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### Effects of Religious Dynamics Radical by Sectarianism on Shia-Sunni Family in District Kurram of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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**Abstract:** This study examines the effects of radical religious dynamics driven by sectarianism on Shia-Sunni family structures in District Kurram, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan—one of the country's most sectarianism-affected regions. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from a randomly selected sample of 200 respondents, equally representing Shia and Sunni communities, using a structured questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Univariate analysis was conducted through frequency and percentage distributions, while bivariate analysis was performed using the Chi-square test to determine associations between the dependent variable (Shia-Sunni family) and independent variables (religious dynamics). The findings reveal that sectarian divisions negatively affect Muslim unity and social cohesion. Sunni families were found to exhibit a relatively more rigid adherence to religious teachings, while both sects maintain separate religious institutions and practices. The role of religious clerics significantly expanded following the latest wave of sectarian conflict, with Sunni scholars receiving advanced religious education mainly from Arab states and Shia scholars from Iran and Iraq. External religious patronage, divergent worship practices, financial contributions to militant groups under the guise of religious obligations, and non-participation in each other's rituals have further deepened sectarian divides. The study recommends resolving jurisprudential differences through the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, ensuring the welfare-oriented use of Zakat and Khums, and promoting inter-sect harmony through religious decrees and institutional cooperation.

#### Introduction

One of the Pakistan based professor while interviewing to a TV channel said; Islam teaches honor, respect and peace for all. We are Muslims but our habits and deeds are like Hindus. We cannot tell the truth to our fellow being because we lack tolerance to heed the truth. We are not imparted to listen the facts. We become failed to keep Bangladesh with us and now challenging Kashmir at the movement when we are unable to keep Sunni and Shias together. The government of Pakistan is unable to solve

the problems of the common people. Allah, give the bravery and the wisdom to the Muslims so that they stop killing each other's (Asma, 2017). In such conditions, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the United States of America (USA) and later in Spain and the United Kingdom (UK) by radical Muslims and the great turmoil that followed worldwide after cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were published in Denmark in 2006, raised many doubts about Western multiculturalism. Rightwing nationalists and racists in Europe began to argue more loudly that Western and Islamic cultures were inconsonant; therefore, Muslim refugees should be transported back to places from where they came (Ishtiaq Ahmed, 2006). Religious leaders raised their followers to defeat the other faction; conflict was started at different levels i.e. Shia-Sunni; native-migrant; rural-urban; among other ethnic groups. Migrated people were being targeted by the Shi'a Jats and Rajputs. Pirs vanished the grip over rural inhabitants. Political orders changed, and new contestants have come to the sight. Before this wave of sectarianism people were living in harmony, equally participating in one another's religious and cultural rituals. Although ideological differences were there but these difference were not highlighted by the local communities. These were the religious leaders who aiming at religio-political leadership fueled sectarian clashes (Khan & Chaudhry, 2011). In concluding, Yusuf (2012) resulted that Pakistan became a battlefield in the proxy sectarian clashes existed between Saudi Arabia and Iran as both countries provided financial as well as logistic support to their respective Shia Sunni groups and Madrassas. Religion, while a defining characteristic of sectarianism, is not the only identity that causes people to divide into segregated groups. Race and ethnicity are also a key element to a sectarian group's identity. Most scholars agree that ethnic identity is defined as "membership in an ethnic community" that provides one with an identity that is separate from other groups (Taras and Ganguly 2002-1). The sectarian clashes between Shia and Sunni are due to ideological differences that turned the religion of peace-Islam into radicalization and extremism (Murphy & Malik, 2009). The people of Pakistan facing tough challenges of militancy which has divided the Pakistani society into two segments means Shia and Sunni. These militants were the products of Afghan revolution against the invasion of Russia on Afghanistan in 1979 and the USA attack on Afghanistan in 2001 (Candland, 2008). Abbas (2011) revealed that increasing number of Madrassas exaggerated sectarian division through judgmental practices and ideologies of opponent sects focusing on the performs and views of opponent sects, emphasizing religious dissimilarities and spreading misinterpretation among people that helping in series of sectarian clashes. It was stated that both sect's sectarian groups gained a massive quantity of financial resources from Iraq, Iran, and Suadi Arabia (Majeed and Hashmi, 2014). Sunni sect has the belief that most of the Shia links divine abilities to their imams. According to the Sunni sect, it is a big sin and this is totally against the basic teachings of Islam (Butt, 2012). Pakistani Shia Sunni facing a serious threat of the sectarian clashes since 1947. The kind of anger is not only intra sects but also inter-sects and all sects using violence and have claim that they are serving their religion and will go to paradise. The murder of religious scholars, intellects and innocent people inside mosques and *imami-barghas* are the religious services in their views. The self-interest of political chiefs and foreign support has more complicated this condition (Naek, 2001: 29). The fight of USA against terrorism is in fact targeted the Muslim states which created hostility among Muslims and therefore, Muslim scholars reflected it, it is against Islamic world. Terrorism is not only limited to the Islamic countries and the USA and the West are worried and blamed Islamic countries for its expansion due to sectarianism that needed worldwide policy. It was the USA when the holy war supported through Jihad in Afghanistan to let out the Russia. According to the investigation report of Washington post, USA spent billions of dollars for twenty years on production of fanatical books and distribution in Afghanistan in the beginning of 1980 and financially supported

Nebraska Omaha University Afghanistan. These records not only highlighted the significance of Jihad among Muslims in their religion but also included in schools curriculum in Afghanistan. This not only represented the religion (Islam) of peace in the beginning as radicalized but also enhanced the interest of Arabs in the country (Malik, M.T., 2011). They have same God, same Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and same book (Quran), still they have differences as well as flexibility and rigidity in the explanation of Quran and *Ahadid* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that divided Muslims into two sects i.e. Shia and Sunni ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 2019). Sectarian clashes are also common between the two sects of Islam: Barelvi who is 50 percent of Pakistan's population and *Deobandis* strictly following the teachings of Islam, who account 20 percent of the population and have hostile attitudes towards Barelvis as well as influencing security of the state (GlobalSecurity, 2012). Shia places of worships (*imami-bargahs*) and mosques would be found everywhere in Pakistan, comprising the most major towns and cities. Both Shia Sunni, although rarely perform pray in each other mosques. Both Shia Sunni sects are visiting some of prominent religious places and most of them are the Sufi shrines (Australian Government, 2013). *Taqrib* society sponsored by Iran only working in the field of sectarianism among Muslims in the twenty-first century. Al-Azhar University also serving from many years as significant place for the dialogue and Muslim unity, not enduring relations with *Wahhabies*, awarded prestigious university "King Faisal International Prize" as served Islam in 2000 (TMWLJ, 2000).

### Methodology

The study titled *"Effects of Religious Dynamics Advanced by Sectarianism on Shia-Sunni Family in Kurram of Pakistan"* was carried out with core objectives to ascertain the association between internal religious dynamics advanced by sectarianism and Shia-Sunni family. The nature of the study was quantitative and a questionnaire consisting upon three levels (Yes, No and Uncertain) was used as a tool of data collection. The study universe was the two tehsils of tribal district Kurram and 200 respondents were selected through simple random sample method from different areas of tehsil Ali zai and Parachinar with equal ratio i. e, 100 from both Shia and Sunni. The collected data was analyzed and then presented at uni-variate and bi-variate levels. For drawing discernible picture of the data, it was presented at uni-variate level with frequency and percentages. The relationship between dependent (Religious Dynamics) and independent (Shia-Sunni Family) variables was constructed with the help of Chi-Square test statistics at bi-variate level.

### Study Results at Uni-Variate and Bi-Variate Levels of Analysis

Religious Dynamics	Perceptions	Yes	No	Uncer-tain	Total	P Value
Do you think that sect-based division among Muslims is harmful for Islam and unity of Muslims?	Yes	56	116	5	177	$\chi=30.25$ $P=0.000$
	No	10	9	0	19	
	Uncertain	0	2	2	4	
Do you think that family institution of both sects is different from each other's with respect of their religious ideologies and practices?	Yes	55	102	5	162	$\chi =3.66$ $P=0.454$
	No	10	21	1	32	
	Uncertain	1	4	1	6	
Do you think that Sunni familial structure is more rigid and static towards observing religious	Yes	60	97	2	159	$\chi=29.97$ $P=0.000$
	No	4	20	1	25	
	Uncertain	2	10	4	16	

teachings?						
Is it true that Shia familial structure is more rigid and static towards observing religious teachings?	Yes	50	77	2	129	$\chi=19.34$ P=0.001
	No	14	29	1	44	
	Uncertain	2	21	4	27	
Is it true that family as institution keep no check and balance on their members contact with religious clerics?	Yes	29	51	2	82	$\chi=7.76$ P=0.100
	No	85	58	5	148	
	Uncertain	2	18	0	20	
Is it true that both sects have their own holy objects such as mosques, madrassas and <i>imam-barghas</i> ?	Yes	66	124	7	197	$\chi=1.75$ P=0.417
	No	0	3	0	3	
	Uncertain	66	127	7	200	
Do you think that people are different with respect of their prayers and practices in the area?	Yes	61	106	4	171	$\chi=8.62$ P=0.071
	No	5	19	3	27	
	Uncertain	0	2	0	2	
Do you think that after the last wave of sectarianism, the role of religious cleric was enlarged in day to day affairs of the local people?	Yes	34	72	3	109	$\chi=10.49$ P=0.033
	No	23	33	0	56	
	Uncertain	9	22	4	35	
Do you think that Sunni religious scholars secured advance religious knowledge in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other Arabs Sunni States?	Yes	40	92	1	133	$\chi=17.77$ P=0.001
	No	13	18	1	32	
	Uncertain	13	17	5	35	
Is it true that Shia religious scholars obtained advance religious knowledge in Iraq and Iran?	Yes	54	99	2	155	$\chi=30.30$ P=0.000
	No	9	15	0	24	
	Uncertain	3	13	5	21	
Is it true that Iran supported Shia population through awarding scholarships to students for obtaining religious education?	Yes	44	59	0	103	$\chi=23.15$ P=0.000
	No	16	44	2	62	
	Uncertain	6	24	5	35	
Is it true that Saudi Arabia and Gulf nations assist Sunni population through awarding scholarships to students for obtaining religious education?	Yes	25	57	0	82	$\chi=13.35$ P=0.010
	No	13	36	5	54	
	Uncertain	28	34	2	64	
Do you think that Sunni prefer to perform <i>Umrah</i> rather to visit shrine either inside the country or outside?	Yes	62	103	7	172	$\chi=7.44$ P=0.114
	No	4	21	0	25	
	Uncertain	0	3	0	3	
Do you think that Shia prefer to visit shrine in Iraq and Iran rather to perform <i>Umrah</i> ?	Yes	39	59	6	114	$\chi=12.67$ P=0.013
	No	27	56	0	83	
	Uncertain	0	12	1	13	

Do you think that Sunni population gives some share of <i>Zakat</i> to militants for safeguarding their communities?	Yes	9	28	3	40	$\chi^2 = 5.55$ P=0.235
	No	35	69	3	107	
	Uncertain	22	30	1	53	
Is it true that Shia population gives some share of <i>Hommas</i> to militants for safeguarding their communities?	Yes	38	34	5	77	$\chi^2 = 20.96$ P=0.000
	No	26	84	2	110	
	Uncertain	2	9	0	11	
Is it true that Sunni residents of Parachinar celebrate <i>Shab-i-barath</i> after their repatriation in the area?	Yes	31	75	4	110	$\chi^2 = 4.18$ P=0.381
	No	24	36	1	61	
	Uncertain	11	16	2	29	
Do you think that Shia families currently celebrating <i>Moharammulhram</i> with more religious zeal and enthusiasm after the last wave of sectarianism?	Yes	62	104	1	167	$\chi^2 = 31.13$ P=0.000
	No	2	19	5	26	
	Uncertain	2	4	1	7	
Is it true that none of the sect participate in religious rituals of the opponent after the last sectarian clash in the area?	Yes	51	56	3	110	$\chi^2 = 37.66$ P=0.000
	No	15	62	1	78	
	Uncertain	0	9	3	12	

#### Description of Study Results at Uni-Variate and Bi-Variate Levels

The study findings revealed that a highly significant association (P=0.000) were found between Shia-Sunni family and the statement that do you think that sect-based division among Muslims is harmful for Islam and unity of Muslims and the above findings revealed that a non-significant association (P=0.454) were found between the Shia-Sunni family and the notion that do you think that family institution of both sects is different from each other with respect of their religious ideologies and practices. A highly significant association (P=0.000) found between family institution and the statement that do you think that Sunni familial structure is more rigid and static towards observing religious teachings. A highly significant association (P=0.001) revealed between family institution and the notion that is it true that Shia familial structure is more rigid and static towards observing religious teachings. A non-significant association (P=0.100) revealed between family institution and the statement that is it true that family as institution keep no check and balance on their members while contact with their religious clerics. A non-significant association (P=0.417) found between family institution and the statement that is it true that both sects have their own holy objects such as mosques, madrassas and *imam-barghas*. A non-significant association (P=0.071) disclosed between family institution and the notion that do you think that people are different with respect of their prayers and practices in the area. A significant association (P=0.033) found between family institution and the statement that do you think that after the last wave of sectarianism, the role of religious cleric was enlarged in day to day affairs of the local people. A significant association (P=0.001) and highly significant association (P=0.000) revealed between family

institution and the notions that do you think that Sunni religious scholars secured advance religious knowledge in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other Arabs Sunni States and Shia religious scholars obtained advance religious knowledge in Iraq and Iran respectively. A highly significant association ( $P=0.000$ ) and significant association ( $P=0.010$ ) resulted between family institution and the statements that is it true that Iran supported Shia population through awarding scholarships to students for obtaining religious education and Saudi Arabia and Gulf Nations assist Sunni population through awarding scholarships to students for higher education. A significant association ( $P=0.114$ ) and ( $P=0.013$ ) resulted between family institution and the notion that do you think that Sunni prefer to perform *Umrah* rather to visit shrine either inside the country or outside and Shia prefer to visit shrine in Iran and Iraq rather to perform *Umrah*. A non-significant association ( $P=0.235$ ) resulted between family institution and the notion that do you think that Sunni population gives some share of *Zakat* to militants for safeguarding their communities. It can be concluded that share of *Zakat* is only given to deserving people while a highly significant association ( $P=0.000$ ) resulted between family institution and the notion that is it true that Shia population gives some share of *Hommas* to militants for safeguarding their communities. A non-significant association ( $P=0.381$ ) resulted between family institution and the statement that is it true that Sunni residents of Parachinar celebrate *Shab-i-barath* after their repatriation in the area. A highly significant association ( $P=0.000$ ) resulted between family institution and the notion that do you think that Shia families currently celebrating *Moharammulhram* with more religious zeal and enthusiasm after the last wave of sectarianism and a highly significant association ( $P=0.000$ ) concluded between family institution and the notion that is it true that none of the sect participate in religious rituals of the opponent after the last sectarian clash in the area.

### **Discussion**

The study results regarding religious dynamics associated with Shia-Sunni family in the study area and research findings deduced that majority of respondents were agreed with the statement that sect-based division among Muslims is harmful for Islam and unity of Muslims. It could be assumed that the ongoing sectarian militancy converted the religion of peace into the religion of violence, which not only resulted the loss of thousands human lives but also destroyed the image of Muslims across the globe. In this regard, the people of Pakistan facing tough challenges of militancy which has divided Pakistani society into two conflicting groups. These militants were the products of Afghan revolution against the invasion of Russia on Afghanistan in 1979 and the USA attack on Afghanistan in 2001 (Candland, 2008). In this regard, the sectarian clashes between Shia and Sunni were due to ideological differences that turned the religion (Islam) of peace into radicalization and extremism (Murphy & Malik, 2009). It could be assumed that Sunni families strictly follow the religious beliefs and teachings according to their Jurisprudence. This could be the out-come of social engineering that was introduced in the area through planned efforts by external hands. It could be assumed that Shia familial structure is also rigid while observing their religious beliefs and practices according to their Jurisprudence. Strict observance of religious teachings by both Shia and Sunni in the area might be the reason of their long standing conflict which most often flourished with the help of clerics under the shade of religion. It could be assumed that both Shia Sunni family institutions have more trust, regards and respect for their religious clerics as they are custodians of their religious ideologies. Due to their ideological and religious differences, both sects established their own mosques, madrassas and other religious objects where they perform their religious functions. This could also be the result of their continuous conflict which left little space for coherence between the two conflicting sects. In this regard, Javeed (2010) resulted that there were forty thousand unregistered as well as registered Madrassa supporting and executing by various

religious doctrines in Pakistan. It is evident from the previous results that both sect's followers obtained advanced religious knowledge abroad. This can only be possible if madrassa graduates are provided scholarships as in most cases students from poor familial background remained attached with religious education. Within the available economic resources, it is not possible for them to secure advance knowledge abroad. So that, such financial constraints can only be restored with the help of external support that is extended by Arab Nations to Sunni and from Iran to Shia population. Both sects (Sunni and Shia) sectarian organizations gained a huge amount of financial resources from Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia (Majeed and Hashmi, 2014). In concluding, Yusuf (2012) resulted that Pakistan became a battlefield in the proxy sectarian clashes existed between Saudi Arabia and Iran as both countries provided financial as well as logistic support to their respective Shia Sunni groups and Madrassas. It could be deduced sectarianism provide an opportunity for religious clerics to manipulate more and more common people which further enlarged their writ in the area. It could also be deduced that the affiliation of some clerics with militants also strengthen them in the area due to their over spread fear among the local. David Laitin and James Fearon stated that there are some sort of leaders who want to produce stout ethnic identities inside their followers so that they may stimulate their support and inculcate hostility among them against the opponent groups (Jesse and Williams, 2011). It could be assumed that both Shia Sunni families have their separate Islamic Jurisprudence and beliefs which promote religious diversity in the area. Such religious difference is the beauty of religion, but the problem emerged when they adopted hatred attitudes toward each other. In this regards, Shia places of worships (*imam-bargahs*) and mosques would be found everywhere in Pakistan, comprising the most major towns and cities. Both Shia Sunni, although rarely perform pray in each other mosques (Australian Government, 2013). It could be deduced that both sect followers secured advance religious knowledge in foreign nations of their respective ideologies such as Saudi Arabia, Gulf Nations, Iran, and Iraq etc. This might be the reason that these nations promote their ideologies among the followers of their respective sects, through whom they promote proxy-war in the land of Pakistan. This can only be achieved with the help of those who has been trained in knowledge specific to their ideology. Yusuf (2012) stated that Pakistan became a battlefield in the proxy sectarian clashes existed between Saudi Arabia and Iran as both countries provided financial as well as logistic support to their respective Shia Sunni groups and Madrassas. It could be deduced that both sects are strongly connected with their ideological values and at all cost they want to preserve it. That is why Sunni focused on *Umrah* as they believed that all *Sahaba*'s are respectable without questioning. While Shia also visit shrines in Iran and Iraq, where the graves of the descendants of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are there. Further, both Shia Sunni sects are visiting some of prominent religious places and most of them are the Sufi shrines (Australian Government, 2013). Sunni are minority in Parachinar who are surrendered by Shia from four sides and in such like situation in connection to last wave of sectarianism, it may not be possible for them to freely perform such functions.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study conclusion of religious dynamics associated with Shia-Sunni family revealed that sect-based division among Muslims is harmful for Islam and unity of all Muslims. The familial structure of both Shia and Sunni is different from each other with respect of religious ideologies and practices. Further, both the sect strictly observes religious teachings and has their own holy objects such as mosques, madrassas and *Imam-barghas*. Religious clerics are trusted in the area and the local feel secure while sending their children toward them. Their role in society further enlarged after the last wave of sectarianism. Both sect clerics obtained religious knowledge in their sect based ideological institutions. Further, for getting

higher religious education Shia prefer Iran and Iraq, while Sunni enhanced their knowledge in institutions situated in Jorden and other Arab nations for which they are financially supported by Iran and Saudi Arabia, respectively. Moreover, Sunni prefer to perform *Umrah* rather to visit shrine while Shia most often visit to shrines in Iraq and Iran. Both Shia and Sunni avoid facilitating militants through *Zakat* and *Hommas* respectively as the same is given to poorest of their respective sect. However, Shia gives half of the share of *Hommas* to the decedents of Prophet (PBUH). Furthermore, both sects celebrate their religious rituals separately in the study area. Ideological differences advanced by Shia Sunni Islamic Jurisprudences should be resolved in the light of Quran and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through interfaith dialogues, *Ijma* and *Ittihad*. The fatwa of Iranian *Khalifa* and *Imami Kaba* could also help in promoting harmony and change the sectarian pro-attitudes and behaviors of Shia Sunni in the study universe, tribal district Kurram of *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, were some of the study recommendations.

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