



**TEACHERS PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF COURSE CONTENTS AND
TEACHERS-STUDENTS' INTERACTIONS IN REDUCING INTOLERANCE IN
THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS OF BALOCHISTAN**

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Abstract

Intolerance is a challenging issue in Pakistan. Every other day the events of intolerance are evident in the country. The people quarrel and even kill to one another on very tiny issues. The frustrated folk deal with dissents in antagonized way. In this way the responsibility of the state is increasing to work on this end and struggle to minimize this menace. In this connection the schools are the most important and relevant forums to deal with this danger. So, this was the reason when this study was pursued to explore the role of government schools in reducing intolerance through courses contents and the teachers-students' interactions. For this study the qualitative research method was employed and the data was collected from well-informed educationists, senior school teachers, and the education officers. The result concluded that the curriculum and courses contents are not that much effective to mitigate the intensity of intolerance in the society, so, they need to be restructured to include the materials consisting of stories regarding tolerance promotion. Moreover, it was found that the teachers are not more trained and competent to teach the students in professional way so that to enhance the peace level. Furthermore, it was found that the injustice, violation of merit, distrust on law and judiciary, the misinterpretation of religion and lack of emotional development are the prominent causes triggering intolerance within the society.

Key words: - Intolerance, Course contents, Teachers-students' interaction, Government schools

Introduction and Literature Review

Tolerance is a positive aspect of social life signifying the critical and perfect response to the challenges that how the conflicting peoples and ways of life can compatibly coexist with each other. The group of people who culturally, religiously and ideologically different from one another in terms of worldview and lifestyle (Walzer, 1997). It is moreover argued that the conflicting ideas giving rise to moral diversities and directed that how the people and even society should behave over these contrasting and conflicting perspectives. The "tolerance is unlike the intolerance makes differences possible, differences makes tolerance necessary". Tolerance in general sense is the acceptance of diversities and ability to evaluate and analyze the perspectives of the people which may be altogether in contrast with each other but still continue to interact peacefully without resorting fights (Kaukab & Saeed 2014; UNESCO, 2013). It is nevertheless more crucial for any decent society or for societies which are in the grip of deep diverging thoughts (Furedi, 2011; Oberdiek, 2001, Popper, 1945; Walzer, 1997). Tolerance as a productive concept carrying dissenting beliefs and thoughts necessary for the societal well-functioning. However, the intolerance on the other side breeding separation, anxiety and aggressiveness between the peoples and the groups. Political figures, the European Union and the United Nations have been warned and emphasized the importance of tolerance



and proposed policies for peace promotion in societies and intolerance reduced. Contextually, the UN general assembly in 1996 called upon the member states culminating to observe the November 16th as the International Day for Tolerance (Verkuyten & Kollar, 2021).

Nevertheless, social intolerance is the approach characterized by the negative attitude towards the other groups, their cultures, values and life style. The people showing harsh and prejudicial attitudes towards the outgroup members or ethnicities (Amodio, 2014). These intolerant attitudes are produced and injected through religious beliefs, parents' ideologies in childhood, anxiety proneness, threat perceptions, aspects of moral development and personality traits like openness to exposure (Dhont & Hodson, 2014; Meeusen & Dhont, 2015; Rowatt et al., 2014; Saarinen et al., 2022; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Peoples while living in diverse world are different from one another in terms of their beliefs, convictions and practices. Their differences are so contradicting that it becomes quite difficult harmonize to the conflicting groups, because each one believes of his own convictions as the most credible and accurate (Joppke, 2004; Verkuyten, Yogeeswaran & Adelman, 2022). Nevertheless, a ten years' survey during 2008-2018 resulted that social intolerance was found a critical issue among the 17-24 years old Zee generation. The phenomenon has led to radicalization increasing among this cohort including rise in violence and terrorism. Educational institutions are providing critical environment for the dissemination of radical ideologies. In this regard Muslim students are more exposed to radical groups as the national survey conducted by *Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat* (PPIM, 2018) outlined in the seven leading state universities (Purba et al., 2024).

Moreover, a study indicates that the low level of education fostering susceptibility to higher social intolerance. Similarly, two longitudinal studies have concluded and predicted that weak educational achievements yield lower levels of liberal and anti-racist political attitudes in adulthood (Deary et al., 2008; Schoon et al., 2010). Though education is normally assessed to increase understanding about the diverse groups of people for having different life style and cultural values to mitigate fear of uncertainty and to open the doors for new experiences and exposures (Vogt, 1997). Low education is however an important detrimental and instrumental factor triggering social intolerance. In this context findings of a cross-sectional study concludes that low educational level is causing to higher ethnic distances (Hello et al., 2006) and higher ethnocentrism (Meeusen et al., 2013). In this way while reducing social intolerance and prejudice against various groups and minorities an array of educational program was launched for both children and adult for the purpose to increase knowledge about the features of the outgroup cultures, their values and the minorities (Rutland & Killen, 2015).

Nevertheless, genetics have also vital role in promoting intolerance. Some studies have evident that there is direct link between the genetics and prejudice-related factors. Contextually, twin studies in this regard concluded that genetic factors caused around 32% of the variant in negative attitude towards strangers (Kandler et al., 2015). Furthermore, another study indicates that the personal disposition has strong relation with the prejudice. The study further assert that hatred and intolerance found around 24% to 37% among the people on the basis of heritable orientation (Kleppesto et al, 2019). In addition to this a candidate-gene study outlined certain environmental factors like negative attitude towards outgroup members yield intergroup prejudice more frequently in individuals with a certain variant of a serotonin transporter genes (Cheon et al., 2014). However, the social sciences more often ignore the genetic factors while focusing the known environmental factors usually (Harden & Koellinger, 2020; Mills & Tropf, 2020; Saarinen et al., 2022).



In Pakistan intolerance and extremism found of all kinds at the extreme level whether it is social, religious or sectarian. These practices are observed in the increasing cases of target killings for example (Rakhsanda & Saeed, 2014). The study argues that such practices were found among the youth of national universities caused by the denial from the education, jobs, food and security. Similarly, radicalization among youth is another form of extremism prevailing frequently among the youth (Yousaf & Jawaid, 2014). Moreover, Pakistani society is passing through changes in their life style, values, norms and standards resulting a high level of jealousy, revenge, social injustice, racism and frustration in the society. In this way frustrated behaviors, aggression, violence and intolerant attitude are more often observed and experienced on roads, streets and other public places (Mushtaq & Kiyani, 2013). Nonetheless. The youth can be found everywhere across the streets involved in various kind of aggressive behavior like fighting, the political hatreds while grouping in educational institutions, quarrels in the passenger trains, busses, hostile reasoning and arguments on roads while driving and at the time of accidents. The youth quarrel for very minute reason, and on the same footings the madrasa educational system is more to enhance the violent behavior (Winthrop & Graff, 2010). In this context the militant extremism is a leading problem of Pakistani society (Majeed & Hashmi, 2014; Winthrop & Graff, 2010).

Arguably, the above mentioned behaviors as shown by the youth increasing level of intolerance, raising many questions about its nature and the causes, correlation and consequences. Besides this the terrible acts of violent behaviors creating mistrust and weakening confidence among the societal folks, which is caused primarily by the revenge, jealousy, and racial and material attainments or the state for being the people are deprived of social justice and the frustration usually (Abro, Fateh & Saeed, 2017). Balint (2010) contends that racism and religious intolerance must be exterminated at all. A study in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa concluded that these factors are associated with extremism and violence among the adolescents. The old studies emphasized that while promoting traditional African values like sanctity of life and mutual honor for others is the triggering factors building justice and harmony among society (Anthony et al., 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The students have the understanding, knowledge, and expertise to support tolerance, adopt religious harmony and local traditions. They have the updated perspective on the principles that how spiritual moderation can be handled at higher education level, and supporting government efforts to reducing conservative ideas and religious intolerance (Mukhibat et al., 2024). Intolerance in the schools is the attitude negating to pluralism, equality and upholding the human rights (Irianto, 2024).

Functionalist approach

Functionalist approach or the Structure Functionalism is a broad sociological approach stressing upon the structural rules and principles that may influence the system at the macro level (Henslin, 1991). It deals with the overall educational system, subjects, syllabuses, course contents and the educational policies. In this regard the schools should design the curriculum which are characterized by more comprehensive and interactive contents emphasizing tolerance and respect for dissonant ideas for the purpose to overturn these differences. The effectiveness of the civic education can be streamlined by improving its curriculum resources and assessment methods (Cui, 2024). It is further argued that the school curriculum must be altered to a broader and interactive level, so that it could accommodate tolerance and respect for differences in its lap, and apply various participatory learning approaches for peace

promotion. It includes stimulation, group discussions and collaborative projects. In this way the students get understanding of these values deeply and practically, which ultimately help them to develop pluralistic attitude and learn to interact bitterly in diverse settings (Irianto, 2024). The courses should design which could consist of the principles of democracy, equality, justice, respects for human rights and citizenship life. For Zhang (2024) the informative instructions improve the learners' insight in the civic education, that include feelings about family, nation and the political identity. Moreover, it deals with the complicated relationship skepticism, faith and tolerance through free thinking and enlightenment thoughts, and culminated on skepticism in the context of religion (Fogel, 2023). Besides this the schools should also improve their education through promoting pluralism and inclusiveness, both through extracurricular activities and direct teaching in curriculum while stressing upon the civic education. The students after going through these contents will understand the value of pluralism and inclusiveness in everyday life, which will be culminated on their outstanding role in society (Irianto, 2024).

Interactionist approach

Interactionist approach or the symbolic Interactionism is another sociological perspective stresses upon the day-to-day interactions and discussions between the social beings (Macionis, 2016). Contextually, it focuses the interaction and communication between the teachers and students within and out of classes. Thus, in this way the teachers should teach and train the students about the utility of pluralism and social inclusion. The students should be taught to tolerate the differences and take them positive, as meaningful differences strengthening consensus of the nation (Dai & Wang, 2024). For this purpose, the school should encourage teachers training so that they may be able to teach civic values and address intolerance. This strategy can make teachers more responsible. The most important thing in this regards for the teachers is to create an inclusive learning environment; encouragement for active participation and respect for diversity, that will definitely be reflected in a generation having more understanding and sense of responsibility of citizenship in everyday life (Irianto, 2024). Developing educational program based upon the tolerance, pluralism and respect for differences will instill and show the importance of respect for human rights. In the civic education the recipients should also remain attentive and show significant mental attention. They should have the ability and skill to correlate their ideas with the other knowledge (Chen, 2024). Moreover, involving parents and communities in education can boost up the culture of tolerance and strengthen support for learners (Rashid, 2023). Peace and intolerance are inversely proportional. In this perspective Lateju et al., (2023) concludes that the peace is established through proper understanding and intensive efforts to denounce social evils. Moreover, unity and peace are directly proportional with strong relationship. Additionally, the teachers find that the instructional topics and practices are more in line with the ideologies, demographics and so on. Thus in this context the religious texts especially the Quran can satisfactorily overcome the religious intolerance against the other religions (Al-Kubise & Haq, 2023). The hermeneutics texts indicate that lack of proper understanding of Quran leading towards intolerance in the Muslim society (Irianto, 2024).

Study objectives

1. Investigating the perspectives of government school teachers on the courses and contents of syllabuses that how these curriculum patterns proving fruitful in reducing intolerance



2. Understanding the teachers' perspectives on the teachers-students' interactions during school time regarding prompting peace and minimizing intolerant behaviors

Methods and materials

Ontologically this study is characterized by the relativism approach of qualitative research, where the teachers were found of different opinions and perspectives regarding the impacts of course contents and curriculums patterns on reducing intolerance among the students and the teachers-students' interactions. The study was carried out in the different parts of Balochistan, where teachers of the various government schools were interviewed face to face through in-depth interviews (IDIs). The interview guide consisted of unstructured questions reflecting the study objectives. The interview process was carried out through tape recording, where prior permission was granted from the study participants. The data was collected from 22 informants including school principals, head teachers, educationists, and senior teachers. The key informants were selected through sequential sampling technique of non-probability sampling, where the data was kept collecting until the saturation of data. The informants were given a complete freedom to express their ideas regarding the study contents. The data was later on analyzed on the basis of themes and sub-themes to deduct the findings according to the spirit of qualitative study. The data was then interpreted in common language in order make it easy for common readers.

Results and findings

The collection of data was commenced by the personal biodata of the informants, where the study participants were found of different service experiences, ranging between 18 years of experience and the 27 years in schools and different other relevant forums or offices. The academic qualification of the informants was different in terms of their subjects, however, all of the them had the Master in Education (M. Ed) degree. The informants of the study were teachers from all kind of government schools, including primary schools, middle schools, high schools, higher secondary schools and the education offices.

The causes of intolerance in the society

Intolerance is a prominent hallmark of the Pakistani society. Multiple factors are responsible for driving intolerance among the social folk. The study participants argued that the absence of free and frequent justice, the violation of merit, depriving people from their basic rights, the misinterpretation of Islam and Islamic texts, the disappointment of people from law and court, and deprivation people from their fundamental rights like education, jobs etc., are the factors triggering intolerance in the society, which ultimately preparing lava among the people and then outburst in society through words, actions, hostile attitudes, quarrels, conflicts and also most often through writings. The intolerant attitudes get birth from the family. As a participant expressed that

Family is most responsible institution for controlling and molding the behavior, attitude and personality of its members. But unluckily the families have failed to properly socialize their new members. There is no emotional development within the families. He extended arguably that due to ignorance, the parents being uneducated, poverty, unavailability of balance diet or malnutrition, large family size and many other factors impeding families to focus the emotional development of their members. Later on, these uncivilized children then show such intolerant behavior in locality, schools and everywhere in the social settings. Moreover, the children having educated parents are found much tolerant and civilized as compare to others.



In the media there a number of contents in news stories, dramas, movies, and other programs causing the promotion of intolerance among people. Similarly, there are also many other dynamics instigating intolerance in the society. An informant increased to share that

The ill-manners and unsocial attitudes of the masses, the culture of corruption and bribery in the government offices, the injustice, the political rivalries, and the deserving youth ignored in different spheres of life, the familial embroilments and the dishonesty and fraud in each field of life by the masses are the fueling features expediting the intolerant attitudes.

The role of government schools in minimizing intolerance

Schools are the most relevant and proper forum to mold the personality of children. The children live their lives informally at the home or in the locality, where they are free and resistant. However, in school they are bound and follow the rules and regulations. The schools' environment and the teachers' role have significant impact on their thoughts. In this context, the study informants communicated that the schools have outstanding role in minimizing intolerance in the society, provided that the teachers are learned and competent that much. But unfortunately, in their schools the teachers are very less competent and untrained to guide the students in proper manner. The teachers have off course relevant degrees but these degrees are like fake ones, because they have earned these degrees through providing money to the college administration, or in other words they have purchased them. The teachers would not have been attended classes or went through the contents of the courses to apply. They don't know even the basics of the courses. In this way the study informants regretted that if the teachers are incapable by themselves then how will they be able to teach the students in convincing way. One of the study participant extended that

The transfer and posting of the heads of the schools are carried out through source and bribery. The one who is close to minister or secretary or the teachers' union get the desired position in any school without scrutinizing the competence and capability. The competent and deserving teachers rest behind. So, in this scenario how can that incompetent person may be capable to run the institution or guide properly the students to promote peace and harmony among the social folk.

The teachers' perspectives on courses contents and curriculum patterns

The curriculum and course contents have significant role in shaping and determining the personality and thoughts of the students. If syllabuses and courses are designed in such a way that they could meet the required ends, then definitely they can keep long standing impacts on the students' overall life. The study found that the contents in the courses are not enough and valid to reduce intolerance in society. The courses and curriculums are outdated and do not meet the needs of modern era. Furthermore, the contents of the curriculums and syllabuses are the infusion of the wars and tolerance. Through different stories and contents different messages are instilled to the students. In this regard a senior teacher finely articulated that

There are some stuffs especially in Islamiyat regarding peace promotion and mitigating intolerance, which is reflecting the holy life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), but in the next pages there are stories of Ghazwat which are instigating aggressions against the people of the other religious groups and sects. He further narrated that there are much materials in the government schools' curriculums which are more political than the academic.

While designing the courses it is necessary to look at the caliber and psychology of the children as the psychologist contend. Lengthy and complicated stuff and lessons may create troublesome for children. Contextually, an educationist argued that

In the subjects like English, history, Urdu and Islamiyat there are some materials about minimizing intolerance. Ironically, these items give no required results because these contents are out of the range of the children. He further went on to say that it would have been better to split these stories and lessons in small stories so that to understand the children in easy way, and through this way it could have been easy to remedy many social illnesses.

A head teacher of a high school viewed that

There are two types of courses as the natural science courses and the humanities. The natural sciences however have no any concerned with the social life of students, but in the humanities subjects like in English, Urdu and Islamiyat there are many contents and stories regarding discouraging intolerance. But unfortunately the teachers are not that much competent and skilled to teach the students with that spirit. These contents need a proper teaching psychology, pedagogy and style, which is much lacking in the government teachers. Additionally, the teachers are not looking sincere in their duty and responsibilities. In other words, they are not doing justice with their profession.

The role of teachers-students' interactions in minimizing intolerance

It is obvious that teacher is the entity from whom the students take influence the most. The teachers can mold the personality of students through their actions and interactions. A sensible and well informed teacher can boost the thoughts and ideas of students in productive way, however, the ill-informed and less capable teacher can spoil the students' personality and their lifeline. In addition to this, the courses are very lengthy and the teachers are hardly to complete their courses during the stipulated time, and now it has become a culture that the teachers bound themselves to complete their courses only but no time for the students' social development. Similarly, the sporadic closure of the institutions due to various untoward events leave no space for the teachers to complete their work in due time. Furthermore, there is also the need of training for the teachers' emotional development. One of the participant added that

The teachers by themselves are victims of intolerance. They should be given training and therapy so that to grow their emotional development. The teachers pressed their students through corporal punishment. Thus contextually they need to be trained first to reduce intolerance in the society.

The teachers have exemplary role as a guide. Their role has been increased today than the past, because intolerance is more rampant today as compare to the past. A senior teacher commented that

The teachers in personal capacity and through interaction advise the students to remain peaceful and tolerant. He further argued that if the teacher let students to be intolerant, it becomes a problem itself for the teacher in the future.

The satisfaction level of teachers regarding curriculum and course contents

The satisfaction level of the study participants not very high about the course contents and curriculums. They have criticism about the syllabuses in terms of reducing intolerance. Even they showed their concerns that the stories and contents placed in the English books are quite tough and beyond the minds of the children. The course contents have however been designed just to cram but having no impact on the behavior of children changed. The courses should be

restructured to embodying with the ingredients promoting peace, harmony, tolerance and pluralism. Meanwhile, one of the informants negated others and expressed that

There are materials in curriculums regarding controlling intolerance. He went on to say that their courses are in line with the national curriculum, in which the authorities have tried their best to include the stories and lessons reduce intolerance. In this relation they have focused and elaborated Islamic event in an articulated manner.

The suggestions of teachers about mitigating intolerance through schools

Bringing positive and productive changes in society the schools can play outstanding role. Schools are the most relevant forums molding the behavior and attitudes of the students. So, in this scenario the schools should be focused the most. Moreover, the courses should be updated, besides this the co-curricular activities like *bazm-e-adab*, sports and etc. are vital for turning students from anti-social activities to positive activities. One of the school head teacher argued that

The above said activities were very common many years ago, but now they have obsoleted and the government is not interested to restart those productive activities. In these activities the capabilities of the students are highlighted and their skills polished. Besides this it provides positive output to the society. Moreover, vocational education and training are very much crucial for students' skill development which distancing students from committing anti-social acts.

In the globally connected world there is the need to take advantage from the experiences of the other countries regarding schooling system. In this context the advanced countries should be consulted to construct the curriculums and course contents in sophisticated way. Removing the contents promoting intolerance and biasness among the people. Nevertheless, the teachers training must be kept on the top priority. Instill professionalism into the teachers. In this context one of the most senior teacher shared that

The teachers training should be the first priority. Because in his life he has observed the teachers' sons are the most disrespectful, intolerant and very rude. So in this connection the teacher should be trained first, so that he may train the students in better way.

Additionally, the fake degrees should be banned and those colleges and universities providing fake degrees should be put on surveillance strictly. A study participant contended that

Seminars are not the solution. It is only for one day. The students are not oriented with the nature of seminars. They forget the contents of seminars very soon. So, there should be constant dealing with the students regarding reducing intolerance and promoting peace and tolerance.

Discussion

Intolerance is a continuous threat to the social structure of our country. It undermines the whole system. There are multifaceted reasons causing this dilemma. So, in this way the said problem needs to be focused seriously, but unfortunately no pragmatic work has been done on this issue to resolve. This research study was carried out to delve with the teachers' perspective on the role of government schools in reducing intolerance. On the basis of data regarding the triggering factors promoting intolerance, it was found that intolerance is caused by depriving folks from their fundamental rights like health, education, jobs etc., denying people from free and fair justice, the violation of merit, the peoples' disappointment from law and judicial system, the misinterpretation of religion and so on. Moreover, it was outlined that the schools have prominent role in reducing intolerance. The syllabus and courses contents are the most relevant stuff dealing with mitigating intolerance and promoting peace and harmony.



Furthermore, the teacher-students' interaction can also be having outstanding role in minimizing the intensity of intolerance. However, there are flaws in this way. The courses and contents have not been designed in such a way to work for the promotion of reducing intolerance. The study participants in majority showed their concerns about the curriculum ingredients and viewed these are not in line with the modern education and never be suitable to address intolerance in the society. Moreover, they regretted that teachers in the government schools are not much professional and well-trained to control the students in this regard. Nevertheless, the informants expressed that the courses are so lengthy that they could not be completed in due span of time. Thus, in this context the teachers are bound to complete their courses, which as a result they cannot find spare time to socialize the students and show them the right path. Additionally, the participants suggested that there is the need to train the teachers in proper way, because they are not well-trained and well-informed, resultantly they will not able to lead the students towards the positive end.

Conclusions and suggestions

Intolerance and frustration go hand in hand in a society. The frustrated behavior triggering to intolerance and harming the social fabric. Contextually, such attitudes should be handled adequately for promoting peace and pluralism in the society. The schools and especially government schools have the maximum capacity to control frustration and intolerance, however, if they are focused properly. Many events of intolerance are being reported on daily basis. The people quarrel on tiny issues and taking lives of one another. Socio-religious and racial intolerance is on peak, though Islam preaches for peace and denounces prejudice and intolerance. Regrettably, the state has failed to handle with intolerance satisfactorily. In this regard the state has the highest responsibility to think about the issue on serious basis. Evolve strategies especially focusing the schools' curriculum and teachers' training. Keep tight surveillance of the schools, educate the people to show them how to create a harmonious environment and live compatibly with the other human beings. Seminars and lectures are more necessary to aware the people about the drawbacks of the intolerance and blessings of the tolerance. Remove the contents of the courses containing of biases and prejudices, and include the stuff triggering pluralism, inclusiveness and peace.

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