

# EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND THEIR CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN (2016-2022)

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## Abstract

Despite having a majority-Muslim population, Pakistan also has a number of minorities. Several religious identities participated in the political struggle for Pakistan's foundation prior to 1947 for the realization of fundamental human rights alongside the nation's majority-Muslim population. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founding father, repeatedly underlined that minorities will have the same rights as other Pakistani citizens, including total religious freedom to profess and practice their beliefs in the newly established state. This objective might not be successfully accomplished in later years or through various tactics. The exclusion of religious minorities from citizenship and education is a serious issue. Education is the means by which a country progresses. Every person has the fundamental right to an education, regardless of any differences. The marginalized communities in Pakistan are not given equal opportunities to attend school. The social and educational systems in Pakistan are inherently unequal. Sadly, the educational system is rife with this inequality. The study aims at analyzing literature on educational exclusion and citizenship to offer strategies for reducing social division and eliminating discrimination against religious minorities by encouraging respect for all cultures through an egalitarian system of education. This study's objective is to evaluate potential changes to educational policy that might promote an inclusive mindset. Methodology for data collection includes study of themes relevant to religious minorities like educational exclusion and citizenship. Literature is reviewed from 2016 till 2022 by the researchers. Thematic review of previous literature from various authentic sources i.e., research gate, sage publications, Taylor and Francis, Google scholar and fifteen research studies have been studied. Two themes educational exclusion and citizenship have been thematically reviewed through literature selected for research and main findings corresponding with themes are presented in tabular form. Data is analyzed through thematic analysis method. It is concluded that Pakistan's educational system has to be reorganized to employ an inclusive strategy. The educational system in Pakistan is insufficiently supportive of religious pluralism and harmony. This type of exclusion causes the society to grow increasingly divided. It is essential to include minority groups in the social development of the nation, especially in the educational curriculum so that development can take place through education. The inclusion of religious minorities in the realm of development is imperative. An educated minority is a tremendous asset for the country. Education is supposed to promote peace, progress, tolerance, and respect for differences.

**Keywords:** Educational exclusion, religious minorities, inclusive education.

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**Introduction:**

Although there are other minorities in Pakistan, Muslims make up the majority of the country's population. Alongside Pakistan's majority-Muslim population, several religious groups participated in the political battle before 1947 for the realization of fundamental human rights. Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founding father, reaffirmed on numerous times that minorities would have complete religious freedom to profess and practice their religion in the newly founded state and that they would have the same rights as other Pakistani citizens. The exclusion of religious minorities from citizenship and education is a serious issue. Education is the means by which a country progresses. Every person has the fundamental right to an education, regardless of discrimination. The marginalized communities in Pakistan are not allowed to attend school. The social and educational systems in Pakistan are inherently unequal. Sadly, the educational system is rampant with this inequality.

**Research Objectives:**

The objective of the study is to analyze literature on educational exclusion and citizenship to offer strategies for reducing social division and eliminating discrimination against religious minorities by encouraging respect for all cultures through an egalitarian system of education. This study's objective is to evaluate potential changes to educational policy that might promote an inclusive mindset.

**Research Methodology:**

The methodology of the research is content analysis of relevant literature which are reviewed thematically. The study of several themes pertinent to religious minorities, such as citizenship and educational marginalization, is part of the data collection process. The researchers have reviewed literature from 2016 through 2022. A thematic review of prior research has been done with 15 research studies. Research Gate, Sage publications, Taylor & Francis, and Google Scholar along with other reliable sources are consulted. The two topics of educational exclusion and citizenship have been thematically reviewed through the selection of research-relevant literature, and the key findings that align with the themes are tabulated and presented. Subthemes included legal and policy framework, discrimination and harassment, quality education, access to education for religious minorities, and sensitivity to cultural and religious differences. Thematic analysis is the method used to analyze data.

A method of analyzing qualitative data is thematic analysis, which is applied to a set of texts based on recurrent themes, concepts, and semantic trends found in literature. In order to conduct thematic analysis for this study, researchers first became acquainted with the themes of education and citizenship that had been identified. They then reviewed recently published articles, with a focus on challenges faced by religious minorities in Pakistan and those that were most pertinent to the educational challenges faced by this marginalized group. Afterwards, the articles were arranged in tabular form, with the authors' titles, years, and main findings of the texts categorized. Texts that highlighted educational exclusion and challenges to citizenship were extracted, and data was organized and analyzed in accordance with the

following themes.

Theme 1: Access to Education for Religious Minorities, Theme 2: Quality of Education

Theme 3: Discrimination and Harassment, Theme 4: Religious and Cultural Sensitivity

Theme 5: Legal and Policy Framework

**Literature Review:**

**Following is the details of the literature selected for educational exclusion of religious minorities in selected year 2016-2022.**

**Table: Literature Focusing on Educational Exclusion of Religious Minorities in Pakistan**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Year Publication</b>	<b>Main Findings</b>
Zaheer Ali and Utsa Mukherjee (2022) <sup>1</sup>	“We are not equal citizens in any respect”: citizenship education and the routinization of violence in the everyday lives of religious minority youth in Pakistan	Diaspora Indigenous and Minority Education 2022, Vol. 16, NO. 4, 246–258	The study’s emphasis is on experiences of religious minority youth and relationship between educational curricula and religious exclusion. It highlighted that the Curriculum subjects minorities to institutionalized forms of violence and foster an atmosphere that justifies prejudice and discrimination against minorities. Curriculum as a catalyst for violence. Need for reforms in citizenship education curricula and topromote an inclusive identity.
M. Habib Qazi (2021) <sup>2</sup>	Construction of students’ religious national identities in Pakistani state schools and its implications for minorities.	A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 2021 Published by Taylor & Francis Group	The study's main point was that state schools and national education were used in the curriculum to help children develop their national identities. The textbooks used in Pakistan's national curriculum ignore students' connections to other cultures, ethnic groups, and religions in favor of using it as a political platform for the creation of students' distinct

<sup>1</sup>,Zaheer, & Utsa Mukherjee. 2022. “We are not equal citizens in any respect”: citizenship education and the routinization of violence in the everyday lives of religious minority youth in Pakistan. *Diaspora, Taylor & Francis Publications Group. Indigenous and Minority Education* 16:4, 246-258.

<sup>2</sup> Qasim Jan, Yi Xie, Muhammad Habib Qazi, Zahid Javid Choudhary & Baha Ul Haq. (2022) Examining the role of Pakistan’s national curriculum textbook discourses on normalising the Taliban’s violence in the USA’s Post 9/11 war on terror in South Waziristan, Pakistan. *British Journal of Religious Education* 44:3, pages 246-255.

			<p>Islamic identities. Numerous consequences for Pakistan's religious minorities may result from these tendencies in school textbooks, including the possibility of their exclusion from the definition of citizenship in Pakistan. While ignoring their cultural and religious views, curricula provide students a singularly Islamic view of Pakistan. Similar to this, the statistics imply that the depiction of Pakistan's religious minorities in textbook discourses is entirely absent. The majority of students has a Muslim versus Non-Muslim worldview, exhibit self-righteousness, and show extreme ethnocentrism against other Non-Muslims.</p>
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Dr.Khaista Rahman (2021) <sup>3</sup>	Attitudes towards Religious Minorities in Pakistan: Gaps in the Literature and Future Directions	Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review July-December 2021, Vol. 5, No. 2[345-359]	<p>In Pakistan, there exist negative attitudes towards religious minorities that have a significant effect on their lives. Bias against religious minorities within the current educational system. The curriculum falls short of addressing the needs and rights of underrepresented populations. The main cause of problems for minority children in public schools is a discriminatory curriculum that exalts militancy and violence against non-Muslims. In Pakistan, official policies and school curricula are seen as the main causes of people's views towards minorities.</p>
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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Khaista Rahman, "Attitudes towards Religious Minorities in Pakistan: Gaps in the Literature and Future Directions," Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review (July-December 2021), Vol. 5, No. 2, 345-359, DOI: [http://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021\(5-II\)2.28](http://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021(5-II)2.28).

<p>Mukhtiar Burdi, Maryum Urrooj, Dr. Muhammad Moiz Khan (2018)<sup>4</sup></p>	<p>Exclusion of Religious minorities from National Curriculum of Pakistan</p>	<p>Pakistan Journal of Special Education (PJSE) Vol. 19, 2018 © Department of Special Education, University of Karachi</p>	<p>Study emphasizes that "curriculum" has overlooked minorities. It has been noted that students from minority religions are offered the option of studying Islam or another alternative subject in the humanities or sciences. No course focused on the study of their faith is provided for them. This fosters a sense of isolation. Currently taught curricula is a cause of social segregation</p>
<p>Maria-Magdalena Fuchs and Simon Wolfgang Fuchs (2020)<sup>5</sup></p>	<p>Religious Minorities in Pakistan: Identities, Citizenship and Social Belonging</p>	<p>South Asia; Journal of South Asian Studies 2020, Vol. 43, NO. 1, 52–67</p>	<p>According to the study, there are a variety of problems, including a lack of access to health care, education, sanitation, transportation, and occupational discrimination, as well as more direct instances of violence like forced conversions, blasphemy accusations, targeted murders as well as regular assaults on houses of worship. Caste prejudices still exist in modern Pakistan towards religious minorities.</p>
<p>Fatima Ebadat Khan (2018)<sup>6</sup></p>	<p>Historical Revisionism in Pakistani Textbooks: A Case Study of Public School Curriculum</p>	<p>Scholedge International Journal Of Multidisciplinary &amp; Allied Studies ISSN 2394-336X, Vol.05, Issue 08 (2018) Pg 89-98.</p>	<p>The revisionist history that is being taught in the nation's textbooks can be related to the surge in hate crimes and targeted terrorism. Minorities have been eliminated from the curriculum. The story of otherness being told in school textbooks and the employment of 'we' versus 'them' narratives in the country's school curricula, which casts people from minorities as outsiders, intensifies heterogeneity.</p>

<sup>4</sup> Mukhtiar Burdi, Maryum Urrooj, and Dr. Muhammad Moiz Khan, "Exclusion of Religious Minorities from National Curriculum of Pakistan," Pakistan Journal of Special Education (PJSE) Vol. 19 (2018): © Department of Special Education, University of Karachi, ISSN No. 1818-2860.

<sup>5</sup> Maria-Magdalena Fuchs and Simon Wolfgang Fuchs, "Religious Minorities in Pakistan: Identities, Citizenship and Social Belonging," South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies (Pages 52-67, Published online: 12 Dec 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1695075>.

<sup>6</sup> Ebadat Khan, Fatima, Historical Revisionism in Pakistani Textbooks: A Case Study of Public School Curriculum (November 24, 2018). Scholedge International Journal Of Multidisciplinary & Allied Studies ISSN 2394-336X, Vol. 5, Issue 8 (2018) Pg. 89-98, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3290508>

Ali Raza Shah & Dr. Bela Nawaz (2021) <sup>7</sup>	Issues and State of Religious Minorities in Pakistan: A Systematic Literature Review	Pakistan Social Sciences Review July-September 2021, Vol. 5, No. 3 [70-88]	Literature claims that forced conversion of women and girls, restricted religious freedom, discrimination in schools, social exclusion, a lack of economic and employment opportunities, and prejudice based on identity are among the problems faced by religious minorities.
Farooq Yousaf (2016) <sup>8</sup>	South Asia Democratic Foundation: The plight of Religious Minorities in Pakistan	Technical Report · February 2016 DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.17953.92000	The study made clear that minorities' rights are not upheld. The actual meaning of Article 20 of the Constitution is not being followed, and minorities are granted complete freedom to practice their religion in addition to security. There is violence and Religious attacks against Pakistani minorities.
Amna Farooq Tayyaba Sohail (2019) <sup>9</sup>	Conceptualization of Religious Belonging of Christian Youth in Higher Education	Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC) Volume 9, Issue 2, Fall 2019 pISSN: 2075-0943, eISSN: 2520-0313	It is mentioned that students from religious minorities were forced to take Islamic studies as a subject because there was a paucity of knowledge about them. Christian students said that their Muslim peers avoided them and were reluctant to have meals with them once they learned of their religious affiliation as a result of the stereotypical behavior that is associated with Christians. A growing number of Christians are dropping out of school in the primary grades, and the curriculum contains bias against

<sup>7</sup> Ali Raza Shah and Dr. Bela Nawaz, "Issues and State of Religious Minorities in Pakistan: A Systematic Literature Review," Pakistan Social Sciences Review (July-September 2021), Vol. 5, No. 3, 70-88, P-ISSN 2664-0422, O-ISSN 2664-0430

<sup>8</sup> Farooq Yousaf. 2016. South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF) Focus: The plight of Religious Minorities in Pakistan. ResearchGate.net Publications.

<sup>9</sup> Amna Farooq, and Tayyaba Sohail. 2019. "Conceptualization of Religious belonging of Christian Youth in Higher Education." Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization 9, no. 2: 253-271.

			<p>minorities. Universities should provide curricula for all students that include lessons on interreligious cooperation in order to encourage religious tolerance.</p>
<p>Uzma Dayan Mashal Naeem Khan Arshad Ali (2017)<sup>10</sup></p>	<p>The Experience of Being Minority Group Member: The Case Of Four Christian Students in Pakistan.</p>	<p>Pakistan Annual Research Journal ISSN: 1990-6579 Vol. No 53, 2017</p>	<p>Christian, Hindu, and Sikhs are three examples of religious minorities. Minority Christian students in Pakistan encounter a variety of obstacles in their academic careers, including instances of prejudice on the part of professors and peers and an educational system that does not include them in certain subjects. It is clear that minority students frequently use the "wall of silence," disturbance, and absenteeism as forms of resistance. These strategies of resistance not only undermine students' confidence but also foster animosity against other classmates. The respondents frequently used "sitting at the back" or "being quiet" as forms of resistance. Curriculum has been a factor in the creation of an unequal academic environment in the schools. The needs of minority students must be taken into account in the curriculum. Their educational outcomes, personalities, identities, and behaviors are all impacted by discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or religion in addition</p>

<sup>10</sup> Uzma Dayan, Mashal Khan, and Arshad Ali, "The Experience of Being a Minority Group Member: The Case of Four Christian Students in Pakistan," 53 (2017).

			to being detrimental.
Rizwan Khan, Ihsan Ullah, Abdul Wahab (2021) <sup>11</sup>	Curriculum of Hatred and intolerances in Pakistan: A glimpse into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa textbooks	Pakistan Review of Social Sciences Vol. 2, No. 1, 2021	Curriculum spreading hatred for religious minorities, like minorities are inferior and enemies of Muslims, Such biased in the curriculum was not only affected the religious minorities. Pakistan must change its course curriculum and amended its textbooks, Particularly in KP. Hate materials that are biased in nature must be eliminated from the textbooks. Minorities students from all faiths should be allowed to study their own Religions.
Farid Panjwani & Camilla Hadi Chaudhary (2022) <sup>12</sup>	Towards a rights-based multi-religious curriculum? The case of Pakistan	Human Right Education Review, ISSN 2535-5406 Vol 5, No 2 (2022)	There is violation of respect for identity and participation of religious minorities. There is need to have a new multi religious curriculum for religious minorities. The five other religions' curricula are part of the proposed reforms, which may fulfill certain human rights demands for educational equality for religious minorities.

<sup>11</sup> Rizwan Khan, Ihsan Ullah, Abdul Wahab, "Curriculum of Hatred and Intolerance in Pakistan: A Glimpse into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbooks," Pakistan Review of Social Sciences 2, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>12</sup> Farid Panjwani and Camilla Hadi Chaudhary, "Towards a Rights-based Multi-religious Curriculum? The Case of Pakistan," Human Rights Education Review Vol. 5, No. 2 (2022), ISSN 2535-5406.



<p>Aina Tarabini, Judith Jacovkis &amp; Alejandro Montes (2017)<sup>13</sup></p>	<p>Factors in Educational Exclusion: including the voice of the youth</p>	<p>Journal of Youth Studies, 2017</p>	<p>In addition to the mechanisms of social exclusion, schools themselves also produce educational isolation through their actors, relationships, and practices. Education exclusion includes things like not being accepted as a "proper learner" in the classroom, not being heard, represented, or taken seriously, being stigmatized, neglected, or even ignored, and feeling completely cut off from educational practices and knowledge.</p>
<p>Tahira Jabeen, Faiza Tariq, Mamoona Abdul Jabbar, Mishal &amp; Fakhar un Nisa (2017)<sup>14</sup></p>	<p>Experiences of Christian Students in Public Schools of Lahore</p>	<p>Journal of Educational Sciences &amp; Research, Volume 4 No. 2, Fall 2017</p>	<p>Christian students faced discrimination in public schools because they were forced to study subjects like Islamiyat against their will due to a lack of subject options. The way the state-run education system and curriculum are created and carried out is what gave rise to the discrimination that people experienced. For instance, ethics is offered as a subject substitute for Islamiyat in many schools, but the subject is either not taught there or is taught by a different teacher.</p>
<p>Danish Alia Tehzeeb Banob &amp; Madiha Ehsan</p>	<p>Structural Inequalities and Minority Rights: Analyzing the Formal Aspects in Context of Pakistan</p>	<p>American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology, and Sciences (ASRJETS)(2019) Volume 60, No 1, pp 212-232</p>	<p>The research emphasizes that while minorities are given full constitutional rights, these protections are rarely actually followed. Actual events frequently diverge significantly from what is recorded in the legal system. Lack of understanding of the legal system is one of the factors contributing to the exploitation of minorities in Pakistan. Minorities are unable to protect themselves from such</p>

<sup>13</sup> Aina Tarabini, Judith Jacovkis, and Alejandro Montes. 2017. "Factors in educational exclusion: Including the voice of the youth." *Journal of Youth Studies* 21, no. 1: 1-16.

<sup>14</sup> Tahira Jabeen, Faiza Tariq, Mamoona Abdul Jabbar, Mishal, and Fakhar un Nisa, "Experiences of Christian Students in Public Schools of Lahore," *Journal of Educational Sciences & Research* Volume 4, No. 2 (Fall 2017).

(2019) <sup>15</sup>			exploitation because of their lack of awareness. The general public is unaware of the rights, laws, and penalties for violating minority laws. Reforms in education are also required to guarantee equal access to education.
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## **Findings & Analysis**

### **A Theme 1: Access to Education for Religious Minorities**

#### **1. Disparities in enrollment rates between religious groups**

Given that barely 4-5% of Pakistan's population is religiously diverse and that Pakistan is a Muslim nation, it should come as no surprise that Muslim pupils predominate in Pakistani schools<sup>16</sup>. However, our study has shown that Muslim dominance in schools and colleges is due to a combination of factors, including a greater population as well as the denial of entrance to about 58.7% of minority pupils. 298 instructors in all were questioned, and they shared their opinions on this specific subject. According to the data, religious minorities are excluded from admission 11.4% of the time because of their beliefs, 2.7% of the time because there aren't enough seats, 23.5% of teachers think they are excluded because of their poor academic standing, and 41.3% of teachers think that minorities are not excluded from admission. Overall, 58.7% of applications were denied admission for various reasons, which pushed minority students behind in the growth of their field. Minority children continue to be illiterate as a result, and according to an NCJP assessment, just 34% of Christians in Punjab are literate, compared to 46.56% of the Muslim majority.<sup>17</sup>

The existence of prejudice against minorities cannot be disputed. In light of this, prejudice may raise the dropout rate for minorities and foster hostility between students who practice different religions. Although the students are not to blame because the professors are in responsible of creating the

<sup>15</sup> Danish Alia Tehzeeb Banob and Madiha Ehsan, "Structural Inequalities and Minority Rights: Analyzing the Formal Aspects in Context of Pakistan," American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology, and Sciences (ASRJETS) Volume 60, No. 1 (2019): 212-232.

<sup>16</sup> Ghulam Mustafa, M. Arslan, and Tooba Ahmad. 2020. "Minorities of Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan." Pakistan Social Sciences Review 4, no. 2: 736-750.

<sup>17</sup> Z. U. I Mehmood. 2020. "Discrimination with Minorities in Public Schools: A Pakistani Perspective." Journal of Educational Research 1027-9776, 23(2).

environment in any classroom, these issues are caused by the way that teachers and students interact with one another. Although minorities' literacy rates differ from those of dominant groups in many nations, this does not excuse the disparity. Minorities are deterred from even applying for admission to schools in the first place due to the general treatment and discrimination they experience.

## **2. Government Policies and their impact on access to education**

The Islamic Muttahida Ulema Board (MUB) was given a role in the evaluation and approval of all textbooks under the SNC by the Punjabi government. This turned out to be devastating, giving the MUB the chance to further the sectarian and polarizing agendas that have long been present in Pakistan's educational system. Numerous studies confirm that, regrettably, the Pakistani government continues to remain mute, particularly on matters and concerns relating to minorities.

Despite their desire to better the lives of minorities, civil society organizations mostly concentrate on political and human rights problems. On the basis of the constitutional protections, political possibilities, and legal guarantees provided, they are not adequately concentrating on their educational growth. Exclusions of minorities from educational rights is a violation of their human rights.

The Pakistani government must ensure that laws protecting minorities are properly implemented. The curricula should be revised to remove all texts that contain discrimination sense against minorities as these texts foster a "us" against "them" mindset, which is the root of all discrimination and harassment minorities experience. They should also establish a proper system for reporting cases of discrimination.

## **3. Socio-economic barriers affecting enrollment of religious minorities**

Religious minorities encounter job discrimination, resulting in fewer career prospects and poorer salaries. Some businesses and sectors are more hostile to minority employees, making it difficult for them to find steady and well-paying positions. This in turn leads to a lack of finances on the parent's part to be able to put their children through schools. Religious minorities face difficulties when attempting to start enterprises or access economic possibilities. Social and cultural constraints make it difficult for them to start successful firms or engage in entrepreneurial activities.

As mentioned earlier, religious minorities in Pakistan face discrimination to the extent that people do not have to drink water from the same pot as them, these sensibilities and discrimination are also projected on the businesses started by the minority. So, it is difficult for them to find customers, or to promote their business in a country that is against them, especially if their business is in the food sector.

Due to a variety of causes, including religious persecution, several religious minorities in Pakistan have been compelled to migrate and relocate. This has the potential to disturb their socioeconomic stability

and access to essential supplies.

## **B. Theme 2: Quality of Education**

### **1. Disparities in the quality of education provided to religious minorities**

Because of their religious connection, the Pakistani government discriminated against minorities, notably Christians who asked for admission to educational institutions. In majority-Muslim public schools, students of religious minorities are frequently required to dine at separate tables. Religious minorities' students were extremely exposed to prejudice when it came to hiring school staff members.<sup>18</sup> The state's Hindu minority differs in their educational rights as compared to other citizens. Immigrant children were forced to follow a curriculum that went against their religious beliefs, which fostered hatred in the group. The behavior of Christian secondary school pupils toward their Muslim instructors, with whom they are least happy due to their professors' prejudice. Conflict between various religious organizations generates an unfavorable learning environment for the pupils. Teachers systematically deny pupils from religious minorities the chance to learn.

### **2. Availability of resources and infrastructure in minority-inhabited regions**

Christians account for around 1.59% of Pakistan's overall population, according to the "1998 Census." The precise figure is uncertain, although estimates range from fewer than 2 million to 3 million. Hindus constitute around 1.85% of the state's population, or fewer than 2.5 million people. However, like with other minority groups, community organizations see these data as untrustworthy and out of date. According to the Pakistan Hindu Council, the overall Hindu population presently surpasses 1.5 million. The Christian community is well-known in Peshawar, Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, and Gujranwala.<sup>19</sup> These cities are located in well-developed areas of the country with adequate educational facilities. Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi, and Gujranwala are liberal and welcoming cities. Christians were an important component of society and contributed to the state's well-being by building hospitals and educational institutions. However, the nationalization of Christian properties and institutions by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1971-7 was the key stage at which the Christian minority, along with other minorities in the state, endured discrimination and oppression.<sup>20</sup>

The province of Sindh has 94% of the 1.5 million Hindu population, with more than half of Sindhi Hindus living in the south-east district of Tharparkar, which borders India. The rest of Pakistan's Hindu

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<sup>18</sup> S Iqbal. 2016. "Discrimination and problems of Religious Minority Students in Public Schools of Pakistan." *Education and Educational Leadership in England: An Integrated Analysis* 8, no. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ghulam Mustafa, M. Arslan, and Tooba Ahmad. 2020. "Minorities of Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 4, no. 2: 736-750.

<sup>20</sup> Ghulam, Mustafa, M. Arslan, and Tooba Ahmad. 2020. "Minorities of Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 4, no. 2: 736-750.

population is concentrated in small enclaves of Punjab, Baluchistan, and KPK regions.<sup>21</sup> Apart from KPK and Baluchistan, Hindus live in reasonably developed areas of Sindh with adequate educational opportunities. However, as a result of Pakistan's ongoing rivalry with India, the country's Hindus are frequently subjected to violence and bigotry. Hindu households living below the poverty level in Tharparker seek water. Hindu communities are not particularly prosperous economically. They reside in rural, undeveloped, and urban regions and work in menial jobs.

Nankana Sahib, Kartarpura or Manzoorpura in Narowal, Choo Harrkana or Ferozabad, Dear Chahi's maternal village, Punja Sahib in Hasanabdal, Rohats Fort, Aimanabad near Gujranwala; Pakpattan Chawali Mashaekh, Vehari; and Makhdumpur Pahurran in Multan district" are located in Pakistan. As a result, the Sikhs have very close connections with Pakistan, and Pakistan likewise aids their cause over the border. Mr. Imran Khan, Pakistan's Prime Minister, has prioritized the construction of the Kartarpura Corridor for the Sikh minority. As a result, people may easily come to visit. In Pakistan, notable members of the Sikh community work as politicians, police officers, army cadets, attorneys, merchants, and in governmental and non-governmental organizations. The government of Pakistan also provides pensions and senior citizenship allowances to older Sikh nationals.<sup>22</sup>

### **3. Influence of curriculum content and representation of religious minorities**

Textbook material is a significant contributor to this prejudice. The creators of the textbook did not take into account all social groupings, notably religious organizations. We see that many textbooks and curricula being used now are culturally and religiously oriented and promote prejudice towards Pakistan's many minority communities. Despite the fact that the constitution mandates "education in relation to religion," textbooks used in the public school system made disparaging statements about religious minorities, particularly Hindus and Christians. Other religions are depicted as the adversaries in both history and Islamic textbooks, despite the fact that the topics covered in the texts are political and economic. Instead, they focus on specific instances where a member of a certain minority religion played the villain. These tales incite hatred for the other party.

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<sup>21</sup> Ghulam Mustafa, M. Arslan, and Tooba Ahmad. 2020. "Minorities of Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 4, no. 2: 736-750.

<sup>22</sup> Ghulam Mustafa, M. Arslan, and Tooba Ahmad. 2020. "Minorities of Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 4, no. 2: 736-750.

**C. Theme 3: Discrimination and Harassment****1. Incidents of discrimination and harassment within educational institutions**

The Asian Human Rights Commission observed that both domestic and foreign security is significantly harmed by Pakistan's negligent observance of human rights. Due to a lack of law and order, Pakistan is a volatile and politically polarizing country. The biggest instances of deficient law and order are violence against women, particularly in rural areas, abuse of police authority against people, and prejudice towards minorities in social and educational contexts. The only issue is that all minorities in Pakistan are guaranteed the same fundamental human rights, as stated in the constitution.

Religious minorities frequently face discrimination in all facets of academic life. 2.7% of the 298 instructors who took part in the poll stated above who were asked about their experiences with discrimination against minorities in class representative nominations agreed to doing so. Furthermore, 23.5% of educators claimed that they had never ever proposed a minority student as a class representative. These teachers were also questioned about any disruptions to class decorum caused by minority pupils in

terms of discipline or other matters. Of these instructors, 31.9% indicated they had no issues with minority pupils, 13.4% said they had to deal with disciplinary action from minorities, and 25.5% complained that minorities were slow learners who disrupted the class<sup>23</sup>.

**2. Role of teachers and school management in addressing such issues**

In schools where young children attend classes, discrimination is on the rise, which is concerning for the self-esteem of these minority youngsters. Due to the animosity, it fosters among students of various religious groups, this discrimination is raising the drop-out rate. These issues are brought on by the way that instructors and students interact with one another as well as the sort of upsetting material that is being taught in school textbooks.

Textbook content should be changed to emphasize the value of minorities in Pakistan's growth in order to address these problems and let pupils feel proud to be Pakistanis rather than develop contempt for it. The fundamental issue in schools is the attitude of majority instructors toward minorities and vice versa.

Due to the tiny number of minority instructors and the fact that majority religious teachers tend to see minorities negatively, minority teachers' attitudes towards the majority are ineffective. Teachers are crucial in eradicating religious hostility between the two groups because, when choosing class monitors,

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<sup>23</sup> Z. U. I. Mehmood, 2020. "Discrimination with Minorities in Public Schools: A Pakistani Perspective." *Journal of Educational Research* 1027-9776, 23(2).

they typically avoid choosing students from minority groups. If teachers started including minority students, however, they could help them feel included in the class rather than excluded from it and alleviate hostility that is developing toward Muslims or the nation. Minorities such as Hindus suffer difficulties when an unwelcome occurrence involving Hindus occurs in India, and Christians become targets when Americans engage in unwelcome action against Muslims anywhere in the globe. By shifting our perspective and taking religion out of the picture, we can combat this. The majority faiths in Pakistan are innocent, therefore if a nation with a Hindu or Christian majority violates the rights of Muslims there, it may be seen as the country violating those rights rather than the religion linked with it. Hate of Christians, Hindus, or any other minority should be eradicated from history texts in order to grant them the same rights as Pakistanis.

When instructors were questioned about their opinions on the nomination of a student from a religious minority group as the class representative in the aforementioned poll, 25.2% of them said they were against it. The instructors were then questioned on their opinions regarding religious minority children having to use a separate pot for drinking water, and 79.9% of the teachers agreed that doing so alienates these pupils.<sup>24</sup> According to teachers, there is a worrying level of prejudice towards ethnic pupils since they frequently use different pots to drink water.

### **3. Psychological impact on minority students' academic performance and well-being**

Discrimination and harassment, like in any other country, can have a significant psychological impact on minority students' academic performance and well-being. It is critical to recognize that the impact of discrimination and harassment is multifaceted and varies depending on individual experiences, cultural circumstances, and support networks. Minority students may experience persistent stress and anxiety as a result of discrimination and harassment. Constantly feeling uncomfortable or undesired might cause increased stress, impairing their ability to focus on their studies and participate successfully in the learning environment.

Discrimination can cause emotions of isolation, loneliness, and despair. Minority students may absorb unfavorable perceptions and doubt their own value, which can contribute to despair and hopelessness. Minority students may have sentiments of not belonging or being respected, which can undermine their self-esteem and ambition to succeed academically. Discrimination and harassment can take an emotional toll, resulting in difficulty concentrating, memory issues, and impaired cognitive function. These difficulties might jeopardize a student's capacity to excel in their academics.

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<sup>24</sup> Z. U. I Mehmood. 2020. "Discrimination with Minorities in Public Schools: A Pakistani Perspective." *Journal of Educational Research* 1027-9776, 23(2).

Because they are afraid of meeting prejudice or harassment, some minority students may begin to shun academic settings, classroom interactions, or extracurricular activities. Their prospects for growth and learning may be limited as a result of this avoidance. Prolonged stress and negative emotions can have physical health consequences, such as sleep problems, headaches, and other stress-related diseases. These health concerns might have a negative influence on a student's general well-being and academic performance. It can cause a strong sense of unfairness and rage. These emotions can impair a student's ability to participate effectively in their school experience and may even lead to behavioral concerns. Some minority students may lack efficient coping skills for dealing with stresses such as discrimination and harassment.

#### **D. Theme 4: Religious and Cultural Sensitivity**

##### **1. Representation of religious diversity in educational materials**

Minority literacy rates are significantly lower than those of the majority population, and textbooks used to implement curricula still contain a variety of forms of prejudice against minorities. The amount of discrimination in Pakistan is impacted by Indo-Pak tensions, American meddling, and relations with Pakistan because both nations—India and America—are depicted in our textbooks as Pakistan's foes despite having majorities of Hindu and Christians, respectively. 91.9% of the participating instructors agreed that the text book material is somewhat biased. Minority pupils who did not wish to participate in the dominant religion's schooling are compelled to do so. Because the Pakistani government's involvement in policymaking is purely instrumentalist and only encompasses legal issues, it is not trying to implement unbiased curriculum.<sup>25</sup>

##### **2. Integration of religious, cultural festivals and practices into the school calendar**

Almost all Christian holidays are celebrated at Pakistani institutes, including Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Halloween. Most schools and universities in Pakistan provide vacations for a few days or up to two weeks in order to commemorate these milestones. However, when it comes to commemorating Hindu and Sikh holidays, Pakistan is not as progressive. However, some festivals, including as Diwali and Shivaratri, are observed in the Hindu majority parts of Sindh, Tharparkar. It is believed that if the entire country began to celebrate all religious holidays, there would be few days left in schools.

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<sup>25</sup> Z. U. I Mehmood. 2020. "Discrimination with Minorities in Public Schools: A Pakistani Perspective." *Journal of Educational Research* 1027-9776, 23(2).



### **3. Role of interfaith dialogue in fostering religious tolerance and inclusion**

Interfaith conversation is critical for promoting religious tolerance, understanding, and inclusion in different society. It provides a forum for people of many religious backgrounds to meet, participate in open and courteous discussions, and learn about each other's beliefs, practices, and viewpoints. Interfaith discourse creates communication and interaction amongst religious communities. It contributes to the development of a feeling of shared humanity by highlighting similar ideals and ambitions, which can lead to enhanced empathy and solidarity. It also encourages people to have meaningful conversations and express their opinions and ideals. This helps to eliminate any preconceptions, stereotypes, or prejudices that may exist among various religious groups, resulting in a better knowledge of one other's beliefs. Interfaith discussion reduces anxiety, suspicion, and apprehension that might develop from a lack of understanding or disinformation about other religions by giving opportunity for direct contacts.

Interfaith communication has the potential to help resolve problems and avoid religiously motivated violence. It offers a civilized forum for debating differences, resolving disputes, and discovering common ground. Open discourse about religious views and practices serves to emphasize the significance of religious freedom and people' ability to follow their faith without prejudice or force. Interfaith conversation is an educational technique that assists individuals and communities in learning about many religion traditions, histories, and cultures. This fosters a more educated and nuanced understanding of religious diversity. Interfaith discourse can have an impact on legislative debates and lobbying activities concerning religious freedom, minority rights, and social peace. It promotes cooperation among religious communities to overcome common concerns. Interfaith interaction frequently includes the exchange of cultural traditions, customs, and festivals. This cultural interchange enriches the fabric of society life and improves cross-cultural understanding. While interfaith discussion may not resolve all issues or biases, it does help to a gradual and long-term transformation in attitudes and views.

## **E. Theme 5: Legal and Policy Framework**

### **1. Analysis of relevant legal provisions safeguarding minority rights in education**

General Zia's Islamization of Pakistan under his rule complicated and complicated the interaction between majority and minority. It harmed the state's minority more than the majority.

In the 1973 constitution, chapter one titled "Fundamental Rights" comprises articles 8-28 of the essential rights of citizens in the country, which include freedom of religion for the majority and all minorities. The 1973 Constitution's main objectives were to establish Fundamental Rights for all state citizens, grounded in the "Quran and Sunnah" and the UN Charter. Here is a list of the Fundamental Rights: "Everyone is equal before the law." Life and liberty should not be taken away from anyone. Discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, creed, sex, or place of birth is unacceptable. Forced labor and slavery in all its forms are

prohibited. It is guaranteed that people can freely express themselves, associate, and engage in cultural activities. Minorities are allowed to practice their religion freely within their institutions. There are safeguards against discrimination in government services, as well as protection for the upkeep and growth of religious institutions across all communities.<sup>26</sup>

"The state shall safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of minorities, including their due representation in the Federal and Provincial services," the 1973 Constitution further emphasized. "Freedom of trade, business, or profession, Freedom of speech, Right to Information, Freedom to profess religion and to manage religious institutions, Safeguard against taxation for purposes of any particular religion, Safeguard as to educational institutions in respect of religion, Provision as to property, Protection of property rights, Equality of citizens, Right to education, Non-discrimination in respect of access to public places, Safeguard against discrimination in services, Preservation of language, script, and culture" are among the protections that the state should offer to minorities.<sup>27</sup>

Article 22 of Pakistan's 1973 Constitution is also from Part II, which is titled Fundamental Rights and comprises articles 8 to 28. According to this article, religious educational institutions in Pakistan are safe: Religious safeguards in educational institutions, for example. It states that no student at any educational institution shall be obliged to participate in religious ceremonies, receive religious instruction, or attend religious worship if those activities are related to a religion other than his own. No community shall be discriminated against when receiving a tax exemption or other financial benefit from a religious institution. Unless prohibited by law, no religious community or denomination may refuse to offer religious instruction to students in any educational institution that is entirely supported by that community or denomination. Likewise, no citizen may be denied admission to any educational institution that receives funding from the public on the basis of race, religion, caste, or place of birth. Nothing in this Article shall prohibit any public authority from providing for the advancement of any class of persons who are socially or educationally disadvantaged.<sup>28</sup>

## **2. Implementation challenges and gaps in existing policies**

Pakistan's religious minorities are entitled by the constitution to establish educational institutions and schools so that they can provide their community with religious instruction. These schools serve only one community and its students. Other religious communities cannot be forced to participate in their religious

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<sup>26</sup> Ghulam Mustafa, M. Arslan, and Tooba Ahmad. 2020. "Minorities of Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis Of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 4, no. 2: 736-750.

<sup>27</sup> Ghulam Mustafa, M. Arslan, and Tooba Ahmad. 2020. "Minorities of Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis Of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 4, no. 2: 736-750.

<sup>28</sup> Ghulam, Mustafa M. Arslan, and Tooba Ahmad. 2020. "Minorities of Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 4, no. 2: 736-750.

practices. As a result, numerous churches and temples operate religious educational institutions. The government did not achieve much in this regard. The destruction of religious institutions is represented by attacks on worship sites and colonies, while the government is far behind in fostering religious tolerance, equality, and freedom.<sup>29</sup>

### **3. Role of civil society organizations and advocacy efforts**

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have an important and complex role in society, frequently acting as go-betweens for the government, the commercial sector, and the general public. In Pakistan's education sector, there are several non-governmental organizations. The Aga Khan Foundation alone oversees around 200 schools, primarily in the Baltistan area and the country's north, as well as a university in Karachi. The Aga Khan Foundation has created schools and educational programs in a variety of nations, with an emphasis on increasing access to excellent education, teacher training, curriculum development, and infrastructure development.

Through education, these projects seek to empower individuals and communities. The Citizen's Foundation (TCF) is another significant education NGO in Pakistan. Teachers in Pakistan are unable to create unions, but most members of this field join informal organizations. The Teachers' Consortium of Pakistan (TCOP) is the umbrella organization for these associations. TCF prioritizes the education of females and children from low-income families. The organization seeks to overcome gender gaps in education and promotes females to enroll in its schools.<sup>30</sup>

### **Conclusion**

A more inclusive strategy needs to be implemented in Pakistan's educational system. The educational system in Pakistan is insufficiently supportive of religious pluralism and harmony. Due to the significant exclusion of religious minorities from the curriculum and textbooks in public schools, a single national curriculum does not promote an inclusive approach either. This type of exclusion causes the society to grow increasingly divided. Minority groups must be included in the nation's social development, notably in the educational programme, in order for education to promote growth. There is a critical necessity to include religious minorities in the field of development. Education among minorities is an important asset for a country. It is advised that education should foster harmony, progress, tolerance, and respect for diversity. The only path to world peace and enlightenment is through education. Minorities' exclusion

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<sup>29</sup>Ghulam Mustafa, M. Arslan, and Tooba Ahmad. 2020. "Minorities of Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 4, no. 2: 736-750.

<sup>30</sup>A. K. Siddiqui. 2016. "The Citizens Foundation—A case of Social Entrepreneurship. A Strategic Approach." 180.

from the mainstream educational system may result in the repression of their rights, and in societies where democratic channels for resolving disputes are few, people are more likely to turn to extremism and violence.