

Interfaith Harmony in Pakistan: An Analysis

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Headings

- [Abstract](#)
- [Key Words](#)
- [Introduction](#)
- [Literature Review](#)
- [Religion in Pakistan](#)
- [Interfaith Harmony in Pakistan](#)
- [Research Methodology](#)
- [Conclusions](#)
- [References](#)

Abstract Pakistan is a religious and Islamic state. The religion followed in Pakistan is Islam with a proportion of 98% being a peaceful religion; it protects the rights of every individual without discrimination of any religion. The constitution of Pakistan also protects the rights of every citizen. In this paper, the researchers have tried to figure out the meaning of interfaith harmony and how state policies and state politicians are playing their role in promoting peace and harmony. Quantitative research method is followed by filling the questionnaires by the respondents mostly from the South Punjab region. The sample population was Muslims and Non-Muslims. In the end, researchers evaluated whether interfaith harmony prevails in Pakistan and non-Muslims and whether they can enjoy the same rights as the Muslim citizens of Pakistan.

Key Words: Pakistan, Religion, Harmony, Extremism, Violence, South Punjab

Introduction

Interfaith harmony means bringing peace and tranquility promoting among people by positivity. There is an interrelationship among people of different religious beliefs at the individual and institutional level which projects a positive picture in the polity of nations. Interfaith harmony encourages the dictum to live and lets others live peacefully. Even though Pakistan was created based on the Islamic ideology, this does not signify that Pakistan is only for Muslims. Propaganda tries to defame Pakistan by presenting a wrong picture of the state and its behavior with minorities; Nevertheless, liberty has been given to the minorities of Pakistan. The constitution of Pakistan protects the fundamental rights of non-Muslims (Part II; Chapter I: Fundamental Rights (Article 20, Constitution 1973). Interfaith harmony aims to the religious harmony in Pakistan (Shaukat, 2017). On one occasion Quaid-e-Azam narrated categorically the rights of minorities in Pakistan:

“Minorities to whichever faith they may belong, they will be safeguarded. Their religion or faith or belief will be secure. There will be no interference of any kind with their freedom of worship. They will have their rights and privileges and no doubt, along with it goes the obligation of citizenship”.

(Jinnah, 1947)

Interfaith harmony is promoted by all faiths by teaching the lesson of love, justice, compassion, harmony and empathy. The objections of interfaith harmony can be tackled by the use of these shared values. The recent most dangerous trends in Pakistan are religious bigotry and sectarian violence. Although no religion is based on fear and terror but nowadays fear arises when the word religion pops up in our mind. Interfaith harmony is the need of time. This real message of interfaith harmony is in need to spread

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to deal with controversial problems like sectarianism. It is the responsibility of every citizen particularly of parents, teachers, religious scholars and political leaders to play their vital role in promoting interfaith harmony in Pakistan ([Masih, 2017](#)).

Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, Jews and Zoroaster are different which make up the population of Pakistan. Moreover, Muslims are further divided into sects and subsects. Because of this severe cultural and religious division, the researcher claimed that the influence of the external powers in Pakistan has been disclosed (Bangash, 2008). People belong to multiple ethnic groups in Pakistan but the matter of faith is never raised in a group of people who belong to different religions or sects because of religious conflicts between the people ([Khan, Karim & Kaj, 2017](#)).

In 1981, the General Assembly session of the United Nations professed the exclusion of all forms of religious prejudice and discernment based on religious conviction (United Nations, 1981). Despite of this resolution, religious intolerance between different religious groups has become the worst phenomenon in the contemporary era. Every individual believes that his religious belief is supreme over all others.

The empowerment of religion is the most prominent factor that leads to religious bigotry. The socio-cultural patterns of the world are being changed by the religious groups and they are transforming the traditional nationalist theory. Discrimination based on religion is increasing in daily life while sectarian-based ghettos are spreading day by day in Pakistan. Religious intolerance has become a tool to exploit religious means and to gather one's religious teachings opposing other religion for political and economic interests. The division of people based on the difference of opinion in diverse context, that is religion and politics which widely direct to bigoted attitude towards the different religions, would be called a state of religious intolerance. In Pakistan, religious conflicts mostly refer to the attacks and violence against people who are motivated by the antagonistic attitude towards the opposing religious belief ([Mahsood & kamran, 2017](#)).

Pakistan is confronting multifaceted dimensions that have hijacked the state. Pakistan became the victim of sectarian violence since 1979. Sectarian terrorism has affected all parts of the country and posing a real threat to the national security of the country ([Warriach, 2016](#)).

In this paper, the researchers will determine the factors which help to encourage interfaith harmony as well as reasons behind the foremost interest of people regarding the religion. Peace and tolerance were always taught to the Muslims, so why people have lost patience regarding the beliefs of other sects and religions. Another major factor will be the lessons of tolerance taught by QURAN and our Prophet (PBUH).

Literature Review

On the World Interfaith Harmony week (2017) celebrated at the forum of United nations, Brahman Kumaris talked about the power of interfaith harmony. According to her, tolerance means appreciating and accepting differences of opinion in people. Tolerance is broadening your mind to accept different viewpoints of people. No one can question other beliefs. No one can inquire about their behavior to their religion. This perception will help people with acceptance about who they are. People who work and live together with an understanding that dissimilarity of religion is a natural way have the power to tolerate.

[Qureshi \(2017\)](#) wrote about the importance of freedom of religion. He explains that interfaith harmony and peace are necessary for Pakistan. Seminars and conferences should be organized by the institutes to promote peace and harmony. For terminating serious human rights violations, sectarian elements must be omitted. Actions must be taken by the State to safeguard the rights of all sects. Ulama and scholars from all religions must play their significant role to promote religious tolerance in Pakistan.

Hanif (2017) wrote an article on the statement of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He has enlisted that terrorism and extremism can be fought with the help of clerics. Violence is a clear misconception of Islam and hate is being spread on the name of religion. Hate and extremism need to be eradicated from our religion which is now the responsibility of our religious scholars. People need to ask themselves about

the society they are promoting and are not causing divisions in the nation and society on the name of religion. The state needs to improve the image of our law institutions by promoting a culture of sympathy and decency.

[Ahmed \(2016\)](#) writes about the effect of state strategies on Islam in Pakistan. The state of Pakistan is being demolished by religious radicalism. The nation is falling apart under the savage and wild jihadists. In any case, examination illustrates that the nation's security arrangements have brought about additional local clashes. Pakistan has nationalized Islam, bringing about the Muslims and non-Muslims being deceived. The state's predisposition toward specific confidence has promoted the current situation with the interfaith antagonistic vibe in Pakistan. The brains of non-radical Muslims and non-Muslims in Pakistan have been alerted by the inability to harness the extremists.

[Hamid \(2015\)](#) states in his article "Threats to national security of Pakistan an analysis" that the main challenges Pakistan is facing these days are bad governance, corrupt and fragile institutions, a weak economy and many others. Another threat to Pakistan's national security is to defeat militants and extremists. The security scenario was changed in Pakistan after the 9/11 issue. Pakistan is now facing different sorts of threats as extremism, sectarian violence, political instability, economic instability, terrorism and feudalism are some internal threats that linked with external threats. A considerable change in internal stability can be brought by good governance and improvement in law and order in the state.

[Rafi \(2015\)](#) talks about the role of religious scholars in promoting interfaith harmony in Pakistan. It is high time to educate the children of our nation about the lesson of tolerance for a perspective to change. Islam is the religion of peace and gives the lesson of brotherhood, forgiving the enemies. These actions must be encouraged across the country; the writer professes that our politicians are not concerned about a peaceful state. We should not allow intolerance in our society; instead, we should allow respect, love and forgiveness. According to the writer, religion is about practising empathy.

Religion in Pakistan

The population of Pakistan is around 210 million (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2018) and state religion is Islam. Nearly 96.28 % (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998) of the population of Pakistan are Muslims while 3.72 % (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998) of the population constitutes minorities which includes Christians around 1.59% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998), while Hindus 1.60% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998), Ahmadis 0.22% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998), scheduled casts 0.25% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998) and other religions who are a major minority in Pakistan are 0.07% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998). According to the constitution of Pakistan, every person has freedom of religion (Article 20, Constitution of Pakistan 1973). Pakistan is multi-racial and multi-religious state. The belief in Islam states that there is only one Almighty God and Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) is the Seal of Prophets which means Prophet Hood ends with Him.

Islam is a religion that portrays a complete code of conduct. It is sinful to believe in any other God except Allah Almighty. Quran, the Holy Scripture of Islam, plays an important role in values and different social norms of Muslims. Cultural differences that exist in various Muslim groups around the world do not compromise in the unifying role of religion.

Population by Religion In Pakistan

Different Religions in Pakistan	Census 2017	Census 1998	Census 1981	Census 1972	Census 1961	Census 1951
Muslims	*	96.57%	96.67%	96.75%	74%	68.38%
Christians	*	1.59 %	1.55%	1.39%	1.70%	1.60%
Hindus	*	1.60%	1.51%	0.61%	10.74%	12.88%

Ahmadis	*	0.22%	0.12%	*	*	*
Scheduled Castes	*	0.25%	*	0.92%	12.61%	16.06%
Parsis	*	*	0.008%	0.014%	0.01%	0.01%
Others	*	0.07%	0.12	0.31%	0.07	0.12%
Buddhist	*	*	0.002%	0.006%	0.87%	0.94%
Sikh	*	*	0.002%	*	*	*

(Table-1) Source: <http://globalvillagespace.com/Pakistans-religious-minorities-the-significant-other>

Interfaith Harmony in Pakistan

Pakistan was created in the name of religion. The flag of Pakistan also signifies the existence and importance of minorities of the state. The constitution 1973 of Pakistan protects the minorities' rights to live in the state freely. Supposedly, Pakistan is considered as an unsafe country for non-Muslims to reside in. Previous outbreaks on holy sites of non-Muslims were broadcast on international media that Pakistan is not a safe state for non-Muslims. But if one looks closely, these terrorist attacks not only harmed the holy sites of non-Muslims but also the holy sites of Muslims. Almost 302 Muslims were killed in these horrific attacks. Article 20 of the constitution of Pakistan provides equal rights to minorities for religious practices. They have the liberty of worship and follow their cultural practices. Article 8-17 of the 1973 Constitution focuses on the fundamental rights of all citizens living in Pakistan.

All existing laws according to the Constitution of 1973 of Pakistan can be amended by following the proper legislative procedure. Article 227 of the constitution of Pakistan positions that all current laws will be carried according to the principles of Islam; Although, Article 227(3) affirms:

'Nothing in this part shall affect the Council of Islamic Personal laws of non-Muslim citizens or their status as citizens. Therefore, the provisions of the ordinances overriding of the Constitution, it may be recalled that in 1991 a federal statute was promulgated whereby Islamic Shariah became the supreme law of the land' (Chaudhary, 2006).

Section 1(4) of the Enforcement of Shariah Act lies down:

'Nothing contained in this Act shall affect the Personal Laws, religious freedom, traditions, customs and way of life of the non-Muslims' (Chaudhary, 2006).

Role of Political Parties to Promote Interfaith Harmony in Pakistan & Participation of Minorities in the Political Process of Pakistan

Religion always has a strong societal hold since the 17th century in the subcontinent. Pakistan came into existence in 1947 on the name of religion (Islam). Quaid-E-Azam, the founder of Pakistan declared that: "Only people with an equal awareness of both western societies and Islamic societies could run the newly created Pakistan properly. Equal rights for minorities and females, democracy, and tolerance should be the main motives of the new state; and that sectarianism and extremism would not find any place in Pakistan" (Wolpert, 1989).

"Pakistan is the heart of Asia" (Masaldan, 1952). These words have been demonstrated by Liaquat Ali Khan on the independence of Pakistan. The governmental structure of Pakistan plays a vital role in the international forums to portray a constructive image of the country due to its geographical importance.

Pakistan Muslim League has fought hard for a Muslim state but it was later declared that Pakistan is a sovereign state and every person can practice his own religion freely without any restrictions. On March 7, 1949, the Objective Resolution was passed by the prime minister of Pakistan and it was defined in the resolution that Pakistan will witness the principles of equality, justice, democracy, tolerance and choice to practice religion for minorities and protecting the basic rights of non-Muslims.

On March 12, 2018, Krishna Kumari Kooqli of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was the first woman senator chosen from Dalit caste. It was a huge step taken by PPP that they have given someone from the minority a chance to participate in government affairs. The parliamentarians need to made space for minorities to demonstrate a strengthen the true spirit of democratic practices in Pakistan.

Non-Muslims in Pakistan have participated in that state electoral process and for the first time in the history of Pakistan three of the minority candidates were able to secure three seats in the National and provincial assemblies of Pakistan) on party ticket of Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarian (PPPP). Those elected candidates are Mahesh Kumar Milani (NA-222), Hari Ram (PS-147) & Giyano Mal (PS-81).

Table 2.

Category	Election 2018	Election 2013
Registered Non-Muslim Voters in Pakistan	3.63 million	2.77 million
Projected Population of Non-Muslim Voters in Pakistan	7 million	*
Hindu Voters in Pakistan	1.77 million	1.40 million
Christian Voters in Pakistan	1.64 million	1.20 million
Ahmadi Voters in Pakistan	167,505	115,966
Sikh Voters in Pakistan	8,852	5,934
Parsi Voters in Pakistan	4,235	3,650
Buddhist Voters in Pakistan	1,452	1,884
Jewish Voters in Pakistan	No official Records	809

Table-2 Source: <http://globalvillagespace.com/Pakistans-religious-minorities-the-significant-other>

The above-shown table indicates that the State of Pakistan is becoming a more peaceful place for non-Muslims. The State of Pakistan is providing them their constitutional rights and their participation in the political process is a prove to that claim by the state (Aqeel, 2018).

Research Methodology

The research has been conducted on the techniques of Descriptive research design. The collection of data is done through primary (data directly collected by the researchers through questionnaires) and secondary (data from the official websites of the government, research papers, news articles and research journals etc.) sources. The research aimed to analyse the situation of interfaith harmony in Pakistan and if Pakistan is as an extremist state as internationally portrayed. Quantitative research technique was used to know about the realities by conducting research at the grass root level. For this purpose, a questionnaire was developed by the researchers. After creating and modifying the questionnaire, the researchers have used pre-testing technique to test the questionnaire before collecting the data. The sample was taken from the target population, which was considered as part of the research. To make sure the validity of the opinion, the target population of the study was Ullema, Religious scholars, lecturers, social activists and politicians. A google form was also generated by the researchers to make sure the participation of people from each province. The Statistical research techniques for Social Sciences (SPSS) software is used for data analysis. Through SPSS, data is thoroughly analyzed statistically and is presented through percentages, means, frequencies, and correlation and regression analysis.

Researchers have generated the results personally. The researchers have identified the findings for this research. In the tables below, in specific time-span the value which occurs most frequently occurs in frequency in a particular group can be defined as frequency value which occurs mostly in a specific time-span and one group. The profiles of respondents are shown in below tables:

Table 3. Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Female	120	40%
Male	180	60%
Total	300	100%

Table 4. Age of Respondents

Age group	Frequency	%
20-35	195	65
35-50	86	28
50abo	19	7
Total	300	100

Table 5. Measure of Central Tendency

Descriptive Statistics	
Statements	Mean score
Interfaith harmony prevails in Pakistan.	3.96
Interfaith harmony paves the way towards peace and prosperity in a state.	3.68
Religious doctrinal differences are primarily responsible for Spreading fear and hatred among the people of Pakistan.	3.36
Inter-faith conflict in Pakistan is the direct consequence of State's contradictory policies.	3.50
Emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan witnessed the mushrooming of various groups who preached hatred against other faiths in Pakistan.	3.44
Terrorism has affected the inter-faith harmony in Pakistan.	3.60
School curriculum needs to be revised to teach religious tolerance and peace among all religions.	3.60
Foreign forces have a free hand to launch their proxy wars in Pakistan on sectarian grounds.	3.22
All banned extremist groups exist with new names in Pakistan.	3.18
The state of Pakistan has curbed religious conflicts and polarization at the societal level.	2.82
Violent Sectarian groups are expanding their geographical influence in the country.	2.32
Media is playing its role to promote religious intolerance in Pakistan.	3.12
Blasphemy law is used fairly in Pakistan.	3.50
The political confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran causes an increase in extremism in Pakistan.	3.50
Poor governance is contributing to spread the religious intolerance in Pakistan.	3.24
Non-Muslims have no place in Pakistan.	2.62
Non-Muslims are safe in Pakistan	2.70

Interpretation of Table 5

The data is evaluated on a measurement scale that is from 1 to 5, where 1 was for strongly agree, 2 for Agree, 3 for Undecided, 4 for Disagree and 5 denotes Strongly disagree. As the table indicates that most of the mean values are greater than 3 which means respondents agreed that factors that are contributing to promote interfaith harmony in Pakistan are more effectful then the factors which are affecting the peace process in Pakistan.

Correlations-Coefficient

The objective of the research is to calculate the relationship between variables by using statistical software that is SPSS. Correlation coefficient is a research formula which is used in this research to check the inter-dependence between the dependent and independent variable and to measure the direction of relationship strength.

H1: Pakistan is a multi-religion state; where the relationship between people belongs to different faiths represent Pakistan as a tolerant state towards religion

Table 6. Correlations Between People of Different Faiths and Tolerance

		People of Different Faiths	Tolerance
Spearman's rho	People of Different Faiths	Cor-relation coefficient	1.000
		Sig. value	.283*
		N	100
	Tolerance	Cor-relation coefficient	.283*
		Sig. value	.046
		N	100

*cor-relation coefficient is significant at the 0.05 (2 tailed) level.

Interpretation

As per the above-shown results, a statistically eloquent association does not exist between people belongs to different faiths and tolerance as the value of p is 0.046 which is less than the level of significance i.e. 0.05. H2: Interfaith harmony is a powerful development procedure which can deliver eternal outcomes to assimilate in a state like Pakistan

Table 7. Correlations between Development Process and State Integration.

		Development process	State integration
Spearman's rho	Development process	Co-relation coefficient	1.000
		Sig. value	.546**
		N	100
	State integration	Co-relation coefficient	.546**
		Sig. value	.06
		N	100

* co-relation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

Explanation

As per the above-shown table, the results indicate that a significant statistical association does exist between state integration level and process and development process as shown value of P is 0.06 is greater than alpha i.e. 0.05.

H3: Religious doctrinal differences are primarily responsible for Spreading fear and hatred among the people of Pakistan.

Table 8. Correlations Between Religious Doctrinal Differences and Hate among people of Pakistan

		Doctrinal Differences	Hate among people
Spearman's rho	Cor-relation coefficient	1.000	.219*
	Doctrinal Differences Sig. value	.	.127
	N	100	100
Hate Among People	Cor-relation coefficient	.219*	1.000
	Hate Among People Sig. value	.127	.
	N	100	100

*co-relation coefficient is significant at the 0.01 (2 tailed) level

Interpretation

As per the results shown in the above table, a statistically eloquent association exists in religious doctrinal differences and hate among people as the value of p is 0.127 which is greater than the level of significance i.e. 0.05. The outcomes showed that here is a positive weak association exists between these two aspects while $r = 2.19$.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

To conclude it all, based on the data collected by the researchers, Pakistan is a religious state where people belong to different faiths are mostly living peacefully. No religion neither allows nor teaches to be violent against other religions. Instead, there are some other forces that are spreading hate among people for which state needs to act against these culprits. It is also analyzed by the research that every human is created with religion, so the difference of opinion must be with religious ideology not with the individual. It is critically analyzed in this paper majority of the population is following Islam as their religion, the religion of peace and harmony. The majority of the population continued to serve and strengthen the interfaith harmony. Many individuals and organizations in Pakistan are playing a very strategic role to promote interfaith harmony among the people in Pakistan.

The most important matter which must be considered is that every religion must be Incorporated in the policy-making process to spread the knowledge in our general public and to aware them of their basic rights as a responsible citizen of the state. To incorporate each state citizen in the policy process, the state needs to implicate societal modification and positive presentation. They are entitled to live with honor by their generous representation in affairs of state. Each individual has the right to claim clear job recruitment to people and the right to authorize land. The state requires controlling the issue of religious radicalism forcefully. Pakistan is very rich in its culture and history so there are numerous religious places of Hindus, Sikh and Christian communities. So, a multi-cultural and multi-religion existence is very important in education, trade and art. It is an obligation to state to guard the phenomenal religious history and cultures of Non-Muslims to provide them a strong and peaceful presence in the State.

The association between religious behavior and social development is strong in Pakistan. Yet, on the whole, the connection is adverse or damaging the state. As the pieces of evidences and arguments equipped in these lines prove, religious manners in the society of Pakistan have triggered delays in the process of development. Patterns and trends are changing in the context of religious behavior because it is damaging the social fabrication of society. Moreover, the partial explanations of Islam have strapped the philanthropic feature of the religion far behind.

Recommendations

This world should be the kind of world now what everyone is dreaming for, and most significantly States should struggle to transform this world a home where people regardless of the variation of religion and culture live peacefully.

- It is to be analyzed that the problem of interfaith harmony in Pakistan would only be handled properly when similarly, the state handles the problem of politics.
- To go entirely secular (as suggested by many respondents) the state would have to sacrifice the very fiber concept of society given to us by the divine knowledge. The state might face problems by men and women in secular societies, severe economic problems in the form of super loans and super interests, biological imbalance in genders, lack of respect on the name of equality, so on and so forth. So, the only solution is we need to admire every other faith as we are supposed to live in one community. If we will be able to feast the message of interreligious harmony, then State can provide justice to the public.
- Pakistan should safeguard that all decrees must comply with its responsibilities under the Resolution on the removal of all Forms of Judgment in contradiction of all the religions. The State of Pakistan must take instant measures to implement and endorse all of the lasting key human moralities to prevail, in specific the International agreement on Political and civil Rights, and the International Covenant on Social and Cultural rights.

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