



BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE FOR COUNTERING THE LURE OF EXTREMISM

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Abstract

The rampant rise of violent extremist incidents across the globe poses an urgent threat to humanity requiring an immediate action. Vulnerabilities within diverse communities can serve as a critical fault line that can potentially foster extremist tendencies. This paper focuses on examining this pressing issue with specific reference to Pakistan. The study argues that although external factors contribute significantly, internal factors too, hold paramount importance in confronting the challenge of violent extremism. The paper addresses the issue of violent extremism in Pakistan, emphasizing the importance of building community resilience. The study aims to inform and shape state's policies and strategies in the context of P/CVE. It sheds light on various forms of violent extremism, i.e., acts of terrorism, religious violence, gender-based violence, violent protests, riots, and hate crimes, demanding a comprehensive understanding. The literature review underscores various factors influencing community resilience, highlighting the significance of a multi-stakeholder approach. The paper highlights the need for an active role of academic institutions, think tanks, and NGOs in P/CVE. Structured across chapters, this paper analyses the issue of violent extremism in Pakistan and suggest soft approaches to tackle this issue. By charting a comprehensive path forward, it aims to contribute to a more secure and resilient Pakistan.

Keywords: Violent Extremism, Counter violent extremism, community resilience, think tanks, NGOs, educational institutions.

Introduction

The battle against extremism is an enduring facet of human history, with civilizations persistently devising strategies to confront this issue in their pursuit of lasting peace. In the context of South Asia, a complex yet significant region, the challenge of extremism has loomed large for several decades. This region, although rich in diversity, has been marred by the insidious presence of various extremist militant groups, effectively impeding its growth and stability. The root causes of terrorism in South Asia span from religious fundamentalism and left-wing extremism to fervent desires for secessionism (Kumar, 2021). Here it is pertinent to understand that terrorism is biproduct of violent extremism (Iqbal, 2021). Other than terrorist acts, extremism can be transformed into or can be expressed in various forms i.e., acts of religious violence, gender-based violence, violent protests and riots, and hate crimes etc.



The dramatic escalation of extremist inclinations in Pakistan cannot be examined in isolation; rather, it necessitates a contextual analysis. Societal intolerance and extremism do not manifest abruptly; rather, they evolve gradually over time. While numerous historical factors contribute to this phenomenon, there are few pivotal events—the soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iranian revolution, and the inception of the 'War on Terror'. The turning point of 9/11 significantly amplified South Asia's prominence in the global effort against terrorism. The United States, at the helm of the war on terror, forged a strategic alliance with Pakistan. For Pakistan, in particular, the ensuing years brought brutal attacks targeting both civilians and security forces, escalating the threat to national security. As the neighboring state of Afghanistan, Pakistan played the leading role in WoT. Extremist groups like LeJ, JD, and JeM, along with militant entities like TTP, exploited the region's vulnerabilities and ineffective governance to fuel their nefarious ambitions. The important term used here is “vulnerabilities”. Understanding these societal vulnerabilities is crucial as the exploitation of these vulnerabilities, coupled with years of radicalization, has culminated in the emergence of an increasingly intolerant and frustrated society characterized by the prevalence of vigilantism in the name of religion.

Nevertheless, the historic resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, culminating in their return to power in August 2021, unleashed a fresh wave of terrorism in Pakistan. This resurgence can be attributed to a confluence of factors within the TTP framework: strategic mergers, the Afghan Taliban insurgency, heightened operational activities, and a significant augmentation of media operations (Hamming & Sayed, 2023). The repercussions of this increase in violent extremism and terrorist activities can be felt across Pakistan's economic landscape and socio-cultural fabric, instilling a pervasive sense of insecurity (VOA, 2023). Back in 2014 in response to the rise of terrorism, Pakistan initiated the National Action Plan, mobilizing its forces and resources to confront extremism as well as terrorism and their root causes. Consequently, Pakistan witnessed a progressive decline in terrorism year after year, as attested by the country's annual reports (US Department of State, 2019). However, today it is again faced with a multifaceted conundrum of terrorism and extremism.

Research Questions

Following are the questions upon which this research study will be carried out.

1. What are the root causes of violent extremism in Pakistan, and why community resilience is crucial when it comes to preventing and countering violence extremism?
2. How can think tanks, academic institutions, and NGOs contribute to the prevention and countering of violent extremism in Pakistan?

Research Methodology

In pursuit of the research objectives, a mix method approach has been employed. This approach is designed to facilitate a rigorous investigation aimed at comprehensively analyzing the underlying causes of violent extremism in Pakistan. Furthermore, it seeks to highlight the importance of enhancing the community resilience against the scourge of violent extremism.

Data Collection

In this research the data has been collected and analyzed mainly from multiple secondary and primary sources. Secondary sources include international and regional organizational records, books, journal articles, various articles from newspapers, reports from renowned think tanks. Primary source of



the data includes a survey conducted through Google Document Form.

Data Analysis

The method of thematic analysis has been opted for insightful analysis of the open-source data collected for the study. A well-structured approach has been applied under thematic analysis to uncover various themes in the data and reach a valid inference in the research.

Literature Review

Literature review for this study has been conducted to critically analyze and comprehend the available published data about building community resilience against violent extremism. The review outcomes are formulated into two themes that present the common identified patterns in the available data and help the researcher interpret the phenomena under study. The themes areas follows.

1. Factors Affecting Community Resilience to Violent Extremism
2. Strategies and Best Practices for Building Community Resilience

1. Factors Affecting Community Resilience to Extremism

Communities have long been understood to be a critical aspect in countering radicalization. There are several key factors that influence a community's ability to resist extremist narratives and maintain stability. Out of these, 'Social Cohesion' is the most crucial factor and the significance of social cohesion in preventing extremism within communities cannot be overstated. A study conducted by Sampson et al. (1999) underscores the pivotal role of strong social bonds, characterized by trust, shared values, and a sense of belonging, in deterring individuals from engaging in extremist activities (Robert, 1999). Moreover, communities characterized by high levels of social cohesion are better equipped to identify and address potential radicalization. These communities foster an environment conducive to open communication among their community members. Furthermore, Social cohesion can contribute to peace, social justice, and tolerance in the society. A survey conducted in the Khyber and Orakzai tribal districts revealed that 80% people, trained under Community Resilience Activity-North project by the USAID with the support of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, had been willingly cooperating with each other despite existing differences (Dawn, 2022). 700 people were basically trained about conflict resolution, social cohesion, civic engagements, and peace building.

The second most important factor is 'Education'. Extremism often thrives in environments with limited access to education as it is easy to exploit the ignorant mind. Today many argue that education can play an important role in building a culture of peace. Educational programs that promote critical thinking and empower young generation to not only discern and reject extremist propaganda but also to positively shape their community and institutions (UNESCO, 2019). Moreover, these programs must encourage individuals to seek non-violent means to address grievances, thus fostering resilience. Research by Wiktorowicz (2005) sheds light on the effectiveness of education efforts that not only educate individuals about the perils of extremism and its consequences but also teaches them to respect institutions of society ((Vladimir, Vladimirovich and Sevastyanovna, 2021). He also argues that state must ensure that educated people are employed and play positive role in the economic development of the society because unemployed graduates are at risk of radicalization because of their grievances. Moreover, many scholars have argued the productive and engaging nature of young students puts them at risk of being easily molded to become activists for radical social change, as this age group is made up of "identity seekers, defenders, and rebels with formidable energy" (Ghosh, Ratna and W.Y., 2017). Hence education is the most



sustainable way of directing the youth bulge towards positive activities and reducing their vulnerability to be influenced by extremist ideologies.

Furthermore, ample amount of literature is present on the importance of ‘Economic factors’ in determining community resilience. Nevertheless, a nuanced analysis of the literature suggests that while the importance of economic factors should not be understated, it should also avoid undue overemphasis. Although high levels of unemployment and economic disparity create fertile ground for extremist recruitment yet several research articles (Krueger & Malečková 2003; Pape 2005; Piazza 2006; Berrebi 2007; Krueger 2007; Silke 2008) also shows terrorists or violent extremists are not always from the lower class of the community (Gary, LaFree, and Schwarzenbach, 2021). A study in late 1900s by Russell & Miller (1977) compiled terrorist profiles of approx. 350 cadres and leaders across 18 different terrorist organizations. The study concluded that most of them were recruited from middle-class (Rae and Jonathan, 2012). Thereby, economic factors isolation from other ideological factors can mislead analysis altogether. On the other hand, it is pertinent to address the economic factors for it being an important push factor. A study by LaFree et al. (2018) found that many individuals who were drawn to extremism were lacking a stable income, which extremist groups often provide (LaFree, Gary, Bo and Lauren, 2020). Hence we can conclude that efforts aimed at addressing economic disparities will be pivotal for enhancing community resilience. By improving the economic well-being of communities, individuals may become more deeply invested in the betterment of their societies. However, altogether blaming economic condition for prevalence of extremism will also be misleading.

The literature also focuses on the importance of community’s trust in government and law enforcement agencies. Research conducted by Tyler (2006) indicates that when individuals perceive authorities as legitimate, they are more likely to cooperate with them and report extremist activities. The principles of transparency, fairness, and accountability in law enforcement play a significant role in cultivating and maintaining this trust. Conversely, a lack of trust in authorities can undermine community resilience. Communities that perceive themselves as marginalized or unfairly treated by the government may be more susceptible to extremist ideologies. Building trust through community policing, outreach programs, and effective communication becomes a vital strategy for mitigating this risk.

Lastly, frequent dialogue among diverse religious and ethnic groups present within a community effectively enhances community resilience. The research conducted by UNSECO vividly demonstrates that interfaith and interethnic initiatives and dialogue additional peace and developmental outcomes for a community (UNESCO, 2022). The research also argues that such dialogue can reduce vulnerability and fragility of a given community therefore building resilience against extremism and intra society conflict. In conclusion, we can state that the capacity of communities to resist extremism is intricately linked to a multitude of factors, encompassing social cohesion, education, economic opportunities, trust in authorities, and intergroup dialogue. Keeping in mind these factors, it is essential to the design effective strategies to counter extremism at the community level.

2. *Strategies and Best Practices for Building Community Resilience*

Community resilience has gained worldwide recognition as a crucial element in mitigating extremism and upholding societal stability. There are plenty of international frameworks i.e., by UNSC, UNODC, GCFT, UNOCT, EEAS and GCERF that are currently in action to ensure collective security of participant countries in general. In this literature review, we delve into an exploration of diverse strategies and best practices that have been implemented to foster community resilience within the overarching framework of P/CVE efforts.



An eminent strategy that stands out in building community resilience is active ‘Community Engagement’. This approach entails the active involvement of community members in the formulation of strategies and interventions (Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2023). This not only endows the community with a sense of empowerment but also nurtures a profound sense of ownership and responsibility in the fight against extremism. For instance, the “Danish Aarhus Model” that endows the community with a sense of empowerment and helps it identify and empower at risk individuals (European Commission, 2023).

Empowering the youth within a community stands as another effective strategy. Extremist organizations often target disenchanted youth as potential recruits. The case study of Indonesia is the best example in this regard. After the Bali bombings, Indonesia came up with the "Beyond Bali" curriculum package, a pioneering initiative aimed at nurturing the minds of the nation's youth to be resilient against extremist ideologies (Taylor, Elisabeth, Peter, Saul, Anne and Nell, 2017). This holistic approach leverages the power of education, steering young minds away from the allure of violence and towards the path of acceptance and tolerance. Indonesia's commitment to CVE through education marks it as a great example of best CVE practices, highlighting the pivotal role that youth engagement and knowledge dissemination play in building a more harmonious and secure society.

Furthermore, in the era of the internet and pervasive social media, countering online radicalization has assumed paramount importance as an intervention strategy. The phenomenon of home-grown terrorism and lone wolf terrorist is becoming an important issue because of the presence of extremist content in digital spaces (Elise, Julie, Meryl and Elena, 2020). Research findings by Johnson and Martinez (2019) underscore the potential of collaborative endeavors between these platforms and governmental authorities to significantly curtail the online reach of extremist propaganda. Moreover, UNESCO in a study, *Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media*, argues that internet today an active platform for radicalization. Hence, agencies like the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has launched online awareness campaigns and initiatives to counter extremism and promote P/CVE, including partnerships with social media companies to remove extremist content (US Department of Homeland Security, 2019).

Moreover, UK's example of P/CVE practice is one of its kinds as it focuses on systematic protection of human rights. It includes safeguarding human rights in CVE interventions Six Point Plan. Its objectives to insure PVE are as stated: A conducive environment exists wherein both national and devolved regional Parliaments, an unrestrained and dynamic media landscape, and a thriving civil society collectively engage in rigorous and all-encompassing evaluation of governmental policies and practices. A domestic legal framework is firmly in place, delineating, safeguarding, and championing human rights while ensuring adherence to the United Kingdom's international commitments on human rights treaties, concurrently offering avenues for impartial redress. A series of nationally recognized human rights institutions, each having garnered an esteemed A status from the ICC, further bolster the human rights landscape. The nation actively participates in and collaborates with international human rights mechanisms, openly embracing peer reviews via the Universal Periodic Review process. The education system plays a pivotal role in instilling the core tenets of equality, tolerance, and mutual respect. Finally, an accessible, transparent, and equitable justice system, presided over by an impartial judiciary, stands poised to hold the government accountable to the highest standards of justice and integrity (OHCHR, 2016).

In summary, the literature underscores a diverse array of strategies and interventions available for the enhancement of community resilience against extremism. These strategies are often most effective when integrated and adapted to the specific needs and nuances of the communities they aim to serve. Active



community engagement empowers individuals to actively partake in the fight against extremism. Youth empowerment programs provide constructive alternatives to extremism, countering online radicalization helps contain the dissemination of extremist ideologies, and rehabilitation and reintegration efforts address those individuals already embroiled in extremism.

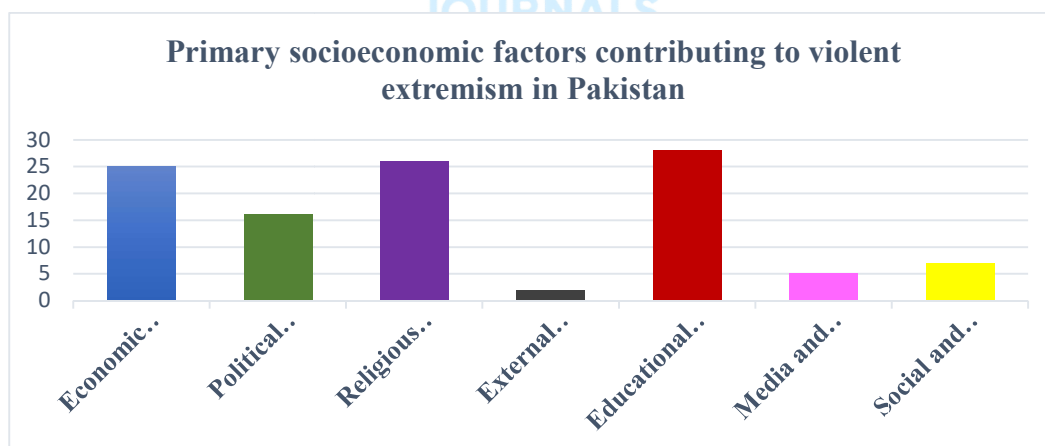
Violent Extremism and the Imperative for Building Community Resilience

The challenge of violent extremism in Pakistan has been steadily mounting over the past few decades, and presently, it appears to have a firm grip on the nation. The proliferation of extremism and the declining tolerance for diversity and dissent have been driven by a constrained conception of Pakistan's national identity, posing a significant threat to the nation's potential for social cohesion and stability (USIP, 2023). The incapacity of state institutions to consistently offer peaceful channels for addressing grievances and the erosion of trust have fostered an environment in which certain groups are increasingly inclined to resort to violence as an alternative. Concurrently, there has been a growing sense of frustration within society, rendering it vulnerable to the influence of violent extremism.

The current landscape of extremism in Pakistan has evolved incrementally and systematically. Whereas limited and ineffective role of government, NGOs, think tanks and academic institutions over the years have inadvertently facilitated extremist elements in perpetuating their violent ideas with increased impunity. Furthermore, the recent Taliban takeover in Afghanistan has led to a gradual upsurge in extremism and terrorism in Pakistan (Kristina, 2023). This research will primarily concentrate on the aspect of violent extremism. To gain a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon of violent extremism in Pakistan, it is imperative to investigate its fundamental causal factors. A survey was undertaken among a purposive sample comprising academia of prominent universities across Pakistan, several government officials, and few NGO's employees. The ensuing findings are as follows: In response to the inquiry regarding the primary socioeconomic factors contributing to violent extremism in Pakistan, participants articulated the following rationales, as visualized in the accompanying graph.

Figure 1

Primary socioeconomic factors contributing to violent extremism in Pakistan



Moreover, in the answer of the following questions, the respondents' answers have been quantified in the pie charts as follows:



Figure 2

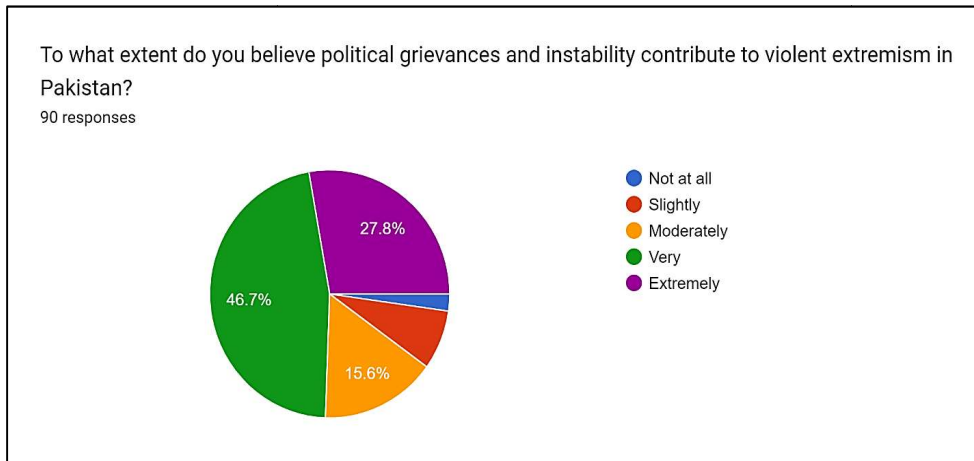


Figure 3

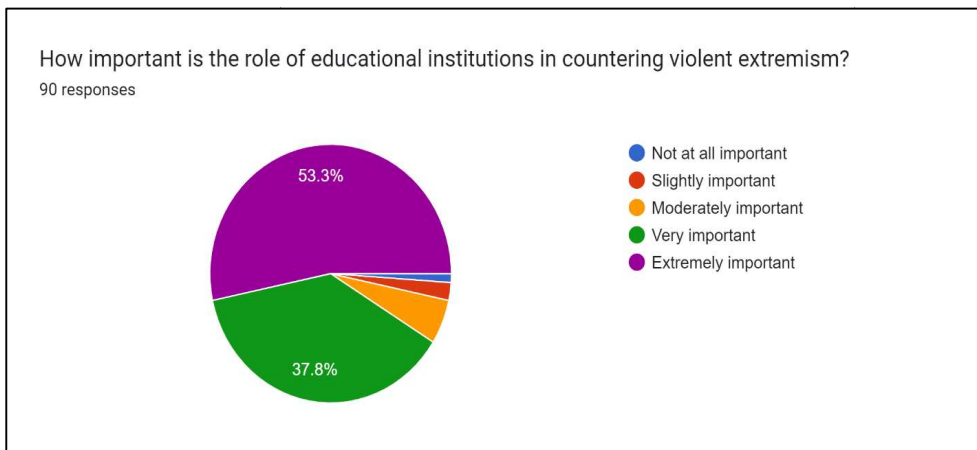


Figure 4

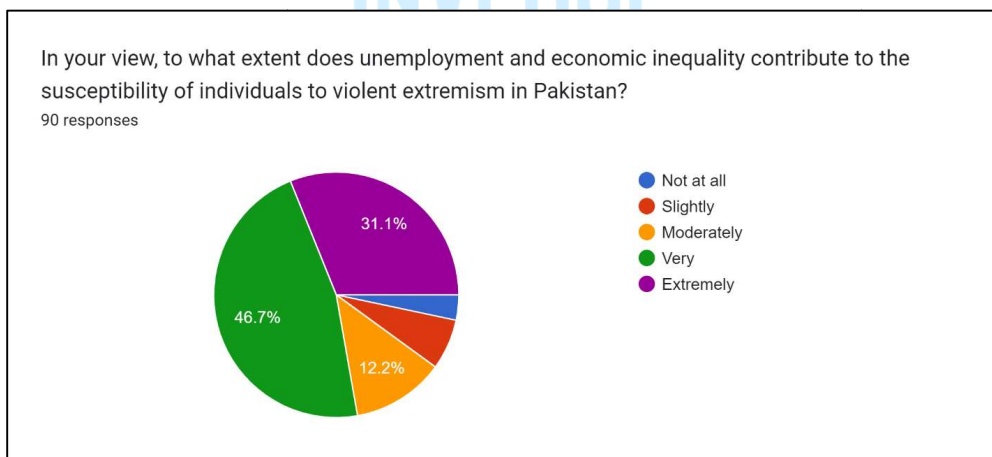
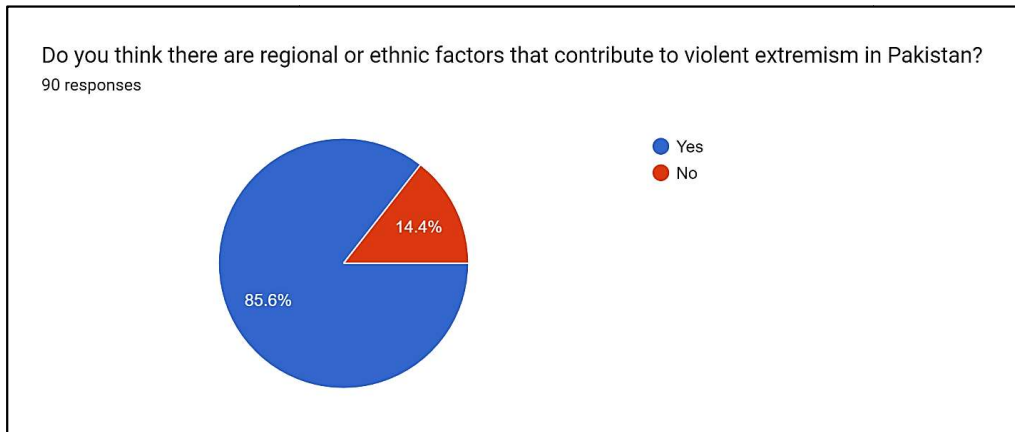




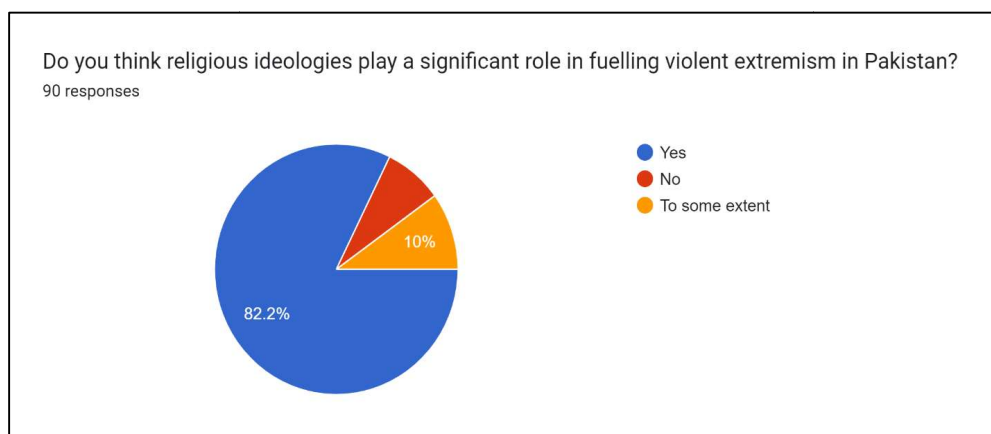
Figure 5



Based on the gathered data, prominent contributors to the upsurge of violent extremism in Pakistan are educational and religious factors, with economic disparities, political elements, and social realities also playing significant roles. Consequently, effective strategies to counter violent extremism should prioritize these factors, forming the focal point for initiatives aimed at enhancing community resilience against extremism. Furthermore, 85.5% of the respondents are of the view that the regional or ethnic factors also contribute to violent extremism in Pakistan. This shows that there is a lack of acceptance of diversity that has led to intra-cultural conflicts.

There are various challenges associated with resolving these issues which has led to the failure of many policies. The inconsistency in defining violent extremism can be termed as the first and foremost reason. It has resulted in the undermining of PVE and CVE measures and has proven to be an obstacle to informed policymaking. Moreover, there is a lack of focus on non-Kinetic measures and the hotspots of violent extremism in Pakistan. Usually, Kinetic measures take place in areas identified as terrorism hotspots. Therefore, this paper utilizes a selection of prevalent acts of violent extremism in Pakistan as data points to gauge the extent of violent extremism. However due to lack of data it does not define extremism region wise. Making these data points will help the paper to conclude solutions that can be implemented effectively in the context of Pakistan. These acts include “Acts of religious and sectarian violence, Terrorist attacks, Extremist recruitment and radicalization, violent protests and riots, Hate crimes, and Gender-Based Violence.”

Figure 6





In the context of religious and sectarian violence, activists and members of minority communities assert that Pakistan's prevailing culture of impunity, coupled with state inaction, has contributed to the escalation of religiously motivated hate crimes and accusations of blasphemy (Sadeeqa, 2023). In January 2022, a report by CRSS revealed that since Pakistan's independence, a total of 1,415 accusations and cases of blasphemy resulted in the loss of 89 lives (Muhammad, 2022). Among these casualties, 71 were men, and 18 were women, with allegations lodged against 1,308 men and 107 women. The report underscored the recurring misuse of blasphemy laws as unlawful. Additionally, it highlighted the Islamabad High Court's previous recommendation to amend existing laws, proposing equal penalties for false blasphemy accusations. However, such reforms face resistance from religious pressure groups, notably Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). The respondents are also of the opinion that religious ideologies play a significant role in fueling violent extremism in Pakistan.

Fighting extremism demands fighting extremism at all levels. Women and children are most affected when it comes to any sort of conflict or act of extremism hence it is important to incorporate them in decision making process. Including women is not a matter of achieving gender equality but also of ensuring effective implementation of polices as they make up 49.2% of the population (Countrymeters, 2023). Moreover gender-based violence is a matter of concern in Pakistan which must be tackled to eradicate the menace of violent extremism from society. According to Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO), a research-based advocacy organization, a total of 10,365 cases of violence against women and 1,768 cases of violence against children were reported to the Punjab police only in first four months of 2023 (Israr, 2023). It is to be noted that these are the reported cases and in Pakistan many such incidents go unreported also. When an individual woman experiences domestic violence, it may be considered a personal matter; however, when hundreds of women are subjected to such abuse, it transcends into a concern for national security and must be dealt accordingly. This problem contributes to the overall prevalence of violent behavior within the nation.

Furthermore, since 2021, terrorism and sectarian strife are on the rise as influence of Hardline jihadi organizations is increasing in Pakistan. According to Center for Research and Security Studies, or CRSS's report militant attacks have surged in Pakistan and number of fatalities have increased gradually i.e., in 2023 the fatality rate of terrorism related incidents was 19% greater than in 2022 (Ayaz, 2023). Whereas, according to another report in 2022 the fatality rate was 120% greater than 2021 (Ayaz, 2023). The challenge of terrorism and violent extremism has primarily been addressed through the use of force by the state. However, the persistent prevalence of these issues underscores the necessity for a more comprehensive solution beyond kinetic measures. Addressing the issue of extremism requires sustained efforts directed at building community resilience. In the context of P/CVE, Community Resilience is not merely a middle-ground option between top-down state interventions and individual radicalization prevention programs, which often face skepticism. Instead, community-led initiatives present a sound and effective strategy. To elaborate, communities' function as the central hubs of violent extremist activities, where recruitment networks, operational cells, financial resources, and infrastructure are intricately interwoven. Furthermore, extremist groups exploit local grievances to establish a presence within communities, giving rise to conflicts so locally rooted that only community members truly comprehend the underlying dynamics and can formulate appropriate responses.

The root causes of violent extremism in Pakistan have not been addressed in an effective manner mainly because of limited collaboration and coordination among different stakeholders, including



government agencies, civil society, and international partners. Most importantly in Pakistan the role of think tanks remains limited whereas think tanks and research institutions worldwide actively contribute to P/CVE. Same is the case with academic institutes, the complex relationship between academic institutions and violent extremism in Pakistan demands effective collaboration with these institutes to prevent and counter extremist narratives. Pakistan can draw valuable lessons from various international best practices, particularly in areas like education & research, narrative building, community engagement, and capacity building within its PCVE initiatives. The role of think tanks is particularly important in this regard. For instance, one such practical example can be of Sustainable Development Policy Institute's recent initiative "Pakistan Community Resilience Research Network" - a prominent program which aimed at building a nationwide network of thought leaders and researchers from Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa whose main focus was building community resilience to counter violent extremism. However, role of think tanks like PIPS and SPDI in PCVE in Pakistan has been quite limited.

Additionally, Madrassas and educational institutes, both public and private, play a pivotal role in shaping young minds. Young individuals are susceptible to extremist ideologies as they search for identity and meaning in their lives. The importance of resilience and adaptation in P/CVE lies in the capacity of educational institutions to empower communities to withstand and respond to evolving threats. By equipping the young minds with the ability to adapt and recover from extremist influences, resilience becomes a critical tool in ensuring sustainable peace and security. However, Pakistan's schools and colleges promote violent extremism mainly through their curriculum and the untrained teaching staff. A study conducted by Javed Ali Kalhoro and Muhammad Zubair Iqbal regarding the Islamiyat syllabus being taught in Balochistan (the hotspot of violent extremism in Pakistan) clearly shows this aspect. On the basis of content analysis, the study concluded that negative terms like Jihad, Jang, Mujahid, Dushman, Hathiyaar, Kafir were relatively more used in the textbooks (Jihad 17%, Jang 28%, Dushman 10%, Kafir 14%). Whereas, positive words like Insaniyat, Miyanaravi, Mohabat, Ravadari, Humahangi and Aman were comparatively very less (insaniyat 4%, miyanaravi 2%, ravadari 2%, Aman 3%, hum ahangi 0%) (Javed and Muhammad, 2021).

Lastly, NGOs exemplify the effectiveness of a multi-pronged approach that includes education, capacity building, and community engagement. Pakistan can draw valuable lessons from international NGOs engaged in P/CVE across the world. According to a report by USIP, there are more than 100 NGOs that claim to be working for preventing and countering violent extremism. Among these organizations, most of them have been working for community resilience and the other have been working for madrasa reforms. Some NGOs have also focused on limited training programs for peace education in educational institutes. However, among the organizations only a few have done some noticeable work in preventing and countering violent extremism.

Strengthening Community Resilience Efforts in Pakistan: The Way Forward

The resurgence of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan has become a pressing concern that demands a multifaceted and proactive approach. Acts of religious and sectarian violence, terrorist attacks, extremist recruitment, radicalization, violent protests, riots, and hate crimes have been prevalent in Pakistan, undermining peace, stability, and socio-economic development. The urgency of addressing these issues is underscored by the need for innovative and sustainable solutions that can effectively counter the extremist narrative and prevent further radicalization. It is imperative to recognize that countering such challenges requires not only robust security measures but also an investment in Pakistan's human resources to build



resilient communities. This entails a comprehensive strategy that addresses the root causes of extremism and nurture a society that is not vulnerable to instigators.

To strengthen state's community resilience efforts, several innovative strategies should be considered. Understanding the landscape of violent extremism in Pakistan must begin with a crucial baseline assessment, offering a benchmark to gauge the effectiveness of future interventions and pinpointing areas of high risk, key drivers, and vulnerable communities. Using that baseline assessment, a location-based analysis can identify hotspots with a higher prevalence of extremism, guiding targeted interventions for efficient resource allocation. Moreover, collaboration with think tanks can introduce valuable research experts to the problem, enabling in-depth studies, trend analyses, and evidence-based recommendations to enhance community resilience efforts. Additionally, engagement with academic institutions is necessary to promote research, data collection, and evidence-based policy development, addressing root causes and intervention impact. Along with that partnerships with NGOs are crucial to facilitate community-based programs and on-the-ground support, extending the reach of community resilience initiatives. Lastly, international collaboration with organizations, neighboring countries, and allies is crucial for leveraging resources, expertise, and best practices in countering extremism on a transnational scale.

For building community resilience, close collaboration with madrassa teachers and religious scholars is pivotal. The Pakistan government can collaborate closely with them, cultivating culturally sensitive and contextually relevant peace education modules that align with existing religious teachings. Such modules can promote values of tolerance, interfaith harmony, and conflict resolution. Furthermore, the government can engage madrassa students and the wider community to counteract feelings of alienation and marginalization. Collaborations with NGOs and community leaders can facilitate programs fostering social integration and providing constructive activities for madrassa students. Addressing the gender dimension, partnerships with organizations specializing in female education can extend the influence to female madrassas. According to UN Women, 2021 report, when women are included in the peace process there is 35% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years. Hence, it is imperative to incorporate women (employed and unemployed) in the community engagement process. Additionally, collaborative efforts with religious scholars can reinterpret and modernize the 'Dars e Nizami' curriculum, ensuring it promotes analytical skills, peace, and tolerance. By addressing misinterpretations like those surrounding the concept of jihad, the government can counter the glorification of violence.

Moving to the realm of primary and secondary education, the government can enhance Pakistan's P/CVE initiatives by focusing on educational reform and curriculum development. Collaborating with public and private sector educational institutes, efforts can be made to revise and modernize the curriculum, particularly in subjects like Islamiyat, to promote peaceful coexistence and counter extremist narratives. Engaging educational experts, scholars, and NGOs with expertise in curriculum development is crucial to ensuring that the new content emphasizes the peaceful tenets of Islam and discourages extremist interpretations. The government can also invest in teacher training programs to equip educators with the necessary skills to deliver the revised curriculum effectively. This proactive approach, working closely with educational institutions, addresses a critical aspect of P/CVE at an early stage, preventing the indoctrination of extremist ideologies among young minds and contributing to a more tolerant and peaceful society. Besides curriculum reform, emphasis on a shift in the educational approach from rote learning to critical thinking aligns with international standards, encouraging students to think critically and analyze the material they are taught.



At the university level, collaborating with universities becomes a proactive approach to strengthening research and expertise in P/CVE. Potential collaborations offer a comprehensive strategy to advance P/CVE efforts. These include curriculum development alignment with the latest developments, joint research initiatives, faculty exchange programs, student scholarships, conferences and workshops, policy development, joint publications, training and capacity building, and resource sharing. Universities can also collaborate with a multitude of NGOs focusing on different aspects of extremism prevention in Pakistan. Drawing lessons from international NGOs engaged in P/CVE, particularly those addressing community resilience and madrasa reforms, can lead to comprehensive P/CVE programs beyond religious radicalization.

Additionally, collaboration with esteemed think tanks like PIPS, SDPI, IPRI, IPDS, and ISSI can address extremism comprehensively through research, assessment, and capacity building. Think tanks can provide expertise for evidence-based policy recommendations, advocacy, and community engagement. Think tanks can play a significant role in policy advocacy, leading to development of effective P/CVE policies, and in hosting workshops and conferences to facilitate meaningful discussions. This approach of utilizing the strengths and expertise of think tanks, can contribute to creating a more comprehensive and effective strategy against extremism.

Conclusion

Community Resilience comprises both the physical and social dimensions. Physical resilience reflects the community's actions to establish, protect, or restore the integrity of crucial built and natural environments, including essential elements like infrastructure and vital resources (such as water and land) that directly affect the well-being, safety, and health of the population. In contrast, social resilience stems from the community's efforts to nurture, shield, or reinstate strong social and economic environments that enhance the quality of life and the overall welfare of its members. However, it's worth noting that research on resilience has frequently focused on one of these intertwined aspects, sometimes overlooking the synergistic relationship between them (START, 2010).

Social Cohesion is a by-product of community resilience. As discussed in the study constrained conception of Pakistan's national identity, and indoctrination of extreme religious narratives create fault lines within our society that is usually exploited by an instigator. Due to these factors and due to presence of diverse ethnic and religious groups in Pakistan it is important to build community resilience in order to promote peace and cohesion. The concept of CR for the prevention of violent extremism is a powerful strategy that recognizes the indispensable role communities play in both the resilience and adaptation of extremism. It shed light on the significance of empowering communities to tackle the underlying causes of radicalization, promote social cohesion, and build trust between different groups. In this regard the role of think tanks, NGOs, and academic institutions is crucial as discussed in the paper. Acknowledging internal factors that contribute to the surge of violent extremism is essential for achieving lasting peace. Pakistani society has, over time, evolved into a state of frustration, suggesting that challenging extremist norms will require at least a decade of concerted efforts.

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