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**RACE AND RELIGION IN PAKISTANI SOCIETY: COMPLEXITIES AND EMERGING CHALLENGES FOR CULTURAL PLURALISM, HUMAN RIGHTS AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION**

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**Abstract**

As most of the scientific literature demonstrates, the relationship between race and religion is complex which requires a unique empirical outlook to understand its all layers. Contemporary research in the case of Pakistan overlooks emerging challenges pertaining to diversity, human rights, and national unity in favor of exploring inter-group harmony. This study tries to understand those overlooked dimensions through a mixed study method, garnering perspectives across communities alongwith how race and religion shape cultural norms, values, and beliefs, unveiling obstacles for pluralism, rights, and integration. Marginalized groups confront biases fueling conflict and impeding pluralism. We found that there is an alarmingly rising nationalism propagating intolerance, spurring hate crimes and discrimination against minorities and immigrants. This erodes pluralism and human rights principles. Proliferating social media, despite connecting diverse cultures, also enables anonymity-shrouded intolerance. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated hurdles, as nations restricted immigration, bolstering xenophobia. The discord between sovereignty and human rights becomes more pronounced as countries resist perceived external interference. Via interviews and surveys, this study probed experiences of diverse Pakistanis. Analysis of race and religion's role in shaping culture yielded insights into community challenges. It examined government policies, civil society initiatives, and religious institutions' influence on race-religion relations and integration. It identified areas needing greater

efforts to further pluralism, rights, and unity. Recommendations equip stakeholders to confront these challenges.

**Keywords:** *Race, Religion, Pakistani Society, Perceptions and Experiences*

## 1. Introduction

Race is a social construct that divides individuals into groups based on physical characteristics such as skin tone, hair texture, and facial features (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). It is frequently used to distinguish between individuals of distinct ethnicities and nationalities. Human populations are typically divided based on physical appearance, social factors, and cultural practices (Race, 2023). Religion is a collection of beliefs, practices, and values associated with a specific faith or spiritual tradition (The Concept of Religion, n.d.). It typically involves the worship of a higher power or deity, as well as rituals, prayer, and moral codes. For many individuals, religion can be an integral part of their identity and community culture (Greil & Davidman, 2007). With an amalgamation of multiple religions, languages, and diverse cultures, Pakistan is located in South Asia - a nation whose complex past offers much depth into societal dynamics today based on race and religion. People from different ethnic groups comprise Pakistan's diverse population, among which Punjabis form the largest group, followed by Sindhis, Balochs, Pashtuns, and others - each playing an essential part in shaping concepts of identity formation and a sense of belongingness (Hays, n.d.). Religion remains one of the key components when exploring Pakistani culture since it was established as a home for Muslim refugees during partition back in 1947. Today, Islam is still prevalent here (Yilmaz et al., 2018), representing over 97% of the population, while minority faiths like Christians or Hindus account for just a small fraction. Pakistan's legal system, culture, and societal norms bear the marks of religion - most notably Islam - as a result of its influential presence throughout history. A defining characteristic of Pakistani society is the intricate interplay between race and religion. This relationship has undergone complex transformations over time. Unfortunately, however, at certain points in history, it was intentionally leveraged to cause fissures among different ethnic groups within Pakistan. During East and West Pakistan's 1971 war, Pakistani military forces specifically targeted Bengalis (Bose, 2011) - mostly Muslims but of another ethnic group - leading to an enormous genocide. However, there were instances where religion created solidarity among diverse ethnic groups; this was especially evident during the anti-Soviet Afghan War in the 1980s, when Muslims from different backgrounds joined together under Islam's banner. The birth of Pakistan as a separate country through India's Partition event significantly influenced how race and religion relate today. In 1947, many people migrated across freshly-drawn borders due to this partition; approximately millions of Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims became displaced, causing violence & trauma that left deep emotional scars among them that still reverberate today. According to Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, published in The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration in 2013, the end of British colonial rule in India on August 14/15, 1947 was accompanied by the political partition of the Indian subcontinent into two independent nation-states – India and Pakistan. This process of partitioning and drawing new political boundaries was marked by catastrophic violence in large parts of north India, particularly the province of Punjab, and led to an unprecedented mass displacement of people that stretched into the ensuing decades. Zamindar estimates that up to one million people were killed during the

violence in 1947, and around 50,000 women were abducted. Some 12 million people were displaced in the divided province of Punjab alone, and up to 20 million in the subcontinent as a whole (Azhar, 2020). A work published by Shahram Azhar, published in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* in 2020, conducts a class analysis of the human experience of migration during the Partition of India using a dataset constructed from 1,000 recently published oral narratives by migrants from across the Indian subcontinent. The article demonstrates that differences in class background not only closely correlate with differences in mode of transport and choice of destination, but also with the timing and intensity of an episode of violence. Most importantly, migrants' experiences show greater similarity within class background and regionality than within a religious group. Azhar argues that discussions based on the conceptual binary of religion are unable to account for the large variations in the experiential aspects of Partition, and suggests that a class analysis can improve our understanding of the humanitarian costs and consequences of the Partition of 1947. Today, racial identity & religious beliefs remain important factors shaping society within current-day Pakistan society. One's religious identity can have a considerable influence on one's self-conception as well as societal prospects like job opportunities (Palitsky et al., 2020). Despite this potential for positive outcomes tied to faith-based traditions and practices, people who belong to minority religions usually face negative treatment such as discrimination or marginalization by mainstream society. Equally significant is the fact that dissimilar ethnic groups undergo comparable biases that contribute to creating turbulence in group relations. Ethnic diversity and religious identity have often been used to create divisions between different groups, leading to conflict and violence. Cultural pluralism, human rights, and national integration are fundamental pillars for any society hoping to achieve stability. Nonetheless, a host of emerging challenges pose significant threats that make achieving this objective increasingly difficult. Notably alarming is the rise in populism and nationalism that propagates intolerance targeting minorities as well as immigrants, leading to an upsurge in hate crimes and discriminatory practices being witnessed towards vulnerable communities. The repercussions are devastating; this undermines Both cultural pluralism as well as principles underpinning human rights. The proliferation of social media platforms as well as wider access to digital technology presents yet another critical challenge confronting us today regarding diversity issues; While individuals can easily learn about various cultures via these social networks that provide an unprecedented level of connectivity, they can also harbor intolerance towards others through anonymity, which fuels hate speech/hateful activities, giving room for cyberbullying, incitement toward violence, & other divisive acts rooted in prejudice. Undoubtedly, COVID - 19 worsened these significant hurdles towards achieving cultural pluralism, human rights, and national integration. Countries have sought to deal with the pandemic by imposing restrictions on immigration, consequently reinforcing xenophobia and nativism. The current discord between national autonomy and human rights is becoming more pronounced. Numerous countries are wary of collaborating with global organizations that espouse human rights because they feel it challenges their authority over internal affairs. Henceforth, this gives rise to a contention concerning upholding a nation's cohesion versus safeguarding citizens' universal entitlements. This study used a mix approach applying six step thematic analysis and content analysis from the available data. We also conducted interviews and surveys for a better understanding. The study investigates the perceptions and experiences of Pakistanis from various racial and religious groups.

It investigates how these groups interact with one another. Through an analysis of the role of race and religion in shaping cultural norms, values, and beliefs, this study offers fresh perspectives on the obstacles encountered by diverse communities in Pakistan in their pursuit of cultural pluralism, human rights, and national integration. In addition, the study investigates the influence of government policies, civil society initiatives, and religious institutions on race and religion relations in Pakistan. It identifies areas where greater efforts are required to promote cultural pluralism, human rights, and national integration and provides policymakers, civil society, and religious institutions with evidence-based recommendations for addressing these challenges.

## **2. Investigative Goals**

The main objective of this research is to explore the significance of race and religion within the context of society. The study is intended to examine how individuals, from religious backgrounds perceive and experience their interactions with each other in Pakistan. By doing this study seeks to contribute insights into the existing body of knowledge on race and religion in Pakistani society. It aims to shed light on the nuances of these issues and their impact on diversity, human rights and national unity. The ultimate goal is to gain an understanding of the complexities surrounding race and religion in society and their wider implications, for the country as a whole.

## **3. Methodology and approach**

The study adopted a mixed method to explore the complex interplay between two societal components, i.e., race and religion, and their contribution to cultural pluralism, human rights, and national integration in Pakistan. To gain a better understanding of how race and religion impact cultural norms, values, and beliefs in Pakistan, researchers utilized interviews and surveys to gather information. The goal was to capture diverse perspectives by selecting participants from different communities across the country. The research team conducted 13 interviews and utilized Google Survey Forms to collect data from 271 individuals. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches provided a comprehensive view of the topic being investigated. By employing multiple approaches for collecting information on race and religion topics, these researchers conducted a study with the explicit aim of uncovering valuable insights into these areas further. They used several different techniques for evaluating the gathered information, like content evaluation methodology as well as the thematic analysis approach, which proved fruitful in finding relevant trends on this subject matter, which are most important when studying it thoroughly from diverse viewpoints. Numerous teams consisting of individuals with various backgrounds examined these findings before concluding on anything definitive, ensuring objectivity throughout all stages involved! Further refinement came through utilizing a six-stage framework that ultimately fortified any conclusions that emerged during their work efforts here while answering those essential questions surrounding these topics consistently. Research team applied hermeneutics to interpret from the available literature.

## **4. Analysis from available literature through hermeneutics**

When people talk about "race " what we're referring to is a system that divides people into groups based on characteristics like physical appearance, including skin tone, eye shape, and hair texture (University, 2022). This classification can inform policies related to housing, employment, or education while also carrying significant weight in determining social status and opportunities for individuals. But it's crucial to recognize that "race" isn't rooted in biology; rather, it's a product of social construction with differing interpretations across various cultures. Pakistan showcases this complexity due to its diverse ethnicities and languages. The major racial categories here include South Asian, East Asian, and Middle Eastern, with the South Asians being the majority group (Carleton University, 2021). However, they share space with smaller minorities, including Hazaras, Balochi Pashtuns, and Pashtuns, who have distinct cultural backgrounds along with unique physical features. It's essential we recognize that race goes far back into history before modern day Pakistan existed. Colonial powers in Europe used this ideology claiming an inherent inferiority of non European peoples based on physical characteristics to legitimize domination over them. During the 19th century it became widespread to believe that certain physical traits could determine a hierarchy among races (Vartija, 2020). White Europeans were believed to be at the top of this hierarchy, which had significant consequences. The field of eugenics arose (which seeks to improve genetic quality) and race was incorporated into laws regulating immigration. Race continues to be an issue around the world; one country grappling with its own complicated history around this topic is America where there once were Jim Crow laws and redlining practices (Leibbrand et al., 2020).

Both restricted and actively discriminated against Black individuals by making it challenging to access adequate housing or other economic benefits. By legally enforcing these discriminatory policies the Jim Crow legal framework allowed racism to be normalized in the United States. Though eliminated in the mid 1900s racial inequalities persist today as seen by higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and incarceration among persons of color and Latinx origin compared to white individuals. The birth of Pakistan as a nation state occurred after the partition of India in 1947.

Pakistan is a country with a rich tapestry of languages spoken throughout its lands, Urdu being its official language but Punjabi Sindhi Pashto Balochi et al are widely spoken too (Manan, David & Channa, 2018). Religion plays an important role in Pakistani society, with Islam being practiced by most citizens while others profess Christian Hindu Sikh et al faiths. Despite efforts made towards promoting cultural pluralism, numerous challenges remain which must be tackled head-on if this nation is ever to become a melting pot of cultures. The country has struggled historically with sectarian violence between communities holding differing religious views. Such violence has demonstrated that conflict resolution techniques are needed that mitigate against any risk of violent escalation when disputes arise; minorities also face social and economic marginalization due to discrimination. However, there are many benefits that cultural pluralism can bring: from encouraging creativity through innovation diversification and much more which in turn help society tackle complex social issues effectively. Pakistan's authorities recognise the significance of promoting cultural pluralism within their borders; they have created several initiatives designed towards enabling greater diversity such as educational programmes aimed at fostering understanding between differing cultures. The policy has an objective of endorsing cultural

diversity and tolerance while also safeguarding the rights of minority communities. Additionally it promotes cultural activities and the protection of cultural heritage sites.

The country sought to unify its varied ethnic groups into one singular, national identity. The idea of race continues to generate conflicting perspectives within today's society. While some maintain that this concept has value for recognizing and addressing social injustices others argue that it simply perpetuates prejudice and discrimination. Critics point out that scientific evidence does not support the existence of inherent differences between racial categories, leading them to conclude that race functions primarily as an excuse for unequal treatment based on ethnicity or skin color. Recently movements like "Black Lives Matter" have gained momentum as advocates raise awareness about long standing issues faced by people of African heritage and other oppressed groups across the globe (Diaz, Pullen & Iannone, 2022); ranging from abuses by authorities to economic disadvantages. Similarly in Pakistan marginalized ethnic communities are pushing for greater representation and rights due to their historical oppression combined with modern day marginalization. As debates about race persist it becomes increasingly apparent just how divisive this issue remains — one which has implications reaching far beyond individual perspectives or experiences alone. To fully understand the shortcomings of the race construct and its utilization to validate discrimination and bigotry, one must be informed. The government has also established various cultural institutions, such as the National Academy of Performing Arts, the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, and the National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage, to promote the arts and cultural heritage of the country. Pakistani government has implemented policies to promote religious tolerance and interfaith harmony. 14 August 1973, the government established the Ministry of National Harmony. Its purpose was to promote understanding and dialogue between different religious communities. The ministry has organized various events and activities. Its aim is to bring together people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds and to promote peace and understanding. The passing of the Shariat Bill in May 1991 holds great significance as it introduced Islamic law into Pakistan's legal system - part of a larger movement towards Islamization which had been present since its inception. Liaquat Ali Khan set the tone with his introduction of the Objectives Resolution in 1949, declaring that implementation of Islamic laws were vital for its people. This paved the way for further incorporation of such principles into their legal and political systems raising concerns around secularism versus religious identity within democratic values . Despite controversy surrounding such moves, supporters argue they are necessary to maintain their religious and cultural identity while critics view them as detrimental to democracy . The integration of Islamic provisions within various constitutions (1956 ,1962 and 1973) were milestones towards achieving this goal with General Zia-ul-Haq's reign being especially instrumental. During his time at the helm Zia ul Haq revised various articles within the 1973 constitution and introduced a plethora of new decrees rooted in Islamic beliefs. Among these regulations were the Hudood Ordinances designed to tackle offenses like theft, adultery, and alcohol consumption. The laws caused debate for discriminating against minorities and women. Islamization was a source of conflict in Pakistan. Supporters see it as important in preserving culture, while others view it as undemocratic and violating human rights. The persistence of egregious human rights violations against minority populations plagues Pakistan today despite constitutional recognition of core individual liberties that should be protected by law enforcers. The legal framework already existing to guard individuals against these injustices

remains underutilized enhancing this problem even further while giving room for abusers to operate with impunity unbothered by governmental authorities who do not consider protecting minorities vital enough.

In addition to the common problem regarding race and religion that arise from this situation; Religious minorities are targeted with discriminatory attitudes resulting in gross disregard for their fundamental freedoms or personal safety in Pakistan . The Ahmadiyya community is one exemplification that has shed light on the manifest nature negative implications associated with this approach; frequently stigmatized leading to exclusionary practices suppressing them from enjoying full citizenship status while government policies restricts their religious practice since it does not recognize them as Muslims thus depriving them equal treatment before the law Finally,Pakistani Christians face comparable issues especially ones living in poverty who don't find access to means of sustenance . Their living conditions are usually exacerbated by extremist groups who impose their brand of Islam on others. Its deeply concerning that forced conversions remain rampant in Pakistan with little or no intervention from the government to curtail this atrocity. To make matters worse the Shia community is yet another group that bears the brunt of social injustice and prejudiced behavior. Sadly extremist violence is used in Pakistan to create control over Islamic beliefs - an act that places innocent individuals practicing their faith at great risk in terms of life and property. Beyond this reality there's another harsh one which lies within racial discrimination - despite having a diverse population accommodating different backgrounds and ethnicities ,some minorities face unequal opportunities. Pakistan has a history of sectarian violence and religious persecution against minorities, particularly Ahmadi Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and Shia Muslims, according to the 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom from the United States Department of State. The government has failed to protect religious minorities and dissenters from attacks by extremist groups, according to the report. The report also indicates that at least 52 people were accused of blasphemy or related religion-based crimes in 2022, and that at least four people were sentenced to death for blasphemy ([US state department](#)). According to a report by the non-governmental organization Center for Social Justice (CSJ) published in February 2022, Human Rights Observer 2022, at least 1,949 people were accused of religious offenses between 1987 and 2021, primarily under the portion of the penal code dealing with blasphemy and the anti-Ahmadi laws ([Human Rights Watch, 2021](#)). Cases of forced conversion of Christians and Hindus, particularly juvenile girls and women, were documented. According to Human Rights Watch, Pakistan witnessed an increase in sectarian violence in 2022, with at least 11 attacks by militant groups against Shia Muslims resulting in the deaths of 28 individuals and injuries to 70 others. According to the report, the government has continued to retaliate against civil society activists, journalists, and opposition leaders who criticize its policies or human rights record ([INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT, 2022](#)). Punjabis who are Pakistan's largest ethnic group dominate politics often sidelining non-Punjabis making them feel frustrated with a lack of representation and equal chances to benefit themselves . Balochistan citizens have suffered numerous forms of human rights violations such as enforced abductions ,extrajudicial killings ,and torture resulting in them being oppressed by the government denying them their fundamental rights. Similarly Gilgit-Baltistan residents are experiencing developmental challenges therefore feeling neglected by their authorities which creates feelings of being ignored or unheard. It's no secret that Pakistan has long struggled with human rights violations -

particularly in cases where discrimination based on religion or race is at play ([Human Rights Watch, 2022](#)). Sadly the laws in place simply aren't sufficient for protecting marginalized groups from harm. Perhaps even more concerning is the lack of genuine political will to make meaningful changes that could address these issues. This issue is prolonged by groups and individuals with extreme beliefs. They refuse to accept anyone else's values and strive to impose their version of Islam upon everyone. It is vital that both the government and people in general collaborate to tackle these troubles and reach a resolution that respects and defends the rights and liberties of all people. Pakistan's National Integration strives towards creating unity amongst people from various ethnicities, cultures, languages, and religions within its borders. National Integration will occur when diverse communities work together harmoniously towards a shared identity built on valuable principles. Despite Pakistan being a hub of cultural and linguistic diversity with Sindhis, Punjabis, Baluchis, Pashtuns, comprising its ethnic block alongside other minorities and multiple religions namely Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity promoting National Integration has always been an arduous task. To attain National Integration in Pakistan effectively The Government needs to create policies that appreciate and encourage every unique group's cultural identity. Moreover schools should include all community backgrounds' history and heritage in their curriculum instead of only including those having dominant or significant roles. In attaining a cohesive nationhood within Pakistan lies the significance of linguistic diversity. While Urdu retains legal recognition as Pakistan's national dialect under constitutional provisions; a sizeable percentage of its populace employs alternate speech forms like Punjabi, Sindhi or Pashto for communication purposes. Consequently advocating for an inclusive approach that encourages multilingualism becomes critical towards curbing sentiments connected with cultural isolation based on one's prowess with Urdu. Achieving national integration in Pakistan requires various factors to come together harmoniously. Among these factors economic development plays a pivotal role. It is incumbent on the government to ensure that all regions benefit from economic growth with equal distribution of resources through pertinent policies for job creation, infrastructure development, education investment, and improved healthcare. However religious tensions across different sects still pose formidable challenges toward realizing nationwide unity within Pakistan. The authorities must commit to promoting tolerance via interfaith dialogues while dealing with extremist groups advocating violence or hate speech through educational programs. Similarly political stability comes into play since past governance experiences demonstrate adversarial effects on long term goals at building a united nation due to military coups or political instability detrimental towards nurturing social cohesion within society. A democratic government that caters to the interests of all segments of society is the key to maintaining national integration ([Bellamy & Kröger, 2016](#)). Lastly, conceptualizing national integration in Pakistan should stem from recognizing its diversity as an asset rather than a divisive force. The government must make efforts through inclusive policies and celebration of cultural identities across all groups. Its mission is to achieve just allocation of resources, encourage interfaith dialogue and tolerance, and instill a firm and democratic administration. Achieving national integration in Pakistan is a long-term process, but with concerted efforts and commitment from all stakeholders, it is achievable.

## 5. Results and discussions



Achieving national integration amidst different races and religions involves both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, it promotes mutual respect, understanding amongst varying groups resulting in greater unity within nations concerned. Different religious communities also establish shared ideals promoting social cohesion based on each other's beliefs. However, this aspect also has its negative side which surfaces through discriminatory actions arising as a result of ignorance or hostility towards certain sections of society causing exclusion or social discord. In conclusion, the impact of race and religion on national integration highlights its complexity with both encouraging aspects providing resilience to dominant values while negative traits cause marginalization leading to problems like social unrest. When striving for a virtuous and flourishing society, we may consider drawing from religious or moral values espoused by diverse communities. Nevertheless, we must not dismiss the harmful implications of race or religion with regards to national unity. When people do not comprehend the various religions and cultures within a population, it can lead to prejudicial beliefs and unjust treatment. This will only serve to worsen inequity and isolate people further, and could also lead to social strife. Furthermore, spiritual beliefs have a strong influence on an individual's and community's self-identification, and when used incorrectly can be a source of turmoil and discord amongst the general public.

### 5.1 Emerging Challenges for Cultural Pluralism, Human Rights, and National Integration

We found 3 major and seven minor themes as follows

**Table 1: Emerging Challenges for Cultural Pluralism, Human Rights, and National Integration**

Major Themes	Minor Themes
Violence	Sectarian Violence, Force Conversion, Minority Rights Discrimination
Strict traditional laws	Internet Censorship, Gender Discrimination, Child Abuse
Inequitable Distribution of Resources	resources and wealth are distributed unequally

### 5.2 Sectarian Violence

Pakistan has long been encountering a prevalent challenge - sectarian violence. This type of violence emerges from opposing beliefs between two Islamic sects resulting in suicidal attacks, killings and bombings. With death and property destruction as its consequences, it further intensifies the tension among sects leading to economic challenges that affect social conditions in

various areas. Additionally, cultural divisions are widened through group marginalization due to the vulnerability caused by this act of conflict.

### **5.3 Force Conversion**

A vital aspect that threatens Pakistan's national integration is forceful conversion witnessed across minority communities such as Hindus and Christians who suffer immense challenges due to these practices with repugnant consequences on social harmony within these neighborhoods. While Pakistan's Constitution respects religious diversity entrenching individual freedoms enshrined in this document; it remains challenging for ordinary citizens considering their lack of influence and access to resources. This has led religious leaders, human rights activists, and state authorities to take action against those perpetrating forced conversions due to their grave implications on communal harmony and peace. However despite legal bans on such practices perpetrators continue resorting to coercive methods such as abductions or threats of rape or forced marriages. Forced conversion leads to an increase in polarization and hinders the feeling of oneness. Dialogue, awareness-raising and policies that strengthen religious tolerance and social harmony can be part of a solution to this problem.

### **5.4 Minority Rights Discrimination**

The subject of minority rights has become an increasingly urgent challenge for those concerned about cultural diversity, human freedoms, and nation building in modern day Pakistan. However despite constitutional safeguards that promote equality regardless of one's ethnic group or believe systems minorities still face discrimination characterised by social exclusion, economic deprivation as well as threats posed by blasphemy laws. These realities present a constant source vulnerability especially for the Christian, Hindu and Ahmadi sections of society who are often subjected to abuse and false allegations.

**5.5 Gender Discrimination:** One formidable impediment for Pakistan remains entrenched gender inequality within its borders. Across nearly every dimension impacting female life in the country - such as access to education or professional advancements or adequate healthcare resources - they face pronounced hurdles due to gender discrimination. Deeply ingrained cultural norms and religious practices unfortunately seem intent on stifling women's basic freedoms restricting their movements considerably. Perhaps more concerning still is rampant violence perpetrated upon females within Pakistani Culture including instances like domestic abuse, femicide, and honor killings. Additionally, transgender individuals are equally susceptible to grave mistreatment constituting another layer to this problematic issue. This ongoing challenge poses one more obstacle towards forging national unity within Pakistan.

### **5.6 Internet Censorship**

Internet censorship is becoming a severe and challenging issue of human rights in Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan has recently enacted legislation that provides broad censorship powers to the authorities to limit access to online content. The censorship of the internet in Pakistan has shifted the country from the principles of free expression and diverse information flow. The authorities have frequently banned social media sites, video sharing sites, and blogs, which promotes violence against ethnic and religious minorities.

## 5.7 Child Abuse

The widespread occurrence of child abuse is one of Pakistan's most pressing issues threatening national integration efforts today. Physical violence, exploitation through sexual offenses or negligence towards minors are frequently reported lately contributing towards its rise over time. The governmental bodies together with non-governmental organizations are tackling it but still need support from all segments of society to weed out this menace completely. The violation of fundamental principles such as dignity protection for minors embolden to tear up the entire social fabric and produce rifts within communities. The rippling effects of abuse reach into economic spheres as it perpetuates poverty, hindering the growth of human capital besides suppressing economic progress. Research indicates that childhood traumatic experiences often lead to more criminal activities in adulthood, inducing a potential threat to national integration.

## 5.8 Inequitable Distribution of Resources

Another untypical challenge for cultural pluralism, human rights, and national integration in Pakistan is the inequitable distribution of resources and wealth. Economic disparities widen the cultural disparities, which ultimately leads to social exclusion and marginalization. This can also lead to increased sectarian or ethnic conflict. The lack of access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and job opportunities further contribute to the existing socio-economic disparities.

## 6. Limitation of the study

A diminutive sample size coupled with corresponding paucity of resources - it's reasonable to conjecture that our findings are not fully reflective of all aspects pertinent to an entire population under scrutiny. It's likewise conceivable that some critical factors have been overlooked or obscured within our data collection method. Hence, it's imperative to carefully interpret these results while avoiding overgeneralizing their scope beyond only this particular sample utilized for this investigation.

## 7. Conclusions

Pakistan faces numerous challenges regarding cultural pluralism, human rights, and national integration. The untypical emerging challenges discussed above have significant adverse effects on the overall harmony of the society that results in damaging national unity and integration. Rights of women, minorities, and LGBT communities are at the stake due to discrimination and intolerance. Sectarian violence and restrictions on freedom of expression are mutually reinforcing factors that undermine national unity and contribute to cultural division. Reducing the socio-economic disparities with proper state support and policy can help to foster harmony and peace within the country. It is crucial for Pakistan to address these challenges seriously and sustainably to build a more inclusive and united society.

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