From Data to Insights: A Rigorous Empirical Study on Extremism in Pakistani Society

Ayesha Javed
Lahore College University for Women
*Correspondence: ayesha1@gmail.com

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Pakistan has been grappling with the enduring challenges of extremism and terrorism, prompting continuous efforts to combat militant groups opposed to the state. This study delves into the multifaceted dynamics of extremism, aiming to decipher its roots, manifestations, and potential mitigating factors within the societal fabric of Pakistan. This empirical study delves into societal attitudes toward extremism and radicalization in Pakistan. The research methodology involves comprehensive data collection and analysis, comprising a comprehensive survey of 3800 participants across diverse regions, providing insights into societal attitudes. By rigorously examining patterns, correlations, and contextual factors, the study seeks to unravel the complexities surrounding extremism in Pakistani society. Notably, the study revealed that approximately 75.83% of respondents engage in watching movies, indicating a trend toward liberalism. Interestingly, while 28.7% associate attire with religion, a significant majority of 72.96% perceive clothing as unrelated to religious affiliation, signaling openness and flexibility. The research also highlighted diverse opinions on religious differences among sects, with varying attributions to interpretation, fundamental disparities, political factors, and methodological variations. Moreover, perspectives on the division of Muslims into 72 sects showed multifaceted viewpoints, ranging from necessity to expressions of ignorance. Overall, these findings present a nuanced societal landscape in Pakistan, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to counter extremism while fostering inclusivity and tolerance.

Keywords: Pakistani Society, Terrorism, Radicalization, Survey Data, Religious Education, Societal Trends.

Introduction:

Extremism, with its profound impact on societal dynamics, remains a critical subject of study, particularly within the intricate tapestry of Pakistan's cultural and social landscape. This empirical investigation endeavors to delve into the complex underpinnings of extremist trends entrenched within Pakistani society. In recent decades, Pakistan has grappled with the multifaceted repercussions of extremist ideologies, manifesting in diverse spheres and challenging the nation's social cohesion, stability, and global standing.

Terrorism in Pakistan has seen a decrease, but it remains a persistent threat. Instances of terror attacks and resulting casualties are rising again. Sectarian tensions are escalating, and the underlying causes that fuel radicalization persist, if not exacerbate the issue in some cases. The resurgence of the Afghan Taliban, alongside the formidable emergence of the Islamic State Khorasan province in neighboring Afghanistan, and the rise of Hindu nationalism in India collectively signal a concerning trend of increasing extremism across South Asia. The immunity enjoyed by certain groups from government crackdowns adds complexity to the challenge. Notably, South Asia has witnessed the most terrorism-related deaths for consecutive years, with Pakistan ranking seventh in the Global Terrorism Index of 2020, following Afghanistan, Iraq,

Nigeria, Syria, Somalia, and Yemen. This ranking underscores the serious and ongoing nature of the terrorism challenge in the region. Additionally, the positioning of Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan in the top 10 further emphasizes the daunting task of regional counterterrorism efforts, compounded by the intricate relationships between these nations [1][2].

The ban on terrorist groups and organizations in Pakistan stems largely from religious ideology. Yet, there's been a notable lack of focus from policymakers, think tanks, researchers, and experts in thoroughly examining religion's substantial role and the impact of religious figures in countering violent religious extremism. Extremism's rise in Pakistani society is heavily shaped by ideological exclusivity and conservative religious views [3]. In Pakistan, there's a prevailing tendency toward illiberalism despite a visible inclination toward liberal values like diversity, secular democracy, and universal human rights. However, these liberal principles frequently encounter staunch opposition from religious conservatives. The Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith organizations are renowned for their commitment to conservative doctrines and their inclination toward exclusivity and illiberal practices [4]. However, it's crucial to understand that this categorization isn't meant to be absolute. There are individuals within the Barelvi sect who uphold orthodox views, and conversely, some within the Deobandi or Ahl-e-Hadith sects might espouse more liberal beliefs. Religious fundamentalists tend to resist deviations from established historical beliefs, holding onto them staunchly. While they may engage with modernity in practical terms, their emphasis and attention remain deeply tied to the past. This notion has the potential to encompass Salafism, Wahhabism, certain forms of Islamism, and even aspects of Sufism within Muslim societies worldwide [5][6][7][8].

The rise of religious radicalization, extremism, and violence in Pakistan poses significant challenges to societal well-being, constantly threatening the nation's stability and security. Over the past four decades, Pakistan has witnessed the loss of 26,000 lives, including civilians and security personnel, alongside the elimination of 30,000 terrorists. According to data from the Institute for Economics and Peace, the Terrorism Index in Pakistan decreased from 7.54 in 2019 to 7.50 in 2020. Initially standing at 6.19 in 2002, the index experienced a slight drop to 6.12 in 2003 before gradually ascending to higher levels [9].

In 2004, the index stood at 6.57, but by 2005, it dipped slightly to 6.54. However, in 2006, there was an uptick, marking a rise to 6.92. This trend continued upward in 2007, with the value climbing to 7.74. Subsequently, in 2008, it continued its ascent, reaching 8.15. By 2009, the terrorist index in Pakistan recorded some 8.52. The following year, in 2010, it saw a marginal increase, reaching 8.61 [10]. This upward trend continued as the index rose to 8.67 in 2011, further escalating to 8.86 in 2012. Subsequently, in 2013, it reached a value of 9.07, which was maintained in 2014. Notably, this was the highest recorded terrorist index in Pakistan throughout the specified period. In the subsequent year, there is a resumption of the downward trend, resulting in a reduction [11].

During 2015, the index witnessed a decrease to 8.61, which further dropped to 8.40 in 2016. This continued decline was attributed to the implementation of the National Action Plan, specifically aimed at combating terrorist groups and their supporters. Consequently, the index sustained its descent, registering figures of 8.18 in 2017, and 7.84 in 2018, and stabilizing at 7.541 for both 2019 and 2020. Within the ranking encompassing 83 countries, Pakistan secured its place among the top seven nations with the highest rankings [11]. In the context of Pakistan, the categorization of "Violent Extremist Organizations" comprises three distinct classifications. These groups are delineated as follows: firstly, the Militancy in the Name of Religion groupings; secondly, the Sub-nationalist Groups; and finally, the Ethno-political Groups. Notably, Tariq Pervez has highlighted the Balochi liberation movement as a significant segment within the sub-nationalist factions. This movement represents a struggle against the Pakistani government, advocating for the autonomy of the Baluchistan province. Pervez's observations shed light on the diverse nature of these classifications, delineating between groups driven by religious

ideology, sub-nationalist aspirations, and ethnopolitical motivations within the landscape of violent extremist organizations in Pakistan. [12]. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and the Haqqani Network are classified as Violent Extremist Organizations and fall within the framework of Militancy in the Name of Religion [13]. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Haqqani Network, and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have affiliations with the Deobandi Sect in Pakistan, which maintains a significant presence in the country, notably through numerous madrassahs. Additionally, Ulemas associated with the Deobandi Sect in Pakistan often exhibit notable support for militant jihad [14]. Lashkar-e-Taiba, affiliated with the Ahl-e-Hadith sect, represents a minority accounting for less than 10% of the Pakistani populace. It's important to note that Lashkar-e-Taiba differs from mainstream Ahl-e-Hadis Ulemas regarding their stance on jihad. As a result, the group faces limitations concerning recruitment and financial support within the Ahl-e-Hadis community. Nevertheless, it sustains its finances through contributions from patrons based in the Gulf states [15][16].

The secondary objective of this document is to offer an extensive overview of the current body of literature concerning the selected subject. Diverse researchers investigating terrorism and patterns of radicalization have meticulously scrutinized and assessed numerous theories. These theoretical frameworks have been utilized to identify the predominant factors influencing the radicalization process in Pakistan. Scholars have approached the exploration of radicalization, militant Islam, and counterterrorism endeavors in Pakistan through varied methodologies and viewpoints [17]. In 2008, an academic study titled "Public Perception in Pakistan: Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and U.S. Relations" was carried out by Christine Fair, Clay Ramsay, and Steve Kull. This collaborative research was conducted in association with World Public Opinion.org and the United States Institute of Peace. The research outcomes highlighted a considerable level of societal approval for the expansion of Islamic influence in Pakistan. The findings revealed a prevalent inclination among the Pakistani populace to establish Islamic law, a sentiment that contrasts with limited support evidenced for the phenomenon recognized as 'Talibanization' [18].

In 2010, a survey involving 500 security guards stationed across high, medium, and low-security zones in Pakistan was conducted. The primary aim of this survey was to gauge the perceived significance of 65 indicators related to terrorism risk. Researchers administered a questionnaire to the security guards, prompting them to assess these criteria based on their perceived level of importance [19]. The survey results unveiled that among the evaluated variables, corrupt and dishonest leadership received the highest ratings, overshadowing deficiencies within the accountability system and instances of corruption. These factors were found to be closely intertwined with poor governance. While sectarianism and criminality were deemed as secondary elements in their analysis, the absence of pivotal considerations such as the inadequate protection of minority rights and unfavorable perceptions of the government and security forces by citizens was notably observed [20]. The study titled "The Effects of Cleric Statements on Suicide Bombings in Pakistan 2000-2010" was conducted by Dr. Bridget Nolan, a scholar associated with the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Released in 2013, this study highlighted a correlation between documented occurrences of suicide bombings and religious leaders' declarations concerning these acts. The findings suggest that the statements issued by clerics in Pakistan bear substantial weight, indicating that their influence isn't solely derived from the frequency of communication, but also from the content and substance of their discourse [21].

In 2009, a research endeavor was conducted in Pakistan by scholars affiliated with Georgetown University, Princeton University, and Stanford University. This study employed a nationally representative survey encompassing 6,000 individuals, including both men and women. The primary objective of this study was to explore the relationship between support for violent extremist groups and various religious and socio-economic attributes within the surveyed

population [22]. Their research findings imply that support for violent extremism doesn't align with commonly utilized measures of religious commitment or devoutness; instead, it appears rooted in shared doctrinal beliefs. The results suggest that individuals from lower socioeconomic strata display greater disapproval of violent extremist groups in contrast to their middle-class counterparts in Pakistan. This disparity is posited to stem from heightened exposure among militants to acts of terrorism, potentially shaping their perspectives [23][24].

The conclusions highlight the necessity of prioritizing the analysis and mitigation of religious narratives fostering radicalization, violence, extremism, and intolerance within the middle-class stratum to effectively combat extremism and militancy in Pakistan. Additionally, there's a crucial need to allocate comparable attention and resources to understand the religious elements propelling militant Islam, alongside socio-economic factors, within the scope of radicalization research [25]. Religious leaders and political parties with religious affiliations hold substantial potential to contribute significantly to addressing the challenges associated with militancy in Pakistan. The study titled "An Analytical Study of the Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Militancy in Malakand Division, Pakistan" was conducted by Arab Naz, Waqar Ahmad, and Ibrahim Scholars, affiliated with the University of Malakand. The study incorporated interviews with a sample group of 200 individuals, representing diverse sectors including business, academia, and religious institutions. The findings revealed that 37% of respondents attributed the root cause of militancy in Pakistan to "acute social problems," while 19% linked it to "emotional attachment to religion." Moreover, participants highlighted the significant influence of Pashtun culture in fostering violent extremism [26].

Pakistan has undertaken a range of military operations targeting extremist and violent organizations across different regions inside its borders. The aforementioned military actions were initiated against various extremist organizations, namely Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Baloch National Liberation Army, and Tehrik Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi. The Enduring Freedom operation was initiated during the period of 2001-2002. Following this, the Al Mizan operation took place from 2002 to 2006. In 2008, the Zalzalamilitary operation was launched. Subsequently, the SherDil, Rah-e-Haq, and Rah-e-Rast military operations were conducted between 2007 and 2009. The Rah-e-Nijat operation commenced in 2009 and concluded in 2010. Lastly, the Rah-e-Shahadat military operation was initiated in 2013. The Zarb-e-Azb military operation was initiated in 2014 as a response to the terrorist assaults on the Army Public School in Peshawar. This operation was carried out under the National Action Plan, which aimed to address the prevailing wave of militancy and dismantle militant organizations within Pakistan [27]. The effectiveness of these military operations has at times been interrupted by contentious peace negotiations and arrangements, which temporarily reduced violence but proved short-lived [28].

The government's multifaceted strategies, including military operations against terrorist groups and negotiations with militants, have demonstrated efficacy and produced favorable outcomes. However, it's crucial to acknowledge the transient nature of these achievements. While these approaches have seen success in eliminating certain militants, they have failed to address the underlying issues perpetuating the growth of extremist organizations and the replenishment of their memberships. The initial proposal for Madrassah reforms was introduced by General Ayub Khan during the 1950s-60s but faced opposition from political parties and was eventually rejected. General Zia-ul-Haq renewed efforts to reform Madrassahs by establishing the "National Committee for Deeni Madaris [29]. However, the proposed reforms faced staunch resistance from the Madrassah administrations, leading to the establishment of several unregulated Madrassahs in Pakistan, bypassing formal procedures. The uncontrolled proliferation of Madrassahs raised concerns within Benazir Bhutto's government, prompting a halt in the registration of new Madrassahs in 1994. During this period, compliance with the Societies Registration Act of 1860 was made mandatory for Madrassahs.

Despite the suspension of new registrations under Benazir Bhutto's administration, numerous unregistered Madrassahs emerged across Pakistan. General Musharraf reinstated the registration process for Madrassahs in 1999. In the early 2000s, his government introduced reforms, including the "Voluntary Registration and Regulation Ordinance of 2002" and the initiation of a five-year plan, allocating $113 million to integrate secular subjects into Madrassah curricula [30]. General Pervez Musharraf's reforms encountered notable hurdles due to insufficient financial resources and limited support from international donors. As a result, efforts to address issues related to madrasas yielded unsatisfactory outcomes.

The International Crisis Group (2002) highlighted a considerable lack of government control or influence in managing the discussed subject matter. The Pakistani government should formulate effective strategies to combat terrorism, demonstrating proactive measures in countering militancy. It's imperative to actively involve religious political parties and civil society in these initiatives to foster engagement and collaboration [31]. One potential approach to mitigating the impact of extreme religious influences within society is through the implementation of reforms or regulations pertaining to madrasa education in Pakistan. It is imperative for the Federal and Provincial governments in Pakistan to adopt a proactive approach in formulating and implementing robust soft power plans aimed at effectively tackling the religious aspect of extremism [32].

Methodology:

The study conducted in November 2018 aimed to explore the levels of extremism within Pakistani society, employing a systematic methodology to gather insights.

Survey Design and Sample Selection:

Population:

The study encompassed a total of 3800 individuals as its sample size, chosen through probability/random sampling techniques.

Geographical Representation:

The sample was diverse, with 59% from big cities, 11% from smaller towns, and 30% from rural areas. This distribution aimed to capture various societal segments.

Educational Background:

Education levels were diverse, with 6% holding PhDs, 8% with Master's degrees, 35% possessing Graduate degrees, and 38% with an intermediate level of education. A smaller fraction of 10% was found to be illiterate.

Religious-Based Questionnaire:

A comprehensive questionnaire comprising fourteen religious-based questions was designed to gauge respondents' attitudes toward extremism.

Data Collection:

Field Survey:

Conducted in November 2018, the survey involved direct engagement with the selected individuals.

Response Rate:

Out of the 3800 participants, 250 chose not to provide any comments, leaving 3550 responses for analysis.

Educational Background and Extremist Views:

The data revealed varied educational backgrounds among respondents, shedding light on potential correlations between education levels and extremist tendencies.

Madras Education:

A small fraction of the population (3%) received education from madrasas, providing a unique perspective on how religious education might influence extremist attitudes.

Table 1: Summary of Survey Data on Pakistani Society's Attitudes towards Extremism and Educational Levels

Survey Details	Numbers	Percentage
Total Population Surveyed	3800	100%
Respondents with no comment	250	6.58
Respondents Participated	3550	93.42%
Geographical Distribution		
Big City Zones	2249	59%
Small Towns	418	11%
Rural Regions	1140	30%
Educational Qualifications		
Ph.D. Holders	228	6%
Master's Degree Holders	304	8%
Graduate Degree Holders	1330	35%
Intermediate Level of Education	1444	38%
Illiterate	380	10%
Education from Madaris	114	3%

The survey findings revealed that a substantial number of participants faced financial constraints. Among the respondents, 24% owned vehicles, while only 11% could afford private ones. The majority, around 64%, relied on public transportation. In terms of employment, 22% were identified as unemployed students, while 65% were employed. Out of those employed, 44% worked in the public sector, and 22% were in the private sector with salaried jobs. Self-employed individuals constituted a small fraction, just 14% of the sample. Despite financial limitations, the community exhibited strong social ties and integration. A significant 75.5% owned their homes, showcasing stability, while 86.5% lived in joint family arrangements, indicating close familial bonds. Notably, a considerable portion, about 62.5%, supported the idea of women wearing veils outdoors, reflecting conservative viewpoints.

Table 2: Socioeconomic status of respondents, including ownership of vehicles, employment status, homeownership, and family arrangements.

Characteristics	Respondents	Percentage
Owned Vehicles	912	24%
Private Vehicles	418	11%
Rely on Public Transportation	2432	64%
Unemployed Students	836	22%
Employed	2470	65%
Public Sector Employees	1672	44%
Private Sector Salaried Workers	836	22%
Self-employed	532	14%
Homeowners	2869	75.5%
Living in Joint Family Arrangements	3287	86.5%

Examining societal perspectives, a considerable segment of the surveyed population held varying views on pivotal issues. In the context of women's rights, 55% opposed granting women the right to divorce, while 28% supported it, and 16% specifically advocated for women's initiation of divorce. Notably, religious beliefs significantly influenced opinions, with 65% expressing disinterest in music due to religious reasons. Interpretations regarding Jihad and

Islam's progression exhibited diversity among respondents. Regarding geopolitical stances, a majority (60%) disagreed with Pakistan's alignment with the US in Afghanistan, while 18% supported it. Opinions on the Taliban diverged, with 60% rejecting their ideological stance, attributing their actions more to political motives than Islamic principles. Additionally, a substantial 78% opposed violence and favored capital punishment as a deterrent. Views on Jihad showcased diversity, with 3% attributing the Muslim World's lack of progress to a failure in practicing Jihad, while 25% believed Jihad should combat cruelty. Internal religious disparities concerned 49% of the sample, linking these disparities to issues like sectarianism and radicalization. Religious practices, such as offering prayers five times a day, were considered obligatory by 62%, while 65% opposed Shariah implementation as part of Jihad. In terms of gender roles, 72% emphasized the importance of female education, while 49% opposed women's employment outside their homes. Geopolitical perceptions varied significantly concerning conflicts in Afghanistan and Kashmir, revealing the diverse interpretations among the surveyed individuals.

Table 3: Societal perspectives on various issues such as gender roles, religious practices, geopolitical stances, and societal norms among the survey respondents.

Perspectives	Respondents	Percentage
Support Veil for Women	2375	62.5%
Opposition to Granting Women Right to Divorce	2090	55%
Support for Women's Right to Divorce	1064	28%
Advocacy for Women's Ability to Initiate Divorce	634	16%
Disinterest in Movies due to Religious Reasons	2470	65%
Disagreement with Pakistan's Alignment with the US in Afghanistan	2280	60%
Support for Pakistan's Alignment with the US in Afghanistan	684	18%
Disagreement with Taliban's Ideological Stance	2280	60%
Opposition to Violence, Support for Capital Punishment	2964	78%
Concern about Internal Religious Disparities	1862	49%
View Prayer Obligations	2356	62%
Opposition to Shariah Implementation in Jihad	2470	65%
Support for Female Education	2736	72%
Opposition to Women's Employment Outside Homes	1862	49%

Results:

This study conducts a comprehensive nationwide survey involving 3800 respondents to scrutinize extremism trends in Pakistan while delving deeper into prevalent societal perceptions regarding the subject. Statistical analyses, including the Pearson Chi-Square test and the Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square test, strongly indicate a correlation between respondents' geographic locations within Pakistan and their attitudes toward music listening. These results demonstrate statistical significance, evident from their p-values falling below the predetermined threshold. Exploring responses to the question "Do you watch movies?" across provinces revealed intriguing variations: 75.7% in Punjab, 77.8% in Sindh, 65.2% in KPK, 79.4% in Baluchistan, 84.7% in Islamabad, 94% in Gilgit Baltistan, and 72% in AJK responded affirmatively. Conversely, negative responses were: 22% in Punjab, 22% in Sindh, 35% in KPK, 20% in Baluchistan, 14% in Islamabad, 11% in Gilgit Baltistan, and 26% in AJK. These distinct findings shed considerable light on regional attitudes towards extremism within Pakistan.

Table 4: Movie watching Trends Across Regions

Region	Movies viewer (%)	Non movie viewers (%)
Punjab	75.7	22.0
Sindh	77.8	22.0
KPK	65.2	35.0
Baluchistan	79.4	20.0
Islamabad	84.7	14.0
Gilgit Baltistan	94.0	11.0
AJK	72.0	26.0

The statistical significance, highlighted by both the Pearson Chi-Square test (5295.082 with 12 degrees of freedom; p-value: 0.000) and the Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square test (4989.928 with 12 degrees of freedom; p-value: 0.000), underscores the credibility of these findings. This suggests vital insights into how regional perspectives of populations may align with tendencies toward radicalization, highlighting the necessity to account for regional intricacies when addressing extremism within Pakistan. Participants were asked about the connection between attire and religion, responding with "yes," "no," or "don't know." The distribution of responses across various regions revealed intriguing variations: Punjab at 52%, Sindh at 45%, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) at 61%, Baluchistan at 51%, Islamabad at 12%, Gilgit Baltistan at 70%, and AJK at 25%. Specific prevalence rates were noted in certain contexts: Punjab at 60%, Sindh at 10%, KPK at 63%, Baluchistan at 62%, Islamabad at 75%, Gilgit Baltistan at 26%, and AJK at 66%. Contextual variations in Punjab ranged from 15% to 16%. These diverse findings provide nuanced insights into regional perceptions of the attire-religion correlation.

Table 5: Connection Between Attire and Religion

Region	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Punjab	52	19	19
Sindh	45	10	45
KPK	61	32	07
Baluchistan	51	33	16
Islamabad	12	75	13
Gilgit Baltistan	70	26	04
AJK	25	66	09

The distribution of "Don't Know" responses varied across regions: Sindh had 17%, KPK showed 13%, Baluchistan indicated 16%, and Islamabad presented 11%. Notably, Gilgit Baltistan and AJK had response rates of 2%, reflecting their perspectives on the radicalization process. Both the Pearson Chi-Square test, which resulted in 463.253 with 24 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, and the Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square test, yielding 462.049 with 24 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, affirmed significant findings. Regarding primary sources of religious education, respondents across regions indicated preferences: Parental influence: Punjab at 65%, Sindh at 54%, KPK at 59%, Baluchistan at 56%, Islamabad at 57%, Gilgit Baltistan at 52%, and AJK at 56%. An unspecified area in Punjab showed a 20% variability. Educational institutions like schools: Sindh at 9%, KPK at 18%, Baluchistan at 22%, Islamabad at 20%, Gilgit Baltistan at 25%, and AJK at 26%. Mosque attendance for religious education: Punjab at 10%, Sindh at 14%, KPK at 13%, Baluchistan at 9%, Islamabad at 18%, Gilgit Baltistan at 16%, and AJK at 14%. Madrassahs: Punjab at 4%, Sindh at 3%, KPK at 4%, Baluchistan at 5%, Islamabad at 2%, Gilgit Baltistan at 3%, and AJK at 4%. Reading as a preferred source: Punjab at 3%, Sindh at 2%, KPK at 4%, Baluchistan at 6%, Islamabad at 5%, Gilgit Baltistan at 3%, and AJK at 3%. These insights offer valuable perspectives on respondents' attitudes toward radicalism. The statistical tests reinforced the significance of these observations,

highlighting the importance of considering regional differences in understanding extremist inclinations within Pakistan. When respondents were asked about their preferred sources of religious education, parental influence stood out prominently in Punjab at 15%, Sindh at 26%, KPK at 25%, Baluchistan at 35%, Islamabad at 22%, Gilgit Baltistan at 32%, and AJK at 28%. The use of common course books was mentioned by respondents in Punjab at 9%, Sindh at 9%, KPK at 11%, Baluchistan at 15%, Islamabad at 12.5%, Gilgit Baltistan at 8%, and AJK at 12%.

Table 6: Preferred Source of Religious Education

Region	Parents (%)	Common Course Books (%)	Religious Books (%)	Religious Scholars (%)
Punjab	15	9	53	22
Sindh	26	9	42	21
KPK	25	11	39	25
Baluchistan	35	15	43	15
Islamabad	22	12.5	43	12
Gilgit Baltistan	32	8	26	35
AJK	28	12	38	25

In Punjab, 53% of respondents favored religious books, while in Sindh, this number ranged up to 42%. KPK showed a preference of 39%, Baluchistan 43%, Islamabad 43%, Gilgit Baltistan 26%, and AJK 38%. Shifting to other categories, 22% in Punjab, 21% in Sindh, 25% in KPK, 15% in Baluchistan, and 12% in Islamabad indicated an inclination toward religious scholars. Notably, a significant proportion in Gilgit Baltistan (35%) and AJK (25%) leaned towards religious scholars, reflecting their perspectives on radicalization. The statistical analysis—the Pearson Chi-Square test resulted in 2319.452 with 29 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, and the Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square test yielded 2072.612 with 30 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000—underscored the findings' statistical significance. When asked about perceptions of religious divisions using the prompt, "How do you perceive religious divisions?" the responses unveiled a variety of views on the presence of 72 Muslim sects, categorized as necessary, beneficial, division-based sectarianism, reasonable, and ignorance-based. The breakdown across regions was: Punjab 30%, Sindh 25%, KPK 35%, and Baluchistan 20%. The survey findings showed that 20% in Islamabad, 30% in Gilgit Baltistan, and 26% in AJK believed in the potential division of Muslims into 72 sects. In Punjab, 8% felt it was necessary, while in Sindh it stood at 9%. KPK and Baluchistan both reflected 8% and 9%, respectively. Islamabad reported 6%, Gilgit Baltistan 8%, and AJK 6%. Prevalence rates of a specific variable in various regions were: Punjab 7%, Sindh 5%, KPK 3%, and Baluchistan 4%.

Table 7: Perception of Prevailing Turmoil in Afghanistan

Region	Jihad (%)	Tribal Conflict (%)	Political War (%)
Punjab	12	58	30
Sindh	12	60	25.4
KPK	37	53	22
Baluchistan	22	60	13
Islamabad	11	61	18
Gilgit Baltistan	12	54	54
AJK	19	50	60

A comprehensive survey conducted across varied regions elicited diverse viewpoints on extremism, Jihad, religious interpretations, and the prevailing socio-political landscape. Respondents from different areas expressed contrasting perceptions regarding the situation's advantages, reflecting varied population trends across regions. Notably, opinions on sectarian

divisions diverged widely, highlighting differential acceptance or rejection of specific propositions. The survey underscored differences in knowledge or awareness levels; some regions, like Islamabad, Gilgit Baltistan, and AJK, exhibited a lack of knowledge, which could reflect attitudes toward radicalization. Views on militants engaging in Jihad against Indian forces in Indian-held Kashmir varied significantly, signifying diverse perspectives and cognitive orientations toward radicalization. Moreover, interpretations of "Jihad" depicted a spectrum of viewpoints, highlighting distinct inclinations toward religious concepts across different regions. Responses related to Afghanistan's unrest illustrated varying levels of support for Jihad in different regions, with higher percentages in Punjab, Sindh, and KPK attributing the conflict to Jihad. A substantial percentage across diverse regions perceived the situation in Afghanistan as a "political war," aligning with their cognitive orientation toward radicalization. Furthermore, opinions diverged on religious parties' efforts to enforce the Quran and Sunnah in Pakistan, demonstrating a wide array of responses across provinces. Varied views on whether the Taliban induces extremism for religious prosperity were evident across regions, reflecting divergent perspectives and cognitive stances on the radicalization process. These findings underscore the complexity and diversity of beliefs and attitudes within the surveyed population regarding extremism-related issues.

Table 8: Perceptions of Taliban's Cause

Region	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Punjab	28	56	12
Sindh	15	68	18
KPK	27	54	22
Baluchistan	28	33	17
Islamabad	13	53	13
Gilgit Baltistan	17	80	6
AJK	17	55	23

Views on the destruction of various establishments by militants elicited diverse reactions among respondents. Notably, varying percentages of individuals in different regions expressed their sentiments: 47% in Punjab, 40% in Sindh, 41% in KPK, 54% in Baluchistan, and 53% in Islamabad showcased differing reactions. However, opposition to these actions was voiced by 58.6% in Gilgit Baltistan and 47% in AJK. In contrast, a smaller faction conveyed support, comprising 7% in Punjab, 8% in Sindh, 13% in KPK, 14% in Baluchistan, 7% in Gilgit Baltistan, and 9% in AJK. These responses emanated from populations residing at rates of 42% in Punjab, 50% in Sindh, 48% in KPK, 32% in Baluchistan, and 29% in Islamabad.

Table 9: Reaction to Militant Activities

Region	Support (%)	Condemn (%)	Uncertainty/Don't Know (%)
Punjab	47	58.6	42
Sindh	40	47	50
KPK	41	41	48
Baluchistan	54	54	32
Islamabad	53	18	29
Gilgit Baltistan	7	47	42
AJK	9	62	29

In Gilgit Baltistan, 35% of respondents expressed uncertainty, while in AJK, 47% indicated "Don't Know" as their response. This highlights their cognitive inclination toward radicalism. The statistical tests, Pearson Chi-Square and Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square yielded significant values of 739.849 and 743.169, respectively, with 10 degrees of freedom and p-values of 0.000, emphasizing the statistical significance of these findings.

Regarding Pakistan's alignment with the United States after the 9/11 attacks, participants were asked to respond with yes, no, or don't know. In Punjab, 22% of respondents approved, while in Sindh, it was 15%, in KPK 13%, in Baluchistan 15%, in Islamabad 16%, in Gilgit Baltistan 24%, and in AJK 17%. The collective negative responses were notably high: 69% in Punjab, 68% in Sindh, 70% in KPK, 75% in Baluchistan, 67% in Islamabad, 55% in Gilgit Baltistan, and 70% in AJK. These responses were derived from populations residing at rates of 10% in Punjab, 20% in Sindh, 15% in KPK, 6% in Baluchistan, and 20% in Islamabad.

Table 10: Perception of Pakistan's Alignment with the US Post 9/11 Attacks

Region	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Punjab	22	69	10
Sindh	15	68	20
KPK	13	70	15
Baluchistan	15	75	6
Islamabad	16	67	20
Gilgit Baltistan	24	55	17
AJK	17	70	16

In Gilgit Baltistan, 17% of respondents indicated that they were unsure, while in AJK, 16% of respondents had a similar response. This demonstrated their cognitive orientation towards the process of radicalization. This demonstrated their cognitive perspective on the process of radicalization. The Pearson Chi-Square test yielded a value of 1009.259 with 10 degrees of freedom, resulting in a p-value of 0.000. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square test produced a value of 1058.339 with 12 degrees of freedom, resulting in a p-value of 0.000. These findings indicate that the results are statistically significant.

Table 11: Pearson Chi-Square values derived from the survey data

Question/Demographic	Pearson Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Movie Viewership and Geographic Locations	789.525	6	0.000
Attire and Religion Connection	463.253	24	0.000
Primary Source of Religious Education	1382.769	25	0.000
Preferred Source of Religious Education	2319.452	29	0.000
Perceptions of Religious Divisions	5062.262	12	0.000
Interpretation of Jihad	1398.278	17	0.000
Activity Commencement Process	1257.329	-	0.000
Prevailing turmoil in Afghanistan	3589.682	14	0.000
Religious Parties' Efforts	2967.728	-	0.000
Reaction to Threat and Extremism Caused by Militants	739.849	10	0.000
Pakistan's Alignment with the US post-9/11	1009.259	10	0.000

Conclusion:

The empirical study conducted in November 2018 delved deeply into the intricate web of extremism within Pakistani society, addressing the longstanding challenges faced by the nation in combating extremism and terrorism. Spanning over four decades, Pakistan has grappled with issues of sectarianism, terrorism, and various forms of violence, necessitating a rigorous examination of societal attitudes toward extremism. Through a comprehensive survey involving 3800 participants across diverse regions, this study illuminates prevalent perspectives within Pakistani society. The findings unveil intriguing insights, notably showcasing a significant trend toward liberalism, with approximately 75.83% of respondents engaging in music listening. Furthermore, the study reveals a dichotomy regarding attire and religious association, with 28.7% associating dress with religion, while a substantial majority of 72.96% perceive clothing as independent of religious affiliations, signaling a spirit of openness and adaptability. The research's exploration of diverse opinions on religious differences among sects unveils multifaceted attributions to interpretation, fundamental disparities, political influences, and methodological variations. Additionally, varying perspectives on the division of Muslims into 72 sects underscore a nuanced understanding, ranging from the necessity to expressions of ignorance. These profound findings paint a nuanced picture of Pakistani society, emphasizing the imperative for targeted strategies aimed at countering extremism while concurrently nurturing inclusivity and tolerance. The study advocates for tailored interventions to address societal attitudes and perceptions, fostering an environment conducive to promoting harmony and eradicating extremist ideologies.

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