The Attitude of Media Study Students towards Suicide Attacks

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Abstract: *This study attempts to investigate the attitudes towards suicide bombings among undergraduate university students in Pakistan. It is a descriptive and exploratory study based on surveys and in-depth interviews. The sample of the study was 52 respondents from a middle class, and upper-middle-class backgrounds enrolled inexpensive private institutes in Lahore. The study found that most undergraduate university students in Pakistan do not condone suicide bombings under any circumstances. The in-depth interviews revealed that young students understand and accept that it is impermissible (haram) in Islam. However, it is found that the use of appealing Islamic terminology of "martyrdom" and "jihad" by the militant organizations and the misrepresentation of "suicide attacks" as "martyrdom operations" has to some extent been effective in influencing even the young minds who are not by any means in their orbit. Moreover, this also demonstrates the inability of the Muslim world in countering the misuse of emotional Islamic appeals of jihad and martyrdom thereby allowing such acts to be portrayed as legitimate and sanctioned by Islamic law and, in doing so, damaging the overall image and understanding of Islam in the eyes of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is, therefore, recommended that the Muslim world actively challenge the misrepresentation of suicide attacks as a permissible exercise of jihad and prevent the distortion and confusion of religious teachings.*

Key Words: Media Study, Students, Suicide Attacks, Pakistan, Islam, Jihad

Introduction

Today's world has been corrupted by violence to an extremely high degree. Violence is used to hurt, kill, damage, or destroy someone or something. There are many forms of inflicting violence, such as physical violence, psychological violence, and sexual violence. Suicide attacks is the worst type of violence in which the bomber not only kills himself or herself rather they kill all the people around them as well. The people killed in such attacks can be innocent as well. In suicide bombing, the bomb is delivered on a person, and the impact of that bomb kills the person who delivered it and the people around them. This research paper aims to focus on the attitudes of Media study students of Pakistani University towards suicide bombing because they future Media professionals, what they understand? and what attitude they opt on such issues would matter a lot in mind making of the masses. (Lippmann, W 1922).

Background of the Study

Suicide attacks have occurred throughout history. Many attacks took place during World War II. They date as far back as Samson's suicide attack that killed the Philistine leaders. Suicide attacks have been used by different factions of various countries. The first suicide attack that was recorded was in 1881. It was by a Russian man, Ignaty Grinevitsky, also known as Ignaty Hryniewiecki. He believed that it was his duty to kill Alexander II, and he wanted to die if it meant killing Alexander II. In the past few decades, the number of suicide attacks has rapidly increased. In Pakistan alone, the cases of suicide attacks escalated alarmingly from 2007. The first suicide attack in Pakistan occurred after the 9/11 terrorist attack, and the number of attacks kept increasing after that. In 2009, Pakistan saw the highest number of suicide attacks. However, the highest number of fatalities because of suicide attacks took place in 2010.

Many people consider suicide attacks to be a strategic weapon. There are many organizations that support and encourage suicide bombing. They inform the individuals that if they take part in suicide attacks, they will be considered martyrs, and they will go straight to paradise. They consider it as an act of courage that is done for a greater cause. They believe it to be self-sacrifice which is needed in order for military purposes. Militants often use suicide bombings as such attacks in which they can attack the enemy's base from within. Suicide attacks are adequately operative because the bombers can conceal their weapons and change the time of the attack. The word "Istishhad" has been used by many Islamist groups instead of the word suicide bombing. This word means that they consider suicide attacks means those that will grant them martyrdom. They are convinced that such attacks show how strong their faith in Islam is. However, Islam condemns suicides and killing innocent people. They believe that this is jihad, and they will be rewarded for their actions.

Moreover, Islamist groups such as Al- Qaeda in Iraq, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, Al Dawa, Egyptian Al-Jihad, and Taliban consider suicide attacks to be a vital tool in their operations. Such groups believed the suicide attacks to be "Martyrdom operations", where the suicide bomber is considered to be a martyr (Burki, 2011). These groups inform the individuals that their life would be sacrificed by the will of God and that if they go through with it, they will go to Jannah.

Although, according to Islam, suicide is impermissible. It is said in the Quran that whoever kills herself or himself will be extremely punished. It has also been said that killing one's self will result in them being burned in a fire in the afterlife. Harming one's own self is also not allowed in Islam. It has been said that killing one human means killing the entire humanity. Additionally, it has been promoted in the Quran that one should make peace with his enemies. Islam teaches love, tolerance, and peace, not war. In Islam, taking your own life or murdering someone is strictly prohibited. Only people whom Allah and the Prophet (PBUH) have allowed are to be killed.

Additionally, in some cases, the Islamist groups claim that they have reasons to kill. They kill the oppressors for the people who are being tormented and tortured. They do this in the name of jihad. The people in countries such as Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon attack their oppressors and defend themselves in any possible way they can. They do this because, in this case, they can conceal their weapons and attack the oppressors in an effective manner.

Overall, there are different opinions of every single individual regarding suicide bombing. The perception of suicide attacks even varies within the different sectors of the Muslims. Some Muslims believe suicide attacks to be haram, whereas other Muslims may think that the attacks are justified under the giver circumstances and that there was no way but to resort to a suicide attack. These perceptions change with education. As people started to get more knowledge, they began to differentiate between right and wrong. The attitudes of Pakistani university students will be further discussed in this research paper.

This study attempts to investigate the attitudes of Media study students towards suicide bombings among undergraduate university students in Pakistan. It is a descriptive and exploratory study based on surveys and in-depth interviews. This study will increase our understanding of the phenomena of suicide bombings, examine its acceptance in educated segments of our society, and will be able to make recommendations to the policymakers for the appropriate response in the current situation. The study sample was 52 respondents from a middle class, and upper-middle-class backgrounds enrolled in private institutes in Lahore.

Literature Review

Suicide attacks have a great influence on society. They take a significant part in today's world. The suicides attacks have been rapidly increasing over the past many years. A suicide attack is an attack in which individuals involved as the bombers die in order for the bomb to take place. There are many names for suicide attacks, such as suicide missions, suicide terrorism, suicide attacks, and suicide attacks (Horowitz, 2015). According to Grimland, Apter, and Kerkhof (2006), suicide bombings cause the greatest damage. This damage can be physical as well as psychological. They claimed that such attacks are extremely challenging to stop and almost always succeed. The death of the bombers is considered to be a success for them (Schweitzer, 2001). Suicide bombers, which cause a violent attack on their chosen target and blow themselves up along with their acquired target, are often politically motivated (Grimland, Apter & Kerkhof, 2006). According to Moghadam (2009), in

every continent, more than 35 countries have experienced suicide attacks. Moreover, Schweitzer and Ferber (2015) stated that the September 11 attack in New York that killed around 3000 people was decided by Osama Bin Laden, who established Al-Qaeda in 1988. In this attack, nineteen hijackers hijacked airplanes and crashed them into the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon, which resulted in many deaths. There was a significant increase in the number of suicide attacks after 9/11 throughout the world (Horowitz, 2015). In countries such as Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Afghanistan, the attacks rose notably (Moghadam, 2009).

The word *Istishhad* has been associated with suicide attacks by certain groups. *Istishhad* is an Arabic word that means "Martyrdom". It means to die a hero or to be considered a martyr after death. The word *Istishhad* means jihad against the perceived enemies of Islam (Schweitzer & Ferber, 2015). To some Islamist groups, it means to sacrifice one's life for Allah.

Additionally, some groups consider suicide bombings to be jihad. Jihad is an Arabic word that means "to struggle or to preserve" (Burki, 2011). It is encouraged in Islam where need be. Although, often, people perceive it to be violence for Islam or violence by Muslims. The word jihad has been driven by the word "*jhd*," which means "to strive or struggle". From all the forty-one times it occurred in Quran, it is associated with warfare only two times. Jihad primary is performed for Allah and only to please Him. In Islam, Jihad essentially means to struggle; however, many people, Muslims included, often believe it does a war against Non-Muslims (Burki, 2011).

It should be noted that there appears to be a relationship between suicide bombings and certain religious groups (Horowitz, 2015). According to Burki, 2011, Islamist groups such as Al- Qaeda in Iraq, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, Egyptian Al-Jihad, and Taliban believe suicide bombings to be Istishhad. She stated that they consider it to be "Martyrdom Operations". However, it is said in the Quran, *"Fight in the cause of God against those who fight against you, but do not transgress limits. Lo! God loves not aggressors"* (Surah Al Baqarah 2: 190). It has been stated that there is a certain limit set by Allah that a person must not cross. Suicide and killing an innocent are a few of the limits that must not be crossed.

Suicide in general is haram and impermissible in Islam. It is said in the Quran that, "*Do not kill yourself, for Allah is compassionate towards you. Whoever does so, in transgression and wrongfully, We shall roast in a fire, that is an easy matter for Allah*" (Surah An Nisa 4: 29-30). It has clearly been stated that killing one's own self is a strictly punishable act. The Islamist groups believe that suicide attacks will reward them in the afterlife as it will please Allah but according to the Quran, killing one's own self is not allowed in any situation.

The word jihad is often associated with warfare and violence caused by Muslims (Burki, 2011). In contrast, Islam appreciate making peace, being tolerable, and being open towards others. Allah has promoted kindness in the Muslims. Even to the Pharos, who was an evil-minded person and was cruel to a great extent. It has been said in the Quran that "***Speak to to Pharaoh mildly that perhaps he may be reminded or fear Allah.***" (Surah Taha 20:44). If Islam told the Muslims to be kind even to Pharos, a cold-hearted person, how can it promote suicide attacks?

In another place in Quran, it has been said, "*Make not your hands contribute to (your) destruction; but do good; for God loves those who do good*" (Surah Al Baqarah 2: 195). A person's destruction means anything that brings harm to them. So as a Muslim, one should not partake in such acts and refrain from them as much as they possibly can. A person's own destruction can also lie in mistreating and hurting others.

In contrast, Freamon (2003) states that Islam informs Muslims to fight back when they are being expelled and cast out from their homes. The following verse was revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that stated that Muslims should fight the home invaders. It can also be applied in regards to the current situation in Palestine. In Quran, it is stated that,

"*Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, "Our Lord is Allah" And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned. And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.*" (Surah Al-Hajj 22: 39 – 40)

Although, according to Ahmed M Abdel-Khalek, Islam is taken from an Arabic word Salam which translates to "peace". He states that in Islam, there is no violence or hatred towards any other religion, whether it is Christianity or Jewish. He explains Islam as a religion of unity, friendship, mercy, peace, and harmony. He believes in Islam, a Muslim considers themselves to be created only as Allah's worshippers and His servants. He said that killing someone is considered to be such a deed that if a person kills one human, it is as if he killed the entire mankind. He also talk about suicide. According to him, taking a person's own life is not allowed, and it is highly punishable as it is a violation in accordance with the Quran.

There are a few literature gaps in the research done on this topic. Most of the articles dated a few years back and are outdated. More recent research needs to be done on this topic. It is imperative to study the perception of university students towards suicide attacks. The primary focus of this study is to fill the gaps in the previous research and to conduct a more recent research of this phenomenon with respect to the affluent Pakistani university students of media study departments who have little exposure to the economic problems, which is considered as the major reason for turning towards extremism. Furthermore, the study explored the attitudes of future mind makers towards suicide attacks. (McCombs, M; Shaw, D 1972).

Methodology

This study attempts to investigate the attitudes towards suicide attacks among undergraduate media students in the leading universities of Pakistan. It is a descriptive and exploratory study comprised of two stages. At the first stage, basic descriptive data was collected through a survey regarding the existing opinions and attitudes towards suicide attacks. At the second stage, based on the information obtained through the survey, the comprehension and acceptability towards suicide attacks were further explored using the qualitative method of in-depth interviews from the same sample frame. The findings were then compared with the knowledge sifted from the existing literature on this subject. The population of the study constituted undergraduate students studying in Lahore, Pakistan. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic constraints, a survey was conducted online using Google Forms through non-random purposive sampling using the snowball technique.

Through convenient non-probability sampling method, a sample of the 52 respondents was contacted, largely belonged to the middle class and upper-middle-class backgrounds and was studying inexpensive private institutes. The survey questionnaire comprised 7 items in total. The in-depth interviews were conducted online with 15 undergraduate students.

The quantitative data thus collected was analyzed, and percentage data was displayed in charts demonstrating comparisons, contrasts, and trends.

The limitations of the study are the small sample size limited to the media and marketing students, and representative of an affluent class only. Moreover, due to time and circumstantial constraints, the overtly religious young men and women could not be accessed.

Results and Discussion

Predominantly our respondents comprised of educated young men and women (1:2) undergraduate student's self reportedly belonging to upper-middle class and middle-class backgrounds and having ideological bends as given in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

		N	%
Gender	Male	16	30.8
	Female	36	69.2
Social class	Upper middle class	26	50
	Middle class	26	50
Ideology	Conservative	8	15.4
	Moderate	37	71.2
	Liberal	7	13.5

The data of the respondent was obtained regarding their most reliable sources of information about politics and society. The mean use of each source , including all the traditional, electronic, and social media outlets. It was found that students mostly rely on Google, YouTube, and WhatsApp for all kind of information (Figure 1). Among traditional sources, Television is the most preferred medium for the youth. But it seems that a major part of the information received is from social media. This indicates that they are vulnerable to fake and misleading propaganda on the internet. Social media platforms are the recruiting fields of militant groups and spreading false beliefs and misleading interpretations of religion.
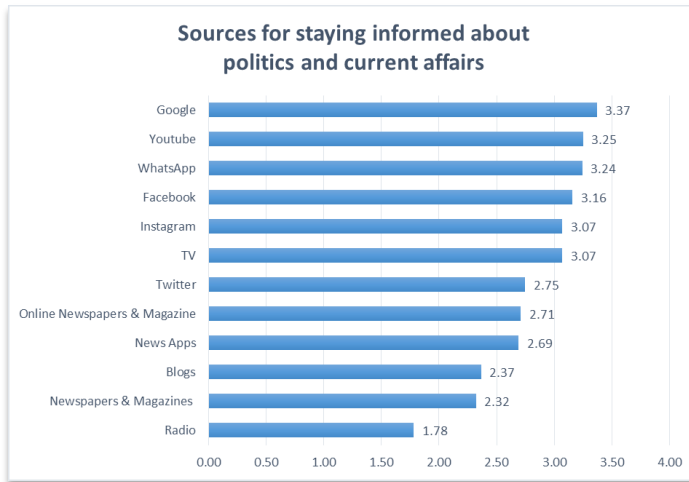

Figure 1: Mean Graph of the Sources Students rely on for Staying Informed about Politics and Current affairs

In response to the question of whether suicide bombings are in the interests of Muslims or not, majority of the respondents said no, while 27% said yes or were undecided, as shown in Figure 2. Furthermore, it can be seen in Figure 3 that when asked to give their opinion on whether such attacks could be used to protect the interests of the Muslims from their perceived enemies, the respondents were still clear in their verdict that suicide attacks could not be approved of. 82.7% unambiguously gave their opinion that they do not approve of suicide bombings even if they are carried out in order to protect the interests of the Muslims.
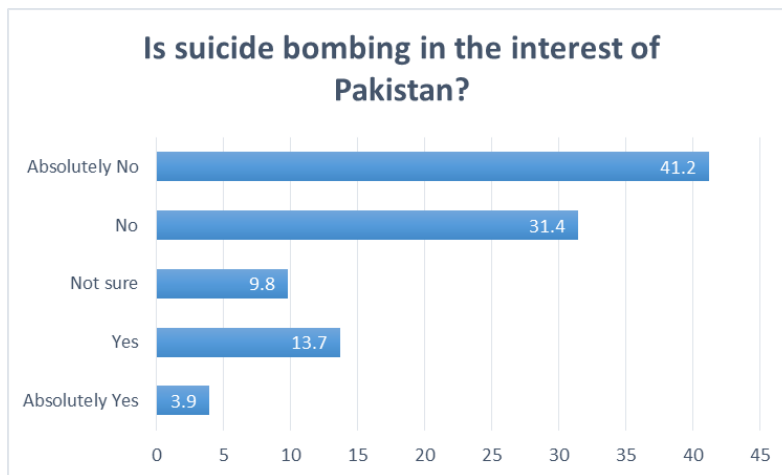

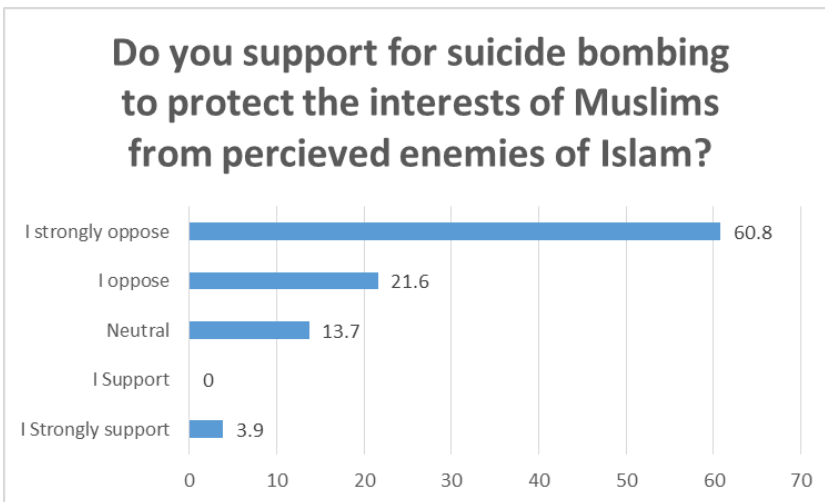**Figure 2:** Opinion Whether Suicide Attacks in the Interest of Pakistan

Figure 3: Opinion about using Suicide Attack to Fight Perceived Enemies of Islam

Very few respondents, 3.8%, seemed to approve of suicide attacks in all circumstances. Further probing the attitudes and feelings of the respondents regarding suicide bombings, they were asked about their first reaction when hearing about suicide bombings. A large majority, 88.5%, said they believed it should not have happened. Only 5.7% of the respondents condoned the attack and believed it should have happened. Others were neutral, as displayed in Figure 3.

To get a deeper understanding of their thoughts, the respondents were asked about their belief in terms of the permissibility (halal) and impermissibility (haram) of suicide bombings in Islam, 88.5%, said that they are not permissible. Not a single respondent said that they are permissible (halal) in Islam. It turned out that, in general, the respondents are clear that suicide attacks are not permissible in Islam under any circumstances. However, approximately one-third of the respondents did not totally disapprove of suicide attacks. These findings are exhibited in Figure 4 and Figure 5, respectively.
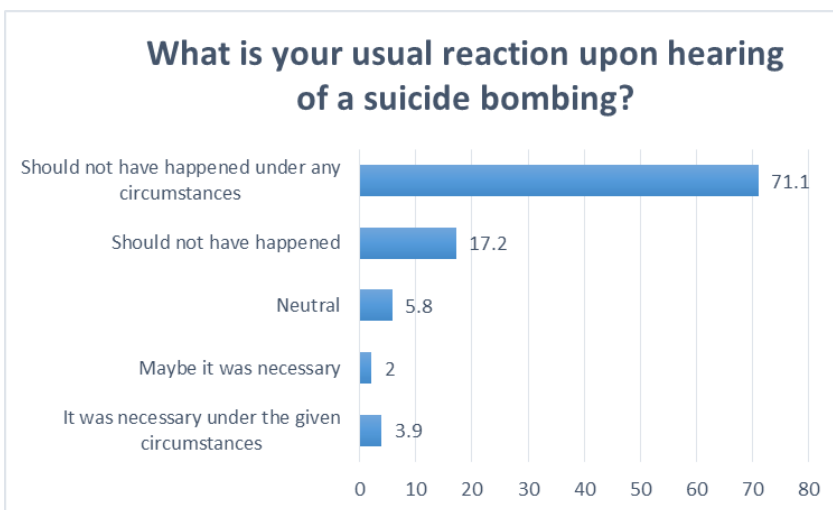

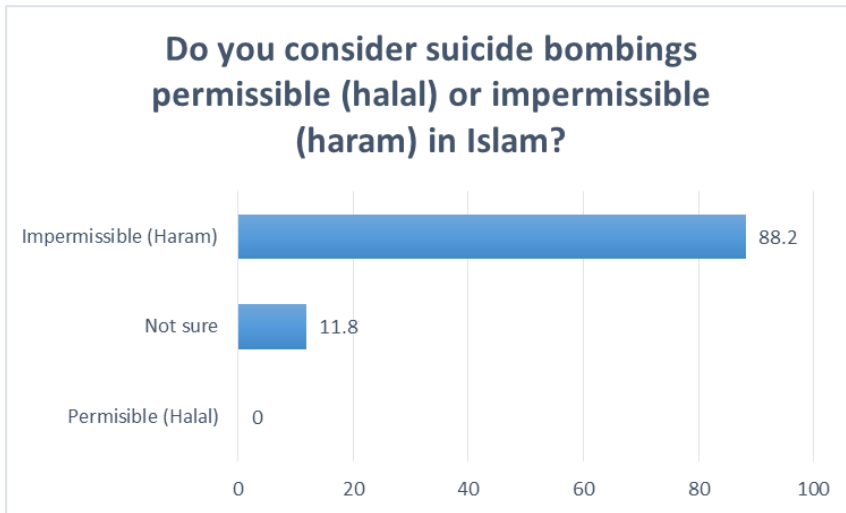**Figure 4:** Respondents Reaction upon Suicide Attack News

Figure 5: Opinion on Permissibility of Suicide Attacks in Islam

From the previously discussed findings, it can be inferred that instinctively a large majority of the youth believes that suicide attacks are not in the interests of Muslims and are totally impermissible (haram) in Islam under all circumstances. However, inconsistency of thought is visible among a small number of respondents who recognize that suicide bombings are haram but still believe that they are in the interests of the Muslims and seem to allow them under certain circumstances. This shows that the propaganda by militant organizations and their use of the appealing terminology of martyrdom operations do seem to work on a portion of the population and does indeed impact the minds of the Muslim youth. Cognitive dissonance is visible in the responses that despite knowing the impermissibility of suicide bombings, they still get caught up in the militants' narrative that such tactics are in the interests of the Muslims and still consider the perpetrators to be martyrs.

For further insight, in-depth interviews were conducted with fifteen undergraduate students. The findings resonated strongly with the survey results discussed earlier. The students were very clear that suicide is *haram* in Islam and under no circumstances is it permissible to take your own life. They did not support suicide attacks even if they were being carried out in the name of Islam and jihad. However, six out of the fifteen interviewees seemed confused. In principle, the interviewee was against such attacks and considered them to be haram and strictly prohibited; on the other hand, they believed exceptions could be made under certain circumstances. The militants' propaganda that suicide attacks are legitimate and sanctioned under certain conditions may have been influenced the minds of the young students.

The aim of the study was to explore the opinions and attitudes of young university students about Suicide Bombing. Since the early 1980s, the idea of Suicide attacks in the context of jihad has been a concern among Muslims and Non-Muslims as militants have taken it as a strategy to achieve their goals.

The use of Suicide Bombings as a religiously-motivated tactic to combat enemies became widespread in the Islamic world during the Lebanese Civil War that went on for 15 years from 1975 to 1990. The Hezbollah militants inspired by tactics used during Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s carried out a suicide attack on the US embassy in Beirut in December 1981, killing 69 people. In 1983, Hezbollah bombers carried out a particularly effective suicide attack that destroyed a building in Lebanon, killing 241 American marines and 58 French paratroopers. The suicide bombings ultimately led to the withdrawal of all American and French forces from Beirut. Hezbollah militants once again used this tactic to drive out the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from South Lebanon between 1983 and 2000. Only a few months after the IDF retreat from Lebanon, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad began their own suicidal campaigns in the Palestinian Territories in September 2000 (Haddad, 2004).

The frequent use of suicide attacks by militant

organizations lead to some very important questions. The most basic of the questions is if suicide is allowed in mainstream Islam. Secondly, as most militant organizations paint suicide bombings as a just and noble way to wage *jihad* against the *Kuffar* in their propaganda, it is important to determine whether killing oneself is allowed if it ensures a decisive victory over *Kuffar.*

Intihar, the Arabic word for suicide, has been largely condemned and believed to be an act that leads to eternal damnation in Hell. Most Muslims believe that only Allah has the power to decide when a person's time on Earth will come to an end, and committing suicide and thus ending one's own time on Earth may be viewed as an attempt to play god.

It is important to note that committing suicide is strictly haram or forbidden in Islam. According to Islamic doctrine, life is Allah's gift and must be cherished. Not under any circumstances can it be forsaken.

The Muslim orientation towards suicide attacks cannot be fully understood without understanding the concept of *jihad* itself. In Arabic, the literal meaning of the word *jihad* is to struggle or persevere. In the Holy Quran, the term *Jihad fil sabil Allah* has been used for acts that have the aim of serving the purposes of Allah Almighty on Earth. As a result of terrorism, *jihad* has become a highly charged word and generally come to be understood as violence in the name of Islam; however, the term ''jihad'' was originally used in the Holy Quran in order to encourage devotion to Allah Almighty and to strive with one's person and wealth in the path of Allah in order to please him (Burki, 2011).

Militants mainly rely on *Jihad al saghir*, literally "lesser jihad," to justify suicide bombings. *Jihad al saghir,* also known as *jihad bin saif*, literally means "jihad of the sword," and refers to an armed struggle in the way of Allah.

Jihad al sagheer has two types: defensive and offensive. Defensive jihad refers to an armed struggle against Non-Muslims that have invaded or taken over a part of the *Dar al Islam*, the areas where Muslims are in the majority. It is widely believed in the Islamic world that when the Non-Muslims carry out a military invasion and occupy a part of the *Dar al Islam*, it should not be considered as an invasion or occupation of that particular Muslim majority state; rather, it should be seen as an assault on the *Dar al Islam* as a whole. It then becomes obligatory for all Muslims, irrespective of

their geographical location, to wage a defensive jihad to liberate the Muslim majority area from the non-Muslim rule. Furthermore, those who cannot physically wage war, such as the sick, the aged, or the young, they are exempted. However, they can assist in other ways, such as by providing monetary support or shelter. But for the able-bodied Muslim men, it is mandatory or *fard ayn* to fight when attacked by the Non-Muslims. Offensive Jihad involves taking the fight to the abode of war or the *Dar al Harb*, i.e., non-Muslim majority regions. However, this form of jihad is understood to be a voluntary one (Burki, 2011).

Acts of *Istishhad* are often misunderstood to be a permissible exercise of *jihad. Istishhad* is the Arabic word for "martyrdom." In recent years the term has come to mean a heroic act of sacrifice and has turned into a full-fledged military and political strategy (Whitehead & Abufarha, 2008). Those who extend the idea of martyrdom to include suicide attacks tend to overlook the Islamic laws regarding armed warfare that prohibit such acts. The Islamic rules of warfare do not permit killing women, children, or non-combatants, or damaging cultivated or residential areas.

For more than 1000 years, these rules were accepted by all Muslims irrespective of the sect; but in the 1980s, militant organizations challenged them in an attempt to justify suicide attacks despite clear transgressions of existing Islamic laws.

Evidently, militant organizations such as *Al Qaeda* have been overwhelmingly employing questionable means to achieve their goals. Their strategies unmistakably violate the limits imposed by the Quranic suras and hadiths, which explain rules of warfare. To convince, mobilize and recruit from the Muslim populace to wage offensives using questionable tactics, including suicide attacks, which lead to the killing of innocent people and the destruction of properties, terrorist entities rely on propaganda aimed at two main things: first, justifying religiously and traditionally forbidden tactics; second, redefining the boundaries of Dar al Islam to depict their struggle as defensive. Through such propaganda, they are able to make it seem incumbent upon all able-bodied Muslims to participate in their armed struggle and trick them into believing that the goals justify the means even if it involves using violent tactics that include killing innocent, unarmed civilians who may also be Muslims.

Positing a suicide attack as an act of martyrdom is

rejected for two reasons; first, in Islam martyrdom refers to a situation where another person kills a Muslim warrior during the war and not when a Muslim warrior kills himself to harm others. Second, martyrdom can never be achieved in violation of the commands of Allah, that in this case, means killing of innocent people particularly women, children, and non-combatants, and damaging properties. Therefore, suicide attacks are not permissible in Islam, even in the name of jihad (Feldman, 2006).

Moreover, Islam clearly forbids suicide. Quran says that "And take not life, which Allah has made sacred, except by way of justice and law," in Surah Al-An'am 6:151 as a prohibition against suicide: also, this prohibition is unambiguously communicated in many of the hadiths discussing this matter, where suicide is not allowed even when one is seriously ill or in extreme pain.

Defying all the Quranic and hadith rulings, militants, in order to legitimize suicide attacks, deliberately use the term martyrdom operation instead of suicide attack to mask the nature of heinous act. The concept of martyrdom operation essentially implies that the attacker will die in the act (Schweitzer & Ferber, 2005). Therefore, the Muslim world's allowance of the use of deceptive terminology of martyrdom operation is in reality equal to condoning suicide attacks and emboldening militants to increase their mass appeal and expand their recruitment base, thus fueling their wars.

It is concluded that the overwhelming majority of undergraduate university students in Pakistan do not condone suicide bombings under any circumstances. They understand and accept that it is impermissible (haram) in Islam. However, the data revealed that the propaganda campaigns run by militant organizations using appealing Islamic terminology of "martyrdom" and "Jihad" are able to influence young minds. Their use of the term "martyrdom operations" instead of "suicide attacks" is effective in manipulating young Muslims to support their motives and actions. This also demonstrates the inability of the Muslim world to challenge the misuse of emotional Islamic appeals of jihad and martyrdom, thereby portraying such acts as legitimate and sanctioned by Islamic laws and damaging the overall image and understanding of Islam in the eyes of Non-Muslims and Muslims alike.

Conclusion

The major objective of this study was to provide a general overview of attitudes of Media study undergraduate university students in Pakistan towards suicide attacks. The analysis reported here focused on university students living in Lahore, Pakistan, in order to increase the understanding of the phenomena of suicide attacks and to examine the attitudes towards suicide attacks among the media students who will be the future opinion leaders of the general public through media. The appreciation of the complex interplay of politics and religion of the media students plays a significant role in building the perception of the suicide attacks and jihad phenomenon rationally. The findings of the study revealed that a large proportion of the media students have clarity about the relationship between the suicide attacks as a political strategy and religious decrees. The majority do not condone martyrdom operations. However, as the data shows, a tiny proportion of the educated population are confused about the reality of suicide attacks and appear to be the victims of propaganda and fake information disseminated on social media.

From a state policy standpoint, the focus should not just be on the attackers themselves but should also be on those who condone and support such attacks, were there not approving segments in society to provide them with shelter, support, and a recruitment base, terrorists would have great difficulty in carrying out their operations.

While the use of "martyrdom operations" as a legitimate tactic in jihad has not gained the kind of unconditional support, the militant organizations had been hoping for despite their attempts to justify the legitimacy of such attacks in the eyes of their fellow Muslims. Furthermore, what is most damaging to the case of such organizations is the fact that casualties from such attacks majorly involve innocent women, children, and non-combatants, including their fellow Muslims. However, it is important to note that due to the relentless propaganda campaigns run by various militant groups and their supporters, the boundaries of what constitutes martyrdom in jihad in mainstream Muslim perceptions have been stretched. In essence, a reinterpretation of the Quran and hadith, along with a lack of strong condemnation and criticism by leaders and clerics of the Islamic world, contamination of the concept of martyrdom has taken place, which has exceeded the moral and ethical bounds of jihad.

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