consequences of the conflict.

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Original Article

U.S.-China Strategic Competition: Conventional Deterrence & the Changing Face of Modern Warfare

JHSS

161-183

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Vol. 32 (2), 2024

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Abstract

This paper explores the future prospects of conventional deterrence in the context of the United States and China's rapidly advancing military technology, focusing on artificial intelligence (AI). As global technological advancements accelerate, modern warfare is increasingly characterized by deploying sophisticated tools such as AI, transforming military capabilities across multiple domains. Technologies like AI, demonstrated by long-operating Mars rovers like Spirit and Opportunity, showcase machines growing abilities to learn, plan, and make decisions autonomously, paralleling human intelligence. The study adopts critical analysis to describe the dynamics of modern warfare between the US and China. AI's integration into military operations raises questions concerning national security, command structures, and global stability. Yet, the strategic competition between the US and China shapes conventional deterrence in multifaceted spheres. Recent conflicts, such as the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, underscore the profound impact of AI-driven tools, including drones, satellites, and cyber technologies, on contemporary military strategy. By examining these developments, this paper aims to highlight the implications of AI and emerging technologies for conventional deterrence strategies, providing insights into the evolving contours of security and power in the 21st century.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Conventional Deterrence, UAV, China, U.S.

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Introduction

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and related advanced technologies is reshaping global power structures and introducing profound changes to military strategy and capabilities. As the United States and China engage in a complex rivalry, their conventional deterrence strategies (Michaels, 2024) are increasingly influenced by technological advancements that have far-reaching implications for global security. This paper examines the evolving nature of conventional deterrence within this geopolitical context, focusing on how innovations in AI and other technologies are transforming military power and international relations.

In recent years, the rapid development of AI has allowed machines to perform tasks that require human-like intelligence, such as learning, planning, and decision-making. AI technologies—exemplified by systems like the Mars rovers, Spirit, and Opportunity—illustrate the significant strides in autonomous capabilities. The adoption of AI in military contexts signals a shift towards highly automated warfare, where tools like drones, satellites, and cyber operations are redefining how conflicts are conducted. For instance, the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation highlights the transformative role of advanced technologies in modern warfare, as both sides utilize drones, satellite-based intelligence, and cyber operations as critical elements of their strategies.

The implications of AI's integration into military frameworks are significant. While AI promises enhanced efficiency, innovation, and operational effectiveness, it also raises pressing questions about the stability of command structures, national security, and the ethics of autonomous warfare. Leaders such as Russia's President Vladimir Putin have underscored the strategic importance of AI, suggesting that it may fundamentally alter global power dynamics and reshape future warfare.

This paper aims to analyze these developments by exploring the future of conventional deterrence between the U.S. and China amid these technological shifts. The methodological approach of the study is qualitative, and the research design is descriptive, which explains the dynamics of new warfare. Although the study applies critical analysis to review the existing literature, the last part of the paper applies comparative analysis to examine the current military capabilities of both states. By examining current trends, potential challenges, and emerging capabilities, this study seeks to understand how AI and advanced technologies will influence the balance of power and international security structure in the coming decades.

What Makes U.S. Conventional Military Power Stand Out

As a major world power, the United States has a wide range of foreign interests, which makes it necessary for the military to be prepared to defend the nation and protect national interests everywhere. With its many allies, reliance on international trade, and ongoing threats from powerful rivals looking to erode its influence in strategic areas, the United States cannot afford to focus on any one region or particular threat. Thus, in order to safeguard the freedom to utilize the global commons sea, air, space, and cyberspace that are essential to the American economy and political influence, the U.S. military has to be suitably big, armed, and ready. But as earlier iterations of the Index of U.S. Military Strength have made clear, the U.S. military is not adequately equipped to carry out its duties and is incapable of managing several Major Regional Contingencies (MRCs). Over the last two to three years, things have become worse.

The United States encounters increasing obstacles from significant rivals like China and Russia, in addition to the destabilizing influence of terrorist and rebel factions in critical areas. The continued conflict and Russia's massive invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 demonstrate that warfare is still a problem in today's world, impacting China's ambitious military build-up and its threats against Japan and other allies of the United States in the Indo-Pacific. Though development varies, nations like Poland, Germany, Lithuania, and Japan have acknowledged these challenges and are dedicated to strengthening their military capabilities. In contrast, the United States has not made a similar commitment, and as a result of inflation eating away at its spending, its military might have shrunk even more (The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2022).

From Munitions to Target Model

During the Cold War, the United States assessed its military requirements in relation to the Soviet threat using a symmetrical correlation of forces technique. To ascertain the needs of the fleet, army, and air force, planners directly compared tanks, planes, and ships with their Soviet counterparts. These comparisons have become more difficult since the late 1980s due to developments in guided precision bombs and surveillance technologies. As demonstrated by wars such as Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine, modern fighting now centers on munitions-versus-target instead of platform-versus-platform. By reducing the quantity of ammunition required, precision weapons raise operational lethality and complicate contemporary warfare (Waseem & Jamil, 2023).

Due to the widespread use of precision-guided munitions, the number of *smart munitions* that the opponent has must be taken into account when calculating the number of platforms and soldiers needed for battle. Unmanned systems introduce additional intricacy. Precision and technology advancements make it possible to be more effective with fewer resources, but they also increase the cost of deploying such weapons (Haddal & Hayden, 2018).

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

Precision and stealth weapons are examples of technological advances that enable smaller forces to have a greater impact. Contemporary U.S. military assets, including computers, telecommunications, space-based systems, and networked operations, increase combat effectiveness. However, as seen in Ukraine, certain military tasks, such as seizing and protecting land, still require a sizable labor force. Each element makes up a higher percentage of the total battle power when the troops are fewer. Sustaining high-intensity operations can be negatively impacted by casualties or equipment losses, particularly when numerous theatres are involved.

Future battles may be decided more by the skill and operational ability of the opposing forces than by differences in technology as sophisticated technology becomes more widely available and inexpensive. Capacity and preparedness will thus be essential. Because of the complexity and potential for bias in defense plan evaluations, budget submissions, and leadership comments, evaluating America's military might take careful consideration. Reliance on perhaps edited or restricted documents is inevitable in the absence of such assessments.

The U.S. Joint Force and the Strategy of Modern Warfare

This section of the study assesses America's defense strategy with regard to conventional hard power, which is the capacity of the American military to confront and subdue adversaries on a scale commensurate with critical national interests. Certain elements, like necessary strength, opponent expertise, political will, and speed—can be measured, while others—like future military requirements, range, detection likelihood, and radar cross-section, remain subjective and require judgment and experience. Our evaluation combines quantitative and qualitative elements and is based on an in-depth analysis of military and outside knowledge. Effectiveness in the military is both a science and an art. While individual military instruments such as weapons, platforms, and units can have an influence, their combined

and coordinated might is greatly increased. Although difficult to measure, this employment principle is vital to combat and is acquired by experience.

This study does not analyze Reserve and National Guard components, which make up around one-third of the U.S. armed force, instead concentrating on the state of hard power itself. It is difficult to regularly assess these components because of a variety of variables, including availability, cost, reaction time, and political issues. However, without Reserve and Guard personnel, the U.S. military is unable to manage significant wars. The research takes into account the baseline combat power available in the Active component of each service in order to ensure consistency in yearly assessments. There are exceptions where substantial resources improve the preparedness of certain Reserve units, as four Army National Guard BCTs in the 2020 Index demonstrate (*Introduction: An Assessment of U.S. Military Power*, 2022).

Aligning the Defense Budget with Strategic Goals

The amount allotted to defense does not inherently determine the strength or posture of the US military. Increased military might does not always follow from higher defense budgets if money is wasted or misappropriated. A competent, up-to-date, and prepared force requires an adequate budget, yet funding on its own is insufficient. There is a general correlation between defense spending as a percentage of the federal budget or GDP and the military's status because the costs of equipment, personnel, and readiness are in line with general economic costs and technological advancements. The defense budget is a reflection of the priority given to national defense in federal spending (Smithberger, 2021).

The United States government strikes a balance between defense expenditure and other governmental priorities when there is no serious threat to the country's survival. The optimal process for establishing defense requirements involves recognizing national interests, analyzing the costs involved, assessing risks, and figuring out what has to be done to fight such threats. The security interests of the United States are in danger from any disparity between estimated requirements and actual defense spending.

Linking interests, threats, needs, resultant force, and budget is the methodology used in this index. Policy discussions on where to take risks in force modernization, capability for large-scale or numerous simultaneous operations, or force readiness occur when less money is spent than needed for a two-MRC force. The emphasis on competing with China and Russia has

made these challenges more crucial. The resource requirements of war and the potency of well-trained and armed military formations have been brought to light by Russia's conflict with Ukraine (McInnis, 2023).

The Joint Force performs a variety of tasks, such as large-scale combat operations, regional participation, crisis management, strategic deterrence, aid to civilian authorities, and support for US diplomacy. While significant combat operations are rather seldom happening, approximately every 15 years, the military continuously performs other vital tasks.

The Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), Africa Command (AFRICOM), European Command (EUCOM), Central Command (CENTCOM), and Northern Command (NORTHCOM) of the United States have all made plans to interact with the nations in their respective areas (US Central Command, 2016). These interactions strengthen ties, advance knowledge of regional dynamics, and highlight American security objectives. They can take many forms, from small-unit training with a single partner to large-scale multilateral exercises. The services offer units that are either permanently based or temporarily rotated in various locations to support COCOM objectives. A base force big enough to consistently train, deploy, support, receive back, and prepare troops in order to satisfy COCOM demand is necessary to maintain these rotations.

The ratio of time spent at home to time deployed, or operational tempo or OPTEMPO, should ideally be at least 3:1 in order to allow soldiers to retain a healthy family life and provide units enough time for training and preparation. For instance, before redeploying, a unit that has been deployed for six months should spend eighteen months at home. This ratio requires an adequate number of soldiers, troops, ships, and aircraft (Herrera, 2020). The Joint Force may be scaled to satisfy forward-based and forward-deployed demands if the main goal was peacetime involvement. Nevertheless, in order to seize a large combat operation, one must weigh the military might require winning potential war scenarios against the needs of COCOM, historical study of previous wars, assessment of present threats, and U.S. capabilities. Evaluations of possible conflicts with China or Russia during peacetime tend to underestimate the conditions necessary to prevail in a war. Estimates made during peacetime may miss the harsh truths that war exposes.

The United States needs a force that is up-to-date, prepared, and efficient in all areas of combat to meet the challenges posed by these highly developed nations, according to national security policies from 2017 to 2023 (National Security Strategy, 2022). The Biden Administration carried on the pattern of

growing non-defense spending faster than defense spending in FY 2023. For the DOD base discretionary budget, \$773 billion was the original proposal, representing a 4.1 percent increase from the year before. In contrast to the 10% increase in non-defense funding proposals for other federal agencies, this increase was, however, negligible. Congress decided that the defense budget was insufficient and added \$45 billion to it in order to combat inflation and expedite the execution of the National Defense Strategy (Michael, 2024).

A Closer Look at China's Conventional Military Power

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is the main rival of the United States, according to its 2022 National Security Strategy, and it has the intention and increasing ability to change the global order. Congress is given access to China's political, economic, and military goals through the Department of Defense's yearly report on military and security developments involving the PRC, which highlights Beijing's objectives. Consolidating all facets of national power is the main goal of the PRC's policy in order to maintain a "leading position" in a long-term battle between various systems ("U.S. Dept. Of Defense, Military and Security Developments," 2022).

The PRC poses the greatest and most pervasive threat to American national security as well as the free and open international order, according to the 2022 National Defense Strategy. In this pivotal decade, it is imperative to comprehend the military strategy, present operations, capabilities, and future modernization objectives of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). In 2021 The PRC has increasingly leveraged the PLA as a tool of statecraft, taking a more assertive and forceful approach in its actions across the Indo-Pacific region. The PLA now plans to further integrate mechanization, informatization, and intelligence by 2027 after apparently achieving its modernization objective of 2020 ("Implications of PLA Modernization," 2023). If successful, these developments might improve the PLA's capacity to serve as the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) reliable military tool, especially when it comes to seeking Taiwan unification. Beyond conventional capabilities, the PRC is stepping up nuclear force modernization, diversification, and growth to bolster its *strategic deterrent*. Concerns over China's unwillingness to talk about its growing nuclear, space, and cyberspace capabilities, however, are growing since they present threats to the strategic stability of the world. his research underscores Beijing's ambition to reshape the current international order as it pursues its goal of national rejuvenation by 2049, the centenary of the PRC. To achieve its strategic aims, which are articulated through initiatives like Xi Jinping's Global Development and Global Security Initiatives, China seeks a supportive global environment (Amonson, 2023).

Decoding China's Military Strategy

In its latest National Strategy, China introduced the concept of “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” with the aim of realizing this vision by 2049. This involves a focused effort to modernize the country across military, social, and political spheres to strengthen national power, enhance governance, and reshape the global order in a way that aligns with Beijing’s objectives. The PRC believes that serious obstacles to its national plan exist because the US is using a whole-of-government strategy to restrain China’s ascent. China sees strategic competition as a conflict between strong countries and diametrically opposed ideologies. Chinese officials blame the U.S. for becoming more combative and structural changes in the international system for the escalating rivalry. China’s strategy consists of concentrated efforts to build up and strengthen its national power on the inside as well as the outside, with the goal of securing a leading position in an ongoing systemic competition. The PLA’s 2027 centennial goals will be significantly impacted militarily and strategically by the results of the 20th CCP National Congress. According to the Congress study, the PLA should modernize more quickly over the next five years, with a focus on strengthening its *system of strategic deterrence*. The Central Military Commission (CMC) was led by Xi Jinping, who also chose members with political continuity, military modernization experience, and operational experience in Taiwan. Establishing a *community of common destiny* to bolster its national rejuvenation plan is the goal of China’s foreign policy. Beijing’s national policy and the political and administrative structures of the CCP are the sources of its revisionist aspirations for the international order. In 2021, China employed various diplomatic tactics to undermine the influence of the U.S. and its allies. These included emphasizing the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and criticizing security partnerships such as the Quad (comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S.) and AUKUS (a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.) (Johnstone, 2024).

In order to create a unified National Strategic System and the necessary capabilities to meet its objectives for national rejuvenation, China’s Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) plan integrates its security and development agendas (Joshi, 2023). To strengthen China’s total national might, this strategy focuses on creating and purchasing cutting-edge dual-use technology for military purposes as well as reorganizing the country’s defense science and technology sectors. The MCF strategy is comprised of six interconnected initiatives:

- Integrating Defense and Civilian Industries: Combining China's economic foundation for defense with its industrial and technological sectors for civilian use.
- Leveraging Innovations in Science and Technology: Applying advances in science and technology to both military and civilian applications.
- Developing Talent: Combining civilian and military experience and knowledge.
- Integrating Military Requirements with Civilian Infrastructure: Using civilian buildings for military objectives and integrating military requirements with civilian infrastructure.
- Using Civilian Services for Military Objectives: Making use of civilian transportation and services for military objectives.
- Extending National Defense Mobilization: Improving China's system for mobilizing the national defense to incorporate all pertinent facets of the economy and society in preparation for both conflict and diplomacy (Fritz, 2019).

Assessing China's Military Power and Its Role on the World Stage

In order to function as an efficient combined force, the PLA seeks to modernize and improve its capabilities in all combat areas, including land, air, sea, nuclear, space, counter-space, electronic warfare, and cyberspace. The PLA is the main ground force of the PLA, with around 975,000 members serving on active duty. It concentrated on standardizing training techniques and creating realistic training situations in 2021. Examples of these were joint exercises with Russia on a wide 2023).

People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN): With over 340 ships and submarines, including 125 significant surface combatants, the PLAN is the largest navy in the world in terms of quantity. Even with the handover of 22 corvettes to the China Coast Guard, the PLAN is modernizing with the launch of new amphibious assault ships and cruisers ("U.S. Dept. Of Defense, Military and Security Developments", 2022). With more than 2,800 aircraft, including 2,250 combat aircraft, they collectively constitute the third biggest aviation force in the world as well as the largest in the area. The PLAAF is quickly modernizing, bringing in UAVs and aircraft manufactured in the country, and it has unveiled the H-6N, the first air-to-air refuellable bomber

with nuclear capability (“U.S. Dept. Of Defense, Military and Security Developments”, 2022). The PLARF, or People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force, is in charge of China’s nuclear and conventional troops stationed on key ground. It launched more ballistic missiles for training and testing in 2021 than the rest of the world combined (excluding war zones), with over 135 launches. With the goal of having at least 300 additional ICBM silos, China is continually expanding its ICBM silo fields (Mihal, 2021).

The main goals are space dominance and information sphere control, which are crucial for contemporary “informatized warfare.” The SSF makes investments in robotic space exploration, human spaceflight, satellite communication, navigation, weather, and space-based ISR (IMR: 2023). China’s policy seeks to limit American access in the larger Indo-Pacific area and to prevent American presence close to its borders. The PLA doctrine highlights the significance of precision strikes in contemporary battles in all areas of warfare. Precision weapons are regarded as instruments for “war control” to moderate escalation and as force multipliers. China has a strong Integrated Air Defense System (IADS) that stretches 300 nautical miles (556 kilometers) from its coast and covers its land areas. Surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems, fighter aircraft, and early warning radar networks are all part of this system. The IADS range is further increased by radars and air defense missiles stationed on South China Sea installations. Strategic objectives are shielded from airborne assaults and long-range cruise missiles by point defenses. This system is intended to target foreign military sites and fleets in the Western Pacific and may eventually replace certain earlier Short-Range Ballistic Missile (SRBM) systems (Panda, 2017).

Assessing the Military Power of the U.S. and China: A Comparative Study

Due to globalization, World politics is dominated by the United States and China in the current structure of the world and each of these power’s actions affects the stability of the world. They are rivals to the bitter end so far as the military strength is concerned. The existence of similarities and differences in the analysis of the powers of the two countries with regard to military strength is converted in this research through the factors of the defense budget, manpower, technology, and strategic strength of the United States and China, respectively. Technology plays an important role in the modern world, especially in the forces. Both nations are involved in the production of the most modern military systems like artificial intelligence, smart ammunition, and cyber warfare. The United States employs technical supremacy to maintain its hegemony in several domains concerning the kinetic operation, namely the air, the sea, and outer space domains. Human resources still retain a very significant place and value in military power. The labor force is

considered to be highly skilled and voluntary in the United States military where the tools and instructions deployed are also considered to be up to date. The People's Republic of China, with the largest number of standing armies in the globe continues to modernize it, with absorption and quality highlighted.

Strategic capabilities include nuclear dissuasion, presence projection, and globe-encompassing. Thus, the United States of America is capable of carrying out a vast number of operations through such military stations globally, hence admitting to providing sustainable operations and rapid deployment (Lippert et al., 2020). Thus, China's policy is preoccupied with building the capacity to exert power beyond its shores and managing the region, especially the Indo-Pacific region.

Comparing the given countries, this paper elucidates the strengths, resources, workforce, and technology because they define the tendencies of the global military and explain the complexity of military competition between the US and China. China has hiked up its defense budget by a great deal over the past two decades or so. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

(SIPRI) estimates suggest that China is the second-largest military spender after the USA, though China is not nearly as transparent with its budget as the USA. China is projected to spend \$252bn on defense in 2021 (SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 2023). At present, China is strengthening its defense system, focusing on the creation of missiles, influence in cyberspace, and the development of naval forces.

Artillery is one of the primary elements or weapons for achieving military domination, and for its control, new technologies should be created. Over time, the United States has been regarded as the world's superpower in military technology due to the developments that have been made in information technology, armaments, and aircraft. According to Stanford University data, US defense companies such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Northrop Grumman Industry are part of the defense industry that makes modern weaponry, including accurate guided missiles, stealth airplanes, and UAVs (The US Defense Industry and Arms Sale n.d). These weapons make the US troops tactically superior for many reasons. However, China has been animated in recent years concerning enhancing military technologies. Schemes like the 'Made in China 2025' intend to give high-tech industries in China a competitive advantage in the world market and minimize dependence on foreign counterparts. They have proved their growing muscle in stealth, cyber, and missile defense with the development of new generation weapon systems such as Type 055 destroyer, DF-21D anti-ship ballistic missile, and J-20 stealth fighter aircraft (McBride & Chatzky, 2019). As all forces and operations in the military entail, quality of labor is as important as quantity in

the military. Today, the United States of America hosts an all-volunteer force of about 1.3 million active-duty personnel famous for their professionalism, training, and technical expertise, backed by about 800,000 reservists and National Guard troops. Cognitive training, modern education, and training courses are offered to American soldiers so that they are ready for various tasks. That is, China has the largest reserve army in the world today, with roughly 2 million people on active duty. Currently, the PLA focuses on training quality enhancements, equipment, and the profession. Another capability, that is, a reserve army together with paramilitary formations, adds to the manpower strength of China's military.

Table 1: Comparison of Hard power

Country	Active Personnel	Reserve Personnel	Paramilitary Forces	Defense Budget
China	2,035,000	510,000	6 25,000	2.27 trillion
US	1,328,000	799,500	0	8.3 trillion

Table 2: Air Power

Country	Total Aircraft	Fighter Aircraft	Dedicated Attack	Transports	Trainers	Special Mission	Helicopters
US	13,209	1,854	896	957	2,648	695	5,737
China	3,304	1,207	371	289	402	112	913

Table 3: Land Power

Country	Tanks Strength	Armored Vehicles	Self-Propelled Artillery	Towed Artillery	Mobile Rocket Projector
US	4,657	360,069	1,595	1,267	694
China	5,000	174,300	3,850	1,434	3,180

Table 4: Naval Power

Country	Fleet Strength	Aircraft Carriers	Heli Carriers	Submarines	Destroyers	Frigates	Corvettes	Mine Warfare
US	472	11	9	64	75	0	23	8
China	730	2	3	61	49	42	72	36

Source: Global Fire Power (2020 World Military Strength: 2020)

How Conventional Deterrence Influences U.S. and China's Military Alliances and Influence

Any military force projection strategy must, in this way, consider a nation's presence in the region and alliances. The United States of America has numerous military facilities around the world, forward operations, allied exercises, and sustainment. Significant and strategically important American facilities and bases on the Pacific Rim assets like those that are in Guam, Japan, or South Korea allow for a speedy response to threats that include potential wars in the Korean Peninsula or the South China Sea. Official defense agreements that the United States has with Australia, South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines also support the US security interests in the Pacific (Stevenson, 2020).

Unlike the USA which is more spread out, China has been leveraging on the BRI to grow its strategic outreach. This infrastructure development program takes steps to increase the interaction and trade between countries in Eurasia and other parts of the world through funds for ports, trains, and infrastructure in more than Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (Yu, 2024). China also deepens its military cooperation with neighbors within the framework of the SCO and bilateral defense agreements. Thus, in the contemporary system of armed forces, one can speak about the growing roles of cyber and space warfare. Many investments have been made by both the US and China within these sectors. Cyber warfare is well developed in the United States; the NSA and the United States Cyber Command engage in cyber operations while at the same time protecting against cyber operations. Another important factor

of military operations is space-based assets for communication, surveillance, and navigation relevant to the USA.

China's information warfare capabilities are growing rapidly as state-backed hackers attack firms, governments, and key assets. For instance, the Chinese military has formed cyber teams to interrupt the communication of the opposition, spying on them, and psychological warfare. Apart from manufacturing anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, China has also sent its communication and navigation satellites into orbit (Gertz, 2024). These developments make it possible for some countries to develop space weapons, yet the superior military strength of the US in space still needs justification.

The research discusses the future prospects of conventional deterrence between the US and China. It is significant to highlight the current trend in the world, especially the advancement of technology, and recent developments have been witnessed, especially in the military as well. Modern warfare has been characterized by the deployment of technologies, particularly AI of the 21st century, that are rapidly revolutionizing the capacities in different fields (Rashid et al., 2023). AI, for instance, the Mars rovers, Spirit, and Opportunity that have been in operation since 2001 has given machines the ability to learn, plan, and decide like humans.

However, although AI has the potential to improve knowledge exchange and innovation, its incorporation into military operations creates profound questions about a nation's security, command structures, and global stability. For instance, the President of Russia, Putin, has pointed to the importance of AI in changing global power relations, not to mention the fact that AI is set to redefine future warfare.

The use of AI in military conflicts, for example, in the war between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, is a prime example of modern warfare's contentious but present phenomenon. Some of the tools and technologies applied in contemporary wars include drones, satellites, and cyber, and they have been crucial in recent wars, which shows that warfare technology is rapidly changing.

Problems associated with the creation of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) include strategic miscalculations and the destabilization of nuclear states. Today, most countries, such as Russia, China, and the United States, invest heavily in developing AI technology for military systems.

Incorporating AI in UAVs, missile systems, submarines, and aircraft is an ongoing process of using technological dominance in defense mechanisms. Approaches such as the US National Security Strategy 2022 focus on the coordinated acquisition and application of AI systems by like-minded partners to protect mutual military interests.

Prospectively, China's plan to become an AI superpower by 2030 and the development of AI in defense systems depict a race to attain technological superiority. However, nations like Russia and Israel are steadily developing AI applications in specific areas, such as naval and anti-missile functions.

Deterrence is the core characteristic of nuclear weapons, which are political instruments used to prevent the use of force rather than to apply force (Jervis, 1979). Should decision-making on the use of force be delegated to artificial intelligence systems, the efficacy of threats and the long-standing norm not to use nuclear weapons could be undermined, which may change the nature of threats and threats' coercion in the relations between the nuclear states (Fitzpatrick, 2019).

This is due to its ability to transform the way that international debates on the involvement of human beings in the management of military technology are conducted. There are some who propose that LAWS should not be used in the first place and that there should be no development of these systems at all. The Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and non-binding Transparency and Confidence Building Measures (TCBMs) are regarded as provisional solutions to these severe global security threats.

Political scientists recommend temporarily banning AI-driven military applications, which are regarded as the most efficient strategy for addressing these novel threats until a legally non-binding treaty is reached (Johnson, 2020).

Autonomous battlefields under the Umbrella of Deterrence

Unmanned aerial vehicles are among the recent revolutionary technologies taking root in modern warfare and are ranked as the third revolution in warfare, with gunpowder and nuclear weapons as the other two. Their effectiveness was seen in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, where Azerbaijan armed with Israeli and Turkish drones, including the lethal 'Harop' loitering munitions, provided the beating edge against Armenia's conventional forces. This was a turning point, with the national militaries actively procuring unmanned aerial systems.

The US National Security Commission on AI also explains how self-governing technologies redefine warfare and calls for significant expenditures in this domain. Today, China, Russia, Great Britain, and Israel are actively developing and purchasing new generations of drones, expecting their operational advantages.

Technological developments like Li-ion batteries facilitate the production of cheap micro and small drones capable of coordinated operations in swarms. If incorporated into a network and working at a pace as fast as a machine, these swarms can overtake old radar systems and pose a threat to high-value military equipment.

Of specific worry are self-flying quadcopters. They are endowed with a computer vision for the identification and locking of targets and could be used in ‘targeted killings’ besides the conventional combat zones. This development adds a new strenuous dimension of persistent and remote threats.

Military drones are another revolutionary factor in recent military actions. They can be seen as the element with both direct coercive power and strategic challenges that have an impact on contemporary warfare doctrines and defense worldwide.

The Evolution and Impact of Contemporary Strategic Approaches in Global Military Affairs

In this context, the signaling aspect is a key component underlined in the framework to support the use of LAWS for deterrence. AI-based systems bring uncertainty to the interactions between users and adversaries. Governments have the dilemma of making the large-scale and real-world tests for their algorithms transparent while keeping the data from foreign adversaries, resulting in deliberate ambiguity. Open testing serves to eliminate uncertainty for the potential LAWS users as well as communicate technical capacity to potential adversaries, while the safeguarding of these trials maintains a veil of exclusivity and decreases the likelihood of an AI-precipitated security dilemma within the Great Power system.

Transparency helps in the deterrence function and assists with the testing and evaluating LAWS, thus improving the signaling of capabilities. Research has found that clarity of the initial signal of capability and intention is the best way to prevent aggression; ambivalence provokes aggression. The signaling process becomes challenging when it has to do with automated systems because different autonomous platforms analyze the messages received. PLA strategists expect future warfare to be characterized by UAVs, MUMTs, and

AI-driven decision-making to counter the opponents. These advances are heading to solve PLA leadership's problem in decision-making where the conditions are already unknown or unpredictable (Purdy & Williams, 2023).

The PLA's Academy of Military Science issued a report in 2013 that strategic military deterrence is supplemented by the principles of using high-tech equipment and Informa-ionization, as well as introducing uncertainty and randomness in the assessment of the opponent through new military concepts and theories. LAWS translates into new unpredictabilities regarding China's capability to foresee its forces' actions and manage adversary autonomous systems, thereby raising the possibility of accidental escalation and great power war.

China's AI military research focuses on autonomous hardware that includes robotic tanks, swarms of drones, and remotely operated submarines. Intelligentized warfare is considered the fourth revolution in military affairs and has had a major influence on conventional military operational concepts. Intelligentized warfare is founded on artificial intelligence and incorporates the latest technologies into commanding, equipment, tactics, and decision-making at various levels of conflict. They consist of human-machine integrated groups of vehicles where self-driving systems have authoritative positions. An example is *latent warfare*, whereby LAWS are placed in strategic positions and are then set on autopilot for aggression against the hostile party or structures. Thus, the U.S. military considers AI and LAWS as necessary tools to accomplish the mission in the present and future conflicts. The Americans see autonomy as providing fundamental protection and lethality benefits and helping the commanders to decide more speedily and accurately in rivalry and emergencies. The United States and China are developing disruptive capabilities, weapon systems, and military concepts involving LAWS. Still, there is no shared understanding of how each side will interpret the other's actions in competitive scenarios, and thus, the risk of inadvertent escalation to conflict is high (Cox & Williams, 2021).

Furthermore, the need for high-quality adversary data to achieve sufficient quantities to assure predictable performance of LAWS in conflict situations can breed 'Military Deception.' This would deceive the adversary to doubt their information and, therefore, the capacity of autonomous platforms to face real enemies

Advent of Autonomous Weapon: more Room for conventional Deterrence in National security Strategy

The proponents of autonomous weapons systems have noted the following advantages in the military. First of all, these systems increase the efficiency of missions by using fewer people, being force multipliers. They also increase the theater of operations, get to places that were previously inaccessible, and decrease the loss of human life by taking soldiers out of harm's way.

The Department of Defense's Unmanned Systems Roadmap (2007-2032) also offers further reasons for more autonomy in weapons. Hence, robots are more appropriate to be used for boring, toxic, or lethal' operations: for example, sustained search and rescue operations, contact with toxic substances, or dealing with improvised explosive devices (Unmanned Systems Roadmap, 2007-2032, 2007). Lethal autonomous robots pose a threat, as Major Jeffrey S. Thurnher of the U. S. Army has explained; they are fast and accurate when it comes to striking, even when their links to the controlling authority are cut off (Thurnher, 2012).

One possible benefit of using military robots is cutting costs. David Francis, in *The Fiscal Times* of June 2013, notes data from the Department of Defense that pegs the yearly cost of a soldier in Afghanistan at about \$850,000, while the TALON robot, an armed small rover, goes for \$230,000. General Robert Cone noted that further reliance on support robots could lower the size of an Army brigade from 4,000 troops to 3,000 but retain the force's efficiency (Thurnher, 2012).

Sensors and sensing compose perception, which includes the physical components and the software components. Planning involves determining a sequence of activities that, when executed, leads to the occurrence of certain events of interest while using algorithms in decisions where people are not involved (Bistron & Piotrowski, 2012). The term learning in the context of AI could mean machines analyzing large data and arriving at usable and, in some cases, better knowledge, such as self-driving cars on the road.

Human-robot interaction focuses on how people interact with robots that exist in the physical environment and must be studied and developed in collaboration with engineers, psychologists, cognitive scientists, and communication specialists. Autonomy involves using natural language processing, which allows systems to work with the language used in the user's instructions, whereby the users provide general objectives instead of specific commands (Harel, Marron & Sifakis, 2020). Finally, distributed tasks entail

assigning work to many robots, software agents, or people, recognizing each capability, and ensuring that collective objectives are met, mimicking human-like cooperation.

Conclusion

The growing military rivalry between the United States and China profoundly reshapes global power dynamics. On one hand, the U.S. maintains a broad, highly advanced military presence worldwide, backed by strong alliances and cutting-edge technology in air, sea, and space. On the other hand, China is rapidly modernizing its military, focusing on its regional influence in the Indo-Pacific, where it seeks to limit U.S. operations and project its own strength.

China's approach includes a blend of conventional military growth and innovative strategies, such as Military-Civil Fusion, in which military and civilian resources are closely linked to drive technological advancements. With extensive investments in areas like missile technology, naval expansion, and cyber capabilities, China is positioning itself to counter U.S. influence, particularly close to home.

While the U.S. continues to lead globally with a highly skilled force and a reach that spans continents, China's military rise is focused and deliberate. It aims to challenge the U.S. presence in Asia without matching its global deployment. This dual approach brings both nations into a more direct and complex competition, where technology, regional alliances, and strategic foresight are essential.

This heightened competition between two superpowers goes beyond military strength and speaks to a deeper question of influence and control in an increasingly interconnected world. It reminds us of the critical role diplomacy and cautious strategy must play in maintaining global stability as both nations navigate their ambitions in ways that could shape the world order for generations to come.

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Constructing Social Reality: A Discourse Analysis of TTP's Text on Social Media

JHSS

185-200

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Vol. 32 (2), 2024

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Abstract

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has used the Internet and online media forums to propagate their messages and to advance their agendas. TTP, Like Al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, has used online platforms to propagate its messages and secure public support for its organization. This study investigates how TTP as an organization constructs its social reality through online blogs and defines the 'Self' and the 'Other.' I have used Laclau & Mouffe's (1985) Discourse Theory to analyze the TTP's text posted on the blog site www.umarmedia.wordpress.com. The article analyzes blogs posted in October 2014, December 2014, and June 2015, a significant moment in time when Pakistan launched its military offensive "Zarb-e-Azb" in Pakistan's Northwestern Pashtun regions. The analysis reveals the strategies used by the TTP in constructing its social reality and articulating the identities of the 'Self' and the 'Other.' The TTP's discourse articulates the Pakistan Army as the 'Near' enemy, an extension of the Western 'Far' enemy, which has waged a full-scale war on the tribal Muslims. The TTP constructs the social reality of Muslims facing existential and cultural threats at the hands of the enemy. Moreover, the narrative of victimhood not only prompts the TTP's cause for revenge but also justifies violence to survive against the enemy, which is both powerful and ruthless. Analyzing the TTP's text with context is important for understanding the militant's worldview and building counter-narratives. Moreover, it can be productive for predicting the trajectory of militant communication, which Pakistan and its allies can use to their strategic benefit.

Keywords: Discourse, Taliban, Social Construction, Laclau & Mouffe

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Introduction

Since 9/11, the United States-led NATO invasion of Afghanistan has had severe consequences for Pakistan. After becoming the United States' ally in the "war on terror," Pakistan's change of heart against the strategic Afghan Taliban prompted fierce reactions from religious and extremist groups within the country. This prompted the loosely affiliated groups in Pashtun settled and tribal regions to ally against the Pakistani state, consequently resulting in the escalation of militancy. The tribal areas, which were strategically used in the Afghan-Soviet war, became the new battleground for Pakistani security forces. The hardcore Jihadist group TTP, formed after the Lal Masjid operation in 2007, has since waged a "Holy war," wanting to impose Shariah across Pakistan. Pakistan, in response, has launched several military offensives to uproot the escalating militancy in the regions. The United States also has deep strategic involvement in these regions and is notoriously known for its aerial drone program, which has sparked a strong reaction from the locals.

Noor Behram, a Waziristan native who has documented the impact of these aerial drone strikes, believes that these drone strikes are not only killing local civilians but also injuring an untold segment of the population, which is causing radicalization (Shah & Beaumont 2011). The TTP tapped into these sentiments and realized the potential of online and social media platforms. Martinez-Torres (2001) states, "The transition from a conventional guerrilla war to an informational war was possible because information technologies had already created new spaces of discussion and diffusion of information through electronic networks" p 347. Thus, along with the physical war, the virtual space became the battleground, making it the war of ideas.

Literature Review

Communication cannot exist in a vacuum, and that is the reason the Jihadist organizations are looking for tools and mediums to communicate with the masses. Al-Qaeda, the global Jihadist organization, has long relied on the Internet as a medium to propagate its messages (Thomas, 2003). Bockstette (2009) highlights that Taliban and Jihadist groups emphasize communication strategies to meet their short- and long-term goals in which the mass media and the Internet play a significant role. Today, many other Jihadist organizations are embracing the use of technology and use social media and online social networks to propagate their agendas, radicalize youth, cause online recruitment, and generate money for their cause (Briggs, 2014; Conway, 2006; Torok, 2013; Winter et al., 2020). Following Al-Qaeda's pattern, the TTP maintains its online presence and disseminates information

through such platforms. Since billions of users are interconnected through social networking sites and social media, the TTP is likely to pose a threat by propagating Jihadist propaganda, radicalizing youth, and causing online recruitment.

Studies suggest that jihadist groups have effectively used communication platforms to propagate their messages and legitimize their media content (Awan, 2007; Karzai, 2009; Weimann, 2010). Rachel Briggs (2014) argues that radicalization and recruitment in terrorist organizations are likely to increase over time because of the Internet's capacity to aid in the process of self-radicalization. She highlights how the Internet can prompt and influence some individuals to act independently without help from terrorist organizations. Briggs's (2014) discussion furthers our understanding of individuals acting with or without the help of a terrorist organization and invites debate on the concept of 'Lone wolf' and 'Loners.' According to Pantucci (2011), Lone Wolf refers to an "individual pursuing Islamist terrorist goals alone, either driven by personal reasons or their belief that they are part of an ideological group (meaning a group of individuals who all claim to believe or follow a similar ideology: in this context, those who might be described as either members or followers of Al Qaeda or adherents to Al Qaedism)" (p. 9). He argues that Loners, on the other hand, are individuals who commit or plan an act of terrorism without any real connections with extremists in natural or online settings, mainly through passive consumption of radical material online or in society at large. Briggs (2014) identifies that extremist and terrorist groups are copying the style of established media organizations to build their credibility and lure people toward their content. Weimann (2010) also acknowledges that terrorist's use of advanced technology and sites such as Facebook have changed the way these groups communicate online. He argues that the interactive nature of the Internet and virtual spaces like chatrooms and social networking sites help these terrorist groups assume an offensive position, which provides them an advantage to lure more people to their sites.

Winter et al. (2020) argue that extremists, like ordinary people, use the Internet for social and political activism. Their online activity, in this sense, must, therefore, be seen as both social interaction and political engagement. Wilson et al. (2012) consider "Facebook as an ongoing database of social activity with information being added in real time" p. 204. They argue that Facebook is an excellent area to study because it provides observable data that can help understand human behaviors. Wilson et al. (2012) discuss social media platforms as "observable" and "concrete" data being added in real time, which gives us a lens to look at these online texts as ongoing social activities that can

predict human behaviors. In my study, I focus on the content posted by TTP in their online blogs, which is concrete, observable data added in real time. It is, however, essential to understand that the militant and Jihadi content is not a new phenomenon in the socio-cultural scene of Pakistan. The militant press publications during the Soviet-Afghan war and the Kashmir conflict in the 1990s amplified jihadi narratives and armed resistance.

Before the Internet, the militant outfits in Pakistan used print publications to propagate their messages effectively. Rana (2008) highlights that these jihadi print publications not only glorified mujahideen and condemn the US and its allies but have played a significant role in attracting the young population to join the jihadi outfits. He corroborates that religious and political parties invested in this jihadi print publication, which emerged as an alternative media published on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Rana (2008) finds that the primary purpose of these publications is to glorify Islam and Jihad at the same time criticizing Pakistan's role in aiding the United States in their strategic wars. He suggests that the findings of his study on jihad print publications can be extended to understand similar ideological online content.

Al Abd (2022) has found that the TTP has used Twitter to advance its propaganda and spread its agendas against the state of Pakistan. He argues that despite many accounts of TTP activists being barred, they keep making new accounts to propagate online. Zahid et al. (2020) used Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze 46 videos and TTP's book, *Inqlab-e-Mehsud South Waziristan*. They find that the 'Muslim' vs. 'Infidel' identity discourse is central to the TTP leadership in their fight against Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts. Zahid et al. (2020) explore that TTP discourse is built on binaries such as us vs. them, believer vs. nonbeliever, and Muslim vs. infidel, construct their enemy into a single entity, the Pakistani state. The article identifies TTP's master narratives in which "the imperial West and their ally, Pakistan, form an evil nexus against Islam and Muslim" (p. 516). Zahid et al. (2020) analyze TTP's discursive strategies and their use of historical recontextualization that helps them legitimize their narratives by drawing parallels to the early Islamic period. Although Zahid et al. (2020) analyze Taliban rhetoric and persuasive strategies, their study lacks a socio-political context based on a specific time, which can help predict TTP's communication pattern over time.

To address this gap, I analyzed TTP blogs posted during the military operation Zarb-e-Azb and analyzed blogs posted in October 2014, December 2014, and June 2015. The data helps our understanding of the issue and predicts the trajectory of TTP's communication based on concrete, observable data in a specific context. Thus, building upon this argument, this study will analyze

blogs posted by TTP, their content, outreach (Global or local), and communication strategies.

For this study, I followed Jan (2015) in analyzing and deconstructing the TTP's text on social media blogs. His book "*The Muslim Extremist Discourse: Constructing Us vs Them*" is among the pioneer studies where militant text has been critically analyzed using Laclau & Mouffe's (1985) Discourse theory. Jan's (2015) the study interrogates the publications of Jihadist and religious political parties that publish their newspapers in Urdu. It provides valuable insights into how militant and jihadist organizations construct socio-political reality within their text. Thus, following Jan (2015), this research analyzes TTP text with context on their social media blog.

The findings of this study would interest scholars in Journalism & Communication Studies, Information Technology, and Strategic and Discourse studies. It provides an in-depth analysis of how online text can construct social reality with real-life consequences. Previously, scholars have identified the presence of militant/terrorist groups in online settings. Still, they lack an in-depth analysis when it comes to exploring how these jihadist groups construct their social reality online. This research provides valuable tools and techniques for understanding communication patterns. Moreover, following a particular communication pattern can help predict a militant's worldview and trajectory.

This study is also essential in modern warfare, where online social platforms have become the new battlefield. The advancement in technology and sophistication in communication techniques has enabled the banned outfits to propagate their messages in the digital sphere quickly. Thus, by understanding the TTP's worldview, communication patterns, and online text, this study is a valuable contribution to the GWOT and Pakistan's long fight against militancy and online radicalism.

Research Questions

- What kind of content is posted by TTP in their blogs?
- What communication strategies/tools are TTP adopting to strengthen their campaign? (use of videos, audio, pictures, multimedia)
- How do they construct their messages, and what social reality are they trying to establish in the "Global War on Terror" context?

Method

Data Collection

I collected data from the word press blog www.umarmedia.wordpress.com and copied three months of posts from the website using the Firefox add-on tool “fireshot” and saved it in three different folders onto the computer. The entire data was saved in Portable Document Format (PDF) for better-quality viewing.

To analyze blogs posted on umarmedia.wordpress.com, I selected three time periods. Since archive data on umarmedia.wordpress.com became accessible in October 2014, I analyzed blogs posted in October. During this month, the Pakistan Army claimed to have achieved success against the Taliban in the military operation “Zarb-e-Azb” (Haider, 2014). Therefore, it was essential to examine the text posted by the TTP when they were in a defensive mode. Similarly, the TTP claimed responsibility for the attack on the Army Public School, Peshawar, on December 16th, one of the worst attacks on any educational institution in Pakistan, which claimed the lives of 144 people, mostly children (Briggs, 2015). Throughout December, the TTP posted online to claim an upper hand against law enforcement agencies. Last, I examined the texts posted in June 2015. Since the military operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched against the Taliban and their strongholds on June 15, 2014, it was essential to analyze the texts posted by the TTP on their blog site after one year of the operation. The first period (October) helped us understand the text when the TTP was in a defensive mode; the second period (December) focused on text when the TTP was in an offensive mode, whereas the third period (June) helped us identify what kind of text the TTP was posting after nearly ten months of the military operation.

Theoretical Framework

The Discourse Theory of Laclau & Mouffe (1985) is used to analyze the data collected from umarmedia.wordpress.com. The analytical tools for data analysis are identity, nodal points, chain of equivalence, antagonism, and hegemony. Two fundamental goals drove data collection, which led to the subsequent data analysis. The first was to explore the content posted by TTP, and the second was to learn how they constructed their social reality through text in the context of the “war on terror.” The corpus for this analysis comprises blogs posted on umarmedia.wordpress.com by the TTP.

Analytical tools

As narratives organize discourse, this study first explored the narratives of the TTP in their text. The narrative is often described as the spoken or written account of events, myths, and stories having some historical legacy. According to Hodges (2008), humans organize their happenings and experiences mainly through narratives. Halverson et al. (2011) consider narrative as a “coherent system of interrelated and sequentially organized stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of its literary and rhetorical form” p.14. In the second step, I explored major themes within these narratives and looked at the linguistic tools the TTP uses to articulate their messages. Moreover, I used several critical terms of the Discourse Theory to analyze the Taliban text. I used ‘nodal points,’ ‘master signifiers,’ ‘identity,’ ‘antagonism,’ ‘chain of equivalence,’ and ‘articulation’ as critical analysis tools.

Nodal points are a key to analyzing the text. For instance, if ‘Islam’ is the nodal point, then signs such as ‘democracy,’ ‘banking,’ and ‘lifestyle’ would draw their meaning by referring to Islam. If the nodal point is changed to the ‘West,’ then the entire meaning acquires in the context of Western perspective and forms an entirely different discourse. Similarly, master signifiers and identity is the key to understanding discourse. For instance, ‘man’ is the master signifier, and various discourses offer different contents to fill this signifier. Master signifiers and a chain of equivalence help establish identity relationally. For instance, if ‘man’ is equated with ‘power,’ ‘bravery,’ and ‘wrestling’ in a chain of equivalence, thus the establishing discourse will identify the real man who wrestles and is both powerful and brave. Therefore, a cluster of signifiers with a nodal point at its center helps generate an identity. In cases where two identities clash and create an obstacle for each other, the term ‘antagonism’ is used. Laclau & Mouffe’s (1985) concept of antagonism is frequently used when there is a conflict between two discourses or identities. Finally, articulation gives meaning to the elements that must be linked together. The structured reality resulting from the articulatory process is discourse.

DISCUSSION

According to Laclau & Mouffe’s (1985) theory, all social realities are constructed in a discourse. The data analyzed reflects how the TTP constructs its identity and the social world in relation to others. The discussion below broadly reflects on how various themes help build narratives and how narratives form the militant discourse.

TTP on backfoot

A total of 11 posts were posted on the Umar media blog from 20th October to 28th October 2014. Most of the text in October posts is in Urdu, whereas English, Pashto, and Arabic were also used. The TTP uses text and graphics to propagate its messages in all these posts. From their first post on 20th October, TTP establishes an antagonistic relationship with the Pakistan Army. The post begins with the text, “We accept the responsibility of the remote-control blast in Salarzai, Bajaur.” The message further reads, “In the attack on 18th October, FC (law enforcement agency) vehicle was targeted, in which two FC personnel were killed while two injured”. In this text, a derogatory word in the Urdu language, “murdaar” (carrions), often used for dead animals, was used for the two security personnel killed in the attack. In addition to the text, the graphics in the post depict a man with his face completely covered in a turban cloth while holding a rifle in the right hand and the Holy Book of Islam in the left hand. The man dressed in black also wears a white logo of Allah Akbar (God is the greatest) on his shirt, and a white flag is also visible in the post. The white flag is a universally accepted meaning of surrender and peace.

In their initial text (October), TTP constructs multiple identities of its enemy as ‘Infidel,’ ‘Apostate,’ and ‘Impure.’ Later, these numerous identities collapse to form an enemy, i.e., the Pakistan Army, law enforcement agencies, members of the volunteer peace force, and anyone who challenges TTP’s ideology. The construction of the enemy’s identity as an infidel, apostate, and impure helps create TTP’s own identity. TTP’s identity is built by placing itself in relation to the Other. For instance, the Other is infidel, which means the Self is fidel or faithful.

Similarly, the Other is apostate and impure, which constructs the Self as faithful and pure. Constructing the identity of the enemy as an infidel causes the identity of the Self to be built in religious terms where the Self is faithful and pure against an enemy, which is an infidel, a disbeliever, commonly referred to as kafir in the Arabic language. Constructing enemies as kafir or infidel provides strong religious sanction and bias as the infidels or disbelievers have been frequently mentioned in the Quran and the Hadith, who are in a constant war against Islam and Muslims. This makes the fight against an enemy a Holy war. The identity of the Self is constructed purely in religious terms, which is in antagonistic relation to the Other.

In its text, “We give a message to the infidel forces united in the name of peace to stop fighting Sharia,” TTP establishes its identity in religious terms where they are fighting a holy war to implement Sharia. The identity

constructed through difference in relation to the Other causes ‘antagonism.’ Thus, the ‘antagonism’ defines who they (TTP) are and what they are up against (army). Although ‘antagonism’ and ‘recognition’ are opposed, the clash of identities results in mutual recognition. The TTP thus establishes itself as a group of true Muslims that want Sharia to be imposed against the enemy, which is out there to eradicate it. The leading cause of social antagonism is that TTP wants its extreme version of Sharia to be imposed across the country against the spirit of the democratic institutions of Pakistan. Although Pakistan’s constitution is made by keeping Islam in the main loop, the country’s political institutions and laws are considered an extension of the West. This also brings the antagonism of TTP to a level where targeting Pakistani institutions is regarded as holy or noble, as Pakistani institutions are not Islamic, i.e., making it Islam (Us) vs Them.

The resurgence of TTP

A total of 20 blogs were posted in December on umarmedia.wordpress.com. The posts continued with the same theme of ‘antagonism’ with the Pakistan Army, civilians, and the government, as observed in October. The text posted in December holds critical significance because of the messages and the nature of actual life attacks. Apart from accepting responsibility for various attacks on ‘enemies,’ which includes civilians, the Pakistan Army, and law enforcement, the dominant themes that emerge are in the backdrop of two significant events. One is Pakistan’s education activist ‘Malala Yousafzai’ receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, while the second is an attack on ‘Army Public School’ (APS).

TTP tries to construct the image of Malala Yousafzai as a symbol of the West, influenced by Western democracy and a threat to Islamic civilization and way of life. In the APS attack, they justify their revenge and attack on children by playing victims themselves. Thus, the dominant theme in text posted in December 2014 is ‘cultural attack on Islam,’ ‘victimhood,’ and ‘revenge.’

When Child activists Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi received Nobel Peace Prize awards, TTP on December 11th posted a title, “Malala,” the Precious Weapon of Western Civilization.” This title carries a deep meaning, as Malala is brought into the chain of equivalence with weapons. There is also an additional link to a PDF file for the detailed version of this post. The post carries a photograph of Malala Yousafzai standing with Kailash Satyarthi and a woman during the Nobel Peace Prize event. The faces of both the woman and Malala are covered in black, while the image of Kailash Satyarthi remains unchanged. The blackening of Malala’s face indicates that showing the faces of women in Islam is forbidden and a symbol of darkness and shame. The

tradition of blackening the faces as a sign of disgrace exists in predominant rural cultures, including countries like Pakistan.

In a post on 18th December, TTP posted about the APS attack. The post carries an image of the APS school building, and the text on the picture gives reasons for the attack on the school in minor points. In the text, they claim that the attack was “revenge” and that “95 percent of them were the children of (apostate) Army”. The post of 18th December ends with a tribute to the suicide attackers of the APS attack. The text reads, “O Martyrs, we are indebted to you ... it is because of you we can live with pride!” Similarly, on 17th December, the TTP held the Army and security agencies as the reason behind the attack.

In the (December) text, the themes of ‘antagonism,’ ‘victimhood,’ ‘revenge,’ and ‘cultural attack’ on Islam build up TTP’s narrative where “the war between Islam and its enemies continues for centuries. Islam is under attack, and they (West) pose a serious threat to our values and way of life. Muslims today are facing an existential threat from the enemy (army)”. The narrative here defines two enemies, i.e., the near enemy, which in this case is the Pakistan Army, while the second is the far enemy, i.e., —the West, which has waged a cultural attack on Islam. The West is articulated as ‘evil’ and ‘demonic,’ as their text reads, “the demonic forces of evils got military domination; they apply all of their resources to cause humans to rebel against Allah.”. By establishing the West’s military might, they construct the West without human morals in the text as “They [are] trying to destroy moral values of human.” TTP constructs the West as having solid military power but without human morals, posing a threat to Muslim’s way of life. Democracy is articulated as dark and evil, and its principal organs, such as media, NGOs, Western knowledge, and democratic parties, are articulated as the pillars of the dark system. They bring media, NGOs, Western knowledge, and democratic parties into a chain of equivalence in relation to the West. It has real-life implications. In TTP’s worldview, Media for its access to the masses, NGOs for its influence and outreach, and Western knowledge through academics and intellectuals can corrupt Muslims and pose a severe threat to their Islamic identity. The cultural threat is further elaborated by articulating ‘Malala Yousafzai’ as a symbol of the West, promoting Western values and education. This construction has serious consequences, as it legitimizes and prompts action against the enemy. Therefore, killing NGO workers or media personnel justifies them that they were working on the agendas of the West.

Similarly, TTP targeted educational institutions such as schools and universities because they consider the modern teachings against Islam.

Educational institutions in TTP's worldview are the breeding centers for an anti-Islamic mindset. Media persons, NGO workers, academics, intellectuals, and even young teenage girl Malala Yousafzai are constructed as an enemy, where the existence of the Self can only be ensured by eliminating the Other. TTP's discourse uses words like 'revenge' and 'avenge' to signify the ongoing war with the Other. The revenge is justified after the Self is constructed as a 'victim.' Sentences like "the genocide of brave and self-respecting Mehsud does continue" signify the victim narrative, which helps not only in gaining sympathy but also prompts immediate revenge. The revenge is legitimized, constructing a reality where existence is only possible by eliminating the Other. TTP constructs the Self as a 'victim' against the enemy, which is killing tribal people and their families. This construction of reality had real-life consequences in the shape of an attack on an Army Public School that killed over a hundred children. Thus, constructing the Self as victims who are facing destruction at the hands of the Pakistan Army legitimized their action against the school children as an act of revenge. The social reality TTP constructed against the enemy, which is killing tribal people and their children, had real-life implications in the shape of the brutal attack on the Army Public.

The conflict continues

In (June) text, themes such as 'antagonism' and 'victimhood' build a narrative as "Pakistan Army and the government are against Islam and are killing the tribal people; they are brutal and without moral Islamic values. Therefore, a fight against the Westernized Army and un-Islamic government is necessary". To establish this narrative, the TTP carefully constructed the Pakistan Army in a chain of equivalence with the West. This was done by proving that the first two Generals of the Pakistan Army were British Generals, i.e., General Sir Frank Walter Messervy and General Sir Douglas David Gracey. Demonstrating that British Generals laid the foundations of the Pakistan Army and questioning the role of non-Muslim Generals in leading the Muslim army constructs a reality where the Muslim forces were led by the infidels, making them controversial and un-Islamic. Moreover, the identity of General David is constructed as Jewish, under the caption, "The Jewish Douglas David Gracey, the General of Impure Army from 1948 to 51."

Bringing Jews into the discourse carries profound implications. Constructing the identity of the enemy as Jewish brings the past into the present, where the enemy has been a traditional enemy of Islam from the days of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This textual construction means a compromise cannot be made with the enemy at any cost. Thus, they bring the Pakistan Army into a chain of equivalence with the West, infidelity, and Jews. This careful

construction of the enemy's identity gives moral support to the TTP's cause for action. It legitimizes their fight against an un-Islamic enemy, which is under the influence of the West.

TTPs use references from the Holy Quran and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as their discursive tools. This validates and sanctions their text. As mentioned in the analysis, the reference to Quranic verse serves as intertext; this validates the text and serves as a 'closure.' This gives TTP religious sanctity that cannot be challenged or argued. TTP realizes the importance of such communication tactics, as they utilize religious text to validate their cause without the fear of being challenged. In addition to this, reference to the Holy text also triggers 'master narratives,' which, according to Halverson, Goodall, and Corman (2011), are trans-historical narratives that are ingrained in a particular culture. Extremist groups such as TTP use 'master narratives' from the Quran and Hadith to bring the past into the present, which validates their course of action.

TTP constructs its social reality by adopting various discursive tools. Identity helps them define the Other in relation to the Self. They believe that the existence of the Self is only possible by eliminating the Other. Thus, revenge and attack on the enemy become a social reality constructed in the text. Similarly, the violent course of action is justified through hegemonic intervention and the use of intertext. The reference to the Holy text serves as a closure, as it cannot be challenged.

Thus, TTP constructs a world in which they are in a constant state of war with the enemy, which poses an existential threat, and survival can only be ensured by revenge and eliminating the Other. This construction comes with real-life implications in the shape of attacks on the Pakistan army, security forces, and the children in Army Public Schools. It confirms the central premise of Laclau & Mouffe's (1985) discourse theory, which states that all social realities are constructed in discourse.

CONCLUSION

This research has examined how Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan constructs its social reality in the context of the GWOT and the military operation *Zarb-e-Azb*. According to Laclau & Mouffe (1985), all social realities are constructed in discourse; therefore, online communication is vital to understanding a militant's worldview.

Analyzing three months of data shows how militant discourse evolved each time. In October 2014, the theme ‘antagonism’ remained dominant, in which TTP is in constant antagonistic relationship with the Pakistan Army. The theme ‘antagonism’ also continues in December, but several other themes are added, further evolving the militant’s worldview. In December, ‘antagonism’ is followed by themes such as ‘cultural attack on Islam,’ ‘victimhood,’ and ‘revenge.’ In a cultural attack, TTP constructs Malala Yousafzai as a precious instrument of the West, who is trying to promote Western values, hence a threat to Islam. Similarly, democracy, education, NGOs, media, and the government are drawn along with the identity of the West after constructing Pakistan as a country without Islamic values and systems.

TTP constructs its image of being victims, facing an existential threat at the hands of the Pakistan Army. This further helps the TTP elevate their cause for ‘revenge.’. The attack on the Army Public School killed 144 people, mostly children between the ages of 12 and 16, and is justified by TTP as an act of revenge against the atrocities committed against the tribal Pashtuns. Thus, by constructing their image as victims, they legitimized violence. December discourse is a classic example where themes such as ‘antagonism,’ ‘cultural attack,’ ‘victimhood,’ and finally ‘revenge’ have real-life implications. The discursive construction of a victimized Self with the evil Others continues in June 2015 as well. The identity of the Pakistan Army is drawn as an extension of the West, which is ruthless.

Similarly, constructing their own identity as true Muslims vs the Evil Others, they also use religious text, which validates their actions. Religious text not only works as a validation tool but also serves as a closure because of the sanctity of the Holy text.

In three months of data, which began in October 2014, the dominant theme is ‘antagonism,’ which defines the enemy and constructs a reality of ongoing war with the enemy. Similarly, in December, ‘cultural attack,’ ‘victimhood,’ and ‘revenge’ are the dominant themes that emerge. The fear of destruction at the hands of the ‘near enemy,’ which is the Pakistan Army and the government, and the ‘far enemy,’ which is the West, prompts them to a course of action based on revenge. These different themes suggest that TTP’s discourse is evolving. Themes such as ‘cultural attack,’ ‘victimhood,’ and ‘revenge’ and by constructing the ‘evil’ identity of the enemy against the ‘victim self,’ TTP constructs a social reality where tribal Muslims are in a constant state of war with the enemy which is both Westernized and un-Islamic. They build a world in which Muslims are faced with the fear of annihilation, making revenge a necessity to survive.

The three months of data also reveal the sophistication of TTP's communication strategies. In their initial posts, they claimed responsibility for the attacks. Later, they posted texts drawing enormous appeal as victims, which helped them justify and legitimize their cause of action. In later stages, TTP used references from the Holy Quran, which served as a validation tool and helped bring the past into the present, which they used to their strategic advantage. Analyzing the data over three periods reveals that TTP is not just posting random text; it has adopted sophisticated communication techniques that construct a social reality with real-life consequences.

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