

Interfaith Collaboration: The Case of PCWR-FF¹ in Contextualizing Postmodern Realities in Pakistan

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Abstract

Religious and faith-based organizations are extremely important for interfaith harmony. With a sizable Muslim population, Pakistan is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious country. Numerous other religions exist, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism. The non-Muslim Kalashi minority also resides in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. From a modernist perspective, the religious affairs in the country were static in the sense that every Religion was confined to its sphere of influence and dialogue as a process of understanding was outside of this equation. In this study, we examine how a postmodern perspective takes shape in Pakistan in the increasing role of those interfaith organizations that believe in religio-cultural harmony and plurality. The Pakistan Council of World Religions-Faith Friends (PCWR-FF) is one platform that encourages dialogue, tolerance, and global collaboration among followers of different faiths. This study shows that all religious leaders concur with most postmodern ideas, including collectivism, equality, pluralism, and interfaith cooperation. The followers of each Religion are keenly conscious of the followers of the other religions. Religious leaders are encouraged by PCWR-FF to adopt postmodern concepts. It gives followers of many faiths a place to gather, converse, and understand one another. Hence, Pakistan has become more tolerant of other religions.

Keywords: PCWR-FF, Interfaith harmony, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kalash Valley, Postmodernism

¹ PCWR-FF stands for Pakistan Council of World Religion-Faith Friends, a registered non-profit organization working for interfaith harmony and collaboration in Pakistan.



Introduction

This study shows how interfaith harmony is taking center stage in Pakistan, a country always remembered for religious intolerance and violence (Javaid, 2011; Rizvi, 2015; Thames, 2014). Pakistan has the World's fifth-largest population (Countries by Population, 2023). It is one of the major countries in South Asia. South Asia is deeply religious with India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and now Afghanistan, where people predominantly identify themselves with one or the other Religion (Evans, 2023). A 2021 survey of religious affiliation in India conducted by the PEW Research Center reported only 0.2% of people who identified themselves as religiously unaffiliated (Sahgal, Evans, Salazar, Starr, & Corichi, 2021), while 99.8% identified themselves either followers of Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Christianity, or other religions. The situation is not different in other countries of South Asia.

In Pakistan, only 0.07% of the population identifies as 'others' that could be religious or non-religious. In comparison, 96.28% identify themselves as Muslims, 1.59% as Christians, 1.60% as Hindus, 0.22% as Qadiani, and 0.25% as scheduled cast (Shah & Nawaz, 2021). This shows just how deeply the lives of the people in South Asia are religiously charged. People of a single religion populate none of the countries in South Asia. They have followers of multiple religions. This makes it very significant to have interfaith harmony and maintain peace amongst the followers of different faiths who might have beliefs or religiously charged histories that are quite antagonistic towards the followers of the other religions (Tahir and Ali, 2022).

Hindustan's religious history, spanning thousands of years, is intertwined between followers of different faiths (Krishnananda, 1970). However, since 1947, the history of Northwestern Hindustan, i.e., Pakistan, took a new turn when it was created as an independent sovereign country based on the premise that British India should be divided into Hindu-majority India and Muslim Majority Pakistan (Roy, 2014). The fact is that the official name of Pakistan is "Islamic Republic of Pakistan" (Article 1 of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973), highlighting the importance of Pakistan as a state and society placed on Religion in general and Islam in particular. This was not an exclusive event of the first half of the 20th Century. Another country was also established in the name of Religion: Israel. Israel calls itself a 'Jewish Democratic' state (Constitution for Israel, 2014).

With a focus on Pakistan, this study examines how different religious minorities are part of the country's religious-cultural landscape and what they say about the postmodern rhetoric of interfaith harmony in the country. The religious minority, although around 03% in Pakistan, is politically more active than the majority Muslim population. In the 2018 General Elections, a 30% increase was observed in minority voter turnout (Khan, 2018). In 2013, 2.77m minority voters

voted; in 2018, the number was 3.63 million. This increase in minority voters' turnout might indicate Pakistan's movement towards a more pluralistic social and political system. Given the fact that there are people of other faiths in Pakistan as well, how does it reconcile with pluralism, religious harmony, interfaith dialogue, and other postmodern thoughts?

Our argument is specifically focused on the interfaith efforts of the Pakistan Council of World Religions – Faith Friends (PCWR-FF), which is a non-governmental organization (NGO) registered with the Economic Affairs Division of Pakistan and located in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. To contrast the typical modernist method of monologue with the diversity of interfaith approaches rooted in a discourse process, we employ the idea of Postmodernism, which does not accept the supremacy of any single 'master narrative' and, therefore, focuses on inclusiveness.

Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Are the world religions willing to accept the postmodern attitudes of pluralism, freedom, and Coexistence?
2. What postmodern attitudes are the religions in Pakistan willing to accept?

Research Objectives

The study aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To explore the attitudes of representatives of different faiths to the postmodern concepts in Pakistan and
2. To explore the role of the Pakistan Council of World Religions-Faith Friends in promoting Postmodern attitudes in Pakistan

Conceptual framework

To understand the perspective of various religions on postmodern attitudes, the following framework was developed from literature on Postmodernism to measure postmodern attitudes:

Table 1: Postmodern Attitudes Concerning Religions

Philosophy	Attitudes concerning Religion	
Postmodernism	1. Coexistence	2. Egalitarianism
	3. Freedom of Religion	4. Pluralism
	5. Collectivism	6. Communalism
	7. Relativism	8. Eclecticism
	9. Interfaith dialogue	10. Interfaith Harmony

Source: Self-generated for this study

Literature Review

(a) PCWR-FF

Pakistan Council of World Religions – Faith Friends (PCWR-FF) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) registered with the Economic Affairs Division of Pakistan and located in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It calls itself a 'representative interfaith organization.' The purpose of PCWR-FF is to 'promote peace and harmony by creating awareness among religious people.' PCWR-FF is involved in promoting a conducive environment for peacebuilding. Its basic assumption is that 'Peacebuilding happens when individuals, communities and organizations work together to create a culture of peace, tolerance and intra /inter-faith harmony' (Pakistan Council of World Religion, n.d.).

(b) Modern and Postmodern

The question of Religion has often gained a significant place in philosophical discussions. Some reject Religion and consider it irrelevant to the pursuit of knowledge. Others accept Religion and consider theology to be a branch of philosophy. In discussing modernism and Postmodernism and the place of Religion, one must first understand the basic notions of modernism and Postmodernism.

According to the Encarta 2008 dictionary, the word 'modern' ry 'belongs to the present day' (Modern, 2008). In philosophical and academic discussion, 'modernism' or 'modernity' is a phase of intellectual development in human history that matured during the age of 'Enlightenment' of the 16th Century. The formative figures of modernism are considered to be Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Rene Descartes (1596-1650), and John Locke (1632-1704). These intellectual figures are

considered modern because they emphasize 'reason' instead of faith. Locke emphasized 'individualism' in his philosophical accounts (Hicks, 2004). The starting point for any modern thinker was 'nature' instead of the supernatural. Supernatural was a pre-modern starting point, a medieval philosophy.

Postmodernism rejected the entire modernism and enlightenment project. It completely rejects the central place of Religion and individualism. Some major features of postmodern intellectual pursuits are social subjectivism, collectivism, egalitarianism, and social constructionism. Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Richard Rorty are considered the vanguard thinkers of Postmodernism (Hicks, 2004).

Postmodern philosophers trace their origin to the works of Immanuel Kant, who radically rejected the central place of reason and provided room for faith and Religion in serious intellectual pursuits. Kant made room for faith and Religion by introducing the concepts of phenomena and noumena. Phenomena is something that can be experienced and that 'which appears.' Rationality and science can play with phenomena. However, the noumenal reality is beyond the comprehension of rationality and empiricism.

Modernism discusses truth and reality, reason and experience, liberty and equality, justice and peace, beauty and progress. The Postmodernists use these concepts in quotation marks. For postmodernists, "truth" is a myth, "Reason" is a white male Eurocentric construct, "Equality" is a mask for oppression, "Peace" and "Progress" is considered implicit or explicit emotional attacks by those who hold power (Hicks, 2004:20). Postmodernism talks about relativism and egalitarianism.

"Objectivity is a myth. There is no truth. There is no right way to read nature or a text. All interpretations are equally valid. Values are socially subjective products. Culturally, no group's values have a special standing. All ways of life, from Afghani to Zulu, are legitimate (Hicks, 2004:20.)"

This last sentence leads us to the present debate: What postmodern attitudes are the world religions in Pakistan currently accepting? Before we delve into finding the answer to this question, let us review some of the literature on Postmodernism and Religion by Pakistani intellectuals.

(c) Postmodernism and Religion in Pakistan

There is very little literature on Religion and Postmodernism published by Pakistani intellectuals.

One of the most influential intellectuals, Akbar S. Ahmad, in his 1992 book titled *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*, argued that the media

is shaping postmodern attitudes and that most of the people in the West know Islam through the lens of the press. Reviewing his book *Discovering Islam*, the famous newspaper *The Economist* commented, "Ahmad's portrait of the [Muslim] ideal... would surprise anyone who formed his impression of Islam from the newspapers (Ahmed, 1991)."

Ahmad and Forst's *After Terror: Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations* calls for a dialogue between various civilizations after the 9/11 attacks. 9/11 does not necessarily have to lead to a clash of civilizations; rather, this clash can be avoided through dialogue, argues the book (Ahmed & Brian, 2013). This is a postmodern attitude. Regarding Pakistan, Ahmad asserts that the postmodern characteristics are changing dynamics in Pakistan.

Methodology

Most studies on Religio religionist employ either. In this study, we develop a social research design. Social science research aims to find patterns in social life (Babbie, 2005). Within the social science traditions, we employ qualitative research design. "Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman, 2012:380).

Data: Source, Sample, Access, Collection

In qualitative studies, people are not only the data source. Rather, they are data repositories (Mason, 2002). They have feelings, knowledge, and experience relevant to their research. There are multiple techniques through which this data can be accessed, such as by observing them, talking to them, video recording them, writing them letters/emails, looking into their diaries, photographs etc.

Keeping in view the objectives of this study, the data source for this study was the followers of various religions who were willing to participate. For this study, religious leaders from various faiths in Pakistan were selected as a data source. To access the data source, the study requested the support of PCWR-FF in identifying the research participants. Since this is a qualitative study, the research participants were selected based on expert sampling techniques. Specialist sampling is suitable for studies that aim to add potential participants with a higher understanding of a subject matter (Nikolopoulou, 2023). Since this study aims to explore the influence of Postmodernism on religions, the followers of different faiths in Pakistan were the potential participants.

Table 2: Participants of the research

Religion	Participants	Religion	Participants
Muslim (Sunni)	1	Hindu	1
Muslim (Shia)	1	Sikh	1
Christian (Catholic)	1	Kalasha	1
Christian (Protestant)	1	Bahai	1
TOTAL	8		

Tools for data collection

This study used in-depth interviews as a tool for data collection. The major themes of the study guided the tool and the interviews, the study objectives and the research question. The interview guide was generated from the conceptual framework of the study.

The following were the major themes of the interviews:

1. Peaceful Coexistence
2. Egalitarianism
3. Religious equality
4. Pluralism
5. Collectivism
6. Communalism
7. Relativism
8. Interfaith Dialogue
9. Interfaith Harmony
10. Religious Extremism in Pakistan?
11. Role of PCWR-FF

During some interviews, the themes were merged into single questions, while separate discussions took place in others. In each interview, we asked the participants about their Religion's perspective on the themes above in Pakistan. The findings are discussed below:

Data Presentation and Analysis

After detailed interviews with the faith actors of different religions, the following themes have been established based on their postmodernist perspective towards Religion.

Table 3: Major Themes from the Data

Theme #	Theme
Theme 1	Every Religion has teachings regarding Peaceful Coexistence and Egalitarianism.
Theme 2:	Every Religion has room for the followers of other religions, leading to pluralistic views
Theme 3:	Communalism, as understood in Postmodernism, was misunderstood by all the research participants, which resulted in irrelevant data.
Theme 4:	All religious leaders recognized relativism.
Theme 5:	All research participants highly appreciated the interfaith dialogue; however, most believe it needs wider social existence.
Theme 6:	For most participants, religious intolerance in Pakistan is not a serious matter but is given undue projection (propaganda).
Theme 7:	The role of PCWR-FF was highly appreciated by all participants in creating religious understanding and harmony in Pakistan.
Theme 8:	Formally or informally, PCWR-FF is promoting postmodern attitudes in Pakistan in terms of religious realities.

Theme 1: Every Religion has teachings regarding Peaceful Coexistence and Egalitarianism

Postmodernism provides room for peaceful Coexistence and egalitarianism (Benali, 2023). The concept of peaceful Coexistence is well-suited to the postmodern worldview. It rejects the idea of one group imposing its values and beliefs on others and instead emphasizes the importance of mutual respect and tolerance. In a postmodern world, peaceful Coexistence means accepting and celebrating the diversity of human experiences and perspectives.

One major theme from the data is peaceful Coexistence and how conscious religious leaders are regarding this attitude. In the following lines, we present the religion-wise primary data with discussion.

(a) Islam, Peaceful Coexistence & Egalitarianism

When it comes to Pakistan, and particularly Muslims around the globe, the connotations of religious intolerance, extremism, and fundamentalism are projected together. A Sunni Muslim participant in the study tells a completely different reality of Islam. When asked about peaceful Coexistence with followers of other religions.

"During the initial days of Islam, in Makka Mukarima, Muslims and non-Muslims lived together. In Madina, there were three categories of people: Muslims, Arab Tribes who were non-Muslims, and Jews. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) made pacts with them for peaceful Coexistence. This was a practical example of Peaceful Coexistence. Islam allows for it."

Living peacefully with people of different faiths is not only allowed in Islam, but the history of Islam has many such examples of peaceful existence. The Holy Scripture of Muslims also calls for peaceful Coexistence. One of the Muslim participants, while referring to the Holy Quran, recited:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ...﴾
[آل عمران] 64 :

Translation: Say, "O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you" (Quran, 2:64).

This holy text and its explanation indicate a practical call for peaceful Coexistence amongst the followers of different faiths. While commenting on what could be included in "Common" or "equitable," the answer was beliefs and a basic code of conduct.

(b) Christianity, Peaceful Coexistence and Egalitarianism

In Christian Europe, bias towards others in general and towards Muslims in particular is a regular theme of literature. The result of which comes in the form of religious intolerance. During the past two decades, the governments in European countries have restricted religious freedom (Diamant, 2019). In 2019, Jeff Diamant wrote an article for the PEW Research Center titled *Europe Experienced a Surge in Government Restrictions on Religious Activity over the Last Decade*. He starts his article by stating: "From national laws regulating religious dress to local laws banning public worship by Muslims, religious restrictions have become more common in Europe in recent years (Diamant, 2019)." Religious restrictions are measured through eight different indices in Europe. Four of the indexes are (1) government limits on religious activity, (2) government harassment of religious groups, (3) social hostilities related to religious norms, and (4) religion-related violence by organized groups. The report indicates an increase in scores on all measures of religious restriction. However, the teachings of Jesus Christ were about peaceful Coexistence, tolerance, forgiveness, and forbearance. In Pakistan, the theme of Christian leaders' discourse is peaceful Coexistence. A member of the Pentecost Christian Community, a protestant community within Christianity, said,

"Once, someone asked *Maseeh* what we should do. He said, "Previously, people were told to have a hand for a hand, teeth for teeth. But I am telling you even to Love your Enemy". This will let people recognize you."

Despite the religious restrictions in Christian countries, particularly against Muslims, "Love Your Enemy" is a common theme in many Christian texts and historical accounts. Christian leaders in Pakistan mostly utter this particular sentence in the context of Religion. Furthermore, a Christian participant also pointed out another fact of peaceful Coexistence in these words,

"You will see Jew Israelites in Europe and America. If the enmity angle is considered, Christians should have much enmity with Jews. They hanged Jesus. They spit on Jesus. They created issues for Christians. But when Jesus was crucified, he said, "Father! Forgive them. They do not understand". Christians, as per Jesus's teachings, live peacefully with Jews. "So *Maseehiat* (Christianity) does not believe in schism. If they do it, they are not living as per Jesus' teaching.

(c) Kalasha, Peaceful Coexistence & Egalitarianism

Considered one of the oldest living people and cultures in the World, Kalasha is a small religious minority in Pakistan. They live in the valleys of lower Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Their Religion differs from mainstream religions in Pakistan and India, such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism. They follow a religion that is indigenous to them. Kalasha is found only in Pakistan. They are not found anywhere else in the World. For Kalasha, Religion and culture are synonymous. Regarding peaceful Coexistence and religious egalitarianism, a representative of Kalasha said:

"Kalasha religion says that you can live together with other religions. There is no restriction. In some religious rituals, we stay away. Otherwise, there is no issue."

It was a new finding for the researchers that there was no restriction on religious conversion in Kalasha when the representative said that the Kalashi religion neither interferes with other religions nor abuses other religions. In Kalash, if their kids adopt other religions, they do not mind and do not forbid them. However, there is a condition of a certain age of maturity for religious conversion.

Regarding religious tolerance and egalitarianism, there is no religious text for Kalasha that provides insight. Kalasha's Religion is based on rituals rather than holy scripture. However, there is great tolerance towards other religions, particularly Islam, as the majority of the people in Kalasha's surroundings are Muslims.

In the Kalasha religion, we accept the existence of other faiths. In Quran, there is an Ayat: ﴿لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ﴾ [الكافرون: 6]. Trans: For you, your Religion. For us, our Religion.

One would be hardly surprised to see a Kalasha leader using references from Muslim sources to justify his claim.

(d) Bahai, Peaceful Coexistence & Egalitarianism

Bahai is a small religious minority in Pakistan. The Bahai faith traces its origin to Bahauallah, a religious cleric born in 1817 in Iran. Regarding peaceful Coexistence, the representative from the Bahai faith said:

"Bahai community principles talk about service to humanity. Hazrat Bahauallah never preaches that whosoever believes in him will be blessed, and the rest will be damned. Rather, he preaches that those who serve humanity for the sake of God's blessings are pious." He added, "The main principles of Bahai faith are the free investigation into nature of reality and truth, equal rights of men and women, compulsory education and brought up and promotion of unity among humans."

The emphasis on promoting unity among humans is not unique to Bahai; it is common to all religions. However, emphasis on compulsory education is a distinct feature of the Bahai minority in Pakistan. This higher education and upbringing have made Bahai followers economically well-off in Pakistan.

One common theme between the Pentecostal Christian faith and Bahai is the emphasis on the practical aspects of the teachings of the founder of the Religion (Jesus and Bahai).

"To remain associated with Hazrat Bahauallah's name, one needs to follow his teachings as well practically."

This is similar to the Christian faith, where the emphasis is on following the *jubilant* of Jesus Christ.

Theme 2: Interfaith Dialogue and Harmony

Interfaith dialogue and harmony was the second major postmodern theme that we were interested in discussing.

Previously, interfaith or interreligious dialogues would be carried out to arrive at the truth, goodness or beauty of certain faiths (Comstock, 1989). However, these factors no longer regulate interfaith dialogues in the postmodern World.

Rather, interfaith dialogues are conducted to look for commonalities among followers of different faiths and live peacefully in harmony.

Our data reveals that the representatives from almost all religions gave higher priority and value to the interfaith dialogue. The Muslim representative said interfaith means [dialogue between] two different faiths. With differences, when we talk about peaceful Coexistence, this means Interfaith [dialogue and harmony].

The Kalasha representative said:

"We believe that we can reduce our differences only through dialogue. For example, our Kalasha religion does not have any religious books. No one can understand us through any book. Only through mutual interaction can we live peacefully and understand each other properly."

The follower of Christianity said:

"We are doing interfaith harmony and dialogue. We are doing. It is necessary to highlight these issues in Pakistan. So, when we do not highlight the contribution of Christians to the Independence of Pakistan, people won't realize it. We have voted for Pakistan. Christians in Punjab joined Pakistan. We fought Wars for Pakistan. Our sister Ruth Pfo contributed a lot to Leprosy. So, Christianity has a welcoming attitude towards interfaith dialogue and harmony."

A disciple of the Bahai faith expressed, "In Pakistan, the Bahai community has been working on interfaith harmony since the 1980s. We used to arrange regular meetings with people belonging to different faiths. In those times, a few Parsi's also lived in Peshawar and used to be part of our gatherings. Bahai community promotes interfaith harmony through its process-based approach."

"In Sikhism, interfaith activities are much needed in rural areas compared to urban areas. The reason is that people in rural areas are mostly unaware and illiterate; they have less understanding of other religions. Hence, grounded interfaith could be an effective way for overcoming or preventing religion-based problems in Pakistan," revealed a Sikh interviewee.

If grounded efforts of interfaith are taking place, then that day is not a way that all people will celebrate *rakee*, *holi*, *bisakee* and *Eid* together like in other countries of the World.

Theme 3: Collectivism and Pluralism

Collectivism and pluralism are ideas that do not look for single realities but accept multiple (plural) realities. Further, these concepts accept diversity and promote collective life (of diverse groups) instead of looking for a single social/political/economic and religious system for all. Regarding collectivism and pluralism, Muslim representatives said:

"Pluralism, to me, is recognizing that individuals of different beliefs and religions may coexist peacefully in a community. We Muslims do not accept the notion that all thoughts are true (*HAQ*). No other religion holds this view. There would be no distinction if all religions were *HAQ*. These distinctions explain why we are unique. Accepting these variations and many readings of the same thing is pluralism. Living with others who hold various worldviews is another aspect of it. However, it is impossible to believe that everyone has *HAQ*."

The Muslim concept of pluralism accepts the existence of other faiths but does not necessarily call them 'true.' For Muslims, Collectivism "The fundamental idea is that all living things, including humans, lead communal lives.

According to the Baha'i spokesperson, there is just one planet and one unalterable and undeniable reality. Due to the evolving conditions, we must adjust. Throughout history, several prophets have appeared with various teachings, but the essence of all is peace and unity. Everything was made to serve both the rules of the cosmos and man. It (Collectivism) is the same as Coexistence, which we practice, not living separately but collectively as a group and becoming a part of each other's ceremonies and festivals. The concept of plurality seems to be non-existent in the Bahai faith. However, the Bahai faith appears to believe in living a collective social life by participating in ceremonies and events of other religions.

According to the Kalasha spokesperson, "Quran is the foundation of Islam. We lack any religious books or texts. Our prayers reflect our values. Islam practices in Kalasha include the Hujj, Zakat, Roza, Namaz, etc., and live according to their unique principles. The concept of collective existence is extremely obvious in our faith. We all recite prayers together. The Kalasha religion strongly emphasizes collectivism." Collectivism for a Kalasha representative means Kalasha-only communal living, prayers, etc.

Theme 4: Religious Extremism in Pakistan

Regarding Religious extremism in Pakistan, the participants had diverse views. The Muslim representative said, "I believe there is a misunderstanding, and it is not without cause. Propaganda is the cause. Due to commercial or political motives, propaganda is spread because some people benefit from it socially and

economically. Similar issues have varied treatment in various places (countries). The issue is heavily debated and condemned in one nation while being disregarded in the other. For instance, the shutting down of a synagogue in Pakistan will be received in a completely different way than an attack on a mosque in Israel. I don't disagree that there are instances, but in most situations, the problem seems to be political or financial. The *Jaranwala* event also included private concerns."

Regarding religious diversity, the Christian representative asserts that Pakistan has no fanaticism. People of many religions shared a sense of love, respect, and social harmony. But that's no longer the case. For two reasons, people's viewpoints have gotten more extreme. Either you side with them or against them. You are either with us or against us, which is the same 9/11 ideology. A wider generation has led to a more radical stance, and second, older people's influence has diminished.

The Kalasha representative said, "Westerners are free to think anything they choose. But I guess the Kalash would already be extinct if they had been in India or Europe. We are Pakistan's indigenous inhabitants. We governed Chitral. The fact that we live in Pakistan is a blessing from Allah (the conversation employs the term Allah, a Muslim concept). Pakistan is not a threat to us, in our opinion. It is because of the majority that we are safe and preserved. The PIA always included Kalasha culture in their displays of Pakistani culture. It implies that Pakistan owns us. So, in Pakistan, we are quite content."

It was astonishing for the researcher to find that Kalasha thinks this way: if they were in Europe, India, or anywhere else, they would have gone extinct, as many aboriginal people have.

Regarding religious extremism, the *Bahai* representative said, "Conflict is something natural that can occur between individuals, groups and communities. I have lived in KPK and most of the time interacted with *Pakhtuns*, never experienced any extremist behavior, and the example I can give you is of PCWR-FF, where I, as a member, have always been respected for belonging to the Bahai faith, which is widely mistaken as Ahmadi faith or an offshoot of it, which it is not. Ahmadis do not believe in the finality of prophethood, whereas Bahais do." For Bahais, nothing is wrong in terms of Religion. For Sikhs, "There are challenges, but interfaith efforts could overcome those."

Theme 5: Role of PCWR-FF in Promoting Postmodern Attitudes

Regarding the role of PCWR-FF, the participants had diverse views. Overall, it is positive, but they think there is room for improvement. The Muslim representative stated that the foundation of PCWR-FF is the idea of tolerating those who practice diverse religions. Be those religious rivals, not as enemies but as

people with different knowledge. Kalasha believes that PCWR plays a vital role by providing a platform for all religions to live peacefully. PCWR and its seminars are usually in Peshawar. In one of such seminars, we said that if we can take such discussions to the Tehsil level and Village level [that will be much more effective]. Calling people from far-flung areas to Peshawar is not working properly. It will have a higher impact if we can take it to villages.

The Sikh scholar said, "I like the work of PCWR because it allows scholars and individuals from other religions to gather and discuss their ideas. Comparably, when members of many religions gather together, they discuss humanity rather than their respective religions. Minorities now have a platform through PCWR to discuss many human rights problems. These initiatives enable us to appreciate and listen to one another. Most religious people talk about fundamental principles. However, it is a universal truth of all religions that many people are ignorant of or misinformed, and the PCWR fills this need."

According to the Bahai representative, they [PCWR] are working very well in their capacity, but they must divert their efforts towards more process-based approaches. Only then will they be able to penetrate and implement something on the policy-making level?

Conclusion

(a) Attitudes of representatives of different religions to the postmodern concepts in Pakistan

The data reveals that almost all religious representatives had expressed their religious leanings towards plurality, identifying the significance of postmodern concepts such as peaceful Coexistence, collectivism, egalitarianism, pluralism, interfaith dialogue, and harmony. In other words, while every Religion claims to respect the rights of believers and non-believers who belong to any faith in its historical texts, the contemporary obstacles of politics and economics make interfaith harmony more complex and trickier. This is the predominant idea of religious comprehension that we discovered among the interviewees, which makes followers of one Religion conscious of the followers of another. Husnul Amin (2002) presented the same arguments in his book "Post-Islamism" that post-colonial Pakistan took a deliberate step towards moderate Islam starting in 1999 by giving space to non-Muslim views, which later resulted in "silent evolution" between 2006 and 2014 (Amin, 2019). Additionally, he called this time "Post-Islamism" (XVI). Post-Islamism is predicated on the postmodernist tenet that respects variety and context.

To put it another way, the concept of post-Islamism theoretically privileges ontology over epistemology in that it interprets religious texts as historical

documents in light of current challenges. Fawzia Afzal Khan criticized the postmodern capitalism, patriarchy, and fundamentalism in Pakistan. She argues that Postmodernism in Pakistan is at a crossroads with traditionalist and fundamentalist forces (Afzal-Khan, 2001). Ahmad asserts that the postmodern characteristics are changing dynamics in Pakistan. The new trends are "a heightened awareness of and debate about religious identity, an ethnic revivalism, diverse political discourse, and a questioning of modernity" (Ahmed, 1991). Besides Akbar S. Ahmad, other works on Postmodernism and Religion in Pakistan seem almost non-existent.

This study fills the knowledge gap in the literature on Postmodernism and religious minorities in Pakistan.

(b) Role of Pakistan Council of World Religions-Faith Friends in promoting postmodern attitudes in Pakistan

PCWR-FF is working on promoting postmodern attitudes amongst religious representatives. It provides a platform to representatives of all religions in Pakistan, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsi, Bahais, Kalashs, Hindus, and others so that they can sit together, talk to each other, and understand each other. This is resulting in more interreligious tolerance amongst different faiths in Pakistan. However, its work is project-based, which has sustainability issues. Further, its job is concentrated in major cities. The problem lies in rural areas where more efforts can be focused.

Recommendations

1. To bring together people of different religions and to provide them the opportunity to work together for peaceful Coexistence and conflict avoidance, PCWR-FF needs to expand the interfaith collaboration to rural areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan in general.
2. PCWR-FF needs to emphasize process-oriented rather than project-oriented activities to maximize the impact of interfaith collaboration.
3. Youth, adult, and female faith-based groups that can routinely be engaged in conversation and debate for socioeconomic growth through social harmony must be formed in this regard.
4. PCWR-FF needs to conduct assessments and research to evaluate the success of interfaith initiatives and identify potential issues that could hamper interreligious cooperation.
5. In addition to promoting interfaith harmony and discussion, PCWR-FF should promote intra-faith cooperation among various Islamic sects to prevent Conflict

and threats to the Coexistence of people of different religions. For instance, the Shia-Sunni conflict frequently fosters a hostile climate that threatens the existence of adherents of other faiths, including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and others.

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