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Education and Radicalization; Is There Any Causative Relationship? A Case Study of Pakistan

Dr. Javed Ali Kalhoro

Assistant Professor and Manager Executive Development Centre, ORIC,
National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan
drjavedali@numl.edu.pk

Dr. Sarfraz Khan

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad Pakistan
sarfraz@qau.edu.pk

Abstract

The concept of radicalization has remained an intense part of human history. The features of this process are significant to understand human behaviour and encountering the social construction of any society. Several studies suggest that radicalization or extremism can be described as violent expressions, manifesting in the shape of extreme views, ideology or acts of violence against any individual, community, sect or even country. For this, several countries have spent substantial financial resources to pledge such threats and a spate of legislation to safeguard their respective national security. Research into radicalization, unfortunately, does not pay much consideration to education. This is extraordinary and may also, possibly, misses an important effect on the process of radicalization. Therefore, this study establishes a cognitive approach towards this term and examines whether radicalization has any linkage or causative relations with education as well. For this study, we have borrowed different denotations and connotations of radicalization and education by numerous scholars to determine the interconnectivity between radicalization and education. After going through existing the literature review, we establish that radicalization and education have strong connections. Education, be that formal or informal, can be used as an extensive tool to radicalize youth anywhere in the world. In this regard, we have studied Pakistan's history vis-à-vis its education system in religious seminaries and public schools. We determine that the government of Pakistan has accepted the reality that its education system at the public schools and Madrassahs have remained an instrument to radicalize the youth in the country, which has raised fear for the internal security of Pakistan and for global security as well. In the end, we suggest that despite numerous steps by the Government of Pakistan, the international community must come up to assist Pakistan in terms of revitalizing its overall education system vis-à-vis curriculum changes to evade any further (emerging) extremism, which is rooted through radical textbooks at the public schools.

Keywords: Radicalization, Extremism, Education, Pakistan, Political Islam, Regional Security

Method

This study is based upon a theoretical literature review. It analyzes empirical evidence, mainly related to Pakistan. This study is focused on the Pakistani education system to examine whether the Pakistani education system has any sort of linkages with radical ideologies. The study is purely based on secondary sources of data.

Radicalization; A Driving Force Towards Extremism

Radicalization is generally understood as a process or a view, which may cause an individual or a group to take an extreme position/action. However, the existing literature on radicalization lacks a proper cohesive definition or explanation (Khan, Khan, Aziz & Shah, 2012). As a result, there is no unified definition of this term. For this study, the term “radicalization” may be considered as a process where an individual, typically, the youngsters, are exposed to the overtly ideological ideas, which may result in encouraging extreme positions/actions (National Criminal Investigation, 2009). Radicalization among youth may be caused by several factors, such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, sectarianism, and injustice. However, the dissemination of radical messages or content can be regarded as one of the major contributors of radicalization among the educated youth. In this regard, the formal education system can also play an imperative role in stimulating or discouraging radical ideologies among young students. Formal education is used to disseminate knowledge of values, culture, and other fields of life.

The definition of the word “Education” has changed from time to time. The conceptual features of Education involve different perspectives and ideas. The Cambridge Dictionary describes the term, “Education” as “the process of teaching or learning, especially in a school or college, or the knowledge that you get from this.” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Similarly, the Oxford Dictionary explains education as; “The process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university” (Oxford Dictionary, 2021). The above-mentioned definitions lead towards a conclusion that education is a scientific, psychological and philosophical procedure that allows an individual to perform his/her abilities at the fullest, as per the needs and demands of society. On the other hand, extremism has remained a horrific disruptive factor across the world. Efforts commenced by global powers to counter extremism, but such factor is yet to be addressed properly. Extremism ensues in many ways, determined from the top-down, through politics, laws and country-level education systems (Afzal, 2021).

Extremism and terrorism are two different concepts, yet inter-related to seek the required purposes. Extremism can lead to violence and may also provide terrorist groups with an extension by leading them to survival. Survival could be defined as financial or logistical support to determine ideological spaces and potential recruits for the group (Afzal, 2021). Nevertheless, there are quite a lot of questions to understand the concept of extremism. Significant consideration was paid to this phenomenon after the world witnessed the 9/11 attacks. Initially, scholars and policymakers believed terrorism is driven by extreme ideologies which are generated by an uneducated and poor class of societies. By the time, it was realized that extremism has not necessarily arisen by the uneducated class, but a big section of educated youth also pursues extreme actions against the

west, amid their ideological appeal of Jihadism, against *Kufar* (Non-believers). However, a non-educated section does provide logistical and financial support for such “ideologically driven” groups to launch their military operations against the west. For instance, *Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP), an internationally recognized terrorist organization, have killed tens of thousands of innocent Pakistanis between 2007 to 2015, as an explanation for its revolt for being Pakistan’s alliance with the United States (US) in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan. The TTP has been receiving funds from various sources, including the external forces, in Pakistan to pursue their actions. The TTP fled from Pakistan after a widespread military operation, conducted by Pakistan Army, which began against this terrorist group and its associates, in 2014. The TTP has now once again, reemerged in 2020 and places its influence in Pakistan’s northwest areas, currently known as *Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa*, killing nearly 40 Pakistani soldiers between March and September in 2020 (Afzal, 2021).

Radicalization; An Academic Debate?

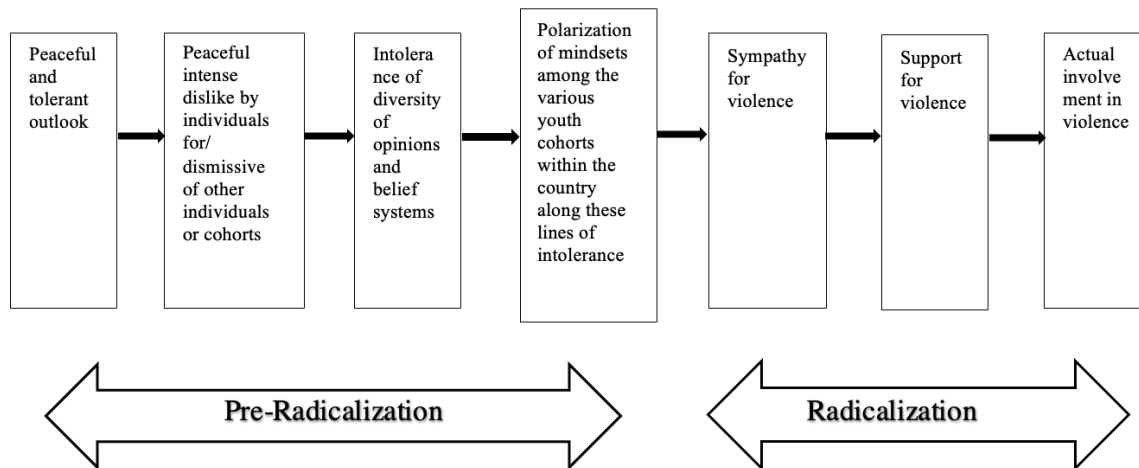
Radicalization can be referred to as extremism (non-violent or violent) or having extreme social or political views. Different international organizations define such terms with different expressions. For instance, The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) describes the term “Radicalization” as an act of “advocating, engaging in, preparing or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic and political objectives” (USAID, 2011). Similarly, the national counterterrorism centre in the United States describes the term radicalization as an activity generally determined by personal anxieties in local surroundings and is generally aimed at impacting global events (Leiter, 2010). However, it can be concluded that there is a lack of a unified definition for radicalization.

On the other hand, this term is being used in a different situation with a slightly different meaning. For example, Yusuf and Arsala (2011) argue that the term “Radicalization” itself is a shapeless concept. Both scholars believe that measuring this term has remained a challenge; however, this term is still being studied across the globe. Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies in Islamabad conducted several workshops, seminars and surveys to discuss the concept of this term within the Pakistani context. The study went through 2008 to 2010 and concluded that;

“...the process of radicalization in Pakistan, particularly at the individual level, might be well understood in the socio-psychological perspective. The argument that mainly political motives drive violent radicalization has got extensive space in the western discourse. In this respect, interviews and deliberations with scholars organized by PIPS simply endorsed that view.... Furthermore, almost all the speakers at the discussions organized by the PIPS agreed that radicalization was not necessarily a religious phenomenon and that it could occur in any ideological or secular learning.” (Rana & Sial, 2012).

It is generally believed that religious discourse may be linked to radicalization. On contrary, many scholars believe that radicalization is not entirely shaped by religious notions; rather, by several other factors. Moeed and Arsala argue that there are four main contexts of radicalization in Pakistan; including education, socio-economic deprivation, lack of governance, and corruption. Moeed and Arsala also believe that there are two main phases of radicalization, i) the Pre-radicalization phase, and ii) the Radicalization phase. It can be observed by the chart given below that even a non-violent individual can turn into a violent one.

The following chart is taken from a report to understand the process of radicalization in a well-defined manner.



To understand this concept deeper, the following table has been taken from the same report, which provides a further explanation of the Pre-Radicalization and the Radicalization phases.

Stage 1: Peaceful and tolerant outlook

- Anti-violence and pro-coexistence views and demeanor

Stage 2: Intense dislike for/dismissive of other individuals or groups

- Personal views disagree with those of other individuals or groups
- Exclusionary mindset when it comes to these individuals and groups
- No actions or support to actions that seek exclusion of these individuals or groups.

Stage 3: Intolerance

- Conviction that the target individuals or groups are not worthy of inclusion in the mainstream
- Potential disengagement from target individuals or groups
- Peaceful but potentially open expression of views that reflect intolerance towards the target individuals or groups
- No action to exclude or harm target individuals or groups

Stage 4: Polarization among groups

- Association with a group that holds exclusionary views towards other groups
- The group's disengagement and opposition of other groups and expressions that highlight dislike and intolerance towards other groups
- The group's peaceful but potentially open expression of views that reflect intolerance towards the target groups
- No direct action by one's group to harm or exclude the target groups

Stage 5: Sympathy for violence

- No opposition by an individual to violence against a target group or individual
- Propensity of the individual or one's group to justify the notion of, or actual violence against, target groups or individuals
- Wishing for further violence against target groups or individuals
- No direct involvement in supporting violence against the target groups or individuals

Stage 6: Support for violence

- Individual's or one's group's direct support in terms of expression of opinion in favor of a particular violent ideology, individual, or movement
- Individual's or one's group's intellectual or material support to a particular violent ideology, individual, or movement
- Individual's or one's group's opposition to counter-radicalization/counter-terrorism actions against violent individuals or groups one is supporting because of a belief that these groups are justified in their actions
- Individual's active involvement in a militant group

Phase 8: Actual involvement in violence

- Involvement in perpetration of violence as a tool to further one's individual or group objectives

“Source: Yusuf, Moeed & Arsala Jawaaid, Radicalism among the youth of Pakistan: Human

Development gone wrong? 2014, UNDP, p7 <http://nhdr.undp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Moeed-Yusuf-Youth-Radicalisation.pdf> accessed March. 10, 2020.”.

The terms; radicalization, extremism, and terrorism are frequently used in media, general public discussions and academic discourses as well. Modern nation-states spend significant resources to enact laws to counter extremism and terrorism. In addition, countries have made series of laws to safeguard their people by providing them with a conducive security environment. On the other hand, academics believe (as discussed above) that every extremist act is rooted in a radical ideology.

It can also be argued that the term radical is not always synonymous with violence. In other others, radicalism doesn't always result in acts of violence and extremism. For instance, as shown in the table above, Moeed and Arsala argue that even a non-violent individual can be radical but not necessarily violent. However, there are other instances, where radicalism results in acts of violence. Moreover, experts from academic and journalistic circles believe that radicalization is shaped by many factors. Therefore, it is noteworthy that the use of the term radicalization depends upon the subjective perceptions of users. For example, in certain settings, human rights are radicals and proponents of foreign agenda. On the other hand, the same human rights activists may consider conservative factions to be radicals. Therefore, research is still required to discover a set definition for this term. Moreover, it is also important to note that the concept of “Radicalization” is not necessarily exclusive to Islam, in particular.

Many several factors play a role in radicalization. Similarly, the political factor is also one of the major causes of radicalism. However, other factors should also be given the same level of importance when investigating the causes of radicalization (Ahrari, 2000). Therefore, the political factor may be one of the factors behind radicalization but not the absolute cause. Roy provides an example of Pakistan's engagement in the Soviet Invasion of the late 70s and 80s. Since then, Pakistan has witnessed many conflicts and terrorist attacks in the country, based on opposing ideologies and the political interests of national and international stakeholders. Such incidents can be are generally termed as acts of “religious violence”. Roy states that the Jihadist movement in Afghanistan was supported by Pakistan and is engaged in several armed conflicts with Muslims and non-Muslims in Afghanistan. Fair argues that the syllabus of Pakistan Studies and Islamic Studies plays an important role in propagating the national policies and ideologies among the students. Sectarian conflicts in Pakistan can also be attributed to the process of radicalization.

A few scholars also believe that radicalization results in a clash of different cultures. For example, if we investigate the history of the Indian Sub-Continent, we may witness conflicts based on cast and culture system. There have been clashes for rejecting or accepting a certain religion, culture, language or even tradition. Therefore, Radicalization is related to such conflicting situations, which may create space for extremists or terrorists. Moeed and Arsla suggest that Mullah (religious cleric) and militants play a role in radicalizing people based on their religious, cultural, and historical identities.

Hanga Horváth-Sántha in her article “Radicalization into Salafi Jihadism: Some Patterns and profiles in Europe 2015–2017”, examine different terrorist attacks that occurred in the European

states during the years 2015-2017. Hanga notes the dynamics, origins, and motivations behind the violent acts of extremism in Europe (Horváth-Sántha, 2017). Hanga's work is intended at increasing the understanding of the complex process of radicalization, especially the latest manifestations of religious-inspired extremist groups. Hanga believes that the knowledge of the motives, pathways, and roost of radicalization provides a useful method to institute preventative measures. On the other hand, Hanga also notes that the motives and inspirations for becoming radicalized vary from body to body; therefore, each piece of information is vital in gaining a profound understanding of the phenomena.

The Connection Between Education and Radicalization

Limited literature is available on the subject of "Radicalization", which may provide any possible linkage between education and radicalization. Most of the radicalized individuals have attained degrees in secondary or some at higher education levels. This is in distinction with an idea that contributors to terrorist acts are uneducated or may be low-skilled (Silber & Bhatt, 2007). Similarly, a study shows that, out of 172, more than 60% of the Salafi-Jihadists have obtained professional degrees. Most of them have completed their higher studies including a PhD degree (Sageman, 2004). Another study suggests that many terrorists in the Middle East have obtained a higher educational degree (Krueger & Maleckova, 2002). As many as 19 culprits involved in the 9/11 attacks, were also well educated. Moreover, many Al-Qaeda members also received education at the university levels (K. Von Hippel, 2002). The founder of Al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden, received his engineering degree as a graduate. Ayman Al-Zawahiri also completed his Master's in surgery. The leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, had a PhD degree in Islamic theology (F. Zahid, 2017). British sociologists like Gambetta and Hertog (2009) establish that 196 out of 284 convicted international terrorists, received higher education degrees. Compare to the average level of their respective countries and region, this number is even higher.

Traditionally, radicalization has always been discussed as a violent act, which is not limited to any country, state, office or even educational institutes. In Pakistan, we have witnessed such examples of violent acts in the educational institutes which paved the way for many local and international scholars to analyze the emerging subject of "educated extremists" or "educated terrorists" (Dawn News, 2017). Such incidents are not only limited to Pakistan but occur across the world. For example, school shootings in the United States could be considered the result of radicalization. Some American scholars consider it an issue of racism or a cultural clash between white and black Americans. Most of the research suggests that the education sector plays an important role in the cognitive development and mental growth of future generations.

The syllabus of Pakistan Studies and Islamic Studies of the public schools in Pakistan carry interpretable terms, which may promote radicalism among the youth of Pakistan (Fair, 2009). For example, in the Safoora Goth incident, as already discussed above, a student, Saad Aziz, killed several people, declaring them to be Kafir (non-believers). After this incident, a seminar was held in Karachi, titled "Growing radicalization in education institutions" organized by the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of Sindh Police. At least 40 officials from different universities and Counter-Terrorism Department exchanged their views on the subject. Addressing the seminar, Additional Inspector General of Police Sanaullah said that; "Radicalization is growing at academic

institutes with the CTD assessing that the next generation of militants is more likely to have university education rather than a Madrassah background” (Dawn News, 2017).

The incident of Safoora Goth raised the need for an effective strategy for identifying violent radicals in the educational institutes as well as in the public offices across Pakistan. On the other hand, some of the western countries have already adopted various steps to counter radicalization in their educational institutes (Macaluso, 2016). The countries have formed a proper framework of their education system. This has led to successful results as various studies, particularly on education and radicalization, did not find any logical evidence or relationship between Education and Radicalization (Macaluso, 2016).

Education is believed to have an ability to not only counter-radicalization but also to increase awareness on the efficacy of peace and mutual respect for every religion or sect. The textbooks and lectures by the class teachers play an important role in the mental development of a student. Sageman (2004) believes that adolescents and youngsters, between 15 to 30 years of their age, are more prone to be radicalized by their surroundings, social interactions. Literature also suggests that schools or other educational institutes are important places for young adults to bridge the gap between ethnic and religious backgrounds. Such places provide the students with a chance for interactions, making contacts and creating a common bond. However, textbooks and lectures also play a role that may promote peace and diversification. Therefore, schooling can have both, negative and positive impacts on a student’s life.

Moreover, the young adults tend to withdraw their support for each other and rather stay in their ethnic groups within or outside the school. Such as; the curriculum of Gilgit Baltistan was highly criticized by the Shia community, claiming that the textbooks promote Sunni ideology amongst the Shia students (Stöber, 2007). The criticism resulted in Sunni-Shia conflicts and the killings of dozens of people in Gilgit city and Islamabad. Therefore, it has always been suggested by many scholars in and outside of Pakistan that the educational institutes should understand and realize the potential of education as a pivotal tool towards breaking such taboos and discouraging such discussion on ethnic backgrounds, rather, promoting inter-faith and peace among the youngsters to undermine radicalization (Macaluso, 2016).

The Education System in Pakistan and its Possible Link with Radicalization

The Pakistani education system is slightly different from the western world. The youth of the country retrieve education through Public or Private schools and Madrassahs as well. The concept of formal education is designed to facilitate learning in different fields of life. It also plays an important role in the establishment of national identities, values, culture, and norms. In Pakistan, the formal education system has been subjected to several educational policies and reforms. The teaching of Islamic ideology has been one of the major objectives of Pakistan’s successive educational policies. This can be verified by the teaching of Islamiyat as a compulsory subject across the educational institutes of Pakistan. Islamiyat entails a study of the tenets of Islamic ideology. Officially, the purpose of teaching this subject is to introduce the students to Islamic Ideology and its relationship to the national identity (Durrani, 2008). The Pakistani education system is a tool to impart a biased and one-sided worldview (Afzal, 2021). Much of the literature found in the school curriculum, especially in the Islamic Studies subject Islamiyat justifies Pakistan’s overall education system as the main victim. Similarly, the textbooks, being taught at

various Islamic seminaries, known as Madrassahs, also do not enjoy any supervision by the government relevant agencies (Singer, 2001).

As per the 1973 constitution of Pakistan, the country is administered as the Federal Republic and its official name is the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The constitution also states that Muslims shall be permitted to practice their lives in individual/collective spheres as per teachings of Islam, set by the Holy Quran and Sunnah by the prophet Muhammad (GOP, 1973). The constitution also instructs the state to provide all facilities for Muslims, which would enable them to understand the basic concepts of Islam and Sunnah. It further explains that the State teachings of the Quran and Islamiyat shall be compulsory to encourage people for learning the Arabic language and Holy Quran (GOP, 1973). The Islamiyat (Islamic Studies) is still being taught as a compulsory subject from early childhood to secondary level of education at the public schools of Pakistan. The subject is extended till graduation (bachelor's degree) at all public and professional institutes of Pakistan. The subject, Islamiyat is a compulsory topic across all the educational institutes of Pakistan; and it entails a study of the tenets of Islamic ideology. Officially, the purpose of this teaching is to introduce the students to Islamic Ideology and its relationship to the national identity (Durrani, 2008). However, critics claim that the existing curriculum of *Islamiyat* carries negative undertones, which may directly contribute towards the radicalization of certain segments of the society (Fair, Shapiro & Malhotra, 2010).

Most historians believe that during Zia's regime (1977-1988), education policy was not only guided by the religious aims of promoting Islam, but also by the political aims of Islamizing the society to legitimize his self-rule (Weiss, 1987). After the end of Zia's regime, democracy returned to Pakistan, which lasted till 1999. During this period, the country witnessed two educational policies, i.e. education policy of 1992 and the education policy of 1998, respectively. The guiding principle for both policies was to ratify the self-designed Islamic ideology through the national education system. Therefore, it can be argued that the educational policies of 1992 and 1998 were the continuation of the previous educational policies. Nevertheless, in 2005, under the rule of General Musharaf (1999-2008), substantial reforms in the education system were announced. These reforms called for new curricula, which would emphasize modern subjects. The proposed reforms faced resistance from the religious segments of the society, and were, therefore, not entirely successful. The existing educational policy of Pakistan was announced in 2009. Subsequently, in 2010, the education system became a provincial subject after the 18th Amendment in the Constitution (Dawn News, 2010).

As Pakistan plunged into unprecedented waves of violent extremism after the US intervention in Afghanistan, some scholars came to link the Islamic studies syllabus, besides other geopolitical, economic and social factors, with violent extremism. The involvement of some individuals with a formal education from the education system of Pakistan also supported this assertion. For instance, Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, the chief of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, allegedly responsible for the Mumbai attacks (Walsh, 2013), was a teacher at the University of Engineering and Technology in Punjab province. Similarly, Saad Aziz, a young student involved in the killing of at least 40 people in Safoora Goth, Karachi, graduated from one of the renowned educational institutions of Pakistan. These instances necessitate the analysis of the existing textbooks of Islamiyat to test the nature of any connection between the literature of these books and the radicalization of the society.

The Rise of Radicalization in Pakistan

Since the 9/11 attacks on U.S. soil, Pakistan has been exposed to an amplified vulnerability to radicalization. To counter this menace, Pakistan received huge support from the U.S. to coup with Afghan Taliban and other extremist groups, pouring into the western strip of Pakistan.

The then-president of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharaf, who ousted a democratic government in 1999, put Pakistan ahead and the country became the closest ally to the U.S. in a war against terrorism. To counter radical elements inside of Pakistan, the State introduced some conducive policies, including the “Enlightened Moderation Programme”, which, intensified an upsurge of religious radicalization, which the country has been witnessing since 1980s. Meanwhile, Musharaf introduced substantial reforms in Madrassahs (religious seminaries) and educational institutes across the country to modify literature being taught in the seminaries and government established schools. For this, General Musharaf came up with the idea of the “Enlightened Moderation Programme”.

The term “Enlightened Moderation” was used by General Musharaf to establish a moderate opinion on the practices of Islam in the country. He announced this strategy at an Organization of Islamic Conference Summit (OIC) held in Malaysia in 2002 (Dawn News, 2003). Musharaf believed that Islam is not a fundamentalist religion as opposed to the teachings of the fundamentalist religious groups. While briefing the conference, Musharaf shared the following remarks about his strategy; “The world has been going through a tumultuous period since the dawn of the 1990s, with no sign of relief in sight. The suffering of the innocents, particularly my brethren in faith -- the Muslims -- at the hands of militants, extremists and terrorists has made it more urgent to bring order to this troubled scene. In this spirit, I would like to set forth a strategy I call Enlightened Moderation.” (Washington Post, 2004).

General Musharaf believed that global security faces a threat from religious extremism. He said that the production of suicide bombers from all over the world has ultimately produced a lethal force that is difficult to be countered. He also stated that the phenomenon of suicide bombers has resulted in the formation of negative perceptions on the teachings of Islam (Washington Post, 2004). He believed that his strategy of Enlightened Moderation would help to limit extremism and may also give out a message of peaceful Islam in the world. He believed that a negative impression about Islam at a global level would further promote extremism; therefore, it is important to reject the negative perception of the teachings of Islam.

In 2001, the Musharaf administration set up “Pakistan Madrassa Education Board (PEMB) to establish model Madrassas and to regulate the existing ones. The team was successful in establishing three Madrassas in Karachi, Sukkur and Islamabad. These three Madrassas introduced new subjects in the Madrassa curriculum, such as Science and Mathematics (ICG Report, 2004). The main purpose of establishing these Madrassas was to promote the mixture of modern and Islamic studies in the Madrassas. In 2002, the Musharaf regime placed at least \$113 million (the U.S. Dollars) for a five years plan for the Madrassa Reforms in the country. This investment aimed to modernize all Madrassas to spread secular education and enable the students to conduct research work in science and technology subjects. The project also included training for Madrassa Ulema, however, the project reached only 507 Madrassas out of 8000 Madrassaahs across Pakistan. This led to the termination of the project in 2008 (ICG Report, 2004).

In early 2002, a crackdown was launched against certain militant groups, such as *Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan* and *Lashkar-i-Jhangvi*. The security forces not only sealed their offices operating across Pakistan but also closed various Madrassas belonging to various “banned” organizations, temporarily (ICG Report, 2002). Meanwhile, these organizations continued operating under different names. For example, the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) re-emerged as Jammāt-ud-Dawa. The leader of Let was also released a few months later. Maulana Azam Tariq, who belonged to Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan, was also released. He was also permitted to contest the general elections, held in October 2002 (ICD Report, 2004).

Another reform brought by Musharraf was the Education Sector Reform (ESR), which aimed to modernize the existing education system by making some structural reforms in the curriculum. One of the main objectives of this reform was to promote secular education as per the recommendations of global allies of Pakistan and the donor agencies. Most of the international community had concerns about the perceived religious extremism resulting in global terrorism. Therefore, Musharraf sought the support of religious political groups such as Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). Historically, almost every political leader of Pakistan needed religious support and Musharraf was no exception. Musharraf also urged religious groups to support his government to gain legitimacy for his political and military roles. The religious groups in Pakistan have a certain degree of importance for any political or military leader as more than 90% population of the country is Muslim.

It can be observed that a considerable section of the population is aligned with one religious group or the other. Some religious groups have an active political role as well, such as Jamat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam. The objective of the National Curriculum was; “To make Quranic principles and Islamic practices as an integral part of curricula so that the message of the Holy Qur’an could be disseminated in the process of education as well as training” (ICG Report, 2004). Despite the efforts made by Musharraf to promote a secular education system in the country, the desired outcomes were not achieved. This can be attributed to two major factors; i) the curriculum in public schools could not be changed due to resistance of religious groups and ii) the training of the teachers for the teaching of new curricula was not effective. This training was required by National Early Childhood Education (ECE) released in March 2002. In addition to these factors, the Musharraf regime also faced protests education reforms on the grounds of labelling them as a “western agenda” (Asia Report, 2005).

After the failure of previous policies, the Musharraf government announced another reform for education in 2006, titled “Pakistan Education Task Force (PETF)”. This task force was aimed to reduce the level of Islamization in the education system by regulating the content related to Islam and abolish the text unrelated to the teachings of Islam. The revised document included sections on “the role of minorities in Pakistan” from grade 8th to Matriculation (10th grade). The main objective of introducing such a topic was to raise awareness among the students on the role and contributions of non-Muslim figures in the creation and development of Pakistan. However, these recommendations were also not implemented, and the textbooks were not printed.

De-radicalization Programme in Pakistan

Pakistan security forces had launched de-radicalization programme for the conflict-hit areas to rehabilitate and reintegrate the captives (*Hindustan Times*, 2020). This programme comprises of

four stages; (i) psychological counselling; (ii) rectification of extremist ideology with the help of religious education; (iii) formal education and vocational training (iv) re-integration to facilitate to move back into the society (Basit, 2021).

Initially, the de-Radicalization and Emancipation Programmes (DREPs), was initiated in several parts of *Swat* areas, where the security forces suppressed violent insurgencies by militant groups in 2009. In this regard, *Sabaoon* Center for Rehabilitation was established in September 2009 after the Pakistan Army launched a successful military operation in the *Barikot* area of the Swat Valley (Dawn News, 2015). The programme aimed at de-radicalizing the youth, aged 12 to 17, who were involved with several militant groups. The centre enrolled at least 184 youngsters who were trained militants as suicide bombers (Dawn News, 2015). Later, the centre was handed to a non-governmental organization Hum Pakistan Foundation (HPF) under the guidelines of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Currently, most of the de-radicalization programmes are being run by civil society organizations and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the full support and cooperation of security forces. *Rastoon* (The Right Path), which is another DREP, was initiated in Barikot, Swat along with a similar strategy, targeted youth aged 16 to 25 (Noor, 2013). This initiative aimed at providing financial assistance and vocational training to the families of the (adult) detainees. The participants of this programme undergo religious rehabilitation. The detainees are trained to become tailors, mechanics, electricians, or carpenters etc. IT skills like Microsoft Word processing to creating spreadsheets are also taught. After the programme, the rehabilitees are provided with certificates as a qualification document (Noor 2013).

The foremost objective of the de-radicalizing training programmes is to stimulate religious tolerance and to establish moderate-religious seminaries, which can provide counter-narratives against extremist ideologies and terrorist groups. In accumulation to the DREPs, the Madrasah Enhancement Project (MEP) along with the Pakistan Institute of National Affairs (PINA), programmes are fully active in resonating different training for religious scholars and *khateeb* (individual who deliver lessons in a mosque) (Fatima & Azam, 2017).

The programme was based on four main modules, including vocational training, formal education and most of all, counselling and therapy. It also encompassed a social component to confer social issues through numerous sessions with the rehabilitees' family members. Similarly, in Punjab province, a joint de-radicalization programme was launched in collaboration with Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Punjab and the Technical Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA), in 2011 (GOP 2011).

The defensive aspect of this programme was solely supported by the Government of Punjab. The programme aimed at taking steps to engross in surveillance of several religious seminaries, which were identified as a threat by spreading radical and extremist ideologies all over. Such religious seminaries were in different parts of Punjab province, including major cities like Lahore, Bahawalpur, Jhang, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rawalpindi (GOP, 2011).

Pakistan's chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, while addressing a conference in Germany said; "... it is history for you, it is still very much a live issue for us back home, as fairly large no of people are radicalized, armed and empowered politically and ideologically. They cannot be wished away, just because we don't like them anymore. We are harvesting what we sowed 40 years back. So, it will be a while before this scourge is eliminated in totality – but first,

let's stop calling it Jihadism as it is nothing else but terrorism. With this rather long context, let me now come to the story of Pakistan's struggle against extremism, terrorism and so-called Jihadism. Pakistan Army has waged a relentless and bloody fight against terrorism and violent extremism, at a monumental human and material cost: - Over 35,000 Pakistanis have lost their lives. Over 48,000 are critically wounded or disabled. Financial cost exceeding US \$ 250 Billion – only a fraction of which is shared by our global partners” (*Duniya News*, 2018).

In his concluding remarks, the army chief state that; “Let me say that terrorists thrive on our divisions and feed on our inability to come together against them. I humbly call upon all of you, to deny them these chinks in our collective armour. Please realize that it's a global problem and needs a global approach. Lack of focus and commitment and individual efforts won't take us anywhere.” (*Duniya News*, 2018). The speech by Pakistan's military commander was highly appreciated by many leaders of the world. His speech showed a commitment to the promotion of peace in the region, which has a direct connection with Pakistan, However, it is important to ponder that why Pakistan is yet to comprehend the root causes of extremism? There are tons of data available in the contemporary literature which shows that majority of Pakistanis, especially the youth, are taught hatred towards the non-Muslims, such as; Hindus (*Dawn News*, 2011). Unless the issue is not resolved, the country may not succeed in bringing peace to the region.

Analytical Discussion

The concept of Radicalization and its possible connection with education has been elaborated. Since most scholars believe that education can play a positive role in limiting radicalization; it can be observed that education has the potential to encourage or discourage violent extremism or radicalization in society. It has also been learned the use of the term “Radical” is dependent upon the subjective perceptions of users. However, the impacts of radicalization could be considered negative if it results in acts of violence and extremism. Radicalization is not limited to Pakistan, exclusively and can be observed across the globe. Moreover, radicalization does not depend on just one factor; rather, it is caused by multiple factors. Moreover, the state of Pakistan must realize its capability of refuting extremism and radicalization in society. Despite numerous steps taken by the government of Pakistan, to de-radicalize the youth, it has been observed that the country has been placing its emphasis upon the captive extremists only. Pakistan launched Paigham-e-Pakistan, an important document, to send a message that Islam and terrorism are not inter-related. However, the country still needs to ponder upon its public schools, especially the Islamic textbooks, which are supporting violent radicalism amongst the students. However, the country is yet to execute the recommendations placed in the document, which is approved by almost all religious clerics, belonging to different sects of Islam.

The de-radicalization programs in Pakistan are often limited and typically confined to individuals in post-conflict situations. Like this programme many other initiatives also fail to embrace preventive and pre-emptive mechanisms of de-radicalization, as an exclusive part of the overall strategy. Surveillance on a few groups or individuals is not enough. Measures to be taken to redefine the overall education from the basic level to prevent the youth to borrow negative ideology which harms Pakistani society itself, more than the global security. However, it can be argued that de-radicalization programs do pay some consideration to a modernized religious ideology. An attempt at the “Enlightened Moderation Programme” by then-President General Pervez Musharraf is one of the exclusive examples where the state had the realization of discouraging extremism in

the country. Similarly, the current chief of army staff (Pakistan), General Qamar Javed Bajwa also confesses that radicalization does exist in Pakistan and need to be eliminated with global cooperation.

Radicalization may be the greatest challenge Pakistan has been facing and still witnessing its blueprints. The country requires a decisive state policy to guarantee its role at all levels by placing in the more effective decision than just to de-radicalize certain groups or individuals. Pakistan needs to have a cohesive plan for its overall education system and shall connect itself to the global innovations and educational developments to bring its youth out of the radical box. As Pakistan's founder and father of the nation, Muhammad Ali Jinnah once said; "You are free; you are free to go to your temples; you are free to go to your mosques or any other places of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the state.... We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state...." (Pakistan, 2021). Such a statement by Mr. Jinnah endorses a fact that the country should have been driven based on secular ideology and shall not indulge in anyone's religious or personal affairs. Rather, Pakistan needs to place influence upon equality and justice for all. If Pakistan follows her founder's ideology, the country could come out of all troubles of itself and the trouble, which may distress the global security.

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