
Radicalization and Prevention: A Case Study of Youth in Quetta

Authors

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Abstract:

This study examines the radicalization of youth in Quetta and proposes preventive strategies. The research study is based on a context-specific area, Quetta, which is a multi-ethnic region comprising different communities and groups. This paper argues that young people are inclined towards radical ideologies due to a multitude of factors, including lack of education, scarce employment opportunities, and unequal distribution of resources. It investigates various factors influencing youth radicalization, such as identity perceptions, education, emerging tendencies, viewpoints on violence, government preferences, and gender equality perceptions. The research employing purposive data sampling, and diverse data collection techniques such as utilizing surveys, focus groups, and interviews, aims to provide a scientific and comprehensive understanding of radicalization trends in young people of Quetta. Moreover, a Social Identity Theory is applied for the analysis of the data collected which suggests that youth join radical groups for identity and a sense of belonging. Such an understanding enables us to recognize the crucial role of youth in shaping a prosperous and dynamic society. The findings will contribute to the existing knowledge on this specific topic which is useful for the decision makers to devise informed and contextualized decisions regarding de-radicalization and youth. The study advocates for engaging young people as "youth leaders" in peace-building and social harmony, aiming to foster just communities.

Keywords: Identity, Radicalization, Prevention, Youth, Religion, Positive Engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

Radicalization of youth around the world is increasing at a rapid pace and is a global challenge in today's globalized world (Campelo et al., 2018; Neve et al., 2020). Radicalization, violent extremism, and terrorism are used interchangeably in literature. However, these all are different from one another. More so, there is a big difference between radicalization and radicalization to violence. Radicalization is a process by which an individual divorces from the existing political, social, cultural, or religious beliefs, ideas, traditions, etc., and adopts extreme ones instead (Majeed, 2021). On the other hand,

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radicalization of violence is something that validates or legitimizes an individual's violent act, intolerable behavior, and extreme attitude against the already established beliefs and ideas of other individuals, whether political, religious, or social (Hayes, 2017). The recent trends in the radicalization of youth have changed and are a result of the wide-scale stereotyping tactics used by some big media and news networks such as CNN in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. The current upsurge in radicalization in the West and elsewhere in the world is not caused by religion or faith rather it is caused by context-specific issues such as migration in Europe, and white supremacy in the United States, to mention a few.

Radicalization leads to splinter group creation in the long run (Dr Moazzam Hashmi, 2024). The youth's susceptibility to radicalization stems from their grievances over the unfair distribution of sources and wealth, feeling of oppression and marginalization at the hands of state authorities, lack of opportunities and employment, etc., which leads them to join the radical organizations across the globe (Siegel et al., 2019). Most of the terrorist acts in the United States and Europe are carried out by young people between the ages of 12 and 19 (Onuoha, 2014). These individuals were associated with a particular faith, Islam, as they were members of Muslim communities. Boko Haram, a Nigeria-based militant group, main source of recruitment is youth from marginalized and poor backgrounds, school and university students and graduates, and orphan children (Onuoha, 2014; Venhaus, 2018). Al-Qaeda, a global terrorist organization, often targets young people for recruitment through online sources (Qayyum, 2020).

As mentioned earlier, the phenomenon of radicalization is a global challenge, many countries around the world have developed their respective strategies for countering violent extremism and radicalization and have incorporated this issue in official public discourse over threats to national security. The seriousness of the issue can be gauged from the response from different governments across the world. For example, the governments of Canada and Australia have in place the *National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence* (Adeyemi, A. E., & Musa, M. N., 2016) and *Preventing Violent Extremism and Radicalization in Australia* respectively, to combat radicalization and violent extremism. Similar policies have been adopted by the United States, Germany, China, and others including Pakistan.

Pakistan has a significant youth population (aged under 30) which accounts for approximately 64 percent of the total population (Amir Jan, 2023), youth has always been othered in Pakistan and left unengaged. This led the youth bulge to radicalization which resulted in the often-reported incidents of violent mob lynching. On 3 December 2021 a 49-year-old Sri Lankan, Priyantha Kumara, working in a factory as a manager was pitilessly killed allegedly for blasphemy by a violent mob of fellow workers (Fatima Bhutto, 2021) Campuses across Pakistan are not safe from menace of radicalization. Before this tragic incident of killing of the Sri Lankan manager, on April 13, 2017, a young journalism student Mashal Khan was lynched to death by his fellow radical Islamist students at Abdul Wali Khan University in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, this research focuses on the multi-faceted nature of radicalization in Quetta, challenging the post-9/11 narrative that predominantly links radicalization with Islamic extremism. The study also addresses the rising global trend of right-wing extremism and its impact on youth, emphasizing the susceptibility of Pakistani

youth to radicalization due to socio-economic challenges. Within the context of Pakistan, it has always existed since the inception of the country but the recent upsurge in radical tendencies in Pakistan after the removal of former Prime Minister Imran Khan from the office and later his arrest is extraordinary (Fatima Bhutto, 2021).

The spread of extremist and radical ideologies in people of young ages is a cause of concern for decision-makers. In Quetta, youth radicalization is further compounded by identity crises, sectarian conflicts, and gender-based discrimination. The research advocates for effective de-radicalization strategies and the development of counter-narratives, particularly focusing on youth engagement in Quetta. Through FGDs, KIIs, and questionnaires, it seeks to understand youth perspectives on radical ideologies and suggests preventive measures for fostering positive youth leadership. This research, therefore, aims to offer insights into combating radicalization by engaging the youth constructively in building a peaceful society.

This study will enable the decision-makers and counter-terrorism and violent extremism departments in Pakistan to devise a goal-oriented policy regarding radicalization. It will enhance the understanding of the readers about the issue and its long-term negative impact on society. For me, the research is of colossal importance as so far no one has conducted comprehensive and empirical research on the youth radicalization of Quetta. Moreover, Quetta is a multi-ethnic city having inhabitants from all faiths and sects. To address this gap, I conducted this research to contribute my expertise. This study fills the gap that I discerned in academic research. As such, no research on this specific issue in this specific area has been conducted. This research is an effort to make a base for further study on the said theme for researchers.

Following are the leading questions for the research study, which helped in formulating the open and close-ended questions for data collection tools like focus group discussion, key informant interviews, and survey questionnaires. It provided ground to focus on the exploration of the required data, information, and knowledge while deepening the understanding through probing questions in the light of the leading questions. It also helped in stimulating the discussion and exploring various viewpoints around the phenomenon of the research study.

- What are the main factors that contribute to the formation of radical ideologies among young people in Quetta?
- How do young people in Quetta perceive and define radical ideologies? What are their motivations and beliefs associated with such ideologies?
- What are the key channels or platforms through which young people in Quetta engage or are exposed to radical ideologies?
- What preventive strategies or initiatives do young people in Quetta consider effective in countering radical ideologies? How do they evaluate the role of education, community engagement, and government interventions in this regard?

2. Hypothesis

The study presents a carefully formulated hypothesis, postulating that "If the perspectives of young people are integrated into de-radicalization efforts in society, it will lead to the creation of an effective counter-narrative.

3. Research Gaps

This research recognizes a significant gap in the existing literature on radicalization, particularly in its failure to account for the regional dynamics and local context of Quetta. Previous studies have often overlooked the unique factors contributing to radicalization in this specific region, leading to a gap in comprehensive understanding. The study emphasizes Quetta's unique socio-political and cultural landscape, aiming to fill the academic void by exploring how these local factors contribute to the spread of radical ideologies among its youth. This geographical focus is crucial for developing targeted and effective de-radicalization strategies.

The research addresses the lack of emphasis on young people's perspectives in current literature. Previous studies have often examined radicalization from a broader societal view, neglecting the direct voices and notions of the youth themselves. The research actively involves young people from Quetta, providing them with a platform to articulate their beliefs, concerns, and aspirations. This engagement is vital for understanding the distinctions behind the factors driving radicalism among youth and identifying potential preventive strategies.

4. Limitations

This research study, while significant, presents certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, its focus on Quetta as a specific regional context may limit the generalizability of its findings to other areas. The unique socio-cultural, economic, and political factors influencing radicalization in Quetta might differ significantly from those in other regions, potentially restricting the broader applicability of the study's recommendations.

Secondly, the reliance on self-reported data from young individuals may include potential social desirability bias, where participants may respond in ways they believe are expected by society rather than expressing their true beliefs. Recall bias might also impact the accuracy of their accounts regarding experiences and perspectives on radical ideologies.

Assessing the effectiveness of the proposed preventive and de-radicalization strategies requires long-term observation, monitoring, and evaluation. This is essential to determine their real-world impact and sustainability in countering radicalization among young individuals.

5. Literature Review

Youth radicalization, a global phenomenon, requires a precise definition to avoid policy misconceptions (Miconi et al., 2021). The terms radicalism, fundamentalism, and extremism demand clarity due to potential overlaps. Diana Miconi (2021) emphasizes the lack of a

uniform definition. In the context of terrorism prevention, Neumann (2008) defines radicalization as "what goes on before the bomb goes off," highlighting its importance. Varied definitions reveal a consensus on radicalization as a process leading to extremist values, fundamentalism, or violence, with shades in regional perspectives (Muro, 2016; PISOIU et al., 2020).

The term fundamentalism, often an outcome of radicalization, denotes strict, non-negotiable adherence to beliefs, originating from early twentieth-century anti-liberal, anti-modern sentiments rooted in religion. While not necessarily violent, fundamentalism may lead to forceful imposition of beliefs (Dunn, 2013). Extremists aim for a homogeneous society with rigid ideologies, sharing similarities with fundamentalism but lacking support for democratic values, human rights, and equality (Schmidt, 2016). Violent extremism is globally defined as any illegal action by individuals or groups with extremist ideologies harming others (Schmidt, 2016). It involves sensitization or mobilization processes driven by identity differences, leading to the destruction of both soft and hard structures of perceived adversaries.

This study adopts a general definition, encompassing terms like violent extremism and fundamentalism, viewing radicalization as a process wherein individuals gradually adopt beliefs justifying violence for change, involving two stages a) endorsing beliefs and b) acting upon them (Schmidt, 2016). The study focuses on youth radicalization in Pakistan, particularly in the Quetta district. To define youth, ages 14-24, as per the United Nations, or 15-29 in the Pakistani context, are considered. Adolescence (10-13 years) and youth are critical periods of physical and mental development, marked by education completion, employment entry, and marriage. Age 18 signifies key legal transformations, including driving, voting, and marriage rights.

During adolescence, individuals develop a sense of identity, a process crucially outlined by Erikson (1972) and expanded by Jarvis (1992), involving stages of exploration and commitment. Youth often make commitments without thorough exploration, influenced by cultural values. Identity formation encompasses both content (the "what") and structure (the "how"), involving the development, challenge, and transformation of ideological ideas.

Pakistan, experiencing terrorism, particularly since 2001, faces the threat of youth radicalization, motivating the focus on this region in the study (Cachalia et al., 2016; Arseculeratne, 2022). Daniel Egiegba Agbibo (2013) highlights youth radicalization in Nigeria, attributing it to high unemployment and poverty rates. Many unemployed and uneducated Nigerian youth, seeking better opportunities, have joined Boko Haram. Adebayo E. Adeyemi and Mahmoud N Musa (2014) discuss incentives provided by Al-Qaeda in the Land of Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to Mali's impoverished youth, offering financial and health benefits, and attracting them to terrorist activities. Lack of education and economic opportunities further drive youth towards radicalization leading to violent extremism. The university-educated youth can also be radicalized leaders, as seen in the case of Al-Shabaab in Somalia (Anneli Botha and Mandi Abdile, 2016). Poverty, unemployment, and lack of education are not universal causes, as some recruits come from middle-income families.

Anneli Botha (2015) emphasizes the role of social identity in youth radicalization in Kenya and Uganda, where Al-Shabaab and Allied Democratic Forces-ADF attract youth seeking to

assert their religious or ethnic identity due to economic, social, and political exclusion. Ramesh Ramasamy (2023) probes into push factors for youth radicalization in Sri Lanka, identifying divisions in ethnic and social identity, lack of opportunities, economic and political marginalization, corruption, poor governance, and state securitization. The complex interconnections between these factors underscore the need for counter-radicalization policies.

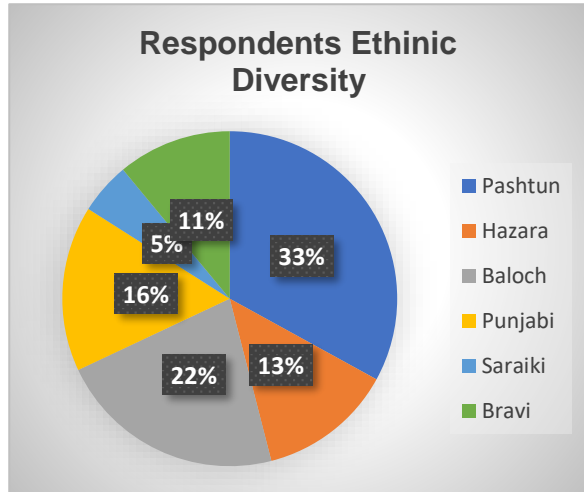
The study underscores that youth radicalization in Pakistan is influenced by similar factors including but not limited to an identity crisis, lack of economic opportunities, absence of a platform to channel youth's potential, bad governance, and prejudiced practices in access to justice. While regional disparities exist, the focus on religious identity poses a significant risk. The study emphasizes the need for regional analysis, specifically in Quetta district, due to its exposure to radical ideologies from Afghanistan. Insights from the study contribute to a distinction in the understanding of youth radicalization, emphasizing the importance of context-specific interventions (Beg & Bokhari, 2008; Haque, 2014; Khan, 2015; Basit, 2021; Pildat, 2015; Pak Institute of Peace Studies, 2021). The research contributes to the existing literature by offering a detailed analysis of youth radicalization in the specific context of the Quetta district, enriching our understanding of the multifaceted phenomenon.

In response to the rising challenge of youth radicalization in Pakistan, concerted efforts have been made by governmental and non-governmental entities to stem the tide of radicalization and extremism. The Pakistani government has implemented educational reforms such as the incorporation of subjects promoting tolerance and critical thinking into school curricula. As outlined by Akhtar and Khan (2019), these reforms aim to counter radical and extremist narratives by fostering a culture of pluralism and respect for diverse perspectives. Besides this, the vocational training programs, exemplified by initiatives like the Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Program, offer skill-building opportunities to marginalized youth, providing them with viable alternatives to radical ideologies (Khan, 2020). Furthermore, collaborations with religious leaders and community organizations, as illustrated by the partnership between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and local mosques, facilitate grassroots efforts to challenge radical and extremist interpretations of Islam (Ahmed et al., 2018). Simultaneously, law enforcement agencies have intensified their efforts to dismantle extremist networks and prevent the dissemination of radical propaganda through initiatives like Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (Saleem, 2017). These multifaceted endeavors reflect a recognition of the complex socio-political and economic drivers of radicalization, necessitating comprehensive strategies tailored to the Pakistani context.

6. Methodology and Data Collection Method

7. In this section, a complete description of the study has been provided. The design of this study is also elaborated in this section. The details about Sampling techniques, and sample size are also included. It also contains data collection tools and data analysis techniques. For the design of the study, a mixed methods approach has been used. The study includes initial literature on the said theme, followed by a round of five focus group discussions, ten key informed interviews, and a survey questionnaire

on youth radicalization. Moreover, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to gain insights into the research questions. Respondents for this study include young individuals, aged 16 to 30, from different areas of Quetta. The audience was selected through purposive sampling, meaning those most relevant to the study.



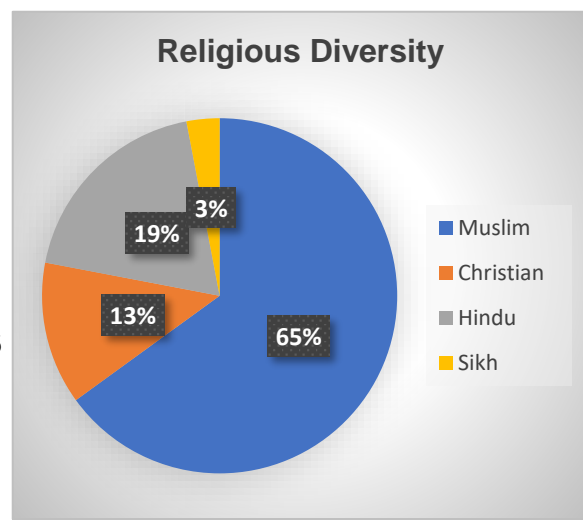
The mixed method is a research approach, which allows the researchers to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data collected for a complex set of questions. The research study was a complex study and was based on the complex nature of the relationship between radicalization and youth. A mixed-method approach has allowed me to explore diverse perspectives on the issues of youth and seek more in-depth and firsthand knowledge.

The research methodology chosen for this study is grounded theory, which is ideal for exploring radicalization among young people in Quetta. Grounded theory allows for the development of a conceptual framework directly from the data, addressing the limitations of existing frameworks. In research, the mixing method is used to gain a deep understanding of young people's beliefs and drives regarding radical ideologies. The research study engaged a diverse group of young individuals, aged 16 to 30, spanning various backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive exploration of its themes. Thirty-two participants actively contributed to FGDs, while ten individuals offered specialized insights through KIIs. In addition to that, the study includes 100 responses which were received through a questionnaire survey. Deliberate efforts were made to maintain gender diversity, with 30% female and 70% male participants, ensuring equitable representation of voices. Educational backgrounds ranged from high school to university, with some participants following the unique religious educational system of Dar-e-Nizami, providing valuable perspectives rooted in religious scholarship.

The research methodology chosen for this study is grounded theory, which is ideal for exploring radicalization among young people

Geographically, respondents hailed from diverse areas within the Quetta district, including urban, semi-urban, and rural settings, offering a holistic understanding across socio-economic contexts. Furthermore, the respondent pool exhibited rich religious diversity such as Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Sikh communities, fostering a comprehensive exploration of differing religious beliefs and practices. The study's culmination showcased the ethnic diversity among respondents, with *Pashtun* (33%), *Baloch* (22%), *Punjabi* (16%), *Hazara* (13%), *Saraiki* (5%), and *Brahvi* (11%) representations. This diversity allowed for an inclusive examination of perspectives within the research themes, reflecting the rich tapestry of ethnic backgrounds existing in Quetta.

For this study, both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used side by side to get data. For the calculation of the data received in quantitative form, Taro Yamane's formula was used. Purposive sampling was employed to

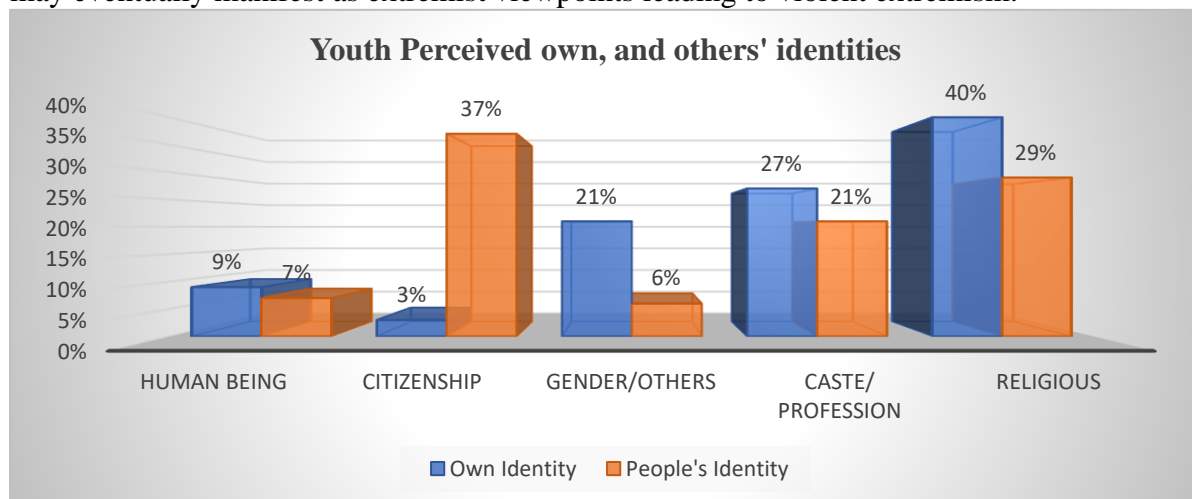


select participants with specific characteristics relevant to the study, ensuring efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Data collection tools were designed considering a mixed method, including focus groups, key informant interviews, and questionnaires. The study engaged a diverse group of young respondents considering diversity in gender, linguistic, religious, ethnic, and socio-economic to represent different aspects of identity. The data collection continues until data saturation is achieved, ensuring a comprehensive dataset is obtained. This approach allows for a refined understanding of the research topic and informs future research and interventions. As a mixed method was used for the collection of data, both quantitative and qualitative techniques were employed. In the research process, first, a qualitative technique was used. Based on the predetermined questions for the interview, focus group discussions were arranged in different towns of Quetta. The focus group discussions and interviews helped the researcher to get primary data. In the second step, for quantitative data, closed-ended multiple-choice questions were proposed for the questionnaire to get data from young individuals in Quetta. Apart from collecting firsthand information and primary data, help was also taken from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, research papers, and government and official documents and policies.

8. Analysis

Identity

The study analysis has revealed that young individuals possess a visible “notion of radicalization” particularly in relation to their religious and caste identities. This perception of identity among the youth is characterized by a linear and inflexible nature, as they regard their religious and caste identities as sacred and non-negotiable. Such a mode of thinking not only diminishes the validity of other religious identities but also inspires a sense of pride in youth, raising a desire for similar conformity in their peers. This pride, associated with their own identities, lays the groundwork for the development of radical thought processes, which may eventually manifest as extremist viewpoints leading to violent extremism.

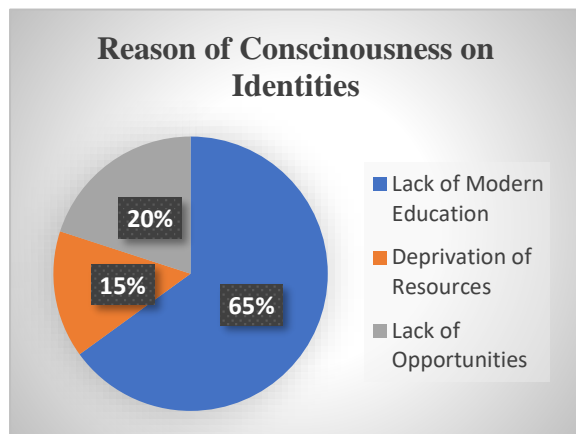


In addressing the question of identity importance, 40% of young participants identified their religious identity as their primary identity, followed by 27% who prioritized caste and professional identities. Gender identity was paramount for 21% of the youth. Notably, only 9% of respondents identified primarily as human beings, and a mere 3% prioritized their

citizenship identity. This indicates a predominant inclination among young people toward their religious and caste identities, with other identity facets receiving comparatively less emphasis. The female respondents reported a sense of marginalization regarding their gender identity.

Interestingly, when considering the identities of other youth, a different perspective emerged. The analysis revealed that 37% of youth regarded others' citizenship identity as primary, followed by religious 29% and caste/professional identities 21%. This was succeeded by identification as a human being 7% and gender identity 6%, highlighting a rigid and unchanging viewpoint regarding identities. The primary data suggests that young people demonstrate a naive conceptual understanding of their identities, leading to the formation of a fixed and subsequently radical worldview about their own and others' identities.

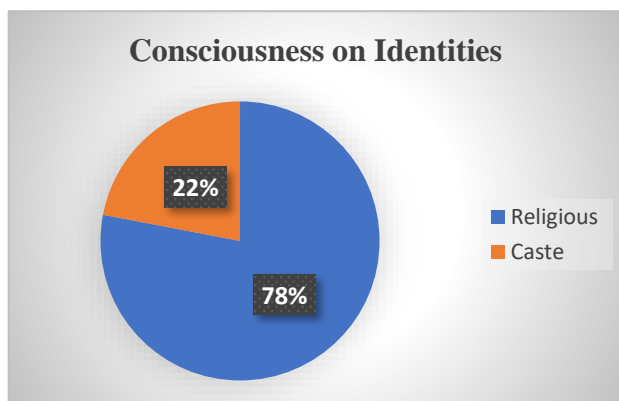
In the analysis of KIIs, it was found that 78% of youth are increasingly conscious of their religious identity, while 22% are more focused on their tribal and caste identities. A lack of modern education 65%, resource deprivation 15%, and limited positive youth engagement opportunities 20% were cited as reasons for this heightened religious consciousness. The radical perspective among the youth remained obvious in analysis whereas the majority of the youth indicated their prime identity as rightest, and also had the point of view that others should behave similarly. The analysis also indicated that religious leaders to some extent exploit the sentiments of the uneducated and impoverished. A smaller proportion of youth in FGDs acknowledged and supported this viewpoint.



Youth from well-off backgrounds, such as landlords, perceived that religion promises security in both the material and spiritual realms attracted people. In contrast, youth of middle-class socio-economic status believed that exposure to various media platforms and witnessing the treatment of Muslims globally has spurred a need to defend their religious community. Thus, young people are more receptive towards radical ideologies to support their fellows having similar ideologies “The religion”.

The analysis of the focus group discussions revealed that while young people are generally tolerant of others' identities, they struggle with their own, particularly during adolescence and young adulthood. Peer pressure, the competitive nature of life, and belonging to socially or economically disadvantaged groups contribute to feelings of inferiority. Simultaneously, they face the challenge of developing their self-identity as emerging young leaders. These complexes are further aggravated by educational content, which, to some extent, directly and indirectly raises animosity towards other identities.

The analysis further revealed that the messages young people have received since childhood about their religions predominantly originate from local



religious leaders, rather than research-based scholarly sources. When asked whether they had ever sought to verify the statements of their conventional religious leaders “Mullah’s” regarding hatred or division among people of different identities, 90% of young respondents admitted that they had never attempted to validate these statements alongside holy texts or scholarly interpretations.

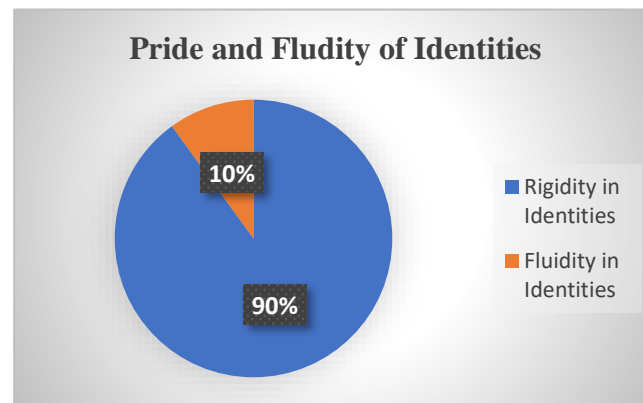
Despite being educated, young people demonstrated a significant lack of critical thinking, reflecting a deep-seated trust in their conventional local religious leaders. This blind faith, inherited from their parents, is starkly evident among the youth. However, 10% of young individuals reported that they had at least once questioned the viewpoints of their conventional local religious leaders, not in the context of Jihad, but regarding social and political issues, but faced the threat of announcement against them for social boycott from the community.



The study also revealed that young people possess an emotional rather than a rational connection to their religious identities, lacking initiative in exploring their religion or understanding the emergence of various sects within it. They tend to accept without question whatever is conveyed by conventional local religious leaders. This development of a debatable sense of supremacy leads to the formation of linear identities and a narrow worldview. Young people practice their

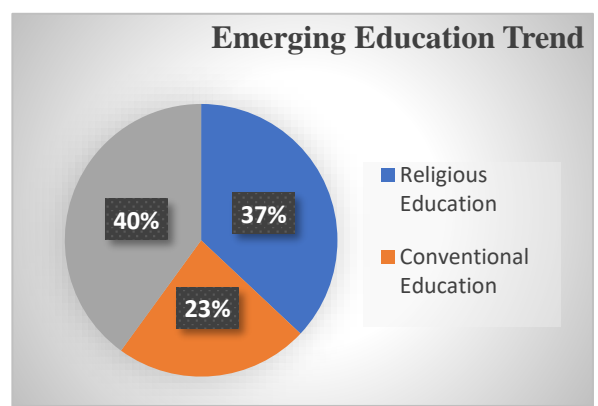
religious supremacy themselves and also encourage others to accept and behave in certain ways. As a result, diversity, multiculturalism, and religious, and social harmony are discouraged, and perceived as threats to these entrenched identities.

Education



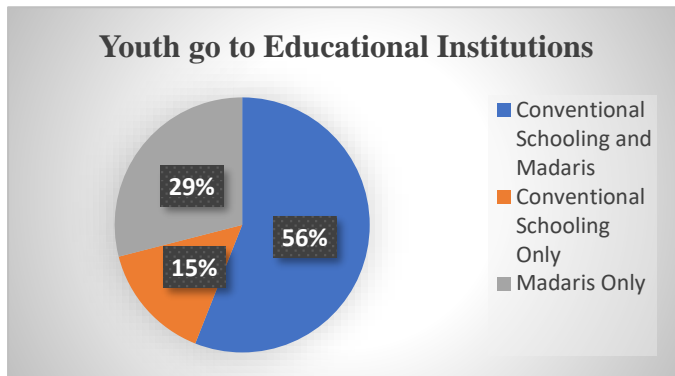
In the context of educational tendencies, the analysis of FGDs KIIs has disclosed that within traditional societies, the schooling system is perceived as a promoter of Western education, perceived to distance young people from their religious beliefs and promulgate non-Islamic values among the youth. The majority of the respondents expressed the trend of sending children and youth to conventional schooling is decreasing while the drop-out from schools and

trend towards religious education is increasing significantly. Another angle that emerged from the analysis is that even in the conventional schooling system only boys are encouraged to attain schooling to some extent while girls are



not encouraged to do so. This aspect clearly indicated the radical notion of young people, to some extent young people of the view that religiously girls are prohibited from attending schools. This viewpoint aligns with Rahman's (2008) research, which states, "The Western concepts of capitalism, socialism, liberty, and economic ideas are disrupting Muslim society".

Besides this, the study explored that 90% of youth engaged in religious education systems have developed a pronounced sense of pride in their religious identities, while 10% have maintained fluidity in their identity perception.



According to the data analyzed, 30% of youth indicated that parents are reconsidering their decision to send youths to Madaris/Religious seminaries due to concerns about potential links between Madaris and the phenomena of terrorism and extremism. It was expressed that young individuals who exclusively attended Madaris are more prone to radicalization compared to those who had access to the

conventional education system.

The study report indicated on average, 15% of youth attend the conventional schooling system, 56% participate in both school and Madaris education, while 29% solely attend Madaris, culminating in a total of 85% of youth receiving some form of religious education from religious seminaries. Moreover, 29% of the youth believe that the trend of attending Madaris is increasing, compared to 15% who think that the trend towards conventional education is on the rise, while 56% perceive an increasing trend of youth attending both Madaris and school.

Youth respondents further shared a nearly unanimous view that youth with more extensive exposure to Madaris tend to be more rigid and show minimal or no acceptance of change, especially changes pertaining to celebrating diversity. This is attributed to the development of a strong sense of group oneness, leading them towards fixed opinions about others' identities and a direct, radical approach towards not only others but also themselves. The KIIs analysis advocates for the promotion of interaction, dialogue, and exposure to critical thinking among young people as strategies for de-radicalization.

The study also revealed that students of Madaris are more prone to radicalization due to their strong religious beliefs and lack of exposure to the modern education system. However, Farhan Zahid (2015) in his research contends that educated youth are also susceptible to radicalization. There have been multiple incidents reported in Pakistan, particularly in Quetta, involving educated but radicalized youth engaged in violent extremism. This notion is corroborated by KIIs with young people, wherein it was observed that educated youth were also less open to new ideas, instead seeking power structures to limit their adversaries'

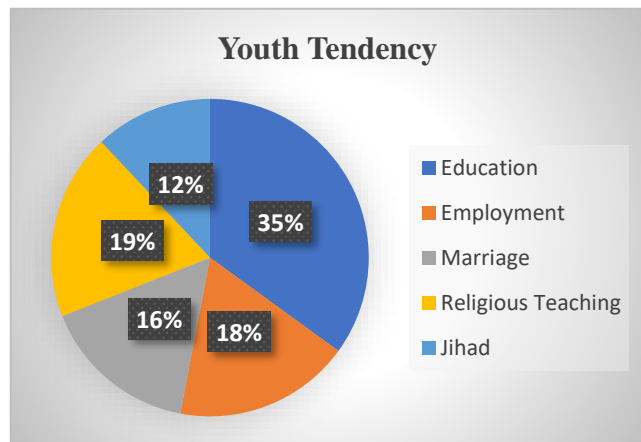
potential growth. The study suggests that mere access to education is insufficient; the content of the textbooks taught to the youth is of paramount importance.

The analysis of FGDs revealed that young people lacking educational opportunities, those educated in religious seminaries without income sources, are generally more exposed to and inclined towards radicalization. Youth from government and private educational institutions also exhibit vulnerability to radicalization. Consequently, irrespective of socio-economic and educational backgrounds, young people are at risk of radicalization. Therefore, a robust monitoring mechanism for religious and educational institutes is imperative, along with the deconstruction and modernization of textbooks, which are outdated in preparing young people for a peaceful society and equipping them to confront contemporary challenges.

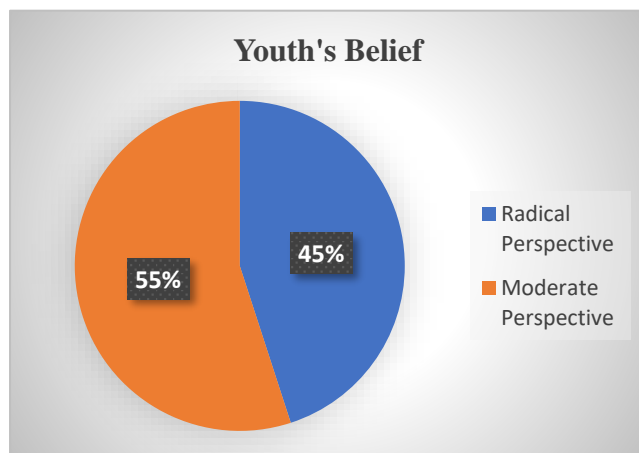
The study highlights the emerging trend among Quetta's youth toward the supremacy of religious identity and a linear approach, potentially steering them toward radicalization, which could escalate into extremist values and violent extremism. The primary data advocate for the integration of religious seminaries under the education ministry, necessitating a strong monitoring mechanism. A thorough review and deconstruction of the curricula of religious seminaries and educational institutions are urgently needed to promote plurality, diversity, and a sense of tolerance among young people, thereby fostering a socially harmonized society.

Youth's tendencies

The research analysis revealed that 35% of youth prioritize completing their education as a future goal, while 18% emphasize the importance of securing good employment opportunities. Marriage is a priority for 16% while 19% aspire to promote religious teachings, and 12% consider Jihad as their foremost future priority. Analysis from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) suggests that both boys and girls exhibit moderate religious tendencies, yet place a higher value on education. However, due to a scarcity of resources necessary for a dignified life, youths feel

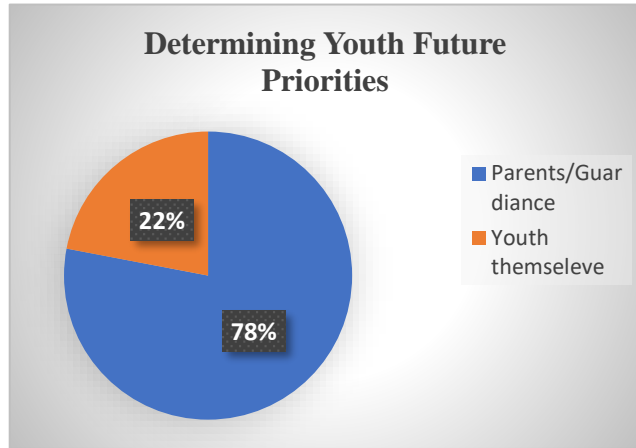


compelled to alter their priorities. It was discovered that youths' prioritization of future goals is influenced by their access to resources and their sense of group identity affiliation. Interestingly, the prioritization of religious teaching and Jihad is driven not solely by religious convictions but also by the need to acquire resources for survival and a sense of protection. The aspiration for Jihad is

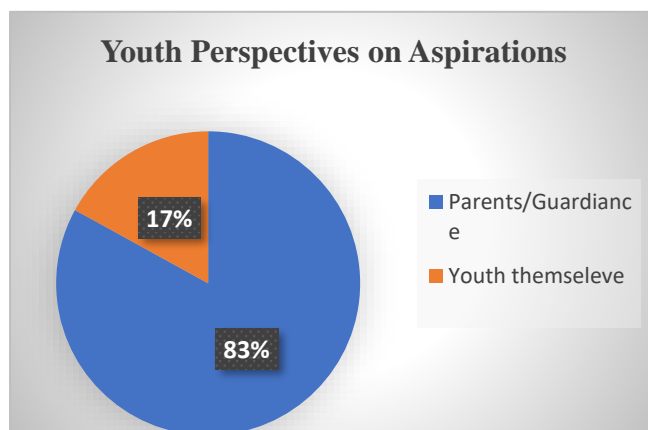


particularly pronounced in the age group of 18-22 years for both boys and girls, with a higher inclination observed among boys.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) suggest a strong desire for social and economic advancement among youth. Religion, particularly Islam, is viewed as a means to fulfill social and economic needs and to safeguard fundamental rights. Approximately 45% of the youth strongly believe that the youth of Quetta are radicalized in one way or another, and this trend is escalating due to frustration among young people. Conversely, 55% held opposite views. A significant 83% of youth respondents in FGDs and KIIs expressed that their parents could aid them in achieving their aspirations, but the lack of resources and discriminatory policies and systems impede their access to equal and equitable opportunities. The remaining 17% of respondents believe that the youth themselves are incapable of realizing their dreams.



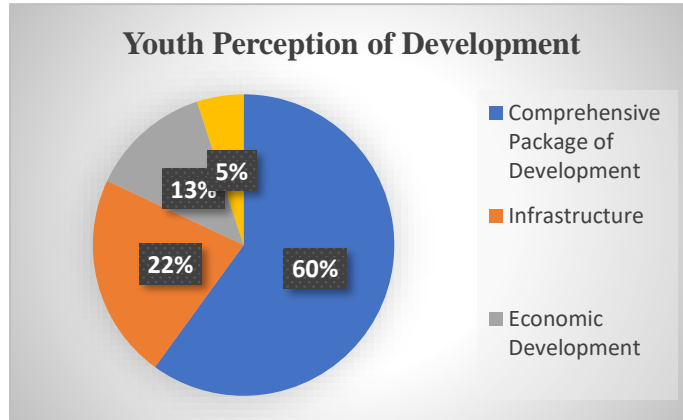
In both KIIs and FGDs, young people shared a common perception that being radical does not necessarily equate to being harmful or hurtful. However, the presence of vested interests, utilizing brainwashing strategies, compels youth towards extremism and the perpetuation of violence. In some instances, affiliation with a strong radical or extremist group is seen as a means of protecting the family from oppression. A majority of 78% of respondents indicated that their future priorities are primarily dependent on their parents' wishes or decisions, while only 22% had the privilege of deciding for themselves.



Young people expressed that their parents often lack trust in their decision-making abilities, and there are limited opportunities for them to participate in decision-making processes at both the household and societal levels. The study reveals that the future priorities of young people are heavily influenced by societal pressures rather than their own desires. Young respondents added that if corruption and the misuse of power were eliminated, the tendencies and future

priorities of young people would shift towards the promotion of an inclusive and peaceful society.

The responses of young girls, in comparison to boys, showed significant differences in terms of their future priorities and emerging trends. The majority of female respondents prioritized exploring the world and embarking on adventurous trips as their first priority, followed by a desire to be economically empowered. They aspire to earn independently and exercise the right to spend their earnings according to their own desires. In addition to it, a significant emerging trend among young girls is the desire to be recognized for their own identities, rather than being defined in relation to their parents or life partners within society. The data analysis also indicated that, in comparison to boys, young girls are less radicalized.

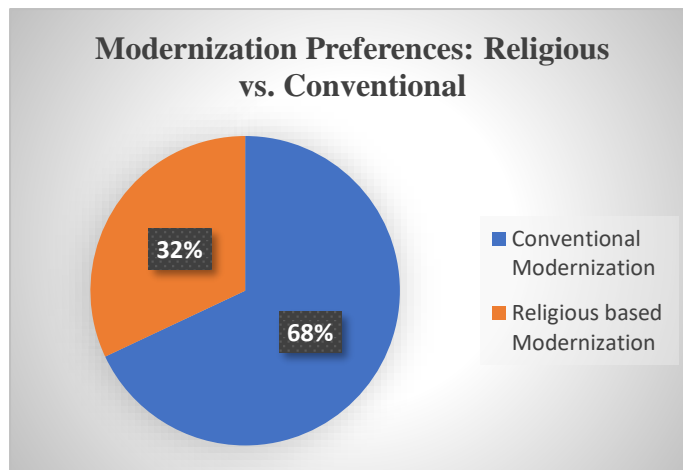


Comparative Development

The research investigated young people's perspectives on development and their satisfaction with government priorities, particularly regarding their alignment with community needs. The analysis indicated that young people conceptualize development holistically, including infrastructural and social advancement. A significant 60% of youth preferred a comprehensive package of

development, with 22% focusing only on infrastructure, 13% on economic development, and 5% on access to technology. Only 20% of youth expressed satisfaction with the quality of government-led development initiatives, in contrast to the 80% who held opposing views.

68% of respondents were inclined toward the development under the religious-based modernization principles while 32% marked for conventional modernization. The majority of the young people responded that the current development in the localities is controlled

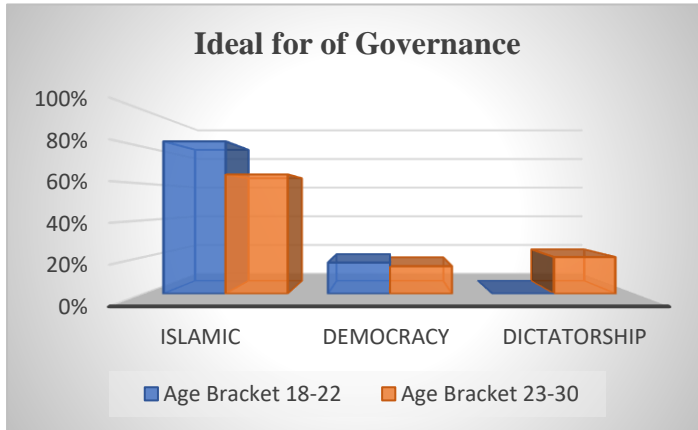


development which doesn't directly meet the needs of the community but rather fulfil the political agendas. Thus, the youth and community priorities are often overlooked in these development projects, which tend to be more politically motivated. There is also a recognized need for inclusive mechanisms in the design and participatory planning of development initiatives with the involvement of young people.

Analysis from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) suggested that young people are more willing to have development in their localities but it has to be religion-based modernization. This perspective indicates the radical perspective of the young people while the existing mechanism of development is a step ahead which is more controlled by a specific group of powerful political elites. Whereas the data reflects currently there are practical

examples and opportunities for conventional modernization in the context of development. Another astonishing aspect revealed is the disownership of the development programs, and initiatives because of two major reasons a, these programs, and initiatives are not religion-based modernization b, they are designed to protect the interest of specific political groups of the elite rather than larger communities.

Ideal Types of Government



Regarding government preferences, the analysis revealed that a majority of 83% of youth aged 18-22 prefer an Islamic Sharia-based government, while 17% favor both democracies. In a similar way, among youth aged 23-30, 65% prefer an Islamic Sharia-based government, with 20% opting for dictatorship and 15% for democracy. Contrasting this, 60% of young respondents admire democratic forms of decision-

making, while 40% prefer autocratic decisions. It indicated a sense of confusion, where the majority of youth lean towards an Islamic form of government, which often aligns with autocracy, yet they also showed a preference for democratic decision-making mechanisms. The analysis highlights a need for clarity among young people regarding different ideologies and their governance structures. When asked why they are less interested in democratic forms of government, the majority responded that the current system in the country, labeled as democracy, is perceived as corrupt and lacking transparency across various sectors, including administration, judiciary, policing, governance, and legislation.

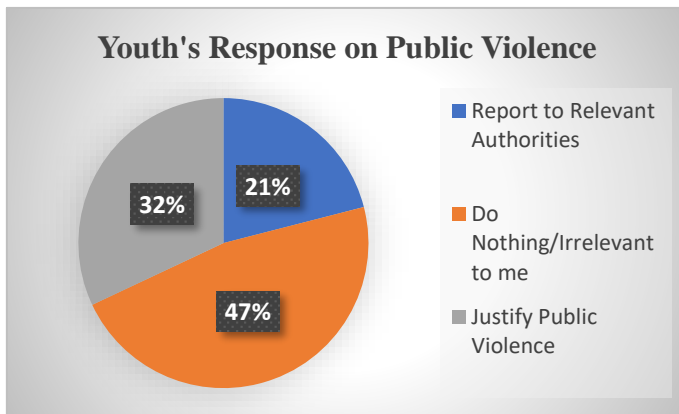
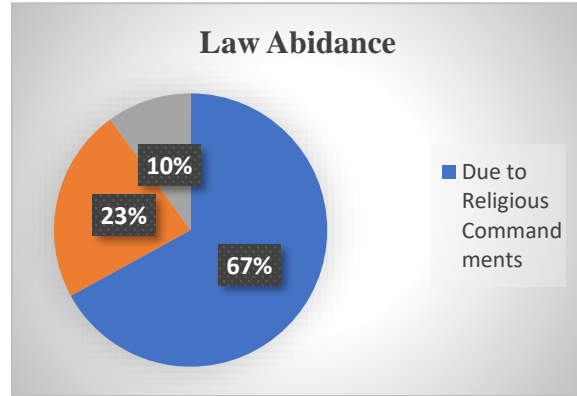
When presented with a hypothetical situation of an improved current democratic governing structure with eradicated power misuse and ensured meritocracy, an interesting shift occurred. 85% of youth who initially preferred an Islamic Sharia-based government and dictatorship opted for a democratic form of government. The analysis indicated a link between governance and the prevalence of radicalization in terms of the application of radical perspective through type of government. The study publicized that bad governance is also a major contributor to the emergence of radical and extremist values, as frustration, hopelessness, and lack of economic opportunities for youth increase, the likelihood of youth radicalization.

The ideological shift from normal to radical thought often begins with the influence of vested interest groups, leading to extremist values. From the youth's perspective, democracy is beneficial for infrastructural development, and dictatorship for maintaining negative peace, while Sharia is favored for strong accountability, transparency, and justice. Notably, freedom of speech was not a marked priority for any form of government among youth respondents. Female youth expressed a preference for a democratic form of government but also harbored concerns about women's exploitation under democratic systems. Respondents from feudal backgrounds justified dictatorship as it protects elite interests, while those with business backgrounds opined that Sharia better safeguards the dignity of life and property. They also

expressed that under Sharia, modernization is unnecessary, and rulers can more effectively establish peace.

Rule of law and legitimacy of violence

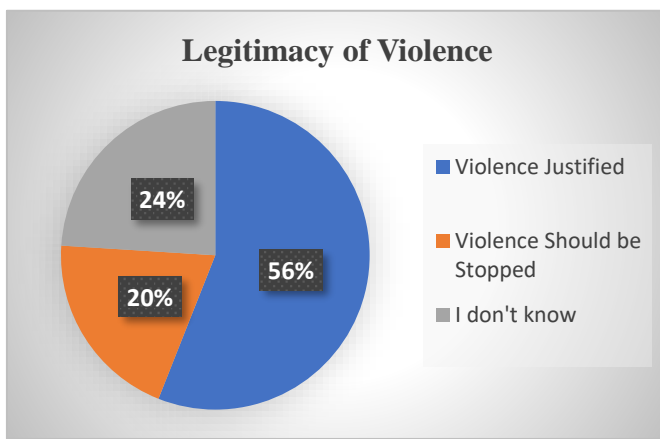
The study investigated the perspectives of youth regarding law abidance. A significant 67% of youth respondents identified themselves as law-abiding, whereas 23% stated their compliance depends on the validity of the law, and 10% regarded accountability as the primary factor for law adherence. The analysis revealed that the rationale behind obeying the law is predominantly rooted in strong religious teachings and background, rather than a sense of civic responsibility. Among the 67% who are law-abiding, 45% acknowledged that although they do not rigorously practice religious rituals, they still hold firm beliefs in religious teachings. Conversely, the remaining 22% adhere to the law primarily due to a fear of law enforcement actions. The latter category of law-abiders indicated that they conditionally comply with the law, subject to its equitable application to all citizens.



In response to the assertiveness on public violence, 21% expressed they assert through reporting to relevant law enforcement agencies while 47% of respondents replied they do nothing if witness public violence while 32% straightly expressed the acceptance of public violence. This phenomenon of doing nothing and accepting public violence straightly indicts the radical and extremist values among young people.

Further investigation revealed a surprising attitude among youth towards the legitimacy of violence. Astonishingly, 56% of youth respondents justified violence in any form, as long as it does not directly affect them. This reflects a concerning correlation between the rule of law and radicalization, with the analysis showing that youth harbor strong radical and prejudiced views towards individuals outside their immediate family and identity group. The justification of violence is fostering a radical perspective among youth, which could eventually lead to the development of extremist values and actions.

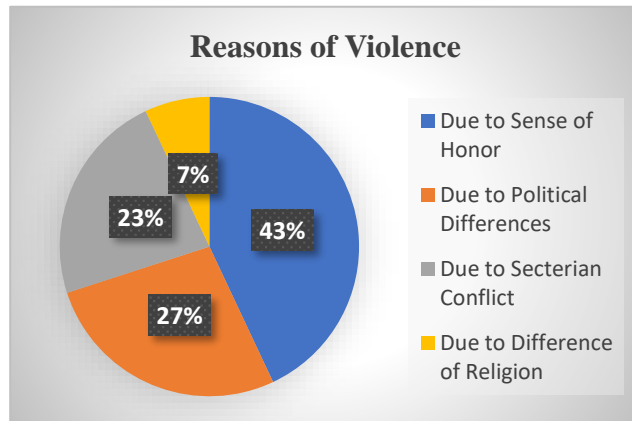
A lack of trust in the rule of law was also evident, as the majority of respondents, including girls, indicated they would take matters into their own hands if they encountered violence affecting them, their family, or their religious community. Youth expressed skepticism about the law's ability to



deliver justice. The violence faced by different Muslim sects or individuals of other religions, tribes, and cultures is considered inconsequential by youth. Even sectarian violence is strongly justified by the majority of youth, regardless of their own sectarian affiliations, with the primary rationale being the perceived threat to their sect. This suggests that young people are not only radicalized but have already entered the realm of extremist belief systems.

24% of youth were uncertain about whether violence is justified, but they expressed a desire to avoid violent confrontations unless left with no other choice. This indicates that, overall, youth have justified violence as long as it does not impact them, their close relatives, or sectarian affiliates. This mindset is perilous for society, as it indicates a societal shift towards justifying violence. Merely 20% of youth respondents stated that all forms of violence (cultural, direct, and structural) are unjustifiable.

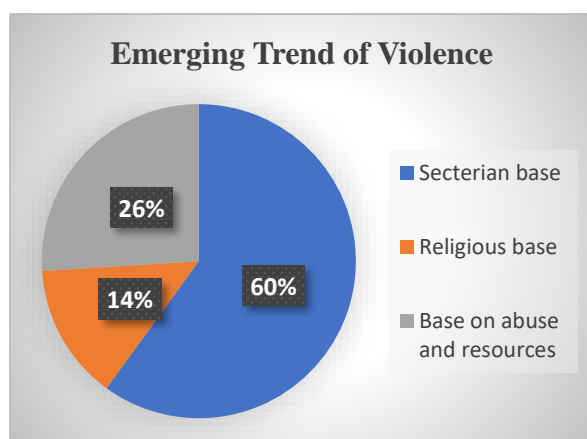
The analysis further revealed that while adherence to religious identity is a personal matter, it becomes perilous when young people's religious-based notions transform into radical thoughts. Most young people justify violence based on emotional connections rather than rational arguments, suggesting a significant opportunity for them to develop a more critical and holistic understanding of the rule of law and the legitimacy of violence. Intriguingly, the



justification of violence was predominantly based on religious or sectarian identity, with gender-based violence also being justified, while ethnic violence was discouraged.

An interesting contrast emerged in the reasons identified for the perpetuation of violence in Quetta: 43% attributed it to honor, 27% to politics, 23% to sectarianism, and 7% to religion. This suggests that radical perspectives among youth arise not only from religious ideologies but also from cultural and traditional influences, highlighting the importance of youth awareness of the strengths and diversity of their culture in a positive light.

A striking finding from the data analysis is the increasing trend of violence stemming from political radicalization. Although radicalization in any form is dangerous, political radicalization is particularly perilous due to its direct impact on the familial structure of society. The lack of political wisdom, dialogue, discourses, and fact-based opinions in society leaves people vulnerable to conflict and political radicalization. There is a strong need for the emergence of discourses and the fostering of dialogue among young people to enhance their tolerance, enabling them to participate in positive youth development programs and activities aimed at de-radicalization.

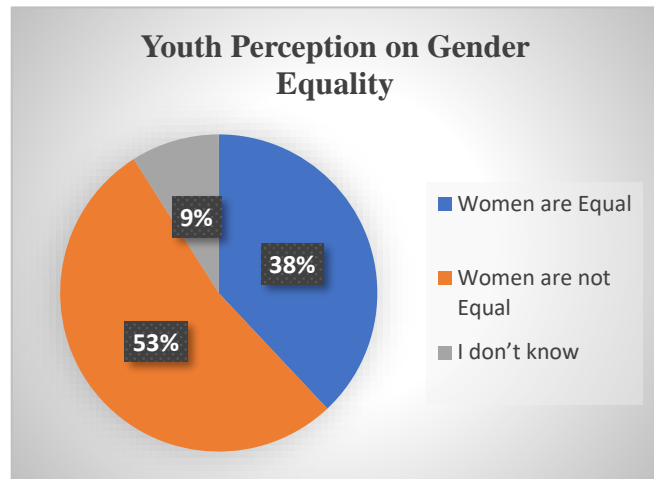


The study found that 60% of young people concurred that Quetta experiences a high incidence of sect and faith-based violence. However, respondents did not unequivocally condemn the perpetuation of sectarian

violence. The rationale for protecting the notion of sect-based violence stems from the desire to defend one's own ideology, which is often considered sacred. Within this group, 26% opposed hate speech directed at individuals of the same religion, while 14% rationalized that asserting dominance of one sect over another may sometimes necessitate actions interpreted as hate speech by others.

Gender perspective

The study's findings indicated that 53% of male youth respondents firmly asserted the inequality of women to men, attributing this stance to religious doctrines. In contrast, 38% held an opposing viewpoint, while 9% considered the matter debatable. Further analysis reveals that the majority of young males not only disapprove of gender equality but also discourage such notions, citing religious theologies as their foundation. The qualitative data uncovered a prevailing belief among respondents that men inherently hold a superior status to women, grounded in religious obligations.



This perspective extends to considering women as commodities, aligning with cultural and religious norms that dictate honor and societal roles. The study identifies a notable level of confusion among young individuals regarding the amalgamation of traditional practices and religious teachings. This confusion, prevalent among both genders, contributes to the reinforcement of radical perspectives on gender roles. Interestingly, even female respondents acknowledge and endorse patriarchal notions within society to some extent.

A critical aspect brought to light in the analysis is the impact of cultural barriers and religious restrictions on the development of radical perspectives regarding women's equality. The data indicated that 70% of respondents, predominantly male, believe that women should not be involved in decision-making processes. Instead, they advocate for women to consult their male counterparts within the family for more informed decisions. Conversely, 30% of the youth, irrespective of gender, acknowledge the significant decision-making capabilities of women. The analysis also emphasizes a troubling pattern where girls are forcibly excluded from participating in decision-making processes at various levels-be it within the household, political arenas, or broader societal contexts. This revelation sheds light on the pervasive nature of restrictive practices that hinder the active involvement of women in shaping important decisions, further reinforcing the radical perspectives observed in the study.

9. Discussion

The analysis conducted in this study reveals significant insights into the perception of identity and its association with radicalization among young individuals. A prevalent "notion of radicalization" is observed, particularly concerning religious and caste identities,

characterized by an inflexible and sacred conceptualization. This perception fosters a sense of pride and conformity among youth, laying the groundwork for the development of extremist ideologies, potentially leading to violent extremism. Regarding the prioritization of identity, the study identifies a predominant inclination among young people towards their religious and caste identities, with gender identity emerging as a source of marginalization among female respondents.

The analysis highlights the influence of environmental and educational factors on heightened religious consciousness among youth. Factors such as a lack of modern education, resource deprivation, and limited positive youth engagement opportunities contribute to this phenomenon. Moreover, the influential role of local religious leaders in shaping youth perspectives is emphasized, often exploiting sentiments for personal or ideological agendas.

Challenges in identity formation are evident, particularly during adolescence and young adulthood, where pressures from peers, societal expectations, and socioeconomic disadvantages converge. Educational content, while intended to facilitate intellectual growth, may inadvertently exacerbate these challenges by promoting animosity towards other identities.

Despite the prevalence of radical viewpoints, a minority of young individuals demonstrate a willingness to question conventional religious leaders, albeit at the risk of social boycotts. This features the importance of fostering critical thinking skills and promoting education reform to encourage independent inquiry and tolerance towards diverse identities.

The educational tendencies among youth in Quetta provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between educational systems and radicalization. The perception of schooling as a facilitator of Western values and the concurrent rise in religious education underscore societal anxieties regarding cultural preservation and identity consolidation. However, this shift towards religious education also raises pertinent concerns regarding its potential role in fostering radicalization among youth.

The observed gender disparity in access to education, with boys disproportionately encouraged to attend schools while girls often face exclusion, elucidates entrenched societal norms perpetuating gender inequalities and reinforcing rigid gender roles. Such disparities not only curtail educational opportunities for girls but also contribute to a myopic worldview that undermines social cohesion and perpetuates discriminatory attitudes.

Furthermore, the analysis illuminates the pivotal role of educational exposure in shaping attitudes toward diversity and fostering acceptance of others. Youth with limited exposure to diverse perspectives, particularly those exclusively educated in religious seminaries, exhibit heightened susceptibility to radicalization owing to their insular environments and deficient critical thinking skills. This highlights the urgent imperative for educational reform aimed at promoting critical inquiry, tolerance, and pluralism, thereby mitigating the risk of radicalization and fostering societal cohesion.

Effectively addressing the underlying drivers of radicalization necessitates a multifaceted approach encompassing educational reform and broader societal interventions. The integration of religious seminaries into the formal education system and the modernization of curricula emerge as indispensable steps towards fostering inclusive education and cultivating a sense of belonging among all youth, irrespective of their religious or socio-economic backgrounds.

The findings suggest that resource scarcity and a sense of group identity affiliation influence youths' prioritization of future goals, with aspirations for religious teaching and Jihad driven not only by religious convictions but also by the imperative of acquiring resources for survival and protection.

The strong desire for social and economic advancement among youth, with religion, particularly Islam, viewed as a conduit for fulfilling socio-economic needs and safeguarding fundamental rights. While approximately 45% of youth perceive some degree of radicalization among Quetta's youth, frustration and perceived injustices contribute to the escalation of this trend. However, divergent views exist, with 55% holding contrary perspectives.

Moreover, societal pressures and parental influence significantly shape youths' future priorities, with a majority (78%) indicating their decisions are primarily influenced by parental wishes. Limited opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making processes exacerbate this dynamic, reinforcing the influence of external factors on their aspirations.

Interestingly, gender differences in future priorities are evident, with young girls prioritizing exploration and economic empowerment, alongside a desire for recognition independent of familial or societal roles. Moreover, compared to boys, young girls exhibit lower levels of radicalization, suggesting unique socio-cultural dynamics at play.

The discussion of the research findings unveils critical insights into young people's perspectives on development and governance, shedding light on their preferences, concerns, and the underlying drivers of radicalization. The analysis revealed that young people exhibit a holistic understanding of development, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive approaches that encompass both infrastructural and social advancements. Moreover, the research identified a pronounced inclination towards religious-based modernization among young people, with a significant proportion advocating for development guided by principles aligned with Islamic Sharia. This preference underlines a drastic perspective among youth, reflecting disillusionment with existing development mechanisms perceived as politically motivated and disconnected from community priorities. The findings accentuate the urgent need for inclusive mechanisms in development planning, with meaningful participation of young people to ensure alignment with community needs and aspirations.

In terms of governmental preferences, the analysis revealed a complex landscape characterized by a preference for Islamic Sharia-based governance among the majority of

youth, particularly in the younger age group. However, despite this inclination, there was also a notable preference for democratic decision-making mechanisms, indicating a sense of ambiguity and confusion among young people regarding governance ideologies. The findings underscore a need for clarity and transparency in governance structures to address concerns about corruption and lack of transparency, which are perceived as significant barriers to effective governance and development.

The discussion begins by delineating the prevalence of law abidance among youth, revealing nuanced motivations behind their compliance. It underscores the significance of religious teachings in shaping adherence to the law, highlighting how religious background and beliefs often serve as primary determinants of behavior. Moreover, the discussion elucidates the complex relationship between trust in the rule of law and the propensity for violent behavior, illustrating how skepticism towards the justice system can engender a predisposition towards vigilantism and justification of violence. The discussion unpacks the multifaceted nature of violence in Quetta, elucidating its political, cultural, and religious dimensions. It underscores the need for nicety understanding and targeted interventions to address the root causes of violence and radicalization among youth.

The discussion highlights the implications of the research findings for broader societal dynamics, emphasizing the urgency of fostering dialogue, promoting tolerance, and cultivating critical thinking skills among young people. It stresses the importance of engaging youth in constructive activities and initiatives aimed at countering radicalization and promoting peacebuilding efforts. The study reveals a concerning trend among male youth, with a majority asserting women's inherent inequality, influenced by religious doctrines. This belief, entrenched in cultural norms, hinders women's involvement in decision-making processes. The findings emphasize the urgent need to challenge these perspectives and promote gender equality through targeted interventions and awareness-raising initiatives.

10. Quotes

The pride I feel in my religious and caste identities is palpable. It's not just about belonging; it's about asserting and maintaining strong space in the society. Ameer

Religion isn't just a belief; it's what helps me feel secure and connected. But sometimes, the trust on our local religious leaders so much results to overlooks the importance of scholarly thinking. M Hafeez

Engaging in religious seminaries fosters pride in our identities, yet there's apprehension regarding potential reluctance to embrace modernization. Shahnaz

Young individuals who have immersed themselves in learning conservative perspectives exhibit hesitation towards diversity and change, thus contributing to a cycle of radicalization. Encouraging dialogue and critical thinking is crucial for breaking this cycle and fostering tolerance. Raheela

Youth face a tug-of-war between societal expectations and personal dreams. Discrimination and scarce opportunities often shape our choices, pushing us towards radical ideologies.

11. Conclusion

The research study intended to explore the notions of young people on radical ideologies and preventive strategies. It also revealed the pushing factors which are engaging young people in attracting and adapting radical ideologies followed by extremist values and perpetuating violent extremism. This research corresponds with a theoretical framework that the identity crisis, lack of positive youth engagement opportunities, and absence of economic, sports, and business prospects are potential factors for pushing youth toward radicalization. This research also coincides with social identity theory and critical theory, as the absence of critical thinking in addition to the lack of youth role in decision-making generates a high level of frustration and hopelessness. The result shows that young people then don't think of consequences, rather they only look into an opportunity to develop their self-identity and manage for survival. The tendency of young people towards religious education is not logical but rather emotional, and it gives a sense of security in the realm of where the rights are protected.

The research reveals that young people are inclined towards their religious identities (mainly sectarian) and prefer the Islamic form of governance. However, the respondents conclude that if the democratic process provides them with a sense of security, equal treatment in all spheres of life, and fundamental rights then they would prefer a democratic form of governance. It clearly reflects that there is a strong link between radical ideologies and the legal, social, economic, and social needs of young people.

The study also reveals that the radical mindset is more into religious education rather than conventional education. Another perspective emerged in research where the young people even studying in conventional education system possess radical perspective. Young people's perspective on development is based on religion-based modernization rather than conventional modernization; and also indicates the current development programs are more politically motivated so, youth are more into the development of radical ideologues due to ideological state apparatus are easily darned into political radicalization.

The strong reflection of ideological state apparatus could be seen among the youth engaged in the study where they would have to look into everything through the religious lens, and further narrow it to a sectarian lens. It is evident in the study that youth straightly justified not only the hate speech but the sectarian violence. The violence against women and restriction of mobility is also justified and countered because of the religious state apparatus. The study further revealed that youth are at the stage of radicalization but if not engaged positively would be moving to violent extremes, because they have already adopted the extremist values for people of other identities, mainly religious sectarian, opposite gender, and political opponents.

12. Recommendations

This study highlights the alarming issue of youth radicalization, with a particular focus on the role of identity in driving this phenomenon. It is evident that the dominance of religious identity among young people is a significant motivating factor for their inclination towards radicalization. Additionally, there is a troubling trend of political radicalization, accompanied by a rise in intolerance and a decline in empathy and compassion. The potential for young individuals to adopt extremist values is also apparent.

Therefore, there is a need for the formation of a Youth Prevention Network at the Union Council's level under the legal framework of the youth policy. The approach of the network will be based on the Lerner, 2009, positive youth development theory of youth development mainly focusing on competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. The youth prevention network will also be working closely with educational institutes for mobilization to restore students' unions, re-integration of radicalized youth, promote dialogue, discourses, celebration of multi-culturalism diversity, exchange visits, sharing of experiences, character leadership development, critical research, channelizing, recognizing youth's potential, youth action projects and expanding connection for participating in decision-making processes. The study highlights the need for a well-thought-out plan and practical de-radicalization methodologies that engage young people. Radicalization is not always visible and can lead to extremism or violence if left unaddressed. De-radicalization efforts must respect fundamental rights and freedoms.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the urgency of addressing youth radicalization, which poses a threat not only to individuals and families but also to the country's global image. Collaboration among civil society, political entities, religious organizations, and government institutions is essential to develop a comprehensive policy framework for the next two decades, with a strong focus on the involvement of young people in the de-radicalization and prevention process. The study also highlights the multi-dimensional nature of radicalization, including spiritual, political, ideological, and social aspects. It is hoped that the study's findings will contribute to the development of effective government policies and civil society programs for youth de-radicalization and positive engagement.

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