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RESEARCH PAPER

Sectarianism as a Menace to Social, Economic and Political Participation: A Case Study from Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan is a heterogeneous society where people belonging to different religions, cultures and languages are living side by side with each other. Within the dominant religion Islam there are two major sects, shia and sunni, who have a roller coaster history of mutual relations. The purpose of this research is to investigate the current status of the one of the sub groups of shia community, Hazara; dominantly living in and around Quetta city. Several shades of terrorism also include sectarian colouring and Hazara community has been facing severe attacks by militants. Study of the effects of terrorist attacks on the socio-political and economic position of this community is the primary subject matter of this research. Using an observational, cross-sectional, and quantitative research design, a face-to-face field survey was conducted in Hazara-populated areas in Quetta, Pakistan. Hundreds of people have either lost their lives or been subjected to severe injuries in dozens of terrorist attacks. The Hazara people are living in a profound sense of insecurity and distrust, which makes this community one of the most beleaguered in Pakistan.

Introduction

For the past thirty years, Pakistan has suffered the heinous consequences of sectarian violence. According to the South Asian Terrorism Portal, from 1989 to 2018, about 3072 incidents of sectarian violence took place, resulting in 5602 people dead and more than 10,000 injured (Asia Terrorism Portal, 2018).A large fraction of Shia Muslims was affected by the increase in faith-based violence in Pakistan and the Hazara ethnic group of Quetta has specifically been targeted in this regard.

The Hazara community is one of the native ethnic groups living in present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is the third-largest ethnic group in Central Afghanistan which is about 20% of the 30 million population of the country (Baiza, 2014). They were about 67% of the total population in Central Afghanistan, before the 19th century and half of them were either massacred or forced to migrate during the reign of Mir Abdul Rehman (1880-1901) in 1893 (Minority Rights Group International, 2021). Meanwhile, about 15000 families of the Hazara community fled to different parts of the region including Mashad (Iran), Quetta (Pakistan), and other different Central Asian states(Mousavi, 1997). Moreover, the Hazara migration from Afghanistan to different states can be divided into three phases: first, they moved to present-day Pakistan during British rule in India for better economic opportunities. Second, they fled from the persecution of Mir Abdul Rehman in 1893 when he forced the Hazara community either to leave Afghanistan or face the worst consequences. Third, a large portion of the Hazara population migrated to Pakistan in the 1990s when the Taliban government specifically targeted them due to their Shiite faith and religious practices (Devasher, 2021; Watch, 2014). Most of the Hazaras live in the Hazarajat region of

central Afghanistan, among the highlands of Koh-i-Baba, at the western extremities of the Hindu-Kush (Khazeni et al., 2003).

The Hazara community in Afghanistan speaks Hazargi, which is a Persian dialect; more precisely a segment of the Dari language(Schurmann, 1962). The Hazara peoples' identity is based on their Shia religious affiliation combined with the Mongol physical features that make them easily identifiable among other ethnic groups(Britannica, 2023; Majeed, 2021a) Likewise, the people of the Hazara community living in Quetta share the same religious, ethnic, and cultural values as the Hazara people of Afghanistan. According to the 2017 census, the city of Quetta is considered the most populated city in Baluchistan and the 10th largest city in Pakistan, with a population of 10,01,205people(Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The total population of the Hazara community living in Quetta is about 500,000 to 600,000 and is considered one of the most progressive communities as compared to other ethnic groups in Baluchistan in terms of literacy rate (International, 2018; Sultan et al., 2020). Since they migrated from Afghanistan, the Hazara community has been living in two parts of Quetta City: Hazara Town and Marienbad. Both areas are protected by high walls and security checkpoints strictly guarded by paramilitary forces (Butt, 2014).

The Hazara people, who mainly belonged to the lower strata, faced extreme levels of persecution, not only through target killings and bombings but also through socio-economic exploitation triggered by high-security concerns. Meanwhile, they have always been a soft target for terrorist groups, particularly for Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, a terrorist group that has been involved in the most gruesome terrorist attacks against the Hazara community. In addition to the broader scope of sectarianism in Pakistan, many terrorist groups, including Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), and Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), were actively involved in cleansing of Shia community in general and the Hazara community in Quetta in particular. This campaign turns out to be a continuation of the global jihad movement against the 'others' (Yusuf, 2012). The Lashkar-i-Jhangvi group has killed most of the Hazaras in the past few decades as compared to any other terrorist group(Minority Support Pakistan, 2012).

According to the National Commission of Human Rights, from 1999 to 2018, about 2000 Hazara people were killed by different militant factions(National Comission for Human Rights Pakistan, 2018) . Apart from this, the Hazara people are much more educated as compared to other communities in Baluchistan, but their constructive role has severely been damaged due to terrorist attacks. The whole community seemed to be caught in psychological insecurity, which limited not only their social activism but also their economic activities as well. After the surge of terrorist attacks, the overall economic share of the Hazara community in the markets of Quetta was enormously shuffled in favor of non-Hazara ethnic groups(Majeed, 2021b). There are no safe localities in Quetta's main market where Hazara people can safely run their business. Their fear not only limited their social interaction, but a sizable portion of the community fled the country or relocated to other parts of the country (Commission & Pakistan, 2021). After a continuous campaign of violence, Hazara people even feel unsafe while traveling outside their residencies as a large number of people have become subject to target killings due to their special physical feathers, which make them easily identifiable among the other people (Siddiqi & Mukhtar, 2015).

It is largely witnessed that the agony of the Hazara community was due to their religious affiliation upon which they were mostly targeted by terrorist groups. The following attacks against the community affected their socio-economic participation as well as their religious and political freedom enormously.

Material and Method

Study Design

This study has used an observational, cross-sectional, and quantitative research design based on primary data collected through a face-to-face survey of the adult population of the Hazara people in Quetta, Pakistan. The Hazara population lives in two parts of the city: Hazara Town and alongside the Alamdar Road, towards Maryabad. People were selected based on professions, age, and gender from both parts of the city. Many female volunteers also participated in the survey so that a handsome number of female participants could be included to maintain gender balance in the survey. After having a sufficient number of volunteers, 300 questionnaires were distributed equally among them. Out of 300 questionnaires, 261 were fully completed and returned to the researchers within the time frame.

The Survey Instrument and Data Collection:

A structured questionnaire was developed by the authors. The questionnaire was based on the History of migration, Socio-political participation, economic status, religious freedom, and international response to the victimization of the Hazara community in the city of Quetta. The authors developed suitable questions according to the indigenous context to engage maximum participants in the survey. The questionnaire was translated into Urdu, (the national language of Pakistan) and updated before initiating the survey for data collection. The method of snowball sampling was used in which an exponential non-discriminative snowball technique was adopted for data collection. One referral contacted the other multiple referrals and they contacted many other referrals to make a chain for data collection. Furthermore, many volunteers from the Hazara community assisted enthusiastically in conducting the Likert Scale survey through questionnaires. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in a face-to-face setting. Before initiating the survey, the participants were asked about their understanding of the questions, and concepts used in the questionnaire, to ensure validity and authenticity. If any participant was found unclear regarding any question, that question was comprehensively explained by the surveyors. Five surveyors were trained, as aides, in the face-to-face survey methodology. The survey was conducted from 16 to 24 October 2020 in Hazara Town and Maryabad, Quetta.

Measures

The study questions were planned to construct a survey for the Hazara community; through research team discussion and consensus on mapping the items that could be assigned to more than one of the scale variables. As a result of this process, all survey questions, about the Hazara community, related to their awareness, knowledge, social activities, religious position, and behaviors were grouped through scales contracts.

The Conditional Responses group, treated as the dependent variable of this case study, was a scale that consisted of the sum of 6 items, the responses are coded as absolutely not =1, to some extent =2, Do not know = 3, Yes = 4 and Very much so = 5. The other constructs of this case study in the Hazara community computed the same way as the dependent variable as scale, served as the independent variables which included: (a) Antiquity (b) Political Activities (c) Community-based (d) Financial Issues and (e) Global Response(see in Table S1).The socio-demographic variables include gender, age, marital status, level of education, and occupation.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for predictors groups [N = 261]

S. No	Antiquity	"Yes" Percentage
1	Do you agree that your family or ancestors settled in Quetta for religious independence?	29.5
2	Do you agree that there have been attempts by various governments to forcibly change your religious affiliation?	17.8

3	Do you agree that your community's displacement from Afghanistan to Quetta was purely due to religious affiliation?	56.3

Table 2
Political Activity Related Questions

	Political Activities	
1	Is the state's response to sectarianism biased?	43.3
2	Are you satisfied with the judicial response against the perpetrators who were responsible for attacking your community?	21.3
3	Do you think that the state has discriminated against your community in the last general election?	23.2
4	Do you agree that various governments have used force against your community because of its religious affiliation?	15.7
5	Do you agree that political parties have played a key role in advocating your rights at the national level in Pakistan?	19.8
6	Do you agree that attacks on your community can also push your community's youth towards extremism?	34.6
7	Does your community prefer to use religious identity in politics?	41.3
8	Are you in favor of maintaining relations with other religious sects to increase the political influence of your community?	12.2
9	Do you agree that your political activities have been affected as compared to the past?	33.7

Table 3
Community Related Questions

	Community-based	
1	Do you prefer your religious affiliation over ethnicity to promote new relations at the social level?	13.0
2	Do the people of your community feel threatened while moving outside?	44.2
3	Are you satisfied with the educational facilities available to your community?	15.7
4	Are you satisfied with the economic and social status of your community?	0.7
5	Do you prefer your religious affiliation over ethnic affiliation?	11.2
6	Do you agree that you feel more secure among the people who share a mutual religious identity?	11.2

Table 4
Financial Issues Related Questions

	Financial Issues	
1	Are you satisfied with the financial status of your community?	0.8
2	Do you think that your economic status has been weakened due to sectarian conflicts as compared to the past?	16.8
3	Are you in favor of maintaining economic relations with other religious sects despite religious opposition?	23.0

Table 5
Global Response Related Questions

	Global Response	
1	Do you think that the international community has raised a strong voice against the persecution of your community?	21.4
2	Do you agree that international human rights organizations played a key role in the persecution of your community?	11.8
3	Has any international human rights organization ever approached your community for humanitarian assistance?	19.6

4	Do you agree that the international media seemed to be biased while reporting the persecution of your community?	31.6

Statistical Methods

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample characteristics. To assess the association between the independent variable (scale variables) and demographics variables, we computed chi-square and likelihood ratio tests, and the trend of P values is reported for statistical significance. We performed ordinal logistic regression to assess the relationship between scale variables. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25.0 (IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25.0, 2017)

Results and Discussion

Demographic Information:

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample characteristics.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics for Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Study of Hazara Community, Quetta, Pakistan

S. No	Variable Names	Variable Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age of Respondent	18-25 Years	158	60.5
		26-40 Years	43	16.5
		41-50 Years	27	10.3
		51-60 Years	20	7.7
		More than 60 Years	13	5.0
2	Qualification of the Respondent	Under Matriculation	46	17.6
		Intermediate	81	31.0
		BA	81	31.0
		MA	48	18.4
		M. Phil	5	1.9
3	Occupation of the Respondent	Personal Business	64	24.5
		Govt. Employee	36	13.8
		Private Job	45	17.2
		Laborer	22	8.4
		Any Other	94	36.0
4	Gender of the Respondent	Male	130	49.8
		Female	131	50.2

According to the mentioned table-6, 261 members of the Hazara community participated in the survey. In this survey, 60.5% of participants were from the age group of 18 to 25. There were about 16.5% of participants were between the ages of 26 to 40 years. The following age section holds maximum participants from all the categories of age to comprehend the variations of their viewpoints. Most of the respondents, in this survey, are youth. The reason is that they are most enthusiastic about any research that endeavors to investigate their prevailing socio-political positions. It reflects that the youth of the Hazara community, despite struggling with severe socio-political marginalities and sufferings, is not disappointed and is still willing to cooperate and participate in such activities that may bring their community into the mainstream. They are not disappointed with society.

In the category of qualification, 31% of people hold a higher secondary certificate and the same percentage of participants is also holding Bachelor's degrees. About 18.4% of people who participated in this survey are holding Master's Degrees. So, the section on

qualification strengthens the quality of research as most of the participants are literate and well informed about the prevailing issues.

To judge the economic conditions and activities of the people as they are affected by the sectarian attacks, a handsome number of people from different professions participated in the survey. There are 13.8% of government and 17.2% of private employees participated in this survey. Apart from the government sector, about 24.5%of participants in the survey are those who are doing their businesses. Simultaneously, a maximum number of people relevant to different economic activities are invited to the survey so that an authentic result can be gained.

Although there is very little freedom for women in Baluchistan, Hazara women are considered more active socially and economically in their areas as compared to other female communities. In this survey, 50.2 % of female participants and 49.8 % of male participants take part and express their opinions. Meanwhile, a significant number of male and female participants are ensured so that a proper outcome from both genders can be organized.

Thus, the whole table depicts the basic information regarding the participants of the survey. In this regard, their information, including their age, qualification, profession, and gender, indicates an organized research pattern that is followed in this survey.

Measure of Association

To assess the association of individual items in the independent variable scales with demographics variables, the Chi-square and likelihood ratio tests are used for the statistically significant relationship between two variables.

Table 7
Association between Item Scale Variables with Demographics variable

S. No	Hypotheses	Pearson's chi-square (P < 0.05)	Likelihood ratio (P < 0.05)	Linear by linear association (P < 0.05)	Results
1	H_0: Education and Group of Antiquity are associated H_1: Education and group of Antiquity are not associated	0.000	0.007	0.0012	Significant
2	H_0: Profession and Group of political activities are associated. H_1: Profession and group of political activities are not associated	0.000	0.001	0.000	Significant
3	H_0: Gender and group of community activities are associated. H_1: Gender and group of community activities are not associated	0.000	0.020	0.021	Significant
4	H_0: Education and group of financial-issue are associated. H_1: Education and group of financial-issue are not associated	0.004	0.003	0.017	Significant
5	H_0: Gender and Group of Global response are associated. H_1: Gender and group of Global response are not associated	0.000	0.028	0.025	Significant

Chi-Squared distribution and these results in an asymptotic (2-sided) p-value which has a value reported as p < 0.05. In the above table-2, we see that the p-value is less than 0.05 and therefore we can reject the null hypothesis that the two predictors' variables are independent and there is no relationship or association between the predictors' variables.

The lines labeled Likelihood Ratio and Linear-by-Linear Association is also tests of independence that shows significant results. In the first group, most of the educated people of the Hazara community agreed with the narrative that their ancestors migrated to Quetta from Afghanistan to get better economic opportunities as well as a better environment in which to practice their religious faith. Thus, two variables education and history are associated and significant. The Hazara community faced an extreme level of persecution by sectarian attacks, which affected not only their religious practices but also their political participation as well. Moreover, the second group of the table identifying that people belong to different professions, agreed with the viewpoint that their political participation is deeply affected by sectarian attacks against their community. Therefore, two variables profession and politics are interlinked and significant. In the third mentioned group, two variables, gender, and social activities are associated and significant. Both genders acquiesced to the view that, on the one hand, attacks on their community restricted their social activities, while on the other hand, their social relations with other religious groups also deteriorated. The fourth part of the table contains two variables: education and economic activity. These two variables are also associated and significant because they refer to the impacts of terrorist attacks on the economic activities of the people. Sectarian violence against the Hazara community did not only deprive the Hazara people of their economic share but also pushed them into a state of economic uncertainty. So, a community that once had the biggest economic share in the city of Quetta is now struggling for survival. The fifth section contains two significant variables: gender and international reaction to Hazara persecution. The Hazara people have shown a lot of concern over international reactions to their suffering. They are convinced that the international community, despite all the claims of equality and social justice, has not done enough to redress the grievances of the Hazara community.

Ordinal Logistic Regression

Ordinal logistic regression is used for interactions between independent scale variables to predict the dependent variable (conditional responses).

Table 8
Ordinal logistic Regression model

S. No	Model	-2Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
1	Intercept	1425.658	-	-	-
2	Final	1331.203	94.455	6	0.000

Table-8 model fitting information contains the -2 log-likelihood for an intercept model, and the full model contains the full set of predictors (scale variables). We also have a likelihood ratio chi-square test to test whether there is a significant fit model relative to the intercept-only model. In this case, we see a significant good in a fit of the final model over the null model chi-square (6) = 94.455, p < 0.000

The above table value of 0.000 shows the best model fit, it tells that the fitted model is statistically significant, which shows all scale variables have good relations to the response variable (conditional response). There is a relationship between all variables and best to explain the conditional response.

Table 9
Parameter Estimates

Sr.	Scale variables (Independent V.)	Estimates	Std. Error	df	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
						Lower	Upper
1	Antiquity	0.483	0.153	1	0.002	0.184	0.782
2	Political Activities	1.419	0.255	1	0.000	0.919	1.919
3	Community-based	0.411	0.214	1	0.005	0.008	0.831

| 4 | Financial Issues | 0.867 | 0.162 | 1 | 0.000 | 0.552 | 1.184 |
| 5 | Global Response | 0.187 | 0.169 | 1 | 0.072 | 0.204 | 0.458 |

In the Parameter Estimates table-9, we see the coefficients, their standard errors, the Wald test and associated p-values (Sig.), and the 95% confidence interval of the coefficients. Antiquity, Political Activities, Community-based, Financial Issues are statistically significant; whereas the scale variable Global response shows insignificant. We would say that for a one-unit increase in Antiquity (i.e., going from 0 to 1), we expect a 0.483 increase. For Political Activities, we would say that for a one-unit increase in Political Activities, we would expect a 1.419 increase in the log odds of being in a higher level of apply, given that all of the other variables in the model are held constant. The value of the Community-based coefficient is positive 0.411, which suggests that the Community-based scale variable positively increases the likelihood to refer the religious effect on their community.

In the above table 9, the group antiquity shows significant results in which most of the educated people of the Hazara community agreed with the narrative that their ancestors migrated to Quetta from Afghanistan to get better economic opportunities as well as better environment in which to practice their religious faith. The Hazara community faced an extreme level of persecution by sectarian attacks, which affected not only their religious practices but also their political participation as well. Moreover, the second group of the table political activities identifying that people belong to different professions agreed with the viewpoint that their political participation is deeply affected by sectarian attacks against their community. In the third mentioned group social activities are significant, both genders acquiesced to the view that, on the one hand, attacks on their community restricted their social activities, while on the other hand, their social relations with other religious groups also deteriorated.

The fourth part of the table financial issue is highly significant because they refer to the impacts of terrorist attacks on the economic activities of the people. Sectarian violence against the Hazara community did not only deprive the Hazara people of their economic share but also pushed them into a state of economic uncertainty. So, a community that once had the biggest economic share in the city of Quetta is now struggling for survival. The fifth section shows insignificant results related to global reaction. The Hazara people have shown less concern over international reactions to their sufferings. They are less convinced that the international community, despite all the claims of equality and social justice, has not done enough to redress the grievances of the Hazara community.

Conclusion

Pakistan is home to several groups; identifying themselves on various basis. This heterogeneous society was brought together, under the leadership of Quaid-I-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, under the banner of Islam. Followers of Islam themselves differentiate themselves based on a variety of interpretations, of Islamic injunctions, and historical events and disputes. The Shia have long been identified as different from mainstream Sunnis; even though the Sunnis are themselves subdivided into several groups. Hazara community is one of the sub-community of the Shia group. The striking feature of this community is its distinctive racial identification. It not only makes them easily identifiable but also makes them an easy target during sectarian rifts and skirmishes.

There have been dozens of incidents in the past couple of decades where hundreds of Hazara community people have either lost their lives or have faced severe losses and injuries. The government has not been effective in controlling such incidents and law enforcement agencies have not been very successful in bringing the culprits to book. Socio-economic deprivations and discriminations, faced by the Hazara community, may, one day, make their trust in the state shaky and some of them, if not all, may fall prey to anti-state elements.

Recommendations

There is a need to put special efforts into this regard and ensure, such communities, a feeling of security and inclusiveness. For that purpose, following recommendations have been made.

- The government needs to give special attention to the threats faced by the Hazara community, both collectively and individually.
- Laws need to be implemented strictly and all those responsible for carrying out terrorist activities against the community must be brought to book.
- People of the surrounding areas need to be made aware of the sensitivity of the issue and thus educated to deal with this marginalized community carefully and with empathy.
- Hazara community also needs to become vigilant and active in projection and protection of their rights.
- Dialogue is the only way to sustainable peace and tranquil in the society. It must not be stopped at any cost.

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