A Study of the Perception of the Community Regarding Impact of University Education in Developing Tolerance

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Abstract

Universities sprawl between global knowledge and local aspirations. Universally higher education institutions create and transmit knowledge as their basic function. There is a growing emphasis that importance should be given to localized concerns and aspirations of the communities. Investments in higher education, demands a transformation of the neighboring societies and cure for socio-economic ills. Diverse Tolerance is a tendency of human beings to show acceptance towards diverse behaviors. Pakistan as a whole and Southern Punjab are especially facing the challenges of intolerance in society. The major factors of this issue are; religious extremism, sectarianism, poverty, and backwardness. Universities are believed to be a source of bringing attitudinal changes in their graduates and transform them into useful citizens. The major objective of the present study was to explore the role of the universities of Southern Punjab to foster tolerance, harmony, and social justice in the community. The students of general public sector Universities of Pakistan were the population of the study. A sample of one thousand students and thirty alumni were selected as the sample of the study. A self-developed questionnaire and interview were used as data collection tools. The mean score, standard deviation, and t-value were calculated. A thematic approach was followed to analyze the responses on interviews and open-ended items. It was concluded that university education is improving moderately the tolerance level among the students, helping the community to combat extremism, increase of social justice, and improving religious and social harmony. To achieve the educational aims and to develop a level of tolerance of students, lectures on tolerance education must be included in the syllabus at every level of degree.

Keywords: higher education, tolerance, harmony, ethics, religious extremism, impact

Introduction

Tolerance is the self-desired imposition towards acceptance of the views and opinions of others, you may not agree with. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary, 2010, tolerance is the willingness to accept or tolerate someone/something, especially opinions or behaviors that you might disapprove of or those that do not resemble you.

Tolerance is the appreciation of diversity and the ability to live with others. It is the ability to maintain an objective attitude towards those whose languages, opinions, practices, religions, nationalities, etc. are different. Pakistan is a country with a 97% Muslim population (Nath, 2005). There are four main geographic groups in Pakistan, named, Baloch, Pakhtoon, Punjabi, and Sindhi. These groups have different norms, cultures, civilizations, and languages (Shahzad, 2007, Nieto, 1999). These ethnic groups differ in their livings and customs (El-Dib, 2004).Pakistan is indulged in the war on terror for the last two decades. The country lost thousands of valuable lives and resources. One of the major reasons for extremism in Pakistan is intolerance and fanaticism. In the present scenario, Pakistan needs to maintain its unity, create harmony among people, and promote a peaceful society in the world. Pakistan needs a tolerant, composed, and open minded citizen to become a safe, peaceful, and progressive society in the world

(Irshad, 2011). The differences between sects, ethnic, religious, and prejudices among provinces have become a big threat to Pakistan. Now Pakistan is facing this issue in the form of massive killing, sectarian violence, political biases, and economic instability. Pakistan's economy suffered more than 180 Billion dollars during the last eighteen years due to the war on terror. (Dawn, 2018). Social inclusion refers to the coexistence of life and leading to interreligious harmony and the construction of a tolerant society. It can be said that interreligious harmony is a means to achieve peace and prosperity. Interreligious harmony is a conceivable condition, which means peaceful coexistence between practitioners of different religious backgrounds, to eliminate the possibility of discord, violent or nonviolent violence, and preach to all Pakistani citizens of all religions. Nobody should be discriminated against for reasons of religion or fulfillment, because the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the equality of rights of all the citizens, regardless of their religion, convictions, or creed, Kalin and Siddiqi, 2014.

Terrorism not only affected the economy of the country but it has severely affected the society and the social fabric of the Pakistani community as well. Religious extremism and sectarian violence have developed a sense of insecurity and unrest in the community at large. Pakistan is an Islamic country having different racial groups and these groups are different based on religion, culture, norms, customs, sects, and language(Shahzad, 2007). These differences between groups have become a major cause of problems in Pakistan. Now Pakistan is facing big problems like the massive killing of people in Karachi, sectarian clashes, political biases, and economic inequality (Yaseen&Muzaffar, 2018). Electronic and print media around the globe is portraying Pakistan as an intolerant country and community. This situation is alarming and causing political anarchy and economic disability. (Azam, 2019). In the present scenario, Pakistan needs to maintain its dignity, create harmony among people to promote peace in society. A peaceful society can be developed by developing tolerant behaviors in its new generation. Particularly, the education system is more responsible for developing tolerant behaviors in the students. Education develops a coherent, peaceful, and tolerant society. It can change the behaviors of hate into the behavior of peace and love which can reduce prejudice among the students who are different from them (Shapiro, 2003). Educational institutions can change attitudes and can develop tolerance among students, if experiences of education are used it can reduce the behaviors of racism and prejudices among students (Klein, 1992). Teacher plays a vital role by using educational experience to reduce biases among students of a different culture (Schaefer, 1996). Classroom activities can reduce prejudices and develop tolerance in students. Teaching in the classroom, with the help of academic subjects and activities of tolerance reduces the prejudices among students (Klein, 1992). In such circumstances where the economic condition of people is getting worse day by day and political parties do not pay any heed to the masses. It has become hard for people to digest the different opinions and cultural differences of other people (Mushtaq & Kayani, 2013). To establish an atmosphere of tolerance and peace in social behaviors like discrimination prejudices, hate, aggrieves, and violence is necessary to highlight and resolve. One of the basic tools of nurturing tolerance is the right of expression to all and the provision of a democratic environment. Tolerance awareness is necessary to teach in educational institutions (Hasenclever, &Rittberger, 2000).

Literature review of different research studies illustrates that educational institutions, their curriculum, environment, and especially the teachers are the major source of elimination of prejudices and elevation of patience among students. (Trompenaars, & Hampden-Turner, 2011). Students are considered to be a vital element of a prosperous and nonviolent community. Tolerance among youth is obligatory for a stable and coherent society therefore the present study has concentrated on finding out the impact of universities in enhancing the tolerance level of students in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

The research-based on the following objectives:
1. To analyze the current state of tolerance in students of higher education institutions.
2. To assess the factors impacting harmony development among students.
3. Comparison of male and female students' opinions on their tolerance level
4. To study the factors affecting tolerance among students at the university level.

Research Design

The research was descriptive in nature. A mixed-method design was adopted to investigate the phenomenon and to get a comprehensive view of the problem. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used. The qualitative data were used to verify the results of the questionnaire's data. A survey Questionnaire having forty-nine closed-ended and two open-ended items were developed to find out the tolerance level of students. Multistage sampling was used to get the replica of the population. Ten departments from each of the universities were selected. Gender and nature of departments (science and arts were given equal representation in the sample. A questionnaire was administered to the two hundred students from each university. The total sample was one thousand students. A semi-structured interview was used to get qualitative data. A group of 30 representatives of alumni of universities from various organizations was selected through a purposive sampling method for the collection of qualitative data. Interviews were conducted through face to face meeting.

Table 1. Sample of the population

Sr No	Institution	Province	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Science		Total
			Male	Female	Male	Female	
1	The Islamia University Bahawalpur	Punjab	50	46	50	49	195
2	University of Punjab	Punjab	49	47	50	47	193
3	University of Karachi	Sindh	45	44	46	42	177
4	University of Baluchistan	Baluchistan	43	38	48	41	170
5	University of Peshawar	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	45	41	47	40	173
Total			182	170	191	170	803

Table 1 shows the description of the sample size of this study. Five universities were selected purposively from all over Pakistan. A total of 195 students were selected from the Islamia University of Bahawalpur among them 96 students from the Arts faculty and 99 were selected from the science faculty. In the next step, from 96 students of art faculty, 50 were male students and 46 were female students. Of 99 students of the science faculty of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, 50 were male 49 females. A total of 193 students were selected from the University of Punjab among them 96 from the Arts faculty and 99 from the science faculty. On the next stage students were classified into male and female respondents 49 male and 47 female were selected from arts faculty, 50 male and 47 female were selected from arts faculty. From the University of Karachi 177 students were selected among them 89 were from arts faculty and 88 were from science faculty. Forty-five male and 44 female students were selected from the arts faculty and forty-six males and 42 female were selected from the science faculty. A total of 170 students have selected from the University of Balochistan among them 91 students were from the faculty of arts and 89 were from the faculty of science. In the next stage, respondents were selected into male and female respondents 43 males and 38 females were selected from arts faculty and 47 male and 40 male were selected from science faculty. A total of 173 respondents were selected from the University of Peshawar among them 86 were selected from the Arts faculty and 87 were selected from the Science faculty. In the next stage of sampling 45 male and 41 female students were selected from the arts faculty and 47 male and 40 female were selected from the science faculty.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The study aimed to determine the tolerability of the students. The research tool was validated and personally distributed among the respondents by the researcher and get filled. The questionnaire was distributed to the students. Respondents were given the time and confidentiality of their answers. The data was collected with the tools mentioned above. The frequency, the percentage of responses to each element of the factor was calculated. The frequencies of strongly matching and matching categories were combined to give a series of responses, while the responses were added by strongly mismatched and

mismatched categories to produce a mismatched response category. The frequencies and percentages of the categories "agree" and "disagree" were calculated for each factor element and when considered together. The importance of the difference between the match and mismatch responses was calculated by the t-test and ANOVA. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically and conclusions were drawn.

Data Analysis and Results of the study

The basic goal of the present research was to explore the role of higher education in developing tolerance among the students. The results of the study were as following:

Table 2. Level of tolerance among university students

Factor	Agree		Disagree		Std. Error mean	df	t-value	Sig.
Level of Tolerance while interacting with others on campus	mean	S.D	mean	S.D				
	763.50	40.29	236.50	40.29	32.89	5	16.01	.000
Level of tolerance while interacting with others outside the campus	747.33	42.13	252.67	42.13	34.39	5	*14.38*	.000
An attitude of students with their fellows	694.50	11.12	305.50	11.12	11.120	5	34.98	.000

The above table shows thestate of tolerance in students of higher education institutions. The above data reveals the level of students' tolerance when they interact with each other on the campus. Mean value (763.50) is higher than the students who don't agree about the statement shows their students' positive behavior towards other students on campus and they have a good level of tolerance with other students. The mean value (747. 33) of agreed students is higher than the students who do not agree that they are tolerating a person outside the campus. This exposes that respondents of the study have a good level of tolerance when they interact with others outside the campus. Furthermore, the mean value (694.50) is higher than the mean value of students who are not agreed that they have a positive attitude with their fellow students. The above table also shows the perception of respondents regarding the current status of tolerance level which is significant at the level (< 0.05)(Basheer et al., 2020).

Table 3.The factors impacting the development of harmony among students

Factor	Agree		Disagree		Std. Error mean	df	t-value	Sig.
Role of teachers in developing Tolerance among students	mean	S.D	Mean	S.D				
	638.66	116.14	361.33	116.14	134.17	2	2.06	0.015
Effects of the environment in developing religious harmony	542.33	146.37	457.66	146.37	169.02	2	.501	0.001
Role of the curriculum in developing liberal attitudes	67.72	34.42	32.27	32.45	41.56	3	.544	.047

The table above assesses the factors impacting harmony development among students. The mean score (638.66) shows that majority of the students were agreed that their teachers play role in developing tolerance among the students. There was a significant impact on teachers in developing tolerance among students at a level of significant 0.01. The majority of the students were agreed that due to the environment religious harmony was developed among them. Results of the t-test show that there was a significant impact of the environment in developing religious harmony among them at the level of significance < 0.05(Basheer et al., 2020). The majority of the students also agreed on the role of the curriculum to develop a liberal attitude among them. There was a significant impact of curriculum on students in developing a liberal attitude at the level of significant < 0.05.

Table 4. Comparison of male and female students' opinions on their tolerance level

Item	Depended variable	In depended group (I)	In depended group (j)	Mean difference	Std Error	Df	f	Sig
26	I like to know the traditions of various social groups	Male	Female	.13	.05	998	2.53	.011
40	Students stop conversation with their friends when they get angry with them	Male	Female	.24	.05	998	4.42	.000
37	Students are courteous towards their seniors	Male	Female	.11	.04	998	2.24	.022
45	I avoid such activities which are irritating for my fellows	Male	Female	.20	.05	998	3.97	.000
25	I respect the opinion of my fellows	Male	Female	.24	.05	998	2.42	.000
16	Students agitate when there is no light in the classroom	Male	Female	.22	.05	998	2.54	.000

The table above shows the comparison of male and female students' opinions regarding the tolerance level. On the whole, when a comparison was made about the opinions of male and female students on their tolerance level there was a significant difference among students' opinions that they know traditions of various groups, they stop the conversation when they have a contradiction, and they are courteous with their seniors, don't irritate their seniors and agitate when there is no light in the classroom.

Table 5. Analysis of student's suggestions data, which can improve tolerance in students

ser	Suggestion	F	%
1	Positive behaviors of teachers and administration and no discrimination	165	30.47%
2	Avoiding aggressive, bad behaviors and abusive language	160	28.92%
3	Respect and good behaviors of students	111	19.76%
4	Parents and teacher guidance and fulfillment of basic requirements	109	18.97%
5	The positive role of society and media	77	13.98%
6	Teaching of religion and adopting the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)	70	12.84%
7	Patience and cooperation	59	10.93%
8	Ethic and tolerance of education	54	10.09%
9	Justice	39	6.24%
10	Avoiding criticism	41	7.22%

11	No ego, jealousy, and anger	32	5.12%
12	Avoiding political conversation	26	4.16%
13	No cast and color values and avoid calling bad names	39	6.23%
14	Good environment in the institution	24	4.83%
15	Betterment of education system and curriculum	32	5.53%
16	Good conversation	20	4.03%
17	Caring and employment	18	3.63%
18	Confidence	18	3.62%
19	Economic stability	17	2.72%
20	Cultural harmony	10	2.01%

Table number 4, demonstrates that Positive Teacher and Administration behaviors and no discrimination can improve the level of tolerance among students the response rate was 30.47 percent. Avoiding Aggressive and bad behaviors, abuse language the response rate was 28.92 percentage, Respect, good behaviors of students the response rate was 19.76%, teacher and parent's guidance and fulfillment of basic facilities the response rate was 18.97%, Positive Media, society role the response rate was 13.98%, Teaching of Islam, and life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUD) the response rate was 12.84%. Patience and cooperation 10.93%, Ethics, and tolerance Education the response rate was 10.09%, Justice the response rate was 6.24%, Avoid Criticism the response rate was 7.22%. No, Ego, Jealousy, and Anger the response rate was 5.12% Avoiding Political parties the response rate was 4.16%, No cast and color values and avoid calling bad names to return rate was 6.23%. Good environment the response rate was 4.83%, Betterment of education system and the curriculum response rate was 5.53% Good conversation rate was 4.03%, Confidence the response rate was 3.62%, Economic stability response rate was 2.72%, and Cultural harmony the response rate was 2.01%

Discussion and Conclusions

Subsequently, the data collected by the students was analyzed and conclusions were drawn. The first objective of the study was to determine the level of tolerance of university students. Many researchers have already found the same conclusions from their studies. The study had similar results on "Religious thought and social attitudes - a case study of Pakistani university students" (Nadeem, 2016). Others are looking for leadership, accountability, and customer satisfaction in educational institutions (Arif, 2011) and "Study Student Satisfaction, Behavioral Intention, and Effectiveness of Online Learning." "(Liaw, 2008). A case study on the Blackboard system, computer & education, has similar results with this search. (Xanthacou, Stavrou, & Babalis, 2013). More than 76% of students demonstrate social tolerance. 79.4% of respondents want to know the traditions of different social groups. 76.8% of respondents visit friends with illness. 79.1% of respondents enjoy holidays from different social groups. 80.1% of respondents would like to learn the local language of their region, 71.2% of respondents are good about the poor service of canteen staff and 71.5% of respondents respect the opinions of their colleagues. The .Majority of the respondents showed their social interaction. 79.5% of respondents remain calm when their father gets angry with them. More than 71% of respondents feel sick when they break a promise. 69.9% of respondents find friends based on their nature. 79.9% of the respondents are pleased to share the pain and happiness of others. 76.4% of respondents avoided irritating activities for their peers. The respondents' excuses for their mistakes were 71.6%.

The majority of the students were agreed that their teachers play role in developing tolerance among the students. There was a significant impact on teachers in developing tolerance among students at a level of significant 0.01. The majority of the students were agreed that due to the environment religious harmony was developed among them. Results of the t-test show that there was a significant impact of the environment in developing religious harmony among them at the level of significance < 0.05. The majority of the students also agreed on the role of the curriculum to develop a liberal attitude among them. There was a significant impact of curriculum on students in developing a liberal attitude at the level of significant < 0.05. On the whole, when a comparison was made about the opinions of male and female students on their tolerance level there was a significant difference among students' opinions that they know traditions of various groups, they stop the conversation when they have a contradiction, and they

are courteous with their seniors, don't irritate their seniors and agitate when there is no light in the classroom. Similarities have been found in research on education for ethnic tolerance among Russian university students (Ananina, 2015).

Recommendations

When reviewing the data and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were always made: Positive attitudes of teachers and administration can promote tolerance among students. Bad behavior and a bad environment were the reasons why they favored intolerance among the students. The university should provide a good environment for students. The causes that promote intolerance among students are the preference of teachers and the lack of parental guidance.

The teacher should not be biased and encourage the promotion of tolerance among the students. The child is the birth of society. Society needs good behavior. Society must play a role in promoting tolerance among university students. The media must play a positive role in increasing tolerance among students. The life of the Prophet is an example of a tolerant life. Tolerance education should teach at all levels of education. The institution of justice is essential for the creation of a coherent society. Program designers and those who are designing a curriculum should give importance to education in building a society.

The government should take steps to build a nation that is tolerant of all levels of education so that it becomes a symbol of dignity and honor in the world.

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