

Interconnection between Social Factors and Radicalism

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Abstract

In Pakistan, the phenomenon of radicalization has frequently dominated national discourse, eliciting profound concerns from both governmental authorities and the general populace. This study aims to elucidate the social determinants of radicalization within the Pakistani context. The primary thesis posits that complex processes of social transition are currently underway, reflecting an evolving social structure in Pakistan. The processes of socialization and social change are linked to the emergence of radical tendencies among individuals. It is contended that Pakistan's social reality has been a significant catalyst for radicalization. To assess their contributions to radicalization, this study examines social issues such as weak social bonds, social anxiety, social repression, social instability, social injustice, deprivation, and unemployment. In order to address the problems of self-segregation and promote constructive social change, subjects and courses may be added to the curricula. Lessons on respect for humankind and the rule of law could be given to the pupils. In order to do this, it is necessary that parents and teachers show affection to the children as well. Parents can learn about contemporary parenting techniques to raise happy, healthy children through advocacy programmes, media, and education. To address the issues of social instability, social inequities, unemployment, and deprivation, the governments may propose and put into effect more effective policies.

Key Words: Pakistan, Radicalisation, Society, Social Change, Socialisation

Introduction

To gain an understanding of the interplay between Pakistani society and radicalism, it is imperative to scrutinize a variety of social issues. In Pakistan, radicalization has frequently occupied a central position in public discourse, evolving into a major source of concern for both the government and the general populace. Radicalism has emerged as a significant challenge due to an array of political, social, and economic variables. Several factors related to socialization and social change may be directly or indirectly attributed to the phenomenon of radicalization. Among these factors are weak social ties, social repression, social insecurity, and social injustice. The objective of this study is to examine the societal determinants of radicalization in Pakistan.

Literature Review

There has been limited research conducted on the phenomenon of radicalization in Pakistan, including the actors, variables, causes, and processes contributing to it. To date, only a few systematic studies have addressed this subject. Notable scholars such as Tariq Rahman, Ayesha Jalal, Sohail Abbas, Amir Rana, Shabana Fayyaz, and Christine Fair have conducted relevant research. However, social factors have only been mentioned tangentially within the context of their work. This study specifically examines the social aspects of radicalization in Pakistan. Tahir Abbas has provided insights into the European perspective on Islamic militancy. His book, *Islamic Political Radicalism*, addresses the origins and dissemination of radicalization in Eurasia, and extensively discusses the international political context of Muslim radicalism (Tahir, 2007). Sabeeha Hafeez's (1991) work, "The Changing Pakistan Society," explores the potential of folklore as a social mechanism and the concepts necessary for analyzing the evolving social structure and organizational system of Pakistan. Ayesha Jalal has addressed the topic within the South Asian context in her books, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (Jalal, 2001) and *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia* (Jalal, 2008).

Gateway to Terrorism elucidates the nation's radical activities and organizations (Rana, 2003). The prevalence and ubiquity of radicalism in Pakistan are analyzed in *The Seeds of Terrorism* (Rana, 2005). "Jihadi Print Media in Pakistan" provides illustrative examples of how radicalism is propagated by the jihadi media (Rana, 2008). Haqqani (2005) has documented the ideologies of radical South Asian jihadi groups. "Pakistan's Drift into Extremism," authored by Hassan Abbas (2004), addresses various issues pertaining to Pakistani radicalization, including the impact of 9/11 and the role of Pakistani radical organizations. Christine Fair (2008) has examined the social aspects of radicalization in Pakistan. She further explored radicalization, its manifestations in Pakistan, and their international linkages in her paper "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al Qaeda and Other Organizations" (Fair, 2004).

Kaul's (2002) study, "Role of Religion in Politics," addresses the effects of Islamic radicalization on Pakistan's military and civil society. Olivier Roy (1994) examines Middle Eastern radicalism and radical organizations and movements in his book, *The Failure of Political Islam*, and also discusses Pakistani radicalism. Stern (2004) elucidates the issue in *Why Religious Militants Kill: Terror in the Name of God*. According to Davis (2007), curriculum and educational systems contribute to the radicalization of individuals in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In *Fighting Terrorism*, Chitkara (2003) examines the phenomenon of radicalization and its causes in Pakistan, as well as various radical groups. Benazir Bhutto (2008) addresses several topics related to radicalization in Pakistan, including its connection to jihad. Irfan Ahmed (2005), in his article "Between Moderation and Radicalization," discusses radicalization and the Jamaat-e-Islami of India. Dyer et al. (2007), in their paper "Countering Violent Islamic Extremism: A Community Responsibility," outline the four stages of the radicalization process: pre-radicalization, identification, indoctrination, and action. Safiya Aftab (2008) explores the relationship between radicalization and poverty in Pakistan. Shabana Fayyaz (2017; 2019) examines the effects of violent extremism on Pakistani youth and child militancy in Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

Calhoun (1985) characterizes radicalism as a "basic or extreme political challenge to established order." According to Anthony Judge (2005), the term "radical" is sometimes adopted by individuals or groups to self-identify, as it carries a less negative connotation than "extremist." Flaherty and Kalogerakis (2007) enumerate seven traits and ideologies characteristic of radical movements and groups: (a) a pervasive sense of hopelessness, prompting the belief that only drastic actions are sufficient; (b) the conviction that the current global system must be dismantled; (c) a disapproval of power-sharing and compromise; (d) the formulation of plans for a new global order; (e) the justification of methods by the ends; (f) a sense of urgency and impatience; and (g) an attraction to the possibility of radical transformation.

Society encompasses religious, political, and economic dimensions. Social processes significantly influence individual personality development. Education plays a crucial role in shaping and guiding the socialization process. It is impossible to comprehend personality and society in isolation from these elements. Radical periodicals and magazines, as well as religious and political gatherings of radicals, serve as social determinants of radicalization, as these radical activities inherently occur within the societal context.

According to Sabeeha (1991, 264), societal values, customs, and rituals exert a greater influence on individual behavior than laws. This suggests that societal attitudes and behaviors shape individual conduct. Additionally, socialization is believed to generate a wide array of behavioral patterns in humans (Hatch, 1985). A survey found that most radicals are less gregarious and tend to "keep mostly to themselves" (Sohail, 2007, p. 191). Radicals may be perceived as individuals whose socialization has been inadequately managed, leading to discomfort in social interactions. Their concepts of happiness and enjoyment diverge from those prevalent in broader society.

Parsons posits that for social structures to endure, they must fulfill four essential functions: (a) adaptation, (b) goal attainment, (c) integration, and (d) pattern maintenance or tension management. He asserts that inclusion, value generalization, and adaptive upgrading are critical for the successful emergence of a more differentiated structure. Inclusion, as Parsons explains, involves processes such as the expansion of suffrage, which fosters individuals' commitment to the new, more specialized institutions. Furthermore, Parsons contends that to legitimize a broader range of activities, values must be generalized or articulated more abstractly (Hatch, 1985).

Research Methods

The basic approach used was reflection and observation. Books and journal articles on the theoretical underpinnings of radicalism and socialisation issues were helpful intellectual resources. Experts were interviewed including Saif Abbasi (former head of the department of sociology at the International Islamic University), Tariq Rahman (former chairman of the department of Pakistan Studies at Quaid-i-Azam University), and Qazi Javed (resident director of the Pakistan Academy of Letters). The interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner since this kind gives the interviewer considerably more flexibility to ask follow-up questions and omit others based on the circumstances.

Society in Pakistan and radicalisation

Radicalism flourishes due to structural constraints including marginalisation, social exclusion, (self-)segregation, and inadequate educational opportunities (Sanghera & Thapar-Bjorkert, 2007, p. 176). The underlying risk factors that determine a society's susceptibility to such phenomena are fundamentally social and economic, with the most effective solutions emerging at the level of the societies that engender radicals (Richardson, 2006, p. 69). Nonetheless, one might inquire whether all cultures and communities have engendered radicalism. The adoption and promotion of radical beliefs and behaviours by individuals and groups from developed contemporary societies, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, is a well-documented reality.

The social structure of Pakistan is undergoing an evolution characterized by intricate processes of societal transformation. However, the trajectory of this change has predominantly been negative, with only partial positive developments occurring under unelected and unrepresentative governments. Change under such autocratic regimes has typically favored radical groups over nonviolent social activists. The rates of radicalization increased, particularly during the administrations of Generals Ayub Khan, Zia-ul-Haq, and Pervez Musharraf, indicating a broader shift in social change towards radicalism. Additionally, globalization-related changes are identified as one of the causes of radicalization, as noted by Rahman (Personal Communication, November 10, 2008).

The overall climate in this region has historically been relatively temperate. Qazi Javed underscores that the writings of Muslim authors over the past millennium, including the 11th-century saint Syed Ali Hujviri and others, are replete with reasonable ideas and concepts, as well as messages of peace and compassion for all people. Qazi Javed (Personal Communication, November 10, 2008) laments that during the 1960s and 1970s, this trajectory reversed, and radicalism and extremism gained prominence in Pakistan. Reflecting on the ongoing process of societal transformation, Khaled Ahmed observes that the seminary triumphed over the shrine, which had been the cultural nucleus of Pakistan. The complete eradication of traditional culture followed subsequently. The pressure of this transition reached a critical point in the 1990s, marking a high-water mark that was termed Talibanization, Khaled notes (n.d., 12). Khaled Ahmed explains that Pakistan's dynamics of social change manifest in four distinct types of conflicts: (a) conflicts between culture and ideology; (b) conflicts between national culture and subcultures; (c) conflicts between economic growth and cultural preservation; and (d) conflicts between Islamization and moderation.

Kemp's (2008) assertion that the breakdown of tribal and state systems, coupled with the growing influence of religiously orthodox foreign groups, is the primary cause of the emergence of radicalism in Afghanistan and the Pakhtun tribal areas of Pakistan, is persuasive only partly. The rise of radicalism in the aforementioned regions of Pakistan is not a consequence of the breakdown of the

tribal structure; rather, the causality is inverted. The tribal structure in these areas has been eroded and severely undermined by the radical groups.

Throughout Pakistan's history, the process of social inclusion has persistently encountered difficulties. Individuals excluded from prevailing social, political, and economic structures have developed antagonistic attitudes. The concept of being a true Pakistani is encumbered by numerous restrictions, precluding any form of value generalization. The institutions necessary to guarantee fundamental rights and security are notably deficient in Pakistani society (A. Saif, Personal Communication, May 5, 2008). Certain social and political structures and institutions, at least in part, support radical activities and beliefs. For example, the Pakistani media has been involved in promoting and disseminating materials that endorse radicalism, sometimes intentionally and sometimes inadvertently (Azam, 2008).

Problematic Socialisation

The proliferation of radical organizations and their activities at various junctures indicates issues with our socialization processes, which contribute to this increase. Radicalism and the resultant violence in our society are partly attributable to deficiencies in our socialization framework. The socialization of children is primarily a function of the family. Generally, parents neglect their duty to ensure proper socialization of their children, a process that cannot occur until their psychological needs are met. Parents often enroll their children in nursery schools at a very young age, thereby depriving them of adequate parental love and care (A. Saif, Personal Communication, May 5, 2008). This immediate deprivation induces anxiety in children. Such deficiencies contribute to the development of aggressive attitudes and behaviors. Potential radicals have not been positively guided by our socialization process or framework. Household chaos adversely affects socialization, as the family operates as a microcosm of society, with the home environment playing a crucial role in shaping socialization.

One of the principal causes of parents' inability to meet their children's psychological and emotional needs is the presence of a large number of offspring. For children to develop rational behavior and positive thoughts, they must be nurtured with love and persuasive reasoning. However, when there are too many children, it becomes practically impossible for parents to allocate sufficient time and energy to rationally persuade them on various issues. Consequently, physical punishment and expressions of disapproval are frequently employed. For Pakistani children, receiving physical punishment from their parents is a commonplace occurrence, with very few exceptions.

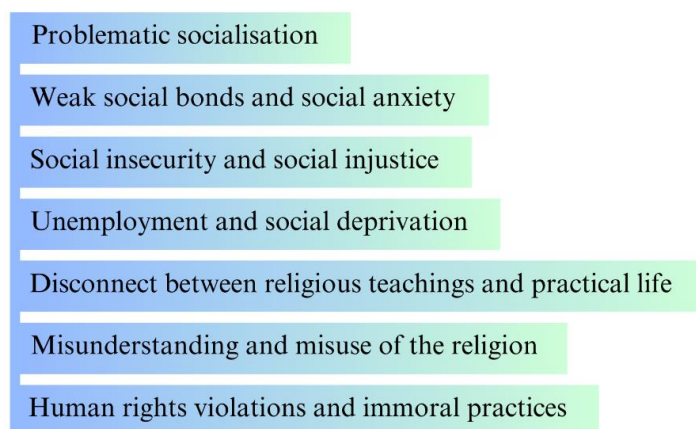


Figure 1: Society in Pakistan and radicalization

It is a common misconception among certain individuals that radicals lack or possess weak social consciences. However, this is not the case. The majority of radicals have developed sophisticated social consciences, but they either disregard or repress them in favor of their commitment to a "superior" cause.

Weak social bonds and social anxiety

Dyer et al. (2007, 5) elucidate that individuals with weak social ties may find solace in the unity provided by extremist and radical groups. Embracing the cause increasingly isolates individuals from broader society and their previous lives. However, radicals are not entirely severed from societal connections. They maintain social ties, which they utilize to identify, evaluate, and persuade potential recruits to adopt the same path. Moreover, the social connections that converts have with other like-minded individuals can reinforce their commitment (Dyer et al., 2007, p. 5).

According to research conducted at the University of the Punjab in Lahore, social anxiety is a significant contributing factor to extremism (Hashmi, 2008, p. 23). Radical recruiters can identify and exploit groups of individuals who are dissatisfied with society for their own purposes. Colleges and universities serve as fertile grounds for radicals to find inquisitive individuals who challenge societal norms (Dyer et al., 2007, p. 5). The religious community, such as Hafiz-e-Quran, often finds himself isolated in our society. Questions arise regarding their integration: what financial opportunities does society offer them? How can one ascend the social and economic ladder solely by learning to lead prayers and recite the Quran? From Saif Abbasi's (Personal Communication, May 5, 2008) perspective, the majority of the religious community is not incorporated into the economic system. He explains that this exclusion drives individuals towards radicalism.

Social Insecurity and Social Injustice

Social insecurity represents a critical factor contributing to heightened susceptibility to radicalization among individuals who perceive limited prospects for success in life. It encompasses the fear of social rejection or criticism in interpersonal contexts, leading to social anxiety, avoidance of social situations, and difficulties in forming relationships ("Insecurity: Overcome Self-Doubt & Boost Confidence," n.d.). The concept of "social insecurity" further denotes a perceived inequity in societal divisions, stemming from disparities in the distribution of societal benefits and disadvantages, compounded by issues such as racism, casteism, classism, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression (Babu & Suneela, 2019). As articulated by Pradeepa (n.d.), social insecurity manifests as an impediment to establishing meaningful connections due to anxiety, self-doubt, and apprehensions about social acceptance and integration.

Radicalism exhibits significant correlation with perceptions of injustice (A. Saif, Personal Communication, May 5, 2008). Status-centric values, often synonymous with social inequalities, are pervasive within Pakistani societal norms that are not conducive to harmonious coexistence. The privileged classes benefit from extreme advantages, while the powerful and wealthy often treat the impoverished and marginalized with impunity, engendering frustration among lower social strata. Radical groups and ideologies frequently appeal to disaffected individuals or groups seeking upward mobility within society. These groups offer a perceived avenue for social advancement to individuals who perceive limited options for improving their social standing. As such, individuals facing restricted social mobility are particularly vulnerable to radicalization.

Unemployment and Social Deprivation

The nation delineates six distinct economic strata: the impoverished, lower-middle class, middle class, upper-middle class, affluent, and ultra-affluent. While the middle class experiences relative economic marginalization, the impoverished endure acute economic deprivation. This raises the query of why widespread political, economic, and social disenfranchisement does not catalyze a mass revolutionary movement if it indeed serves as a catalyst for radicalization. The response lies in the limited mobilization of individuals driven solely by these or other grievances to initiate such a movement. Consequently, those radicalized on these grounds gravitate towards existing radical organizations active in the absence of a broader revolutionary mobilization.

Radicalism, defined as the recourse to force for political ends, functions as a coping mechanism in response to feelings of helplessness, adversity, and despair. It serves to enhance the social standing of radicals, which comprises elements of power, privilege, and prestige (Sabeeha, 1991, p. 7).

Individuals engage in a comparative process where they consciously weigh their material possessions against their perceived deprivations, striving to bridge any deficit by acquiring material goods or asserting social status attributes such as power, privilege, or prestige (Sabeeha, 1991, p. 3). However, when these efforts at compensation prove inadequate, individuals may be driven towards extreme measures as a means of redress for perceived deprivations.

The sense of deprivation intensifies notably among individuals experiencing underemployment or unemployment, contributing to an increased susceptibility to radicalism. Fair conducted a study involving interviews with 141 Pakistani families of Shaheeds—individuals who perished in conflicts in Afghanistan or Kashmir post-1990, distinct from those during the Soviet era. Her findings indicate that approximately 75% of these Shaheeds were either unemployed or had limited job prospects (Fair, 2008, p. 60). The former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where radicalization has surged, presents few employment opportunities, often relying heavily on a single breadwinner per household, thereby placing considerable pressure on youth to engage in religious extremism (Shinwari, 2013, p. 1). The process of rapid modernization and fluctuating economic conditions fosters instability and challenges conventional worldviews (Richardson, 2006, p. 55). Richardson (2006) suggests that in the absence of effective systems for integrating young men into the workforce, they are more likely to contemplate the shortcomings of their current circumstances and become receptive to supporting causes promising transformative change (Richardson, 2006, p. 55).

Disconnect between religious teachings and practical life

Pakistan, characterized by a predominantly Muslim population, holds Islam as a cornerstone of its culture and civilization. However, a genuine Islamic ethos is largely absent despite widespread identification with Islamic identity and observance of Islamic rituals and festivals. Many individuals, while proud of their Muslim identity, lack comprehensive understanding of the Quranic teachings and directives, resulting in a disconnect from the desired ideals of Islam. This disconnect is exacerbated by several factors including linguistic barriers, sectarian biases, and the politicization of religious discourse. Although proficient in Quranic recitation, a significant portion of Pakistani Muslims do not comprehend the Arabic language, hindering their ability to grasp the Quran's deeper meanings. Compounding this issue, many Muslim preachers in Pakistan prioritize sectarian affiliations and personal interests over broader Islamic principles. Consequently, their preaching often emphasizes selective interpretations of Quranic verses that align with their sectarian agendas or personal gains. This phenomenon has persisted for decades, perpetuating a superficial understanding of Islam among the populace.

The sectarian manipulation within the context of Islam, traditionally understood as a “religion of peace,” has engendered outcomes contrary to its doctrinal teachings, manifesting in violent conflicts and profound societal fractures. Throughout Pakistan's history, the intertwining of politics and religion has been conspicuous, notably exploited during the tenure of the unelected Zia regime, which strategically utilized religion and religiously motivated groups for political expediency (Jalal, 2008, pp. 304–305). Opportunistic interpretations of Islam often stem from political calculations, as highlighted by Jalal (2008). Research indicates that a significant proportion of Pakistanis who participated in the Afghan jihad felt exploited in the name of their faith, underscoring the manipulation of religious sentiment for political ends (Sohail, 2007, p. 148). Aly (2007) identifies political indoctrination as a direct catalyst for extremism and sectarian intolerance, emphasizing the role of brainwashing aligned with political agendas. Furthermore, state-sponsored arming of religious organizations has been counterproductive, exacerbating radicalization among non-state actors. This approach underscores the state's complicity in fostering radicalization, particularly evident in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) where clerical influence played a decisive role in promoting radical ideologies (Shinwari, 2013, p. 2).

Misunderstanding and misuse of the religion

The concept of religion undergoes significant distortion in various contexts, leading to misinterpretations of Islamic teachings that propagate beliefs and behaviors contrary to Islamic

principles, and at times, even antithetical to them. Under the banner of “Islamization,” certain social norms, attitudes, and practices have been either discouraged or proscribed, often by state entities and various groups, organizations, and political parties who have promoted Islamization as a national agenda. This process has occasionally targeted social norms, beliefs, and practices that historically fostered social harmony and peace. Sabeeha (1991, 264) elucidates the detrimental impacts of Islamization initiatives, attributing these effects to a foundational assumption that existing laws, conventions, practices, and rituals may not align with Quranic teachings. Consequently, where discrepancies are identified, there is a perceived imperative to reform or replace them in accordance with Islamic principles. Addressing questions such as “Which elements of Pakistani norms, values, rituals, and customs are inconsistent with Islamic teachings?” becomes imperative in this context to achieve alignment with perceived Islamic ideals.

Islamic teachings promoting moderation and modernization frequently encounter marginalization and neglect within contemporary discourse. Specific factions within Islamic thought have emphasized particular principles and values, resulting in a discourse that not only restricts individual liberties but also adopts a puritanical stance. This trend has transformed the folk order into a more conservative entity through literalism while eroding its historically tolerant spiritual dimensions. Despite embracing technological advancements for economic gain, this approach remains distinctly antimodern in its social orientation (Qadeer, 2006, p. 245).

Radicals strategically leverage religion as a mobilization tool for recruitment and indoctrination purposes. Most of the religious hierarchy imposes selective moral imperatives, prioritizing compliance with desired actions while disregarding alternative ethical considerations (Sohail, 2007, p. 191). Farhana (2008, 22) identifies religious elites and mass adherence to religious doctrines as among the five principal determinants of violence. Additionally, a study suggests that a significant proportion of individuals exploit religion to advance personal agendas (Rabia & Seema, 2008, p. 24). Religious communities, whether directly or indirectly, largely endorse societal inequities, economic frameworks, and behavioral norms that perpetuate injustice (Qureshi, 2002, p. 37). Moreover, radicalism is not confined solely to religious factions; secular communities, parties, and organizations also engage in and support radical activities (T., Rahman, Personal Communication, November 10, 2008).

Human rights violations and immoral practices

Widespread corruption stands as a significant catalyst in the process of radicalization. The pervasive presence of corruption across societal spheres can evoke profound disillusionment with societal norms, prompting individuals to contemplate extreme measures as a means of addressing perceived injustices. In Pakistan, the recurrent targeting of police stations, checkpoints, and mobile units in acts of violence may correlate with systemic corruption within law enforcement institutions. The enrichment of numerous affluent and ultra-affluent individuals at the expense of the vulnerable further exacerbates social disparities, fostering resentment among the poor and middle classes who perceive wealth accumulation as unjust. This animosity may fuel desires for retribution on behalf of the disadvantaged and marginalized. Farhana (2008, 29) contextualizes pre-9/11 violence as stemming from widespread socio-economic frustration among various demographic groups. Saif (Personal Communication, May 5, 2008) posits that radicalization often occurs when individuals experience violations of their fundamental rights and perceive a lack of protection thereof, leading them to pursue justice through any means necessary.

Conclusion

The study posits that Pakistan’s societal reality significantly influences radicalization. It identifies weak social bonds, social anxiety, social repression, and social injustice as contributing factors. Additionally, authoritarian and anti-democratic attitudes and social institutions exacerbate the issue. Both state and non-state actors have utilized religion, media, and education as tools for radicalization. Flaws in the socialization process partially account for the radicalism and consequent violence within society. According to Dyer et al., radical and extremist groups provide solidarity to individuals lacking strong social connections. Social insecurity, which leads many to believe they have limited opportunities for success, further exacerbates susceptibility to radicalization. The middle class

experiences relative deprivation, while the impoverished endure a sense of absolute deprivation. Consequently, radicalism, or the use of force for political purposes, emerges as a coping mechanism for feelings of helplessness, hardship, and hopelessness.

Despite widespread pride in being Muslim and the regular celebration of Islamic holidays and customs, the authentic Islamic spirit is largely absent. Most individuals lack a comprehensive understanding of the Quran's commands and injunctions, and are indifferent to the type of people Islam intends them to be. Consequently, the concept of religion is severely distorted in many contexts. Misinterpretations of Islamic teachings can lead to the dissemination of non-Islamic, and occasionally anti-Islamic, beliefs and behaviors. Another significant factor is pervasive corruption. Witnessing corruption's pervasiveness in all aspects of life can drive individuals to such a level of disdain for society that they consider extreme measures to impart a lesson to those they deem responsible.

Additional research is warranted to investigate several pertinent inquiries: (a) What are the underlying social psychological factors characterizing radicalized individuals in Pakistan? (b) How do the socialization processes and domestic turbulence experienced by radicals intersect? (c) To what extent do foreign media platforms contribute to the radicalization phenomenon in Pakistan? (d) What impact has the international community had on the trajectory of radicalization within Pakistan?

Recommendations

The syllabi may be expanded to include subjects and courses that address the problems of self-segregation and promote constructive social change. Lessons on the rule of law and love for mankind could be given to the pupils. In order to achieve this, parents and instructors must likewise show the kids affection. In order to raise healthy and optimistic children, parents can be educated about contemporary parenting techniques through advocacy seminars, media, and education. The issues of social instability, social inequities, unemployment, and hardship may be addressed by the governments through the introduction and implementation of more effective policies.

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