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Integrating Gender into Counter-Terrorism: A Critical Analysis of National Internal Security Policy of Pakistan

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Abstract

Conflicts around the world create conditions that offer challenges and opportunities for women. Gender analysis offers how conflict and security affect people with differences being observed based on gender. Conflicts arise due to the existence of structural inequalities and the perpetual exclusion of women from leadership roles in social, economic, and political realms. The National Internal Security Policy of Pakistan NISP 2018-2023 gives significant consideration to incorporating gender perspectives into mainstream knowledge and policy making. This research paper aims to analyze NISP, with a specific focus on incorporating gender considerations within the framework of preventing and countering violent extremism (PVE). This article underlines the necessity of working not only on the kinetic indicators but also on the cognitive and socio-economic processes to combat terrorism and extremism. Additionally, this research highlights the significance of gender equality and the need for incorporating women's perspectives and their active participation in the formulation of policies. Finally, this research provided policy implications to strengthen the working and output of the NISP in dealing with violent extremism and promoting gender parity. To enhance the efficacy of NISP, the incorporation of gender-sensitive measures is necessary to attain enduring peace and social cohesion in society.

Keywords Gender and Counter-Terrorism, NISP, Patriarchy, Cultural Values, Women's Perspectives

Introduction

During instances of conflicts, atrocities, genocides, and wars within a community, women and children bear the greatest brunt and are the most vulnerable groups, despite having minimal involvement in the events that trigger these conflicts. Women disproportionately experience the negative effects of violence and societal disintegration in nations affected by war. Put simply, they are consistently the main sufferers of a societal condition that they possess minimal or no authority over. Although women are the main targets of war, they are seldom acknowledged as key participants in the negotiation of peace agreements (Rumi, 2015). They seldom engage in peace negotiations due to the common perception that it is predominantly a matter of masculinity. From 1990 to 2017, women comprised only 2% of conflict

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mediators and 8% of peace negotiators globally, according to a United Nations assessment. This data indicates that women are frequently marginalized when it comes to pursuing nonviolent resolutions to conflicts. Women are unjustly precluded from conflict resolution methods and are disproportionately affected by conflict. (Khan et al., 2017). This stems from their perception that they have minimal or non-existent input to provide towards the peace movement.

The Pakistani government has mostly employed security measures in its efforts to address the menace of violent extremism, resulting in significant displacement of populations and extensive loss of life and property (Hussain, 2021). In regions affected by post-conflict circumstances, Pakistani women have experienced profound consequences stemming from trauma, displacement, and violence, which have become defining features of the conflict's aftermath. The limited skills or educational backgrounds of numerous women in post-conflict settings significantly hinder their ability to access economic opportunities. In the previous decade, the Pakistani government devised and implemented several security policy initiatives, such as the National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines (2018), the National Internal Security Policy (2014–2018), the National Action Plan (2015–2018), the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997 and its 2014 amendments, and the National Action Plan Implementation Strategy (Khan, 2022). Although certain tools attempt to recognize and account for the gendered aspects of security policy, they ultimately fail to provide a comprehensive framework, that can adequately integrate women and their concerns into the formulation and implementation of security policies, as well as a gender-sensitive assessment of the policies' outcomes.

As females and girls who are impacted by acts of terrorism, they demonstrate an increased susceptibility and therefore require specific safety protocols. This encompasses the protection of the human rights of women in situations involving extremist violence, such as displacement, conflict, and other similar circumstances. (Asia, 2021). The Security Council has prioritized the issue of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and its association with trafficking in the context of terrorism, as demonstrated by resolutions 2331 (2016) and 2388 (2017). It is of the utmost significance to acknowledge that a gender-sensitive approach must also include the experiences of masculine victims. In capacities such as perpetrators, enablers, or sympathizers, women may engage in acts of terrorism. The phenomenon of female foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) who travel to, depart from, and relocate from conflict zones is garnering attention, despite its historical existence. A significant information gap persists about the underlying factors contributing to the radicalization of women (Abbas & Cheema, 2022). This situation presents a predicament, as the identification of the optimal plan of action necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental factors at play. As enshrined in Council Resolution 2242 (2015), it is crucial to evaluate how CTPs differentially impact women and their human rights. Other researchers have shown that counter-

terrorism policies including laws banning the financing of terrorism influence women in similar ways. This is especially the case in regions where women are forced to use infrequent, irregular methods of transferring remittances since they are barred from accessing banking services (Fair et al., 2006). Representing a constant commitment to gender mainstreaming within all of its initiatives designed to support Member States in the fight against terrorism as per Resolutions 2242 (2015) and 2395 (2017). This means that efforts in the area of gender must be all-encompassing, and include not just prevention measures, but also intervention, response, prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration. CTED incorporates gender considerations in all its interactions with any government and with the business world. Therefore, this study seeks to establish the participation and engagement of women and girls in the implementation of Council Resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), and 2178 (2014). CTED conducts investigations into various strategies employed by terrorist organizations and identifies areas where technological support is required (Abbas, 2016). This approach acknowledges the valuable contributions of women and girls, who bring a range of viewpoints, abilities, and life experiences to these endeavours.

In addition, CTED incorporates the viewpoints of women into the evaluation of nationalization initiatives conducted by the Committee. In some instances, the participation of UN women on the assessment committee contributed to the accomplishment of this goal. CTED, which co-chairs the Working Group of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, is dedicated to ensuring that counterterrorism initiatives effectively incorporate a gender-sensitive approach (Akbar, 2011). The principal aim of the research endeavour entitled "A Gendered Analysis of Pakistan's National Internal Security Policy" is to fill current knowledge voids and make a scholarly contribution towards the incorporation of gendered perspectives into Pakistan's security policies. Additionally, the gap analysis fosters improved social cohesion (Christine Fair & Chalk, 2006). Among communities and the resolution of escalating security issues that disproportionately impact women in Pakistan.

Review of the Literature

The research on the perpetration and consequences of actions that are commonly regarded as terrorism is devoid of female representation. Women are wholly disregarded in the current research on terrorism. Several recent significant books on terrorism, such as Bruce Hoffman's Inside Terrorism, Ken Booth and Tim Dunne's edited Worlds in Collision, and Walter Enders and Todd Sandler's The Political Economy of Terrorism, do not include a specific section or comprehensive analysis of the role of women or the gender dynamics and effects of terrorism. It is crucial to acknowledge this (Sjoberg, 2009). The "terrorist" is generally assumed to be inherently masculine in numerous studies on terrorism. Feminist studies posit that there are a variety of perspectives that perceive, encounter, and understand terrorism

in unique ways. These perspectives are not exclusive to women, but rather inclusive of them. Jaggar (2000) has observed that individuals who identify as women are located at the epicentre of conflicting social influences in the global arena (Sober, 2009).

The achievements of women in addressing violent extremism and terrorism, both offline and online, have been widely recognized and appreciated. Women can assume a crucial role in the identification of early signs and the implementation of de-radicalization initiatives within their communities and households. However, these bodies play a crucial role in policy development, ensuring security, and providing law enforcement services. The inclusion of women in security measures is a crucial factor in the pursuit of gender equality and frequently contributes to the effectiveness of law enforcement activities (Fair & Chalk, 2006). The inclusion of women in policy creation and decision-making processes leads to a broad range of opinions and knowledge. Furthermore, it facilitates the inclusion of a wider array of individuals with vested interests, allowing them to engage and avail themselves of areas that would otherwise be inaccessible due to cultural and religious constraints. Enhancing the involvement of women in law enforcement could potentially bolster the efficacy of early warning systems and threat assessments, as well as expand the potential for community engagement initiatives (Aziz, 2008). Given the aforementioned circumstances, on October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325 in response to the ongoing marginalization of women. Furthermore, this resolution was regarded as a significant triumph for the feminist movement. Particularly, the Security Council's implementation of the framework on women, peace, and security contributed to positive progress (UNSC, 2000). Although resolution 1325 acknowledges the potential for women to be singled out during times of conflict.

Research Methodology and Objectives

This study is primarily based on secondary data, gathered from a wide array of sources including textbooks, scholarly articles, and other written materials procured from libraries. In addition to these, the research utilized online sources that provided insights into the gender perspective on counterterrorism. The data sources referenced are publicly accessible records. The study employed a qualitative methodology to analyze and interpret the collected data. This approach enabled a deeper understanding of the gender dynamics within peace studies, particularly focusing on the role of women in peacebuilding efforts.

Data Collection Methods

Documentary Analysis: The study involved a thorough review and analysis of existing literature, including academic journals, books, reports, and other relevant documents. The documentary analysis helped in identifying patterns, themes, and

gaps in the current knowledge regarding the role of women in conflict zones and peacebuilding initiatives.

Thematic Analysis: To analyze the data, thematic analysis was employed. This technique involved coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the integration of gender in peace studies and the involvement of women in counterterrorism efforts.

Content Analysis: A content analysis was also conducted to assess the portrayal and emphasis on women's roles in peacebuilding in various sources. This method allowed for a systematic examination of the communication and representation of women in the context of conflict resolution and peace initiatives.

The purpose of the evaluation of the "National Internal Security Policy of Pakistan through a Gender Lens" is to resolve the aforementioned gaps in knowledge and to facilitate the integration of gender perspectives into Pakistan's security policies (UNSC, 2019). This study aims to improve the comprehensive and equitable representation and involvement of women in all aspects of peace processes and security endeavours, by the strategic plan of UN Women for the years 2018–2021. The Gap analysis also plays a significant role in fostering greater cohesion between communities and effectively tackling rising security challenges that affect these communities. The precise aims of this research endeavour are as follows:

1. To discern and effectively respond to the unique security requirements and vulnerabilities experienced by women and girls based on their gender.

2. Advocate for the comprehensive and significant engagement of marginalized communities, especially women leaders and networks, in the process of determining security objectives and implementing security measures.

3. Enhance the conduct, efficacy, and responsibility of both formal and informal security agents, with a specific focus on safeguarding the well-being of women and girls.

4. Ascertain the disparities between genders within these strategic frameworks.

5. Offer suggestions for enhanced and pertinent policies/strategies that guarantee the engagement and safeguarding of women and girls in pursuit of this objective.

National Internal Security Policy of Pakistan (NISP)

Pakistan, in its capacity as a low-income developing country (LIDC), confronts an extensive array of challenges in society, security, and politics (Mazhar & Goraya, 2019). Terrorism and violent extremism, in their multifaceted forms, are the foremost

security concerns that are frequently cited. Recently, the implementation of kinetic measures by the state has yielded some degree of success in preventing the occurrence of terrorist acts. Nevertheless, it is critical to acknowledge that acts of terrorism do not transpire in isolation; instead, they are influenced by ideological, socioeconomic, and cultural factors that bolster extremist ideologies and promote violent conduct (Khan, 2011). Consequently, kinetic tactics are constrained by their inability to address the socioeconomic and ideological factors that motivate individuals to engage in violent extremism. Academics and policymakers are increasingly in agreement that to effectively address the underlying causes of violent extremism, tailored non-kinetic strategies are required in addition to kinetic interventions (Ahmad et al., 2016). Legislators and policymakers in Pakistan have implemented a multitude of policies and laws to eradicate the violent extremism ecosystem. This segment presents a scholarly evaluation of the 2018–2023 National Internal Security Policy. The analysis is performed on gender.

The subsequent segment outlines the advantages and disadvantages of the current policy instruments. It is essential to emphasize that this research employs a multidimensional perspective on gender, which encompasses cisgender, transgender, and non-binary identities. Nevertheless, the recognition of non-binary and transgender gender identities in Pakistan is still in its preliminary stages; as a result, the primary emphasis will be on women. Additionally, this section applies the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) framework of the United Nations Security Council to undertake a critical assessment of Pakistan's security policy over the past thirty years (Muzammal & Akbar, 2020). The focus of this research is on four fundamental processes for preventing violent extremism: "prevention," "protection," "participation," and "relief and recovery." This study critically evaluates the deficiencies and inadequacies of current policy frameworks, with a specific emphasis on the marginalized participation of women's organizations and the limited regulatory authority in the context of efforts to combat and contain violent extremism. The research therefore concludes with several policies relying on pragmatic challenges and objective context that Pakistan faces.

In 2018, the federal cabinet of Pakistan authorized the National Internal Security Policy (2018-2023). A commitment to gender mainstreaming is evident in all decisions within NISP as it recognizes the importance of the inclusion of women and other marginalized genders in policy development and implementation (Ilyas, 2021). Adnan et al. (2018) consider gender mainstreaming one of the most critical approaches to the PVE toolkit. The NISP references the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan and the life of the founder of Pakistan to stress the importance of gender equality in all sectors of Pakistani society and to move forward to serve the ideology of Pakistan’s founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in terms of economic progress, social justice, and the creation of unity in the country of Pakistan.

The NISP is quite significant in this respect because it diverges from the mechanistic approach and establishes an overbearing expectation for constructing policies for the prevention and counter-violent extremism (PVE) in Pakistan. The NISP is suggested to present an ideal framework that consists of six R's and employs a dialectical approach. The six R's comprise the subsequent elements: first, the need to reform the security establishments; second, the importance of reshaping society; third, the urgency of promoting unity among the hitherto excluded societies and geographic areas within society; fourth, the call for resource rebalancing; fifth, the need to operationalize regionalism with support from the neighbouring societies; and lastly, the recognition of the need for the continued research on the suggested strategies. The dialectical approach that is used at NISP is based on the recognition that V & E affects various spheres of human life including political, economic, cultural, and others. At the same time, it is also a recipient of these societal components as well (Iqbal et al., 2012). An aspect worthy of mention is the comprehensive methodology employed by NISP, which emphasizes discerning the fundamental origins of terrorism as opposed to exclusively endorsing containment strategies.

In policy circles, it is commonly observed that there is a prevailing inclination to employ a reductionist and essentialist methodology. This approach involves concentrating on a singular component while neglecting to recognize the interconnected and dynamic nature of social, political, cultural, economic, and ideological variables. Based on the comprehensive epistemological framework presented in the policy, NISP sets forth an ambitious agenda that aims to provide a comprehensive and gendered perspective on preventing violent extremism (PVE). Numerous scholarly research has provided evidence to support the notion that gendered hierarchies have the potential to sustain conflict within civilizations. Pakistan has been positioned as the sixth-most perilous nation for women according to relevant rankings (Khan, 2023). Gender-based stereotypes are prevalent in Pakistan, posing adverse effects not just on women but also on the overall societal harmony.

The prevalence of domestic abuse among married women in Pakistan is approximately 33%, while approximately 90% of women in Pakistan experience various forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual assault. In light of the dominant and pervasive influence of patriarchy within Pakistani society, the phenomenon of domestic violence against women is rationalized and legitimized based on socio-cultural justifications (Yusuf, 2020). It is quite probable that young males and females who observe instances of domestic violence perpetrated against women within their households or communities would internalize the notion that resorting to violence as a method of conflict resolution is deemed socially acceptable, starting from a young age. This has the potential to be damaging in two distinct manners: 1) Young males, specifically, and males in general, perceive violence against females as a matter related to the household or family, and/or as a cultural

expectation. 2) Owing to limited options for legal and social redress against individuals who commit acts of violence, young females, specifically, and females in general, often experience a sense of powerlessness and may develop apathy towards instances of violence and mistreatment (Bari, 2009). Therefore, it could be contended that adolescent males and females who are exposed to instances of violence against women within their households and communities are susceptible to psychological vulnerabilities that may lead them to adopt violent extremist ideas.

Within this particular context, the primary focus of NISP lies in the alteration and modification of the current curriculum, to instigate a transformation in the attitudes and perspectives of young individuals. This endeavour involves the elimination of all content within the curriculum that promotes division, hatred, and misogyny. Such an initiative can be regarded as a significant stride towards progress and alignment with desirable objectives. Furthermore, the National Integrated Strategy for PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism) acknowledges the critical importance of addressing domestic violence against women as a significant barrier to effective PVE efforts (Macaulay, 2012). The argument posits that to promote social cohesiveness and social justice, it is imperative to fully implement and execute all laws designed to protect women, including the Women Protection Act, Anti-Rape Bill, Anti-Honor Killing Act, and Acid and Burn Crime Bill (Yusuf, 2020). The enforcement and fortification of the Anti-Honor Killing Act, Anti-Rape Bill, and Acid and Burn Crime Bill would be prioritized, with the integration of modern scientific investigation techniques, such as DNA samples, to reduce the occurrence of gender-based violence.

NISP additionally emphasizes the criticality of women's empowerment as a preventive measure against violent extremism. Particularly, it underscores the importance of economic empowerment for women, encompassing domains beyond the professional sphere and even within the household. The significance of recognizing the monetary value of uncompensated domestic and home labour performed by women, who frequently forego professional advancements to fulfill their familial obligations, is emphasized in particular by NISP (Abbas & Cheema, 2022). The economic value of the labour performed by women in the home, during which they sacrifice their professional pursuits to care for the household and raise children, will be appropriately recognized. The proposed amendment to the Family Laws would include provisions for the evaluation of in-kind financial assistance rendered to the family.

Furthermore, guaranteeing fair and equal opportunities, specifically in the domains of education and employment, is a priority for the NISP (Chinkin, 2003). This is accomplished through strict quota observance and the successful reintegration of all marginalized groups into the fabric of society. Historically, there has been a conspicuous lack of female participation in the policymaking process concerning the prevention and countering of violent extremism (PVE) in Pakistan. This deficiency

has been recognized as a substantial one. The NISP initiative promotes the inclusion of historically marginalized groups, including women and minorities, in all future policy formulation processes. The integration of marginalized groups, such as women, transgender people, and individuals with disabilities, into public and private sector workforces and educational institutions shall be achieved via the application of affirmative action policies (Mansab, 2023). This will facilitate their equal opportunity and participation.

One notable limitation of the NISP is its failure to explicitly address the phenomenon of women's recruitment by terrorist organizations. In addition, the text briefly discusses the necessity of establishing distinct correctional facilities for female offenders and juvenile offenders in all districts, including the federal territory. This point holds significance for a minimum of two reasons. In light of the prevailing dominance of patriarchal structures within the Pakistani state and society, it is evident that women incarcerated in prisons are highly susceptible to experiencing violence. Consequently, it becomes imperative to reconceptualize prisons as rehabilitation facilities that prioritize the creation of a secure environment for women (Malik, 2014). Furthermore, it is important to note that women incarcerated for violent acts in Pakistan may exhibit distinct motivations and justifications for engaging in such criminal behaviour. This can be attributed to their unique socialization and habituation processes, which differ from those experienced by men. Consequently, the provision of rehabilitation and counselling that are gender-sensitive is of paramount significance to female inmates.

NISP and Women Integration in Combating Terrorism

The NISP 2018-2023 addresses the issue of women's participation in a variety of security and social policies. Nevertheless, it fails to integrate women and gender minorities into critical policy perspectives, particularly those related to the 6Rs.

The Reorientation of Security Apparatus

The proposed reorientation of the security apparatus seeks to implement significant reforms within state security and law enforcement agencies. However, there is room for improvement by providing explicit guidelines on the involvement of women in enhancing the gender representation and sensitivity of these agencies towards the gendered aspects of preventing and countering violent extremism (PVE). As exemplified by NISP 2018, it is asserted that the modernization of the state security apparatus should encompass not just improvements in infrastructure and capability, but also the acceptance of a people-centric approach and a re-evaluation of its raison d'état. In light of the pronounced gender hierarchies prevalent in Pakistan, probably, a "people-centric" strategy will inadvertently perpetuate prevailing gender disparities, and potentially be construed as a "men-centric" one (Ganguly, 2022). Considering the significant lack of female representation within the state security apparatus, it is

necessary to address this issue by prioritizing a women-centric strategy, in addition to a people-centric approach, to effectively reorient the state security apparatus. Regrettably, it was either disregarded or omitted unintentionally.

The Re-imagination of Society

The reimagining of society is cantered on the second 'R', which appropriately emphasizes the construction of a fresh national narrative cantered on principles of peace, pluralism, inclusivity, and national cohesiveness. Additionally, there is a demand to reject and eradicate all detrimental myths that contradict the welfare of young individuals, women, minorities, and other marginalized communities. Nevertheless, one could contend that the effectiveness of this undertaking could have been augmented had women been actively engaged throughout, commencing with the preliminary phases of imagining an alternative discourse and continuing through its execution and pervasive acceptance by the general populace. To strengthen a collective vision for the nation, it is necessary to reconceive society as an inclusive, democratic, and tolerant polity. It is imperative to underscore the fact that gender equality is a prerequisite for the formation of a democratic, inclusive, and tolerant society (Makki & Akash, 2022). Therefore, it is discouraging to note that the NISP's conceptualization of societal reinvention does not explicitly give precedence to the consideration of gender. Enhancement is necessary to the current narrative, specifically in the areas of gender mainstreaming and the promotion of gender equality, to cultivate tolerance throughout society.

Reconciliation Approach

The concept of reconciliation is a process that involves the resolution of conflicts or differences between individuals or groups. It is a means of restoring: The third component focuses on a policy (proposal aimed at reconciling and reintegrating Islamist/Nationalist militants into the broader national framework, with particular emphasis on regions such as the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Baluchistan, Karachi, and certain parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) (Makki & Akash, 2022). The promotion of non-violence and the reintegration of individuals must be incentivized to a larger extent than the perpetuation of militancy and anti-social behaviour. Additionally, there will be an initiation of a reconciliation process, particularly in areas that have been impacted by sub-nationalist and ethnopolitical militancy. However, a significant limitation of this approach is its failure to acknowledge the gendered dimension of violent extremism and the specific ways in which extremist forces perceive and treat women. Hence, it is suggested that the aforementioned plan may have been enhanced through the incorporation of women and the solicitation of their comments, given that women were disproportionately impacted by terrorism in the specified regions. The process of reintegrating militants should encompass the provision of education aimed at

instilling an understanding of the significance of advancing gender equality within society.

Redistribution of Resources

The fourth component of the NISP places significant emphasis on the equitable redistribution of resources throughout society. This particular aspect of the policy aims to ensure a fair allocation of resources, particularly toward marginalized groups like women, youth, and minorities. The current initiative, albeit commendable, combines women with minority groups and young individuals (Masood, 2021). One crucial focus in this context involves the advancement of marginalized groups, including youth, women, and minorities, in terms of their social, economic, and political well-being. Women belonging to religious and ethnic minorities face even greater disadvantages compared to men from the same ethnic and religious backgrounds. Additionally, the research indicates that households headed by females experience greater disadvantages compared to households headed by males. Therefore, redistribution policy must acknowledge the intricate relationship that exists among social class, ethnicity, religion, and gender. An explicit delineation of gender-based reallocation of resources, disbursements of currency, provision of state services, and other germane aspects can serve to improve the policy. It is crucial to recognize the immense importance of incorporating female experts into the consultative and decision-making processes on redistribution.

Regional Integration and Cooperation

The strategic framework known as the regional approach is cantered on the resolution of challenges and concerns that arise within a particular geographic region (Khan, 2022). It entails cooperation and collaboration among adjacent states or countries to accomplish shared objectives: The fifth 'R' concern is the formation of strong partnerships and partnerships with adjacent nations to effectively combat violent militancy and terrorism. Additionally, the text addresses a shift in emphasis from geopolitics to geo-economics. Numerous security concerns, including terrorism, are inherently transnational, requiring international collaboration and coordination among nations and regions. However, the lack of female involvement in these collaborative and high-level policy formulation processes is once more conspicuous. This particular "R" would have been considerably improved by placing a greater emphasis on the gendered dimension of the regional approach, as certain feminist theories suggest that female world leaders are more likely to advocate for peace and long-lasting regional cooperation. Acknowledging or identifying an entity or individual is essential.

Recognition

The final 'R' underscores the imperative to improve research and educational benchmarks, specifically in the disciplines of Humanities and Social Sciences, to

attain parity with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) (Akhtar, 2022). This statement recognizes the prospective advantages that Pakistan could derive from the integration of the natural and human sciences. By doing so, it is hypothesized that Pakistani society can be more tolerant, pluralistic, and receptive to diverse narratives. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that this integration will aid the Pakistani government in its shift towards policymaking grounded in empirical evidence and enhance its capacity for analysis. Academic institutions and universities must encourage high-quality research to identify the fundamental factors that motivate individuals to adopt extreme viewpoints and commit extreme actions. However, the program neglects to acknowledge the obstacles that Pakistani women face when attempting to attain advanced degrees and establish academic careers. There is a substantial number of males who are responsible for senior policy-making positions at the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, including the majority of vice-chancellors. Therefore, to promote diversity and pluralism, gender mainstreaming and gender equality must be incorporated.

Conclusion and Way Forward

To ensure the long-term viability of efforts to prevent violent extremism (PVE), policymakers must recognize the complex and multifaceted agency that women possess. This suggests that legislation and policies ought to encompass more than just the protection of women against violent extremism; they should also facilitate and encourage women's active participation in countering violent extremism. A lack of advancement has been observed in the integration of policies and interventions that specifically target women within Pakistan's existing security frameworks (Asia, 2021). Despite this, a substantial void remains in the comprehensive incorporation of a gender perspective throughout the entirety of the security policymaking process. In conclusion, it is possible to say that Pakistan's security strategies demonstrate a notable lack of integration of gender mainstreaming. While Pakistani authorities have attempted to promote gender inclusivity, to achieve gender mainstreaming, it is essential to ensure that women and gender minorities are given equal representation, authority, and resources in all four spheres of PVE (prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recuperation).

The National Interior Security Policy (NISP) was formulated by policymakers who, in contrast to their predecessors, have successfully confronted the deficiencies in internal security policies. In addition, they have increased the scope of the policy framework's impact (Dilawar & Khan, 2019). The aforementioned concern emphasizes the criticality of incorporating a gender-sensitive methodology into the overarching security structure. However, considerable room for improvement remains, and further investigation is justified in the form of scholarly research that specifically scrutinizes Player versus Environment (PVE) activities through the lens of gender. The violent extremism phenomenon is influenced by and reciprocally

influenced by a variety of social variables, including gender. Nevertheless, the authors neglect to offer a definitive indication regarding the relative significance of gender to other factors (Mullally, 2011). Gender is a substantial determinant in the allocation of social privileges and benefits, as well as the distribution of economic resources, within the patriarchal framework of Pakistan. Therefore, it is critical to undertake a thorough analysis of the interplay between genders in the context of violent extremism in Pakistan. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the NISP lacks sufficient recognition of the potential for women to participate in violent extremist activities.

In Pakistan, policies about PVE (Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism) must be grounded in current scholarly investigations and incorporate knowledge gained from the experiences of neighbouring countries in the area. Existing research suggests that through their effective prevention of gang and criminal organizations, women play a significant and advantageous role in their communities. Recruitment (Mustafa et al., 2019). Fundamentally, incorporating gendered analysis into a policy is not only morally defensible but also the most effective method for preventing and combating violent extremism. Policymakers in Pakistan must therefore give precedence to gender considerations in the development of future policies. In light of the nation's past encounters with religious and sectarian extremism, no complacency must befall us. This involves recognizing and confronting the substantial elements that contribute to modern-day extremism and terrorism, while not disregarding their pertinence.

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