

Assessment of Interfaith Harmony between Muslims and Hindus in Socio-Cultural Activities in Swat

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ABSTRACT

This research work investigated the interfaith harmony and social cohesion between two different religious followers of Hinduism and Islam in District Swat of Pakistan. The current world is facing various kinds of issues and challenges regarding interfaith harmony, peace and social cohesion. This is need of the time to establish a peaceful and harmonised day to day life standard for all the segments of society. This research was an effort to analyse the willingness among the Hindus and Muslims for enhancing their tolerance towards each other's social and cultural activities. It also aimed to highlight the positive approach of the respondents towards the participation in the socio-cultural activities of each other. The results of association of social cohesion showed non-significant relationship with an opinion that Hindu and Muslim communities should take part in socio-cultural activities particularly the sports. Similarly, non-significant relationship was found based respondents' data with an opinion that relations between Hindus and Muslims shall enhanced through participation in cultural and religious ceremonies. The result further concluded that there was peaceful and harmonised environment between Hindus and Muslims being living in the target area. The minorities were fully enjoying freedom and equality in District Swat. Based on the findings of the study, positive social interaction, mutual respect, positivity in thinking and positive role of local media have been recommended as policy guidelines for promoting inter-faith harmony.

Keywords: Socio-Cultural Activities, Interfaith Harmony, Social Cohesion, Peace, Religion

INTRODUCTION

According to Henslin, (1997) ideas and practices cut off the profane from the sacred and its adherence into a sacred community. This is commonly believed that the living in harmony of both Muslims and Hindus was most important in respect of progress, betterment and prosperity for the whole world and especially for the region. According to In‘ām Ullah (2010), interfaith harmony means to live and let other to live. Abid (2012) stated that population of 57 out of 193 countries has Muslim majority. Muslims of sub-continent had migrated from Central Asia as conquerors. However, their glory and superiority were blamed from time to time by the non-Muslims by various ways. Nonetheless, they were two separate nations with remarkably different existence, different digression, culture, language, literature, customs and traditions. Both have been struggling hard to subordinate each other in all fields of life. Both were very different from each other in all respect of life (Anil, 2006; Rehman et al., 2018). According to Husain, (2009), due to this background of the uncompromised behaviour and attitude of the Hindus, the Muslims of Indian sub-continent rose to the occasion of mistrust and highlighted the hatred of Hindus towards them. Therefore, they decided to throw off the burden of double chains of slavery i.e., British superiority and Hindu dominance over the Muslims in the South Asian sub-continent.

Pakistan came into being as an independent state on 14th of August 1947 which has ensured the equality of all inhabitants irrespective of their caste and creed. Hindus and Muslims have been living together on the same piece of land for more than one thousand years. However, the future does not seem to be hopeful since the anxiety in the region and particularly among the two nations is on the rise. People have no awareness about what is happening around their region. Above all, there is trust deficit on people to people level as well. So, it creates a very ambiguous picture for the laymen in particular. Harmony is inevitable and essential for the smooth relationship in the region (Paul, 2008; Riađ et al., 2018a). According to Kana (1992), Muslims and Hindus were living together in the subcontinent over 1000 years. During their period, there was always great violence and conflicts. Keeping in view above discussion, it can be analysed that the behaviour of Hindus and the policies of the leadership of Congress resulted in widening the gulf between Hindus as a larger community and the Muslims as minority in South Asia (Maħboob, 2009; Khan et al., 2017).

Minority everywhere on this globe is suffering from inconsistency in social, political, economic, cultural and religious spheres of life (Stewart, 2009; Riađ et al, 2018b). Hinduism is totally against the Muslims (Islamism) regarding their beliefs, rituals, festivals and cultural activities. It is also evident from the observation that it was a great leadership of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-A‘zam Muhammad Ali Jinnah who highlighted his opinion that both Hindus and the Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, thinking, societies, culture, customs and

literature (Sarfaraz, 2009; Khan et al., 2016). He urges upon the ministry of national harmony at a federal level to promote harmony among people of different faiths and religions (Yoay, 2008; Khan & Rehman, 2018).

The present world has been engulfed by different dilemmas and complex issues. The status of minorities is much debated topic across the globe. The interfaith harmony between the Muslims and Hindus is much significant in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Islam ensures to protect rights of minorities. Unfortunately, mass media in the western world has misinterpreted the image of Pakistan that the minorities here are deprived of their fundamental rights and freedom. The area under discussion in this study will elaborate the relationship between Hindus and Muslims living together with peace and harmony. The study will also investigate the mutual respect, and cooperation in their day to day affairs (Husain, 2009; Shah et al., 2018).

Interfaith versus Intra faith harmony

There are two terms usually used to explain the relationship among the people particularly between majority and minority. The first one refers to the strong and cooperative relationship among different religions and faiths; the second refers to the positive and great relationship within the sects of same religion. Since there are Sunni, Shia, and Barailvey among Islam, so the relationships among all these sects are called intra faith harmony. In contrast, the relations which occur among the different kind of religions as like as Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism are called interfaith harmony.

The Hindu community cannot be declared completely safe. They are facing threats and persecutions in many ways. Quaid-e-A'zam had also realized their religious freedom and assured them of their religious practices and rituals in the newly independent state of Pakistan...".But with the enactment of the 1973 Constitution, Article-2 made Islam as the official State Religion of Pakistan". Article 2-A was added in 1985 to the Constitution, which included the "Objectives Resolution" as part of the Constitution. The name Pakistan means "Neat Land or the Land of the Pure". It clearly refers to the land of pious and noble people. According to the research of Anil (2006), about 97% of the people of Pakistan practice Islam. Two per cent are Christians; 1.6 % is Hindus; the remaining belongs to other smaller sects. Nonetheless, Religion was the basic and major's reason for the establishment of Pakistan as an independent nation.

Conceptual Framework

For the study and analysis, the following conceptual framework was designed.

Independent variable	Dependent variable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social and cultural activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social cohesion

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

District swat is situated in Malakand division. There are 65 Union councils and 5 tehsils in district swat. According to census of 1998, the total population was 1,257,602. District swat hosts some minority like Hindus and Christians. The numbers of Hindu in swat are 1581, which is 0.013% of the whole population. Hindus are living in the Union Council of Khwazakhila and local city of Mingora. Purposive sampling method has been used for the data collection. The population of Muslims and Hindus was scattered in the hilly terrain. Therefore, it was difficult to reach every person and the scholar had to use purposive sampling (Bailey 1987). The acquired populations according to criteria as we selected those members, who had taken part in day to day life, like as Nazims, social workers, Religious Scholar, khans, and teacher. The total size of population at that criterion stood at 400. According to the criteria designed by Sekarān (2003) the sample size selected for the study was 210 respondents. The relative sample size of distribution strata against each of the population.

$n = \frac{n \cdot N_1}{N}$ Chaudry, (1996)

N

Breakup of the Sample Size

No.	Villagers	Population	Sample size
1	Nazims/leaders	65	36
2	Khan/Malak	45	24
3	Mullah	70	38
4	Social Workers	90	48
5	Teachers	120	64
	Total	400	210

Source: Social Welfare department Mingora Swat.

A well-designed tool of interview schedule was used for both educated and uneducated respondents as tools of data collection. This interview schedule was comprised of almost all aspects of the study. It better served the purpose to collect the required primary information and to explore the issue of harmony in the social and cultural activities of the people of these two religions. The data collected was

analysed by using SPSS-20. For the sake of understanding, the data was tabulated and presented in percentage and frequencies. Chi-square (χ^2) test has been used for testing the hypothetical association between independent variable (social and cultural activities) and dependent variables (social cohesion) at bi variate level. The procedure adopted for calculating chi-square as outlined by Tai (1978) is given below.

$$(\chi^2) = x^2 = \sum_{j=1}^j \sum_{i=1}^k \frac{(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{e_{ij}}$$

Where

(χ^2) = Chi-square for two categorical variables

o_{ij} = the observed frequencies in the cross-classified category at i th row and j th column

e_{ij} = the expected frequency for the same category, assuming no association between variables under investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research are given under univariate and Bivariate analysis which showed relationship for both dependent and independent variables.

Univariate Analysis

Table1. Respondents Attitude about Social and Cultural Activities

Statements	Social & Cultural Activities				Total	Mean (\bar{x})	SD (σ)	$\bar{x} + \sigma$	$\bar{x} - \sigma$	% Deviation	
	Yes		No							Sample-1	Sample-2
	O.V	%V	O.V	%V							
Are you willing that the Hindu should take part in game with Muslim	207	98.6	3	1.4	210	105	144	249	-39	23	1
Do their cultural activities have positive impact on Muslim	206	98.1	4	1.9	210	105	143	248	-38	23	1
Have you ever shared your food with Hindu being	40	19	170	81	210	105	92	197	13	4	30

living in the same area?											
Do culture and religion allow conjugal relation b/w Muslim and Hindu	19	9	191	91	210	105	122	227	-17	2	33
Are you in the fever that Hindu and Muslim having the same style dress?	200	95.2	10	4.8	210	105	134	239	-29	22	2
Do you have any Hindu friend?	210	10	0	0	210	105	148	253	-43	23	0
Is discrimination found in the status of Hindu and Muslim on the bases of minority?	12	5.7	198	94.3	210	105	132	237	-27	1	34

The values in the table indicate frequencies and the values of parenthesis indicate percentage.

Respondents Attitudes about Cultural Activities

Culture is the way of life and includes habit, knowledge, behaviour, fashion and style etc. The cultural variables have strong influenced on social solidarity and promote deep understanding amongst the followers of different religions. In the opinion of Maḥboob (2009), there are two levels of prejudices in Pakistan with respect to Hindus that are cultural and legal. The table given below indicates that out of 100% respondents, 98.6% respondents responded that Hindus should take part in the games with Muslim, while 1.4% reported negatively. Hindus are of the opinion that culture has positive impact on Muslim majority i.e. 98.1% responded in yes while 1.9 answered in 'negative'. Regarding the sharing of food with Hindus, 81% of respondents were not shared their food with Hindus and 19% of Muslims did share their food with Hindus at festivals. The result also showed 91% of respondents claimed that culture and religion are not allowed their followers for conjugal relation among each other while, in contrast only 9% showed willingness in this regard. According to the article of United Religions Initiative (anonymous) that changeability of ideas between different religious followers is a joy of solidarity and cohesion. Regarding changeability of idea between different religious followers is more effective. In addition, upon asking about dress, 95.2% showed positive impression in the wearing of same dress while only 4.8% did not show willingness to same dressing. Moreover, friendship at individual's level was

prevalent between both faith holders. This finding is in negation to Maḥboob (2009).

About the status discrimination and disparity, majority i.e. 94.3% of respondents claimed that there was no discrimination in the status based on the minority and majority while only 5.7% responded that there are disparity and discrimination on the bases of minority among majority. It was found that majority of the minorities are taking interest to participate in all the social and cultural activities. This is vital for the dynamism and smoothly running of any society. Majority of the minority opined that they play games with their Muslims friend along with having Muslims friend as well. Minority also claimed that there is no discrimination based on religion in the society of Pakistan. Therefore, the result concluded that there is a congenial atmosphere existed between Muslims and Hindus in the targeted area.

Bivariate Analysis

Table 2: Association between Socio-Cultural Activities and Social Cohesion

Statement s	Attitude		Social & Cultural Activities						Mean (□)	SD (σ)	□ + σ	□ - σ	% Dev.		Chi Square P value
			Yes		No		Total						Sample-1	Sample-2	
	O.V	%V	O.V	%V	O.V	%V									
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes									
Are you willing that the Hindu should take part in sports with Muslim	No	Yes	3	197	0	10	3	207	103.5	132	236	-29	0	16	$\chi^2=0.152$ (P=0.696)
			100	95	0	4.8	1.4	98.6	1.5	2	4	-1	0	17	
Do their cultural activities have positive impact on Muslim	No	Yes	4	196	0	10	4	206	103	132	235	-29	0	16	$\chi^2=0.308$ (P=0.348)
			100	95	0	4.9	1.9	98.1	2	3	5	-1	0	17	

Is discrimination found in the status of Hindu and Muslim on the bases of minority?	Are you in the fever that Hindu and Muslim having the same style dress?		Do culture and religion allow conjugal relation b/w Muslim and Hindu		Have you ever shared your food with Hindu being living in the same area?	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
189	11	10	181	19	162	38
96	92	100	95	100	95	95
9	1	0	10	0	8	2
4.5	8.3	0	5.2	0	4.7	5
198	12	10	191	19	170	40
194	5.7	4.8	91	9	81	19
99	6	5	95.5	9.5	85	20
127	7	7	121	13	109	25
226	13	12	216	23	194	45
-28	-1	-2	-25	-4	-24	-5
16	1	1	15	2	14	3
15	2	0	17	0	13	3
$\chi^2=0.358$ (P=0.550)		$\chi^2=0.525$ (P=0.469)		$\chi^2=1.045$ (P=0.307)		$\chi^2=0.006$ (P=0.937)

Values in the tables indicate frequencies and values of parenthesis indicate percentage.

Association between Socio-Cultural Activities and Social Cohesion

According to Abid, (2012) minority in Pakistan facing two levels of prejudices and biasness that are cultural and legal. Social and culture aspects is another variable that could lead to solidarity and cohesion. Socio-cultural variables include legal rights, social cohesion, equal status religious and cultural freedom, security, violence and inequality. It means that culture is the way of life and covers somehow the all aspects of life.

The table regarding association of results of social solidarity showed non-significant ($p=0.696$) relationship were found that Hindu should take part in games with Muslim. Similarly, a non-significant ($p=0.348$) relationship was found regarding the culture activities have positive impact on Muslim with social cohesion. A non-significant ($p=0.937$) relationship was found in the sharing of food with Hindus and social cohesion. Moreover, a non-significant ($p=0.307$) relationship was found with opinion that cultural and religion allowed conjugal relation between Hindus and Muslims. In addition, a non-significant ($p=0.469$) relationship was found in context of Hindus and Muslims having the same style of dressing in social solidarity. This finding is totally in negation of In'amullah (2009), that there are lack of similarities and equality with Hindus and Muslim style of dressing. And the lastly, a non-significant ($p=0.550$) relationship was found with the opinion that discrimination found in the status of Hindus and Muslims on the bases of minority and majority with social solidarity. While, regarding the contrast of this finding, Abid (2012) said that the minority dilute their culture identity amongst the majority and stronger. Moreover, the relationship between Muslims and Hindus communities in Hyderabad is regarded as relatively peaceful compared to other regions in Pakistan (Rediff, 2010).

The result helps to conclude that cultural and legal prejudices are creating much more problems in the way of interfaith harmony and social interaction. While, it was found according to the study that Hindus minority in the targeted area are enjoying full fledge freedom in social and cultural activities. Minority have Muslim friends and having a very nice nexus with each other.

CONCLSIONS

The study titled interfaith harmony was conducted in swat to determine the level of interfaith harmony with special focus on Hindus and Muslims relationship. It is concluded that a pleasant and congenial atmosphere was prevalent here in social and cultural activities and along with co-sharing day to day life system. Muslims were fond of participation in all cultural/rituals practices of the Hindus irrespective of their minority status. According to the findings both communities had a smooth and peaceful environment of mutual respect. There is somehow mutual changeability in co-sharing in different aspects of life for smooth running. Sustainability in their relationship is recommended hereby-maximum level of participation from both communities in social systems and set up. A vibrant media needs to play its role through focusing the cohesion objectives, along with religious scriptures indoctrinating through the idea of proximity.

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