

Human Rights Education in Pakistan: Transition to a Tolerant and Peaceful Society

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the violent extremism in Pakistan considering its historical evolution, contributing factors and efforts made to address the growing extremism in the recent past. It provides a critical discourse based on the historical and institutional struggle of human rights education in the context of violent extremism. Opting qualitative research approach, the paper is based on secondary analysis. The analysis includes reviewing available literature such as official documents, reports, books, journals, and articles. Based on the analysis, universities are the crucial point of connection for students to interact, learn and exchange ideas. The culture of tolerance, patience and peaceful co-existence in the academia can potentially reduce the violent extremism, deeply rooted in the universities of Pakistan.

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Introduction

The dawn of the 21st Century witnessed a sharp increase in violent extremism and terrorism globally. Attack on the World Trade Centers in the United States on September 11, 2001 triggered violent extremism (VE) worldwide. The statistics proved a sharp rise in the deaths from violent extremism and terrorism from 3,329 in 2000 to 13,826 till 2019. It shows that intolerance and violence are more prevalent globally.¹ Amongst various regions, the South Asian region remained the most impacted by terrorism in 2019, despite improvement in law and order in Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan. The total number of deaths from violent extremism and terrorism has been 17,510 in Pakistan since 2001.²

Pakistan is a country of 224 million, and half of its population consists of youth. However, it was ranked 154 among 188 countries in UN Human Development Index 2020 rankings. In 2020 Global Hunger Index (GHI), it ranked 88 among 107 countries with sufficient data to calculate GHI scores. The level of hunger in Pakistan is intense and causing disruption in social order. Likewise, the fanaticism against the minorities in Pakistan has intensely been increasing.³ Pakistan, ethnically and culturally, is a heterogeneous country; Punjabis are in the majority, followed by *Pushtoons*, *Sindhi*, *Seraiki*, *Hindkos*, *Balochs*, *Muhajirs*, and *Brahvi*.⁴ Muslims are the majority (96 percent), and the remaining 4 percent consists of Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and others. Sunni (75

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- 1 Peace, Institute for Economics & "Global Terrorism Index 2020 Measuring the Impact of Terrorism" Sydney, Australia, 2020.
 - 2 "Terrorism In Pakistan-Yearly Fatalities | SATP", *Satp.Org*, 2022, <https://www.satp.org/datasheet-terrorist-attack/fatalities/pakistan>.
 - 3 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, *State of Human Rights In 2019* (Lahore, 2022), <https://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-State-of-human-rights-in-2019-EN.pdf>.
 - 4 Khalid Hasnain, "Pakistan's Population Is 207.68M, Shows 2017 Census Result", *Dawn*, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1624375>.

percent), and Shias (25 percent) are the largest sectarian diversity in the country.⁵ So, the diversity and multilayered socio-cultural assortment disrupt social order and cohesion. Over the last few years, incidents of VE involving individuals such as students, staff, and teachers from renowned educational institutes were observed in universities across Pakistan.⁶ There have recently been violent incidents in some Pakistani universities' campuses involving students from different ethnic groups. The efforts to address the incidents are scarce. Thus, this article presents the critical discourse of violent extremism in universities of Pakistan and further to explore whether the curriculum can uphold, defend, and promote a tolerant and a peaceful society in the country or exacerbating the non-tolerance and impatience.

Literature Review

The Human Rights Education (HRE) is an international programme to propagate the rights acknowledged under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in general and other human rights instruments in particular. The human rights awareness, democratic transition, and increasing role of worldwide organizations boasted in the 1990s. This renaissance also rejuvenates the concept of HRE. The basic concept of the HRE is to make the rights holders realize theirs and the rights of others.⁷ Unless a consensus on what to be taught, how it is to be taught, and by whom, it is impossible to ensure the full realization of these rights. The UDHR education and training is somehow compressive to provide the fundamental framework of critical components necessary for holistic HRE.⁸ The overarching objective of

5 Hasnain, "Pakistan's Population Is 207.68M, Shows 2017 Census Result".

6 Satvinder S. Juss, *Pakistan and Human Rights* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022).

7 Felisa Tibbitts and W. Fernekes, "Human Rights Education," in *Teaching and Studying Social Issues: Major Programs and Approaches*, eds., S. Totten and J.E. Pederson (NC: Information Age Publishing, 2011), 87-117.

8 Alison E.C. Struthers, "Human Rights Education: Educating about, Through and for human Rights," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 19, no.1 (2014): 53-73, doi:10.1080/13642987.2014.986652.

the HRE is to incorporate international human rights practices and standards into people's daily lives. It is often associated with civic education, conflict resolution programmes, and democratic education.⁹

The primary content to be enclosed in the HRE is based on laws, institutions, and practices that have come out of the human rights instruments. The core document that has implemented in 1948 was the UDHR. The UDHR is *prima facie* of the modern human rights system in the world. The very nature of UDHR is that it hardly 'gives' rights, but it 'recognises' and 'defines' them. The current challenge of the HRE is to reach these ideals with meaningful intervention in society's lives. Therefore, the HRE must address various factors while educating human rights to get the desirable outcomes. Addressing the violence, tolerance, the fear of personal danger, and dealing with individual and collective hostilities as well as patterns of discernment and marginalisation by training the people how to respect other's rights, strive for peacebuilding, and be tolerant environment, that may prevent the violent extremism.

Historical Background of Violent Extremism

Historical evidence of VE draws attention towards the religious and politically inspired violence in Pakistan along with the role of youth and educational institutions to exacerbate intolerance and violence in society. Growing numbers of radicalisation and extremism raise wider questions about the role of educational settings, including the national curriculum. It is important to investigate the material of the educational substance in the curriculum; how effectively it addresses the growing social pollution in the country.¹⁰ It is also to evaluate whether the qualifications of

9 Ana Cecilia Vergara and Jorge Vergara Estévez, "Justice, Impunity and The Transition to Democracy: A Challenge For Human Rights Education," *Journal Of Moral Education* 23, no. 3 (1994): 273-284, doi: 10.1080/0305724940230305.

10 Anita M. Weiss, *Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan: Local Actions, Local Voices* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2020).

human rights in the curriculum in Pakistan is sufficient to handle the apparent failure of educational institutions to build a tolerant, and a peaceful society or not. Students in universities suffer from an acute lack of positive socio-cultural and intellectually stimulating activities on campuses to prevent and/or counter narratives of VE, as training participants highlighted during the various sessions. As, the Secretary General of Council of Europe states:

It is not enough for children and young people simply to hold human rights. In order to embed a human rights culture and ensure that our young people understand how to access those rights – and to uphold, defend and promote them—they need an education fit for that purpose.¹¹

How does VE creep into Pakistani universities? The substantial evidence of politico-religious violence can be traced back to the 1970s, when Pakistani universities were seen as the epicentre of political violence. During that period of political turmoil in the country, the students of the University of Karachi were trapped by the conservative religious leaders who inculcated violent behaviour against any action against Islam. The intolerance and radicalisation encouraged the students to form violent groups.¹² Major political parties, ideologically aligned with the students' groups also encouraged politically inspired violence. After 1971 debacle, the Pakistan People's Party came into power and started strengthening the Peoples' Student Federation (PSF), a student faction of the political party, which provided support to political leaders to ascend to the government.¹³At

11 Message from Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General, CoE, Compass of Human Rights Education) "Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People," *Manual For Human Rights Education With Young People*, 2022, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass>.

12 Nadeem F. Paracha, "Bleeding Green: The Rise and Fall of IJT," *Dawn*, 2012, <https://www.dawn.com/news/742642/bleeding-green-the-rise-and-fall-of-the-ijt>.

13 J. Matthew Nelson, "Embracing the Ummah: Student Politics Beyond State Power in Pakistan," *Modern Asian Studies* 45 (2011): 595-96.

this time, students began using weapons on the university campuses. The violent wave grew with time; in the 1990s and 2000s, the University of Karachi and the University of the Punjab (Lahore) witnessed violence between *various students' groups*.

Since 2001, we have seen a paradigm shift from political violence to religiously-inspired violence in Pakistani universities. Over the years, the fundamentalism, extremism, radicalisation, and violence have been on the rise. It is a matter of grave concern that numerous students have been found involved in VE. Earlier, it was perceived that religious seminaries and the conservative tribal belt of Pakistan are safe havens for nurturing extremism. Still, the above instances proved that extremism grows quickly in government and private education institutes in different parts of Pakistan.

A group of extremists, namely Ansar-ul-Shariya, comprised of learned persons, was involved in numerous terrorists' activities, including an attack on a member of the Sindh Provincial Assembly of Mutahida Quomi Movement, a political party, in 2017. Couple of names with their associations to various renowned universities is written down here for giving a sound reference to the argument. Shahriyar headed the group, alias Dr. Abdullah Hashmi, who had a post-graduate degree in applied Physics from the University of Karachi. He also worked as an IT expert in the department of Computer Sciences, Nadirshaw Eduljee Dinshaw University of Engineering and Technology, commonly known as NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi.¹⁴ The other prominent instances include the arrest of Seham Qamar from Karachi on November 27, 2015, when he was working as a Deputy General Manager at Karachi-Electric Company. He was associated with Hizb-ul-Tehreer, one of the extremist groups in Pakistan. On October 16, 2015,

14 Abdul Basit, "Radicalization of Educated Youth in Pakistan: Traits, Narratives and Trends," *Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research* 1, no. 1 (2019): 1-33.

Awais Raheel was arrested when he was serving as a professor at Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, Karachi. He worked for Hizb-ul-Tehreer and would brainwash his students. After two months of his arrest, Ghalib Atta, an Associate Professor at Punjab University, Lahore, was arrested on charges of affiliation with Hizb-ul-Tehreer.¹⁵

A few of the instances are such as, the lynching of Mashal Khan – a 25-years old student - on April 13, 2017 in Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan. He was pulled out of his university accommodation in April 2017 by hundreds of his fellow students and beaten to death in the disguise of blasphemy.¹⁶ Similar clashes are often reported from Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad and International Islamic University, Islamabad. In 2016, the University of Hazara in Mansehra witnessed a deadly student clash in which two students were shot dead.¹⁷ The violence went beyond the campuses by engagement of students with terrorist organisations. One such example is Saad Aziz, a graduate of one of the elites' university, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), in Karachi who along with some others was running an Al-Qaeda sleeper cell in the city and was involved in target-killing of affiliates of religious minorities and low-rank security officials.¹⁸

The involvement of highly qualified youth, a few mentioned-above, in various violent activities in Pakistan is a serious concern. The growing extremism in the higher educational

15 ARY News, *Why Educated People Are Turning Towards Extremism*, video, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOTpZCFhWzY>.

16 "Mashal Khan Case: Death Sentence for Pakistan 'Blasphemy' Murder," *BBC News*, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42970587>.

17 Minhas Majeed Khan, "Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan: An Appraisal of Pakistan's CVE Initiatives," *Strategic Studies* 35, no. 4 (2016): 23-44.

18 Muhammad Feyyaz, "Youth Extremism in Pakistan– Magnitude, Channels, Resident Spheres and Response," *Defence Against Terrorism Review* 6, no. 1 (2014): 63-92.

institutions led to the speculation that Pakistani universities have become the breeding ground of extremism. Since 2010, Pakistan's military and para-military forces have launched various operations, including operation "Rad-ul-Fasad" to neutralize extremists' organisations. Pakistani forces curb the menace of extremism by intelligence-based operations in central cities and western tribal areas of Pakistan. Resultantly, extremists were killed, arrested, or fled to neighboring countries.¹⁹ Apart from the military solutions, these shameful incidents turned our attention towards the underlying causes and drivers of growing extremism in Pakistani universities. It demands reforms in the curriculum taught in the universities to counter the violent and extremist behaviors, and attitudes of the students, teachers, and other stakeholders working in these institutions. It also highlighted that the education system went unsuccessful in nurturing a tolerant and peaceful youth.

Drivers of Violent Extremism in Pakistan's Universities

As human rights are integral to global peacemaking initiatives, therefore, the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in 1998, said, "Without human rights, no peace or prosperity will ever last."²⁰ One of the core activities in the promotion of human rights is human rights education (HRE). A clear definition of the HRE set by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in 1994, is 'training, dissemination, and information efforts aimed at building of a universal culture of human rights through imparting of knowledge, and skills, and the molding of attitudes. Teaching human rights to the students requires a dynamic approach from the perceptive of

19 Khan, "Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan,".

20 Kofi Anan, "Without Human Rights, No Peace or Prosperity Can Endure, Secretary-General Tells Assembly Commemoration" (Speech, UN General Assembly, SG/SM/6827 HR/4393, New York, 10 December 1998)

real-life experiences and their values, attitude, and behavior.²¹

What are the drivers of violent extremism in Pakistani universities? Committing a violent act is an outcome of a process that passes through different stages before committing such an act. An individual may move back and forth between pre-radicalisation to actual radicalisation stages. This discourse revolves around madrassa militancy, poverty-terrorism, illiteracy-radicalisation, and conservative-liberal narratives. The majority of youth in Pakistan consider religion as an important factor in life. The available literature demonstrates that religiosity could support violent extremism and radicalization. The teaching methodology and knowledge transmitted to the students has somehow radicalised the students' thought process.²² Additionally, encouraging Conservatism and opposing liberal ideas by the teachers in religious seminaries widens divides between groups of contrasting religious ideologies.²³

Majority of Madrassa students belong to the lower economic strata of society. Lower economic groups fall prey easily to the extremist groups because of the vulnerabilities in their life. They could easily be trapped through money, falsifying the rewards of heaven, or inciting their sentiments against the privileged ones.²⁴ On the other side, university youth

21 "Speeches 2004", *United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime*, 2022, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/speeches/speeches-2004.html>.

22 Rebecca Winthrop and Graff Corinne, *Beyond Madrassas: Assessing The Links Between Education And Militancy In Pakistan*, Working Paper II (Brookings: Centre for University Education, 2010), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/14E21A34E9FC61CF C125774C00078AD3-Full_Report.pdf.

23 Abdul Basit, "Countering Violent Extremism: Evaluating Pakistan's Counter Radicalization and De-Radicalization Initiatives," *IPRI* no. 2 (2015): 44-88, <https://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/3-art-s-15.pdf>.

24 Huma Yusuf, "University Radicalization: Pakistan's Next Counterterrorism Challenge," *CTSENTINEL* 9, no. 2 (2016),

absorb radical ideas and become part of such discourse without understanding the underlying messages. This is the point they started radicalising themselves towards intolerance, violence, and conflict.

The tendency of violent extremism amongst youth may be augmented by deteriorated socio-economic conditions, bad-governance, weak writ of the state, and exacerbated politico-ideological environment. This environment promotes closed and homogenised self-identity in Pakistan's national narrative. It is an ideal situation for the growth of extremist tendencies, which further exacerbates with lack of alternative narratives and misinterpreted historical curriculum of Pakistan.²⁵

The existing literature accounts for empirical scholarship on the economics of terrorism and economic factors contributing to violent extremism. The curriculum being taught in the country also could not equip students to counter radical narratives.²⁶ The educational curriculum in Pakistan remained debatable; the authenticity of the facts, the alignment with practical fields, and the glorification of wars. On the other hand, the educational content in the universities is a mixed bag. Few of the universities are excessively liberal. They are resulting in challenging the religious framing of Pakistan so openly. In contrast, some universities are perceived as pro-conservatism. Thus, the culture of rigid following religious rituals and debating on such issues could lead to another extreme of violence.

<https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/CTC-SENTINEL-Vol9Iss29.pdf>.

- 25 Farhan Zahid, "Waiting for Resurgence: Al-Qaeda Core in Pakistan," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*9, no. 9 (2017): 1-4,

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26351549.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A901d8b2bcd5a2b321990656d4f1e4955&ab_segments=&origin=.

- 26 Madiha Afzal, "What's The Relationship Between Education, Income, and Favoring The Pakistani Taliban?," Blog, *Brookings*, 2015,

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2015/10/19/whats-the-relationship-between-education-income-and-favoring-the-pakistani-taliban/>.

How is this culture prevalent in educational institutions? According to Nadeem,²⁷ the content they are being taught and the teacher who persuades them what is right and wrong. So, universities are hanging in between two extremisms, liberal and conservatism, resulting in shrinking the spaces for dialogue, freedom of expression, and tolerance. Along with Military Operations leading to counter violent extremism, civil administration and civil society play a vital role in countering violent extremism.

Theoretical Background

The Significance Quest Theory stresses that a prime situation for any kind of extremism is motivational imbalance. This compels constrained behaviour to become a reasonable and permissible sort of behaviour. In context of violent extremism, the behaviour in question turned into deadly aggression towards specific groups. This certain need that trigger kind of behavior takes paramount importance in Significance Quest Theory.²⁸

Methodology

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, qualitative research approach is the most appropriate technique to apply. The qualitative research is grounded on the constructivism and interpretivism. It is usually an inductive construction for which research needs to construct knowledge systematically through development of reliable tools and research instruments. This study relies on the interpretivism research paradigm and conducts secondary analysis. The secondary analysis comprises of all sort of literature available from government documents, official reports, books, journal articles and so on.

27 Zahid, "Waiting for Resurgence," 1-4.

28 David Webber et. al., "Deradicalizing Detained Terrorists," *Political Psychology* 39, no. 3 (2018): 539-56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12428>.
Arie W. Kruglanski, "My Road to Violent Extremism (as Its Researcher, That Is...)," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 14, 1 (2019): 49-53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691618812688>.

Efforts Made towards Transition of a Peaceful Society

Preamble to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, mentions "Every individual and every organ of society shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms." Having directive force, Principle of Policy Chapter 2 of the *Constitution of Pakistan 1973* states that every citizen and community on a collective level must be ensured social well-being. Article 38(d) explicitly states, "the state shall provide necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, and education for all such citizens." Furthermore, Article 37(a)(b)(c) also emphasises the eradication of social evils in society combated with the tool of education. Hence, drawing a guideline for further legislation that:²⁹

State shall promote educational interest of all classes and areas with special care, it shall also remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education also making technical and professional education generally available and higher education equally accessible to all. (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973).

Analysis of the efforts taken around CVE unveils the critical yet essential role of the Civil Administration (Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, Ministry of Human Rights & Ministry of Interior) and Civil Society Organizations. Government is the leading actor to run the societal institutions. These institutions are meant to harmonise social functioning through various channels, including curbing social evils in the community. The government has held up its commitment to spread the reformatory educational plan since the inception of Pakistan.

Declaring primary education, a fundamental human right for all people in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 is the utmost need of the human beings. All the state parties of this convention, including Pakistan, have

29 "Chapter 1: "Fundamental Rights" Of Part II: "Fundamental Rights And Principles Of Policy," *Pakistani Org.*, 2022.

<https://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part2.ch1.htm#:~:text=25A.,may%20be%20determined%20by%20law.>

taken steps to provide education to every citizen. At the inception of Pakistan, more than 80 percent of the population was illiterate. Upon recommendations of the All-Pakistan Educational Conference 1947, the Primary and Secondary Education Committee was formed. It was also recommended that education be based on the Islamic conception of the universal brotherhood, social democracy, and social justice.³⁰ It is appreciated that the realization of brotherhood and peaceful co-existence was included in the educational agenda earlier. In 1959, National Commission for Education was established to align the socio-political and economic needs of the nation. Since then, various educational policies have been launched, but none could proactively address the violent extremism. The first formal Education Policy, including higher education was launched in 1970. The National Education Policy 1972-82 was made for universal education focusing on providing free education.³¹ It failed due to political instability. Military-led government put forward another Education Policy 1979. The policy emphasized mobilizing indigenous resources to gain education targets. The said policies primarily addressed the structural development of educational institutions. It could also be more beneficial to consider the process reforms, including curriculum review, extra-curricular activities, and dialogue.

The National Education Policy 1998-2010 considered elementary education as the basis for the entire education system and defined its legal compulsion on the government in the light of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and convention on the Rights of Child. To accelerate the follow-up of National Education Policy 1998-2010, the military-led government introduced Education Sector Reforms 2002-04. Resultantly, the Higher Education Commission was established through the Higher Education Commission

30 Muhammad Aziz, *Review of Education Policies and Corresponding Five Years Plans (1947-86)* (Islamabad: Ministry of Education, 1986), 45-47.

31 Aziz, *Review of Education Policies and Corresponding Five Years Plans*.

(HEC) Ordinance 2002, which is a regulatory body for Higher Education Institutes in Pakistan. Under Section 3, Sub-section (1) of the Federal Supervision of Curricula Textbooks and Maintenance of Standards of Education Act 1976, the Pakistani Government constituted the Higher Education Commission to supervise curriculum reforms.³² Under the revision programme, the HEC had to watch over the courses of Class XII and the university degree programmes, certificates, and diplomas, which are awarded by the HEC. The HEC may advise the chancellors, and Vice-chancellors of the institutes on its statutes and regulations. Moreover, the 44th Vice-Chancellors Committee decided to review the curriculum of each subject every three years; hence, the HEC regularly coordinates with universities on curriculum modification.³³ Committees, established at national levels, are comprising senior academics proposed by the universities to enable these changes. Teachers from local degree colleges and expert stakeholders from other organizations can also be included in these committees. The Higher Education Commission was formed to develop a long-term plan (HEC Vision 2025) to initiate further qualitative and quantitative reforms in line with the Government of Pakistan Vision 2025. The HEC Vision 2025 document incorporates Human Resource Development platform with the Economic Development platform to create a knowledge economy in Pakistan.³⁴ The HEC plans to implement policies, and reforms which may produce human capital with both professionally competent and ethically committed for making Pakistan an emerging Asian economic tiger.

32 The Federal Supervision of Curricula, Text-Books and Maintenance of Standards of Education Act, 1976

33 Higher Education Commission, "Curriculum Revision," Higher Education Commission.

34 "HEC Vision 2025: Carpe Diem: Seize the Day for a Better Future," Higher Education Commission, Islamabad.

One of the key reforms in the curricula is to establish a peaceful society in Pakistan. Hence, peace education and the inclusion of interfaith harmony at the Bachelors' level show the firm commitment of the HEC towards the promotion of peaceful co-existence in the youth. To reform the education system further at the basic level so that the universities in Pakistan receive students who are already peace-oriented, one of the initiatives is to develop a Single National Curriculum (SNC) to be implemented across the the country. The SNC consists of members from renowned universities, research organizations, teacher training institutes, and assessment experts and representatives of minorities for developing a curriculum. For the first time, distinguished experts from the *Ittehad TanzeematUl Madaras* Pakistan (ITMP) participated in developing the curriculum in 2021.³⁵ In compliance with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 4.7.1 indicator, specific values were highlighted in the curriculum under the themes and sub-themes for different classes, including global citizenship, sustainable development, gender equality, diversity of cultures, languages, and religions, countering terrorism, avoiding social evils (plagiarism, falsification, aggression, deception, greed, violent protests) and propagating sports and adventure.

The Constitution of Pakistan, national policies, international commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recent trends in education; societal values; and inclusive education are the key considerations for the development of SNC include. It has been seen that the exclusiveness of students of madaris also pushed them towards extremism. The SNC focuses on inclusivity to streamline students of the prevalent educational system (Government, Private, and Madaris) on consensual educational content on different academic grades up to secondary education. It is hoped that the SNC would bring

35 "National Curriculum Framework Pakistan," ed., Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, Islamabad.

religious objectivity by promoting intra-faith harmony and would address the needs of students from marginal groups by teaching them their religious beliefs.³⁶ It is also a daunting task for the government to ensure the SNC adoption by all public and private schools in all provinces.

Inclusion of key attributions which mainly develop peace, follow human rights education, and building a coherent and peaceful society in the country, have been made part of the higher education institutions since 2002. Themes and sub-themes that promote values of peace and social cohesion are enhanced either by establishing a separate department or by including contents on religious values, human rights, conflict management, conflict prevention, patience, tolerance, respect for self and others, respect for Pakistani and international values, conflict resolution, 'global citizenship education' equity between groups and nations, making friends, sharing, learning to live together in an extended society and trans-culturally at the national level.³⁷ The main focus is to encourage students of all ages to become proactive contributors to a fair, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and sustainable world.

The exacerbated situation of violent extremism in the Pakistani universities drew the attention of the researchers to analyse the high-impact initiatives, and one of such is the National Action Plan for Human Rights, implemented by the Ministry of Human Rights. The Prime Minister of Pakistan approved the Action Plan for Human Rights on February 13, 2016. Under the 'Thematic Area-III Cross-Cutting Interventions for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights,' which has the following actions no. 35-36:

36 Nida Usman Chaudhary, "Implications of Single Curriculum," *Lahore Education and Research Network* (October 20, 2021),

<https://learnpak.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Implications-of-Single-Curriculum-Nida-Usman-Ch.pdf>.

37 Salman Akram Raja, "Reforming Education?" *The News*, Feb 6, 2021; <https://www.thenews.com.pk/amp/785636reforming-education?>

- i. Inclusion of human rights and peace education in higher education, Law, and Social Sciences curriculum.
- ii. Inclusion of human rights and civic education in the curriculum of primary and secondary and higher secondary school level with particular focus on respect and promotion of interfaith dialogue and harmony.
- iii. Inclusion of human rights education in the public sector national training and capacity building institute such as National Police Academy, Civil Services Academy, National School of Public Policy, Foreign Services Academy, and so on and so forth.³⁸

Under action Number-I, mentioned above, one of the core components of the said plan is to create an awareness and sensitization campaign of human rights in Pakistani universities. More than eighty seminars were conducted across the country. Students, teachers, and parents attended the seminars. The seminars conducted in the Pakistani universities were to develop understanding and identify critical factors influencing Human Rights, brought together students, researchers, and practitioners, and facilitated a dialogue on the essential issues of Human Rights in the country. It was also to share the best practices and experiences and challenges and obstacles in Human Rights and suggested specific and realistic strategies and programmes for mutual collaboration for the protection of Human Rights in the country. One of the outcomes of the seminars was the expansion of the role of academia in the improvement of the worst human rights conditions at higher education institutions. They can offer expertise, extensive knowledge, and evidence to support government initiatives in specific fields. For instance, the latter engagement of the

38 "Action Plan for Human Rights," ed. Ministry of Human Rights, Islamabad, 2016.

Ministry of Human Rights with the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies to survey the prevailing situation of violence against children. The academia's expertise helped MoHR initiate evidence-based laws and policies for child rights. No doubt, legislative lacunas are significant blocks on the path of a human rights-friendly society. Federal Cabinet has approved the inclusion of 'Child Domestic Labour' in the list of occupations listed in Part-I of the Schedule of the Employment of Children's Act, 1991. The other landmark legislation is the ZainabAlert, Response and Recovery Act, 2020, enacted on March 24, 2020 to generate an early response in case of a missing child.³⁹ The law is an outcome of a research study commissioned by the Ministry of Human Rights and conducted by the University of the Punjab, Lahore. The academia could also help the Government reflect continuity and policy change.

Another important Government department in countering violent extremism is the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), which was established in 2009 as an administrative wing within the Ministry of Interior. The overarching goal of the authority is to address the underlying causes of violent extremism and terrorism. The Outreach Branch (OR) of the Authority is a specialised unit to take, project, and promote initiatives for countering violent extremism through non-military means.⁴⁰ The OR branch excels at engaging youth, artists, literati, scholars and students, community leaders, and researchers for the project and promotion of non-violence, peace, and tolerance. With the collaborative approach of NACTA, various awareness and sensitization sessions were conducted with different groups of society, including youth, Members of Parliament, civil society, etc. Apart from government efforts, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play an essential role in countering violent extremism.

39 Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Act, 2020.

40 "Outreach Branch," National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA); <https://nacta.gov.pk/outreach-branch/>.

The role played by the CSOs in countering violent extremism is remarkable. The Cursor of Development and Education Pakistan (CODE), a not-for-profit organization, is one such NGO that worked with madaris and their leaders to improve the education offered to the students in the madaris. The participatory approach for reforming madrasa education reduces the gap between religious seminaries and development practitioners. This engagement also helped changing the perception of making madrasa reform a 'law and order' issue instead of an educational issue. The University Madrasa Interaction Program, led by CODE Pakistan, successfully initiated a dialogue between university and madrasa students, thus, removing the barriers between mainstream education systems and madrasa. To further identify the entry points for engaging madrasa students, the CODE Pakistan, in early 2019, led an extensive consultative process involving interviews of the relevant senior-level central madrasa leadership of Pakistan.⁴¹ Further, several roundtable dialogues at provinces were held collaborating with the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). The consultative exercise provides the baseline of interventions for reforming *madrasa* education and bridging the gap between *madrasa* students and government policy-makers.

Another remarkable initiative by the CODE Pakistan is a 'Youth Outreach at Universities for Countering Violent Extremism (YOU-CVE)' Program; it assisted the state departments in addressing growing violent extremism in the university campuses. The project was launched in June 2018 and successfully organized first-ever National Youth Conference on Countering Violent Extremism in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and the Higher Education Commission (HEC).⁴² During the event, students and faculty members from 40 universities and five madaris developed policy

41 Cursor of Development and Education Pakistan, "Peacebuilding," <https://codepak.org/service/peacebuilding/>.

42 CODE, Peacebuilding.

recommendations on various themes around countering violent extremism on campuses. As an outcome of the event, 15 universities across the country were also approached to create localized, and culturally sensitive action plans to promote tolerance and peaceful co-existence. The Insaf Foundation Trust also collaborated with five universities to engage youth from various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds for sensitization on peacebuilding activism. During 2010-11, within the mandate of 'Act for Change: Peace and Democracy', the IFT, in collaboration with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), mobilized students from 31 schools and four universities to demonstrate values of peace, tolerance, and democracy.⁴³

The systematic approach of the YES Network Pakistan during the YES Change Maker Project is innovative that works with students in learning through creating values for others. For instance, giving usual advice to fellow "Be positive in life," "Do good," etc. In Addition, it also encourages youth to use sport, music, and information technology to promote peace, tolerance, and reconciliation. The British Council-funded project worked with 80 universities orientated 4600 faculty members on thousands of students on promoting peaceful co-existence, peace, and interfaith harmony.⁴⁴ The 'Seeds of Peace' is another innovative initiative led by the Aware Girls (AG), a non-profit organization working in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the north-western province of Pakistan. The initiative aims to strengthen the leadership skills of young peace activities, prevent young people from indulging in militancy, and promote non-violence, humanism, and tolerance. The activists trained during these initiatives will work in various schools and colleges to engage young people to instill peace

43 CODE, Peacebuilding.

44 "YES Network", *Yes Network Pakistan*, 2022;

<http://yesnetworkpakistan.org/yes-changemaker-project/>.

and tolerance values through conducting monthly study circles.⁴⁵

Similarly, the Conflict Resolution is an essential component of promoting peace, harmony, and tolerance in society. The Renaissance Foundation for Social Innovation, with its objective to counter violent extremism, was established in 2011. It runs several conflict resolutions programs and conducts peace fellowship conferences. In 2015, they launched a counter-narrative campaign named *Mashal-e-Rah* to challenge extremist ideologies by engaging more than 2000 students in 17 universities of Pakistan.⁴⁶ The campaign addressed the different narratives based on misperception and misinterpretation of religious teachings. The campaign has three activities—University Dialogue Sessions, Studio Recording of Panelists, and Social Media Sensitisation. Over 35 students from 10 universities were trained to initiate dialogue in the campuses to conduct and moderate the University Dialogue Sessions. Furthermore, Studio recordings produced content for social media campaigns on Facebook & Twitter. 55,000 virtual audiences viewed the content made.⁴⁷

During 2013-15, The Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research, an NGO that ran a peace education programme for primary and middle schools in Karachi (Sindh), had success with a broader alternative learning programme that targeted about three thousand students between ten and eighteen years old across twenty schools, most of whom belonged to the *Pashtun, Sindhi, and Brahvi* ethnic communities.⁴⁸ The Grammar School Rawalpindi (GSR) took part in a Human Rights Education Program (HREP) campaign entitled “A Piece for Peace.” The Human Rights Education Program (HREP) organised a peace

45 “YES Network”, 2022.

46 “YES Network”, 2022.

47 *Rasipsocial.Net*, 2022, <https://www.rasipsocial.net/projects/Mashal-e-Rah>.

48 “Projects–Piler”, *Piler.org.pk*, 2022; <https://piler.org.pk/projects/>.

campaign by inviting schools' kids to participate in a poetry competition. It aimed at increasing awareness among children about the significance of peace, non-violence, and peaceful conflict resolution.⁴⁹ The *Bardgad* organization, through funding of Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF), engaged youth of educational institutions in Pakistan during 2002-2003. The project's objectives are to promote the culture of peace and harmony in society and eliminate various forms of violence from educational institutions.

Conclusion

To establish lasting peace, we need to disarm the world entirely without any discrimination against nations, countries, or religion. We first must overcome the notion that violence is inevitable because of human nature. Otherwise, the sense of security would bring peace into its last ebb, and we rest in peace instead of *live* in peace. Therefore, human rights education is the way to transform violence by peaceful means and achieve positive peace in society. Pakistan is a country of 224 million inhabitants belonging to very diverse identities, and characteristics. Education is a critical tool for ending prejudice, hatred, and discrimination by promoting tolerance and respect in such contexts. The overall goal of human rights and peace education should thus be to address the root causes of social conflicts—divisions based on ethnicity, religion, caste, class, and sect—through a change in mindset, especially of future generations. Peace education programs follow a variety of strategies from country to country, of course. Integrating peace education with mainstream schooling is perhaps the most effective. The education sector is a central agent of socialisation and has substantial outreach, especially among children and young people. Undoubtedly, it is a stiff challenge addressing the root causes of violent extremism and radicalization and rooting them out from the universities in particular, and the country in general for good in a short time; however, it requires firm commitment to build

49 Piler, 2022.

peaceful and tolerant universities through its continued efforts such as the State, and the Civil Society has been doing through its various actions, and programmes in Pakistan. This is how Pakistan can see a successful transition towards a peaceful and tolerant society in the world.