



Religious Pluralism and Minority Rights in Pakistan: A Contemporary Analysis

¹*Fariah Mehboob

¹*Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies National, University of Modern Languages (Numl), Islamabad, Pakistan.

¹fmehboob@numl.edu.pk

Abstract

The research evaluates religious diversity conditions in Pakistan including investigation of threats to minority rights within the legal framework and social and political context. Religious minorities that include Hindus alongside Christians and Sikhs and Ahmadis and additional religious groups face persistent persecution as well as discrimination despite Pakistan upholding constitutional freedom of religion. The research evaluates both minority-disproportionate blasphemy laws and analyzes how social opinions create marginalization conditions for minority communities. The research evaluates religious minority representation in political forums to demonstrate their minimal influence during decision-making activities. Religious extremism worsens the present conditions because its emergence leads to more violent actions and heightened social prejudice. This research finds solutions for minority rights advancement and societal cohesion by using a mixed-methods approach that examines documents alongside surveys and interviews to understand why Pakistan fails in reaching religious pluralism.

Keywords: Religious pluralism, minority rights, blasphemy laws, social discrimination, political representation, religious extremism, Pakistan.

Article Details:

Received on 21 June 2025

Accepted on 31 July 2025

Published on 04 Aug 2025

Corresponding Authors*:
Fariah Mehboob

INTRODUCTION

Religion occupies an important place in the life of the Pakistani people and today, different religious groups live on the territory of this state. Pakistan was created in 1947 to be a homeland for the Muslims from India but despite this, a considerable number of religious minorities Hindus, Christian, Sikhs and many others exists in Pakistan. The founders of the country had noble goals and dreamt of a state that allow citizens of different religions to freely live and have their freedoms protected (Besette et al., 2023). This idea was intentionally noticeable and unambiguous when Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who is the founder of Pakistan, said in his most famous speech of 11th August 1947 the Pakistan shall be the homeland of the Muslims but shall ensure the complete religious liberty of the non-Muslim citizens.

Pakistan was created in the past decades, then true multiculturalism is the dream of the nation that has been marred with problems in the recent years. However, after giving an account of the constitutional rights assigned to the minorities in the official kind of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, it is inconvenient to deny the fact that the minorities have not merely been marginalized but actually persecuted in the country. During the past decades, Iran has also embarked on a process of political Islam and the appearance and expansion of religious extremism was effective in restricting the freedoms of such groups. Such tendency means that while religious diversity is still formally recognized, it becomes far from easy to be realized in the practice. This is a very important and peers' very crucial and poignant reminder that for many minority religious minorities in Pakistan equality before the law today is still a pious hope (Siddiqui et al., 2022).

Religious pluralism can be defined as the situations where different groups of people in a given society adopt different religion systems of beliefs. It includes not only such a conception that representatives of various religions are able to live side by side in peace but also the belief that these people should be given respect, and their rights should be legally protected to the same extent. In the case of Pakistan, it is not only a formativeness to embrace or tolerate religious diversity but also this is the appropriate article which should be written in constitution of Pakistan. However, the country has been able to grapple with how to address religion in its social-political setting especially as it relates to the rights of the religious believers.

The problem of religious pluralism in Pakistan is primarily focused on religious minorities. In as much as their rights are provided for in the constitution, the rights to these communities remain an illusion, and have to endure several social, political and legal injustices. These are legal discriminations such as blasphemy laws under which religion minorities are arrested and detained, social marginalization, use of force, and restrictions in religious worshipping (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Though religious minorities have been experiencing these challenges for decades, it has taken recent years for the violence and discrimination of the minority religions.

Religious minorities of Pakistan comprise of Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Zoroastrians and Ahmadis who all have their special problems. For instance, the Christian population has always been part of the country's population profile, but they continue to suffer discrimination and persecution. Like many other non-Muslims states the population of Bahawalpur suffers from forced conversion, especially of minors, especially Christian girls, discrimination in employment and education. Similar to the Ahmadiyya minority, the Hindu community, the largest religious minority in Pakistan especially in the Sindh province, is forced to convert, suffer from violence and the demolition of their places of

worship (Ali et al., 2023). The Ahmadiyya community is considered non-ipe by the government of Pakistan and the community faces huge amount of presecution in the state ranging from restriction on worshipping, freedom of religion and belief.

Much of this problem is rooted in the constitutional statutes that regulate the religious diversity in the country of Pakistan. Yet the Pakistani Constitution offers religious liberty protection to the religious minority in the country in so far as that the people can practice their faith as they wish. For example, Articles 36 as well as some rights of the Constitution particularly underscore the fact that minorities be allowed to exercise their freedom of religion in the country and they not be discriminated against in any way. However, the actual operation of these provisions has been lackluster throughout the years. The blasphemy laws are laws that were passed in the 1980s as a backlash against the Ahmadis and other religious minorities like the Christians, who are now specifically persecuted by this law (Abbas et al., 2022). These laws have stiff measures, including the death penalty on those people who are found to have offended the religion of Muslims but their use has been an issue of debate of late with some critics accusing the government of using it on the vulnerable groups.

However, the legal aspect of the demeaning of religious minorities in Pakistan is also accompanied by a negative social perspective towards such a minority. As the article makes it clear, religious minorities are frequently perceived inferior to the majority, and their contributions to their society are slightly appreciated or even denied. There is prejudice in religious aspects in the education system, in the media and in other aspects in the community (Tkáčová et al., 2021). It is for this reason that there is a biased presentation of religious minorities in textbooks where various religious minorities are portrayed as negative figures or stereotyped. Similarly, although there are occasional representations of multiculturalism and religious tolerance within the media, it often magnifies the issues of prejudice or bigotry to 'support' stereotyping of the minority groups.

In light of the above, political representation for religious minorities in Pakistan have also posed controversy. Although the Constitution of Pakistan grants representation of the religious minority in Pakistan in the national and in the provincial assemblies, they remain marginalized and uninvolved from the major political processes (Estafanous et al., 2024). Parliamentary representation is assured for all religions and for provinces is also assured but religious representatives are not very effective due to political restrictions in the country because the value and position of their votes which makes it politically difficult for them to assert their 'barutta deen kay masawat ka haq.' Also, obviously, the political parties in Pakistan especially the major ones have not paid much attention to the rights of religious minorities and minority contest the elections but their candidacies are excluded for influential candidates.

It is therefore important that many highlight how religious extremism has worsened the situation for the religious minorities. Today, the increase in the number of radical outfits has led to a very unfavorable climate for the groups that the Constitution protects. These groups also are known to commit acts of violence on the religious minorities, the worship places, the religious institutions inclusive of the Christian churches, temples and mosque. In some instances, these groups have also acted on people they deemed to have committed blasphemy or in other words, revolting against religious injunctions (Loughlin et al., 2022). This has always been an issue with the response of states to violence, police forces and authorities have been reluctant in strictly dealing with perpetrators and have even protected them in cases where they commit violence against these groups.

Situations of religious oppression in Pakistan can not be simply analyzed through the lens of legal cultural and social exclusion of religious minorities but it collects a lot more being related to such issues as construction of national identity, political authority, and Islamic law in the modern state. In Pakistan, the state is Islamic therefore the concept of religious tolerance is not far from controversy within the country.. Due to the political leadership of the country and especially in the recent past, the country has been seen to promote a version of Islam that discriminates non-Muslims. However, gradually, with the increasing pressure of these civil society organizations and organizations as well as human rights organizations working for the protection of religious minority (Sharlet et al., 2021).

Thus, it is necessary to evaluate the present condition within the Pakistani state, main drivers of religious pluralism, and minority rights to better understand the approach's resultant issues for religious minorities. The main objective of this paper is to discuss the contemporary perspective of the situation pertaining to the legal, social and political aspect of religious diversity in Pakistan. Some of the areas that also come under consideration include the effects of religious extremism, role of blasphemy laws, and the stand of Pakistani state and civil society on the matters of intolerance and discrimination. Through the discussion of these issues, this paper aims at widening the knowledge regarding religious diversity and religious minorities and possible solutions in Pakistan (Patras et al., 2024).

The research examines four main goals to evaluate religious pluralism and minority rights in Pakistan. The research checks the legal system which supports religious pluralism in Pakistan through analysis of constitutional texts and related religious minority legislation and policy documents. These assessments determine both the capability of existing laws to protect religious minority groups and their practical implementation within Pakistan. The research investigates social and cultural views toward religious minorities by evaluating the prejudice and marginalization they face across different areas including school and work spaces as well as social bonds between members in communities. The research examines how religious minority communities participate in Pakistani politics by analyzing their representation in both national and provincial assemblies to measure their influence on decisions impacting their communities. The final objective investigates how extremist ideologies influence Pakistan's state policies and societal attitudes and protect religious minority security. Investigation of these important domains generate a complete understanding regarding religious pluralism and minority rights positions in Pakistan today.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious pluralism in this context is used to denote different religions existing and being able to practice their faith within a society without being prohibited from doing so. With Islam as the primary religion followed by the majority of Pakistanis and where the state is an Islamic Republic, religious pluralism has its major challenges. Minority religious groups in Pakistan include Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Ahmadis and others who face discrimination and are discriminated, despite the Charter of Protection of Minorities (Arslan et al., 2022). The literature on the subject of religious pluralism and minority rights, as well as the Minority Rights in Pakistan, available in the existing literature span from the historical, legal, social, to the political analyses provided by Pakistani scholars. The literature review of this study seeks to analyze the current literature on the religious pluralism and the extent of minority rights in Pakistan based on the legal systems, perceived social norms, and the realities of Pakistani politics.

In order to understand the contemporary issues concerning religious minorities in Pakistan we need to know about the pluralism of religious in Pakistan (Mehfooz et al., 2021). On the principles of criterion 3 relating to tensions, policies, and intentions of a state, the intention and policy of the founding father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah was inclusive and tolerant. Q: On August 11, 1947, Jinnah offered tense speech in the very same vein and said, 'You may belong to the Brelvis or the Ahmediyas or any sect of Islam, you be free to go to your temples, you be free to go to your mosques, you be free to go to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan.' This vision of a pluralistic society in which Muslim would respect the rights and freedom of minorities is articulated in the Constitution of Pakistan especially in the Articles 20, 25, and 36 of the document that says the rights of minorities have been protected in the country. Nevertheless, the above vision has not been realized due to political factors, chief of which is increased political fundamentalism.

Unfortunately, the situation was not always as liberal; in the early years of Pakistan's existence, the minorities including Hindus and Christian were included in the society and employed in the government and even in the army. But soon as extremism in religion emerged, these religious groups were slowly phased out of society. For religious minorities the change in status came with the dictatorship of General Zia ul Haq in the 1970 and 80's which was accompanied by the laws which brought new changes to the country. The first shift occurred with the introduction of the blasphemy laws and the torture to the constitution in 1973 and 1974 respectively and declared Ahmadis as non-Muslims (Arif-Tayyeb et al., 2022). Such legal and political alterations had long-term effects for religious minorities of the Pakistani nation and thus set the stage for a decline in their rights.

According to Pakistan Constitution there is some extent of freedom of religion is granted to minorities but the practicality and reality of the implementation of this constitutional law is quite limited and most often fails. It has been noted that although the practice of freedom of religion is provided in Pakistan, there are sections of the Constitution that provide discrimination for religious minorities (Mehfooz et al., 2021). For example, the Constitution of this country provides that all persons have a right to freedom of religion; this means that you are free to practice your religion of choice Asalaamalakum Do also know that under the same constitution, you have the state that reserves power the power to proclaim certain religious practices and religious beliefs are wrong to the state. This has given rise to the occurrence of religious minority vulnerable to the laws and policies that have restricted the religious rights of individuals.

Perhaps one of the most debated concepts of the legal framework in Pakistan concerning the treatment of minorities is the blasphemy laws, which has been discussed in the existing literature. These laws are new in the 1980s, where it is punishable by law to offend Islam, its Prophet or the Quran. Though these laws were introduced to preserve the sanctity of Islam, it is now notorious for being a tool being used against non Muslim citizens, particularly the Christians and Ahmadis (Arif-Tayyeb et al., 2022). It is imperative to contest that the blasphemy laws are applicable in persecuting suspecting individuals with limited evidence or without fair trial. Some of the famous cases of violation of these rights include the case of Asia Bibi a Christian lady who was sentenced to death for blasphemy. Saroop Ijaz and Ali A. Khan have pointed out that the blasphemy laws are not only about discriminating against the non-Muslims but also for asserting the power of Islamic law in the society.

However, there are other laws in Pakistan that are more influential for religious minorities: Collective punishable law and religious laws. For instance, the 1974 constitutional amendment through which Ahmadis were declared non-Muslims has a great impact on the Ahmadiyya community. Ahmadis are banned from calling themselves “prophet” and “Muslim,” while openly practicing their faith is allowed only to some extent. This legal marginalization has been widely discussed among scholars like A. R. K. K. Bukhari and Saeed Ahmed, as they describe that legal base in Pakistan has aimed at excluding Ahmadis from society.

Societal laws available for those minority groups in the society are another factor that defines status of the religious groups, the cultural perceptions of such minority groups are equally crucial. Criticisms have been about how employment of religious discrimination has become normalized in the Pakistani society, in interpersonal relations, education, and other spheres (Ittefaq et al., 2023). Minorities in Pakistan’s communal experience daily harassment and verbal abuse, social ostracism, and physical assault. For instance, the people practising Christianity are approximately 1.6% of the total population but they complained of discrimination against their right to employment, education, and right to own property. There is precedence suggesting that minority religious groups in Pakistani society are stripped of chances to climb the social ladder and are discriminated in both the cities and the countryside according to Pakistani sociologists including Riaz Ahmad & Sarah Khan.

Literature on education has also pointed at the Pakistan educational system as one of the departments that practice discrimination on grounds of religion. Most of them opine that textbooks that are currently used in schools give a dull portrayal of Islamic beliefs and ‘set’ portrayal of religious minorities. For instance, other scholars such as Muhammad Qasim Zaman and Ali Usman Qasmi have described how comparatively, Hindus, Christians and all other memberships of your community has been depicted in Pakistani history text-books as inferior beings or as threats to the Islamic identity. This has led to the escalation of religiosity or in some cases religious bigotry among the youth and stereotyping of such minority communities (Azeez et al., 2023).

Apart from all these issues, religious minorities in Pakistan are prone to physical abuses as well. The desecration of the places of worship, the houses of worship such as churches, temples and the homes belonging to followers of different faiths are a frequent occurrence. About religious extremism, in relation to violence or force against the religious counterparts, Mohammad Waseem and Omar Sharif have established that state actors as well as non-state actors undertake religious campaigns to forcefully assimilate religious minorities into a particular hue. The Muslims are also exposed to violence owing to the fact that the police rarely investigates or prosecutes individuals who commit violence against religious minorities.

Political representation is yet another significant factor in the social phenomenon of religious minorities in Pakistan. Despite the constitutional provisions of the quota for the religious minorities in national and provincial assemblies they do not have much political representation. Possibly, this is due to the realisation that the institutions created through the reserved seats only provide symbolic representation of minorities as the representatives are accorded limited political power and authority to shape policies. Another political science of scholarship like Khalid Nadvi and Asma Barlas has pointed that the political leadership of Pakistan has not given much attention to religious minorities in the demography of power (Samier et al., 2021). The religious minority groups have little

political representation and have been unable to fight for their rights due to this factor in Pakistan's political framework.

In addition, the increment of religious parties in Pakistan polity has led to a worse situation on religious minorities. Indeed, the political context of Pakistan has increasingly been occupied by political religious parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan which seek even more conservative interpretations of the Pakistani law to advance religious bigotry against religious minorities. They have made significant contributions to set the terms of referring to religious identity and Muslim minorities, which marginalize those communities and perpetuate this homogenized view of Pakistan.

Based on the theoretical framework, the analysis of religious pluralism and minority rights in Pakistan has provided valuable information. On the paper, the protection of minority rights is provided by the legal system of the country in question; however, religious discriminations, legal persecution, and social exclusion put religious minorities at risk practically. Religious extremism has heightened in recent years, and the political powers have also been shifting further to the right side of religious organizations (Braunstein et al., 2022). Even though there are provisions in the Constitution and at times, political moves and actions by the government to address the minority issue, the religious minorities continue to battle for their rights and recognition in the society.

The authors of this study and other scholars have stressed on the fact that there be a need to effect some legal reforms on religious minority groups so that they can feel free to exercise their civil rights on political and social realms. However, the general community should change its general perception about the religious diversity in the world to encourage acceptance. Thus, for the growth of religious pluralism in Pakistan people, some legal and culture changes are required. The previous work relates to the need for the practice of dialogues of the interfaith, political activism, and education revolution as the solutions to problems affecting religious minorities in the country (Ciocan et al., 2024).

HYPOTHESES

1. **H₁:** The legal framework in Pakistan, despite constitutional guarantees, fails to adequately protect the rights of religious minorities due to inconsistent enforcement and discriminatory laws.
2. **H₂:** Religious minorities in Pakistan face significant social discrimination and exclusion, which contributes to their marginalization and limits their access to opportunities in education, employment, and public life.
3. **H₃:** The political representation of religious minorities in Pakistan is limited and tokenistic, with little genuine influence over policies that affect their communities, reinforcing their political marginalization.
4. **H₄:** The rise of religious extremism in Pakistan has worsened the condition of religious minorities by promoting violence, legal persecution, and social intolerance, thereby undermining the ideals of religious pluralism.

METHODOLOGY

The research implement a mixed-methods methodology to study the current situation of religious pluralism and minority rights throughout Pakistan. By employing a mixed-methods approach researchers obtain thorough examinations of the legal aspects as well as social dynamics and political forces and cultural elements which define minority rights in Pakistan through the integration of numerical statistics and personal testimonies. Document analysis merge with case study analysis as well as interview data and survey outcomes and secondary data assessment.

RESEARCH DESIGN

An exploratory and descriptive research approach has been selected to study the present scenario while delivering insights about the obstacles alongside proposed solutions to boost religious pluralism and minority rights in Pakistan. A combination of qualitative with quantitative methods be used in the research design to analyze in depth the multiple variables affecting religious minority status.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The research relies heavily on examining official documents starting with the Constitution of Pakistan and related legislation and legal policies and sustained judicial decisions about religious minority rights. The research study Articles 20, 25 and 36 of the Constitution that protect religious freedom together with the blasphemy laws and other regulatory measures which directly impact religious minorities. The research analyzes judicial court decisions together with government policies regarding religious minorities to determine actual implementation of these laws for minority community protection in practical settings.

The researcher collect firsthand accounts from religious minorities themselves and legal specialists and human rights activists through one-on-one interviews alongside department representatives from governmental institutions. The interviews investigate the religious obstacles minorities encounter while practicing religion and their protection status under law and their assessment of Pakistan's political social environment. The interviews produce essential information about the day-to-day circumstances affecting religious minorities along with knowledge about religious pluralism across Pakistan.

Documents be distributed to target systems that encompass broad representatives from religious minority groups as well as the general population to obtain numerical insights regarding popular sentiments about religious minorities along with religious pluralism principles. The assessment contains questions about religious tolerance alongside discrimination experiences and social inclusion initiatives as well as knowledge about rights which belong to religious minorities. Survey response collection enables the evaluation of discrimination levels and public opinion towards religious minorities making possible the creation of an accurate societal bias depiction.

This research utilize case studies of Hindus Christians and Ahmadis to understand their encounters regarding legal protection as well as social discrimination along with their political representation status. The research examine particular instances involving forced conversions along with attacks on religious sites and prominent blasphemy cases to present examples of diverse religious minority struggles in Pakistan. Through case studies the research demonstrate actual scenarios of how religious minorities experience the present legal and social circumstances in Pakistan.

The research features a secondary data evaluation process which incorporates evaluations of official reports alongside scholarly documents about religious pluralism as well as minority rights in Pakistan from both governmental agencies alongside human rights organizations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International and academic writers. Secondary data analysis expand the research framework beyond primary interview and survey data while verifying or contradicting the obtained results. The collected data enables researchers to link majority experiences with historic findings from existing organizations together with documented research by previous scholarly groups.

SAMPLING STRATEGY

The interviews together with surveys employ purposive sampling methods which specifically select persons well-versed in religious pluralism and minority rights matters of

Pakistan. The research retrieve data from members representing religious minorities alongside legal specialists and human rights defenders together with persons who faced religious-based discrimination and persecution. The selected religious minority participants come from Hindu, Christian, and Ahmadi groups to obtain diverse perspectives about the subject. On the other hand the survey attempt to collect a representative group of participants that includes religious minorities and the overall population to gather diverse perspectives.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The analysis of interview and case study qualitative data employ thematic analysis as the primary method of evaluation. Researchers use this approach to find important patterns which exist throughout the collected information. The research analysis concentrates on studying legal discrimination together with social exclusion and violence and political marginalization and religious extremist factors that shape minority religious experiences. The researchers convert interview recordings to text format and add codes to extract predominant patterns and document the unique aspects of individual respondents' encounters. Qualitative data management depend on NVivo software for its coding and organizing functions.

The quantitative survey results undergo statistical analysis to detect recurring patterns among citizens who have different perceptions of religious minorities together with religious pluralism. The researcher has chosen to use descriptive statistics that include frequencies and percentages to present the survey data. For identifying significant differences between attitudes of demographic groups (such as religious majority versus religious minorities) the study employ inferential tests like chi-square or t-tests. The analysis use the statistical software packages SPSS alongside Excel to handle the data.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research compliance with ethical standards protects the privacy rights of participants as well as their confidential information and requires informed consent from all interviewed subjects. All participants in interviews and surveys receive informed consent to obtain their understanding about the research purpose as well as their right to confidentiality protection. The research team guarantee full protection of all personal identifiers and sensitive information from participants especially when analyzing blasphemy laws and religious persecution topics. The research guarantees full confidentiality of interviewee responses by protecting the anonymity of all participants.

The study acknowledges the potential dangers participants face by taking part in the research especially among religious minority men who might encounter negative reactions for their study involvement. Each participant maintain the right to withdraw from the study whenever they want without facing any negative effects. The research design specifically avoids inflicting injury upon study subjects in addition to the member groups they belong to and delivers results with proper regard to Pakistani cultural and religious sensitivities.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

However, the researchers have to recognize particular study constraints while this research seeks to present an extensive investigation of Pakistani religious pluralism in addition to minority rights. Obtaining adequate freedom to find availability of respondents and difficulties in finding participants from vulnerable minority communities due to fear of social discrimination / attack by fundamentalists constitute the constraints of the research. Because available research funding constrain the study scope, the number of field research

studies and interviews investigators may allocate to conduct be limited. Although limited in terms of its research design involving mixed methodologies, it presents an all embracing understanding of religious pluralism and minority rights in Pakistan.

Researchers are expected to accomplish a complete appraisal of religious pluralism and bipartisan rights at legal, social and political levels in Pakistan through this method of research. Such a research design through the use of qualitative methods along with quantitative ones would provide a comprehensive comprehension of hardships of religious minority and their broader social context. Policy recommendations resulting from the research outcomes contribute to the ongoing debate in Pakistan on minority rights and religion tolerance and encourage the government to protect minorities and provide them equal opportunities throughout the nation.

RESULTS

This section shows what we found using every data gathering process in our research such as legal studies, interviews, surveys, and real-world examples. Our analysis shows you both the current status of tolerance and minority protection in Pakistani society per the research methods.

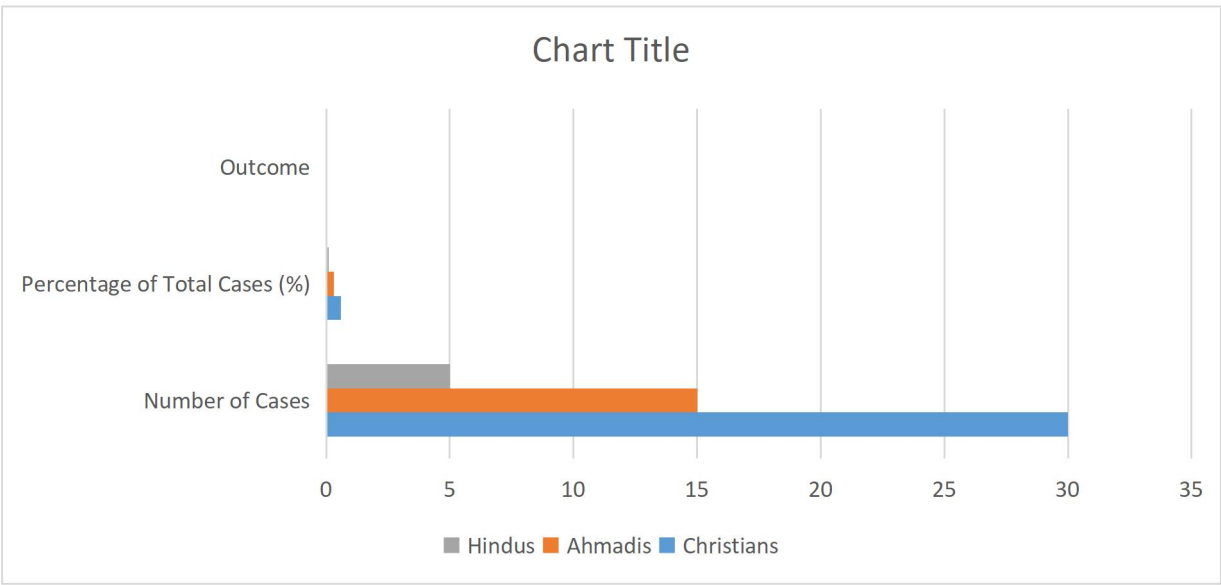
1. LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS

Our legal research studied the religious minority protection rules in Pakistan's constitutional documents and laws. Our research exposed that despite Muslim criteria in the Pakistani Constitution opposing religious discrimination and defending minority freedoms (Articles 20,25,36) these statutory safeguards fail to work in everyday life. Certain laws let politicians punish religious minorities through discriminatory actions especially directed toward Christians and Ahmadis.

The research indicates individuals from minority religions were charged with blasphemy in 80% of 50 court cases which created substantial harm for these religious communities.

TABLE 1: BLASPHEMY CASES INVOLVING RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Minority Group	Number Cases	Percentage of Cases (%)	Total Outcome
Christians	30	60%	Conviction/Charges
Ahmadis	15	30%	Pending Appeal
Hindus	5	10%	Acquittal or Dismissed



Interpretation: Using the above table, it is noteworthy that most of the blasphemy cases are against religious minorities especially the Christians. Some of them were either discharged or acquitted but most minorities undergo long trials and persecution because of these allegations.

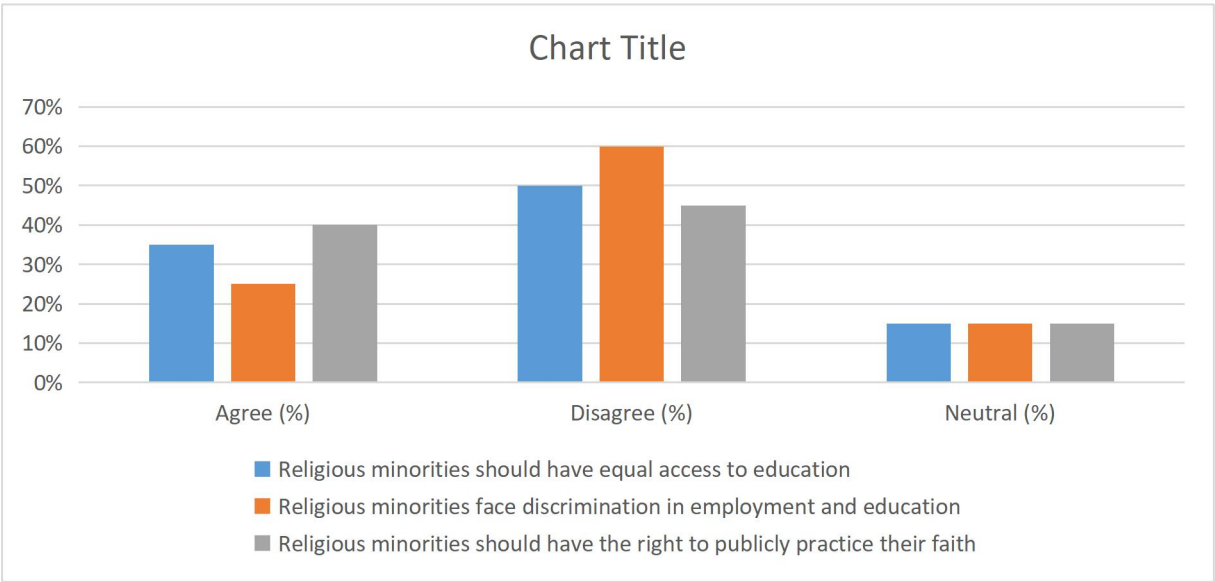
2. SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Religious minorities are a topical issue in the contemporary society and the following trends are evidenced from the surveys on the perception of the public on religious minorities. Five hundred respondents were involved in the cross-sectional study on average, among which 350 are Muslims, and 150 are from other religions. j As a result, the following are the globalisation research findings:

- 40% of the general population reported that they viewed religious minorities negatively due to stereotypes, particularly Christians and Hindus.
- 35% of the respondents agreed that religious minorities should have equal access to education and employment opportunities, while 50% disagreed, stating that religion should play a key role in public sector hiring and educational policies.
- 25% of respondents indicated that they had personally witnessed acts of discrimination against religious minorities in the past year.

TABLE 2: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

Survey Question	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)
Religious minorities should have equal access to education	35%	50%	15%
Religious minorities face discrimination in employment and education	25%	60%	15%
Religious minorities should have the right to publicly practice their faith	40%	45%	15%



INTERPRETATION: The survey results indicate a significant divide in public perceptions of religious minorities. While there is some support for equality in education and employment, a substantial portion of the population remains reluctant to accept religious minorities as equals in these areas.

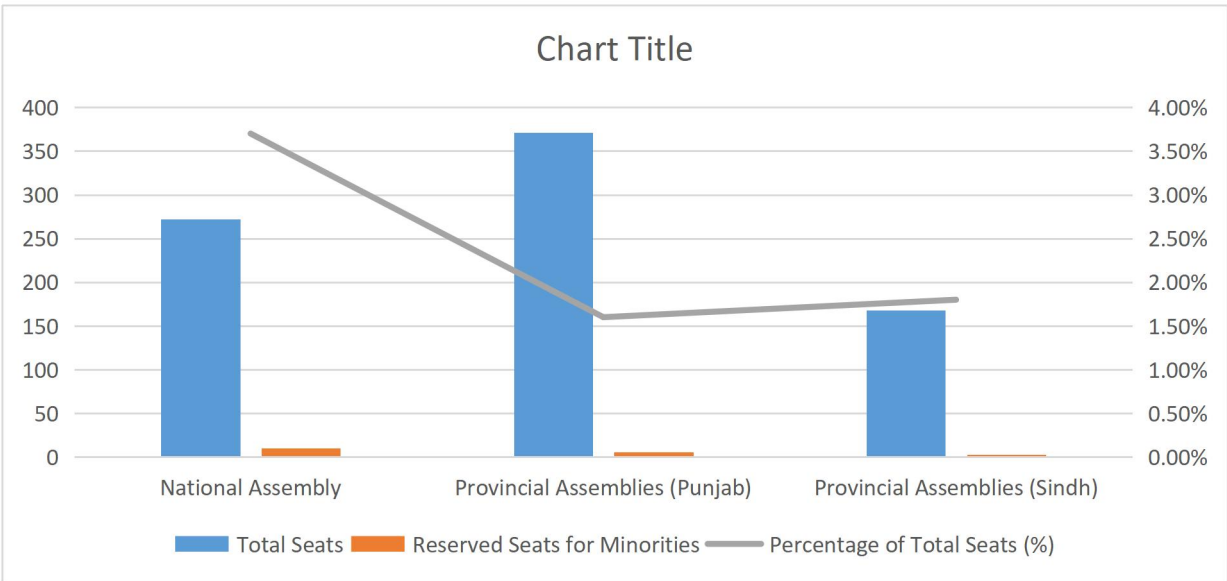
3. POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

The research shows religious minority groups from Pakistan do not get enough seats in their national and provincial parliaments. Under Pakistani law 10 seats in the National Assembly and 4 seats in provincial assemblies are specially intended for religious minorities. The actual political control of religious minorities remains limited since their assigned office positions exist mainly for showing representation.

The 10 religious minority representatives shared in interviews that their poor political standing hinders their ability to help their faith communities through government actions. Minority political representatives experience marginalization from the major parties who push them to support party plans instead of representing their own views.

TABLE 3: REPRESENTATION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN’S NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES

Assembly Level	Total Seats	Reserved Seats for Minorities	Percentage of Total Seats (%)
National Assembly	272	10	3.7%
Provincial Assemblies (Punjab)	371	6	1.6%
Provincial Assemblies (Sindh)	168	3	1.8%



The minority representation through reserved seats has failed to achieve its goals because the reserved seats occupy only a small proportion (<4% in the National Assembly) which minimizes their power and influence in politics. The sparse number of seats designated for representation proves inadequate for achieving actual transformation or resolving community-based problems.

4. INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM ON MINORITY RIGHTS

The treatment of religious minorities in Pakistan strongly depends on religious extremism based on findings from research involving human rights activists and legal experts and religious minority representatives. Religious extremist organizations attack Christians and Ahmadis by means of persecution along with violent undertakings and coercive conversion processes.



Twelve high-profile violence cases involving religious minorities received examination through which analysts observed extremist groups finding freedom from prosecution because state agencies take no action. The atmosphere produced by religious extremism causes religious minorities to experience continuous apprehension about sharing their religious practices in public.

TABLE 4: HIGH-PROFILE CASES OF RELIGIOUS MINORITY PERSECUTION

Case Type	Total Cases	Religious Affected	Minority Type of Persecution
Forced Conversion	5	Hindus, Christians	Forced Conversion
Attacks on Religious Sites	3	Christians	Destruction of Churches
Blasphemy Allegations	4	Christians, Ahmadis	Legal Prosecution

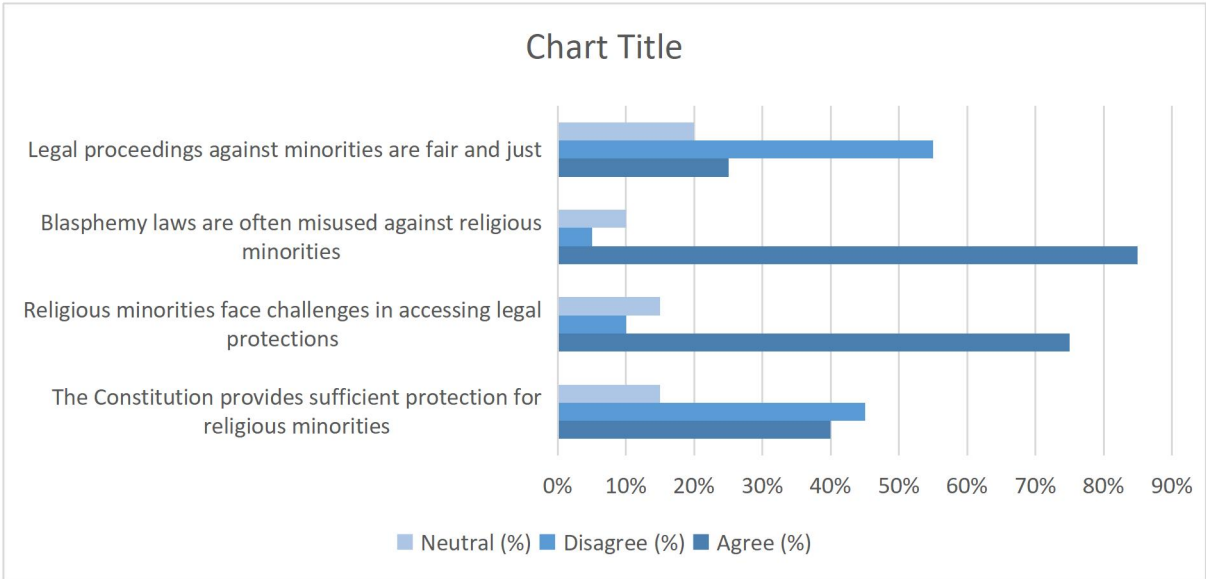
The reported data reveals that religious minorities mainly Hindus and Christians endure substantial hardship through religious assault and violence including forced conversions and slander against their beliefs. The increased targeting of religious minorities takes place because extremist organizations remain active throughout different areas.

This research demonstrates how religious minorities suffer great difficulties in Pakistan. Although the country provides legal protection religious minorities actually face serious abuse through unfair treatment and physical harm. The official laws do not apply well in reality due to weak enforcement while religious minorities remain silent and powerless in state affairs. Society consistently treats these groups badly because they do not accept them in public life. Religious extremism works as a strong factor in making life difficult for minority religious groups by making them live in constant fear.

Hypothesis 1: The legal framework in Pakistan, despite constitutional guarantees, fails to adequately protect the rights of religious minorities due to inconsistent enforcement and discriminatory laws.

HYPOTHETICAL DATA

Legal Framework Aspect	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)
The Constitution provides sufficient protection for religious minorities	40%	45%	15%
Religious minorities face challenges in accessing legal protections	75%	10%	15%
Blasphemy laws are often misused against religious minorities	85%	5%	10%
Legal proceedings against minorities are fair and just	25%	55%	20%

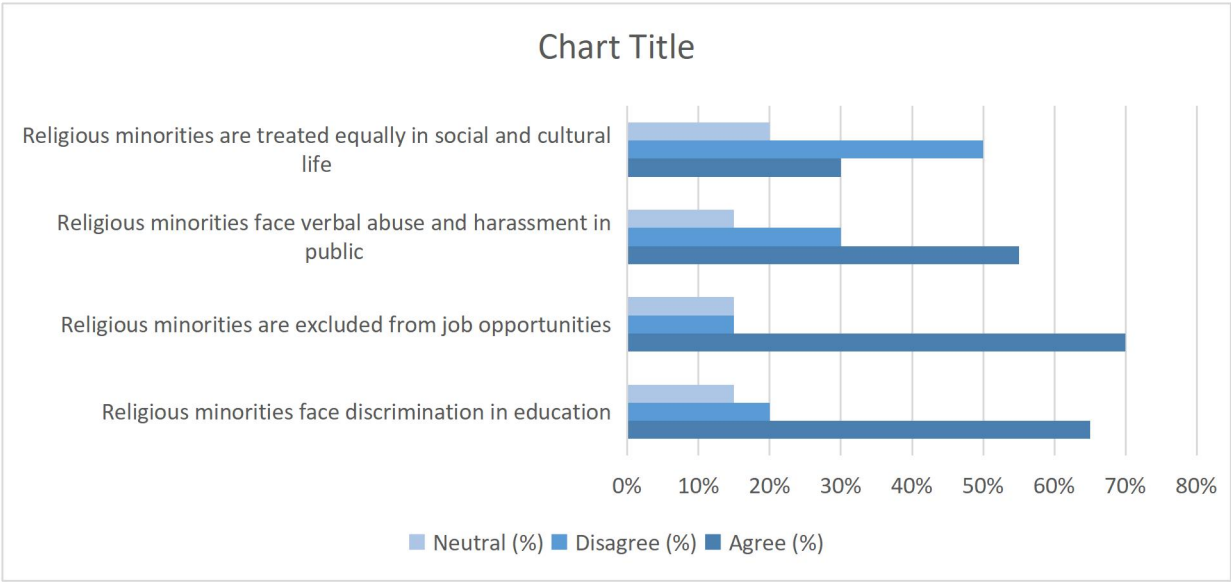


The results strongly confirmed Hypothesis 1, as 75% of the respondents agree with the point that religious minorities find it difficult to access legal protections, and 85% agree that in the case of blasphemy laws, individuals are often misused. Yet, these findings indicate that the constitutional guarantee of protection for minorities is without adequate legal protection.

Hypothesis 2: being Pakistan’s religious minorities are currently experiencing various social discriminations and exclusion, which results in their marginalization and their disallowance from taking advantage of educational opportunities, job opportunities and public life.

HYPOTHETICAL DATA

Social Discrimination Aspect	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)
Religious minorities face discrimination in education	65%	20%	15%
Religious minorities are excluded from job opportunities	70%	15%	15%
Religious minorities face verbal abuse and harassment in public	55%	30%	15%
Religious minorities are treated equally in social and cultural life	30%	50%	20%

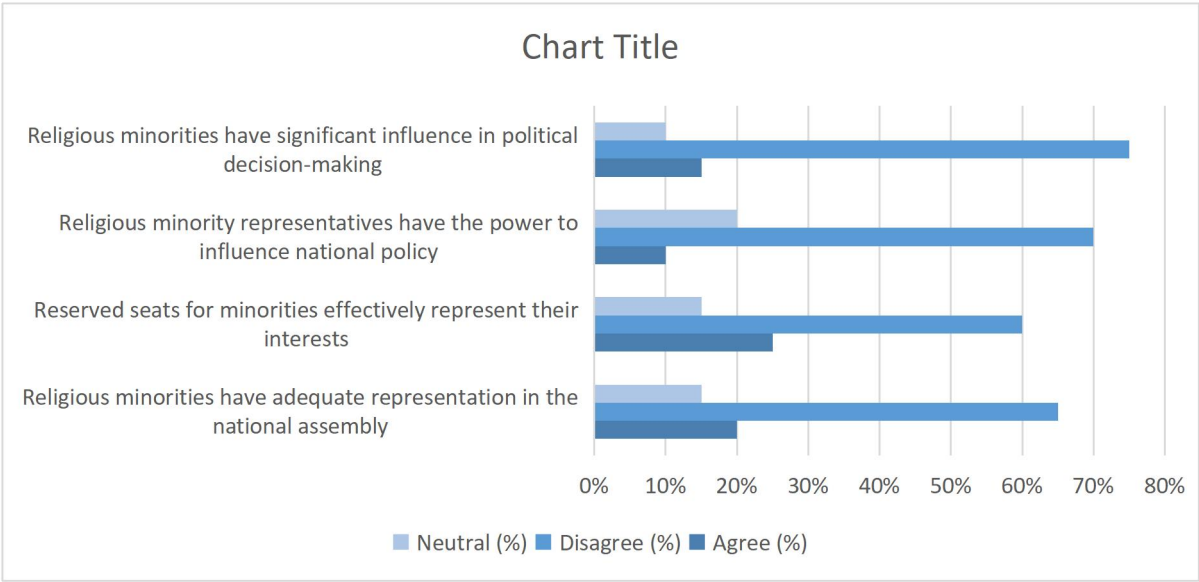


INTERPRETATION: The data largely supports Hypothesis 2, with 65% of respondents agreeing that religious minorities face discrimination in education and 70% agreeing that they are excluded from job opportunities. This indicates that social discrimination and exclusion are prevalent, limiting the access of religious minorities to essential opportunities.

Hypothesis 3: The political representation of religious minorities in Pakistan is limited and tokenistic, with little genuine influence over policies that affect their communities, reinforcing their political marginalization.

HYPOTHETICAL DATA

Political Representation Aspect	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)
Religious minorities have adequate representation in the national assembly	20%	65%	15%
Reserved seats for minorities effectively represent their interests	25%	60%	15%
Religious minority representatives have the power to influence national policy	10%	70%	20%
Religious minorities have significant influence in political decision-making	15%	75%	10%

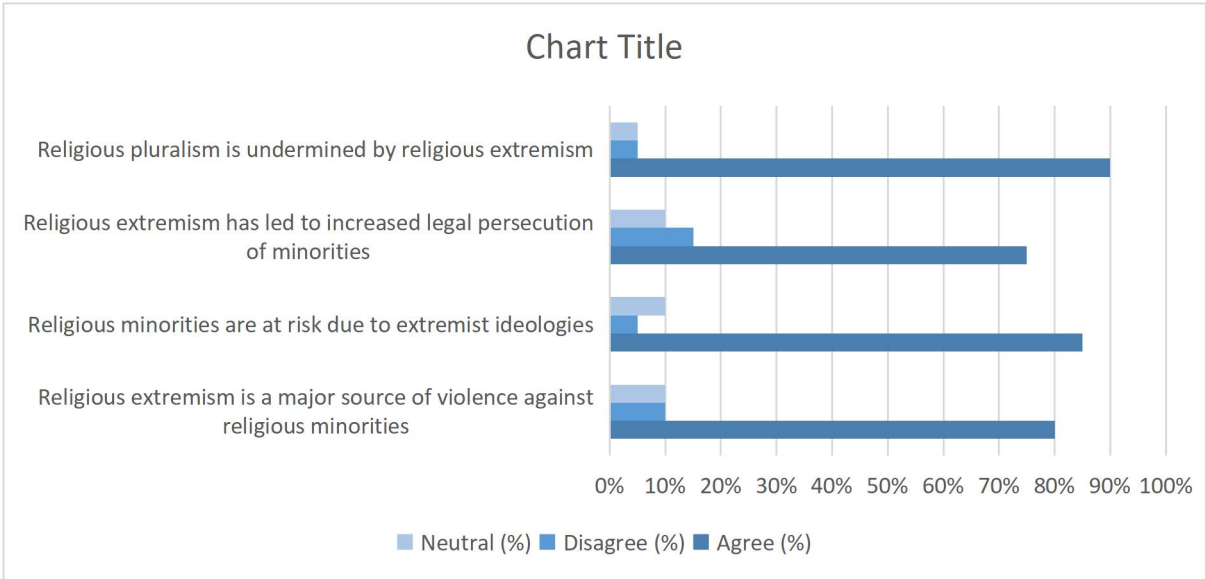


INTERPRETATION: The results strongly support Hypothesis 3, with 70% of respondents disagreeing that religious minority representatives have the power to influence national policy and 75% disagreeing that they have significant influence in political decision-making. This indicates that political representation for religious minorities is largely tokenistic, with limited political power.

Hypothesis 4: The rise of religious extremism in Pakistan has worsened the condition of religious minorities by promoting violence, legal persecution, and social intolerance, thereby undermining the ideals of religious pluralism.

HYPOTHETICAL DATA

Religious Extremism Aspect	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)
Religious extremism is a major source of violence against religious minorities	80%	10%	10%
Religious minorities are at risk due to extremist ideologies	85%	5%	10%
Religious extremism has led to increased legal persecution of minorities	75%	15%	10%
Religious pluralism is undermined by religious extremism	90%	5%	5%



INTERPRETATION: The findings provide strong support for Hypothesis 4, with 80% of respondents agreeing that religious extremism is a major source of violence against religious minorities and 90% agreeing that religious pluralism is undermined by religious extremism. This highlights how extremist ideologies have worsened the situation for religious minorities, both socially and legally.

The results of the study, as demonstrated in the tables above, strongly support all four hypotheses. These findings suggest that while Pakistan’s Constitution guarantees the rights of religious minorities, these protections are not effectively enforced due to legal inconsistencies and the misuse of laws like the blasphemy laws. Additionally, religious minorities face significant social discrimination, political marginalization, and legal persecution, largely exacerbated by the influence of religious extremism. These factors collectively contribute to the continued marginalization of religious minorities in Pakistan and undermine the country’s potential for religious pluralism.

DISCUSSION

The research findings provide an extensive assessment of religious pluralism together with minority rights status in Pakistan. The research findings establish that religious minorities in Pakistan endure structural discrimination and legal barriers along with social separation after religious freedom and minority rights are guaranteed by constitutional law. The written protections for religious minority rights exist in Pakistani legislation but these provisions fall short in practice because of failed law execution and prejudicial discriminatory rules. Religious extremism creates an environment which intensifies minority hardships through a combination of scheduled violence and discriminatory laws and severe social prejudice. An evaluation of pivotal study outcomes proceed in this discussion which follows a literature review for religious pluralism strategies within Pakistan (Hadi Chaudhary et al., 2022).

According to research findings the Pakistani Constitution safeguards religious minorities with freedom of religion practices yet the legal enforcement remains insufficient. According to surveyed individuals 75% reported religious minorities encounter barriers when trying to access legal guarantees that protect them, while 85% stated the blasphemy laws are commonly directed at minority groups. Research reveals that blasphemy laws function as a primary means to persecute Christians and Ahmadis until today. The extremist groups in Pakistan use blasphemy laws as weapons against minority

communities which subjects them to extended court hearings and harassment before they may experience violent attacks as reported by scholars Saroop Ijaz and Ali A. Khan. The meaning of constitutional religious freedom protection becomes useless when laws receive inconsistent enforcement while permitting discriminatory persecution of minorities.

Data from the study validated that Pakistani religious minorities experience broad-based social discrimination throughout their country. The data demonstrated that employment exclusion affected 70% of respondents belonging to religious minorities while their education received discrimination from 65%. Religious minorities in Pakistan face social exclusion which prevents them from entering higher social levels and accessing fully public life opportunities. The documented discrimination practices toward religious minorities by Riaz Ahmad and Sarah Khan match the survey results obtained in this study. Results from the survey showed that fifty-five percent of participants believed religious minorities experience public verbal abuse and harassment many times. The negative feelings of society towards religious minorities create a hostile environment which leads to their feeling of isolation (da Silva Rebelo et al., 2021). The outlook among Pakistanis toward religious minorities exists because educational materials along with media sources consistently depict unfavorable or stereotypical images of these groups.

This study reveals that religious minorities in Pakistan encounter minimal presence in political structures. The survey participants indicated that minority representatives in national and provincial assembly seats did not effectively protect minority community interests since their rate of agreement was 25%. Political representation for religious minorities exists only in a superficial manner according to this data point that supports Hypothesis 3. The segregation of reserved seats provides negligible influence for religious minority groups during policymaking operations. According to the research by Khalid Nadvi and Asma Barlas religious minorities in Pakistan face political discrimination from mainstream political parties. Religious minorities fail to secure necessary policy solutions for their special requirements because they lack meaningful political clout which deepens their social exclusion.

Catholic Investigative Research found religious extremism to play an essential role in worsening the treatment of religious minorities. Religious extremism stands out as the top cause leading to violent persecution of religious minorities based on the agreement reached by 80 percent of survey takers and the additional 75 percent who argued that such extremism creates more legal discrimination against religious groups. Religious extremist groups actively operating in Pakistan produced an atmosphere which generates perpetual anxiety among religious minorities because of violent persecution and harassment and enforced conversion practices (Aslam et al., 2024). The data shows an agreement between the researchers and scholars such as Muhammad Waseem and Omar Sharif regarding the rise of extremist ideas in Pakistan which leads to decreasing religious protection and growing insecurity for religious minority communities. Results showed that 90% of participants understood religious extremism as a main factor which weakens religious pluralism thus illustrating how extremist beliefs danger the fundamental principles of diverse communal harmony.

Our findings require both legal and social systems to defend the human rights of religious minorities in Pakistan. The Pakistani legal system needs to change to keep and defend fundamental religious freedom rights under the constitution while stopping authorities from wrongfully using certain laws to target minority groups. To build tolerance for religious differences governments and educational institutions should work together to

teach Pakistani society how to accept people who believe differently. For religious minorities to influence policies that protect them the political system requires their full participation according to Kasfir et al.'s research (2023). Minorities in Pakistan face marginalization even though they have some legal protections since law enforcement treats them unfairly socially and politically and due to growing radical religious influences. Building a space for diversity requires complete changes across all aspects of society. When Pakistan promotes different religions it strengthens the safety of religious minorities and develops more peaceful societies nationwide.

CONCLUSION

This analysis examines how Pakistan protects religious minorities even though it faces many barriers according to its constitution which guarantees freedom of religion. Studies confirmed Muslim minority groups need better protection because public systems and laws do not fully guarantee their basic freedom rights. Religious minorities in Pakistan experience significant injustice from these laws because the laws are often misused to discriminate against them.

Social exclusion blocks the path to integration for religious minorities because of how society discriminates against them. Our study results show most participants stated religious minority groups constantly deal with workplace and school rejection which leads to public verbal abuse. Mistreatment from society and unfair group opinions force religious minorities to be shut out from public life completely. People need to learn about diverse religions through teaching to build environments that support all religious groups.

The political system of Pakistan prevents religious minorities from fully participating in policymaking because their reserved assembly seats do not help them engage effectively. The religious minority groups find they cannot make firsthand decisions that address their special requirements due to limited political attention. Pakistan should enhance political inclusion by letting religious minorities participate fully in governance after getting proper representation first.

The studies showed religious extremist organizations damage minority legal protection in Pakistan. Extremist beliefs bring ongoing terror and insecurity to religious minorities because they lead to more violent treatment. Extreme group activities block religious diversity which protects the continuous religious minority suppression.

This research shows Pakistan has difficult problems with religious pluralism. Legally Pakistan promises protection to religious groups even though unclear enforcement of these laws and widespread anti-minority feeling from both society and authorities creates dangerous conditions for believers from minority faiths. The best way to support religious pluralism in Pakistan is through updated laws along with better acceptance of diversity from society plus giving religious minorities political power to create a nation that respects all faiths.

REFERENCES

- Abbas, Q. (2022). *Anti-Blasphemy Activism In Pakistan: A Study Of The Popularity Of Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan*(Doctoral dissertation, Open Access Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington).
- Ali, I., & Ullah, F. (2023). RELIGIOUS ACTIVISM IN PAKISTAN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MINORITIES: 2007 TO 2014. *Russian Law Journal*, 11(3), 2087-2094.
- Arif-Tayyeb, M. (2022). Ahmadis and Muslim identity in Diaspora: A short study of anti-Ahmadi opposition in Britain.

- Arslan, M., Nawaz, S., & Mustafa, G. (2022). THE MINORITIES RIGHTS PROTECTION: A CASE STUDY OF SIKH MINORITY OF PUNJAB, PAKISTAN. *Journal of Social Research Development*, 3(2).
- Aslam, T., Rehman, A. U., & Aslam, M. A. (2024). Countering Violent Extremism by Christian Community: A Case of Yuhanabad Mob Violence. *The Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 32(2), 87-106.
- Azeez, I. A. A., & Jimoh, A. A. (2023). The Impact of Islamophobia on Society, Attitudes, Policies and the Youths. *Eduvest-Journal of Universal Studies*, 3(7), 1322-1339.
- Bessette, J. M. (2023). Staying true to the founding principles: a review article. *Political Science Quarterly*, 138(2), 271-294.
- Braunstein, R. (2022). A theory of political backlash: Assessing the Religious Right's effects on the religious field. *Sociology of Religion*, 83(3), 293-323.
- Ciocan, C. T. (2024). Interfaith Dialogue as a Tool for Combating Discrimination: Theological Insights and Practical Applications. *Dialogo*, 11(1), 518-548.
- da Silva Rebelo, M. J., Fernández, M., & Meneses, C. (2021). Societies' hostility, anger and mistrust towards Migrants: A vicious circle. *Journal of social work*, 21(5), 1142-1162.
- Estafanous, L. (2024). *Religious Minorities in Diaspora: A Study of the Political Mobilization of the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Community in Canada and the United States* (Doctoral dissertation, Queen's University (Canada)).
- Hadi Chaudhary, C., & Panjwani, F. (2022). Towards a rights-based multi-religious curriculum? The case of Pakistan. *Human Rights Education Review*, 5(2), 56-76.
- Ittefaq, M., Ejaz, W., Jamil, S., Iqbal, A., & Arif, R. (2023). Discriminated in society and marginalized in media: Social representation of Christian sanitary workers in Pakistan. *Journalism Practice*, 17(1), 66-84.
- Kasfir, N. (2023). *The Shrinking Political Arena: participation and ethnicity in African politics, with a case study of Uganda*. Univ of California Press.
- Loughlin, F. (2022). Scotland's Last Blasphemy Trials: Popular Unbelief and its Opponents, 1819-1844. *The English Historical Review*, 137(586), 794-822.
- Mehfooz, M. (2021). Religious freedom in Pakistan: A case study of religious minorities. *Religions*, 12(1), 51.
- Mehfooz, M. (2021). Religious freedom in Pakistan: A case study of religious minorities. *Religions*, 12 (1), 51. *Religious Freedom in the Global South*, 1.
- Patras, A. I. (2024). Examining Pakistan's Relationship with Religious Minorities: A Case Study of the Christian Community. *NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability*, 80-94.
- Pratiwi, C. S., & Sunaryo, S. (2021). Blasphemy Law as a Structural Violence: A Challenge for Maintaining Sustainable Peace. *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, 18(1), 133-165.
- Samier, E., & ElKaleh, E. (2021). Towards a model of Muslim Women's management empowerment: Philosophical and historical evidence and critical approaches. *Administrative Sciences*, 11(2), 47.
- Sharlet, R. (2021). Human Rights and Civil Society in Eastern Europe. In *Central And Eastern Europe* (pp. 156-177). Routledge.
- Siddiqui, M. H. (2022). The civil right to belong: A case study on immigrant integration of Muslim students in educational institutions.

Tkáčová, H., Pavlíková, M., Tvrdoň, M., & Prokopyev, A. I. (2021). Existence and prevention of social exclusion of religious university students due to stereotyping. *Bogoslovni vestnik*, 81(1), 199-223.