



RESEARCH PAPER

Issues and State of Religious Minorities in Pakistan: A Systematic Literature Review

Ali Raza Shah ¹ Dr. Bela Nawaz ²

1. PhD Scholar, Department of Social Sciences, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

PAPER INFO ABSTRACT

Received:
March 25, 2021

Accepted:
July 01, 2021

Online:
July 20, 2021

Keywords:
Minority Exclusion
Minority Problems,
Religious
discrimination

***Corresponding
Author**

ali.raza.shah@live
.com

This article presents a systematic review of previous empirical literature regarding the problems faced by religious minorities in Pakistan which is a hub of religious diversity. Using various keywords Google Scholar, JSTOR, Emerald Insight and ProQuest were searched and 31 studies were identified applying inclusion criteria. Studies applying inclusion criteria of publication in peer reviewed journals from period of 2005-2021 were included. Their findings were analyzed and relevant themes for the present study's purpose were created. Themes included: religious freedom, out - group identity, media, social exclusion, extremism, education, economic deprivation and constitution and laws. The themes identified through the comparison of last fifteen years' literature discuss problems faced by religious minorities which, inter alia, include forced conversion of women and girls, restricted religious freedom, discrimination in education, limited employment opportunities and identity - based discrimination. Implications for research, policy making and interventions are also presented.

Introduction

The health Pakistan is a hub of religious diverse groups. Some groups are comparatively greater in number than others. Population wise larger groups include Hindus, Ahmedis and Christians while smaller religious minority groups include Buddhists, Sikhs and Parsis (see Population by Religion'table 1). These religious minority groups are living in a hostile environment (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2020). They are, as put by Raina (2014), 'woefully small and powerless' and have been experiencing a perpetual sense of fear (Zaidi, 1988).

Minority Group	Percentage of Population
Muslims	96.28%
Christians	1.59%
Hindus	1.60%
Ahmedis	0.22%
Scheduled Castes	0.25%
Others	0.07%

Percentages taken from Population by Religion', Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Website ("Population by Religion", n.d.)

The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in his famous August 11 1947 speech, said: *You are free, you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or cast or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State* (Hasan, 2015). His speeches and conduct before and after the partition of the subcontinent are evident of his secular inclinations and intentions for the newborn state on the world atlas. He opposed the idea, given by Amir Ali Khan, the treasurer of the Muslim League that Pakistan would be a theocratic state. He stopped Khan from saying such things on stage as it might imply that he also shared the view about Pakistan being a theocratic state (Ispahani, 2017). Unfortunately, his dream of Pakistan being secular state was not realized. Just after his death, Liaqat Ali Khan, the first prime minister of the newly - established country, in his famous March 12 1949 speech said that creation of country was only half of work done. The other half would be done by making it a 'laboratory' of Islam (Bangash, 2016). Bangash (2016) states that religious minorities of the country realized this fact when the Objective Resolution 1949 was adopted. They came to know that the country's energies will be directed towards advancement and protection of interests of the Muslims who constituted overwhelming majority.

As a result of this discrimination found in the constitution, the non - Muslims started losing hope in the shared future of the country when the leadership of the newly - established country started steering it towards being an Islamic state. For instance, the first law minister of the country Jogendar Nath Mandal, told a reporter in 1950 that Hindus did not see a secured future in Pakistan. He told reporter: "I have asked them to wait for a few weeks more and that I too am prepared to accompany them to India" (Ispahani, 2017). Similarly, religious minorities' members were frightened when the Objective Resolution was passed on 12 March 1949 (Bangash, 2016). On the basis of these historical facts, it is concluded that the religious minorities have been experiencing marginalization and consequent sense of fear from the very inception of the country (Muzaffar et. al. 2017)

This discriminatory attitude towards religious minorities also become a part of all three constitutions - 1956, 1962 and 1973 - of the country. They prohibit non - Muslims from assuming the office of president (Article 32(2) of 1956 constitution; Article 10(A) of 1962 constitution; 41(2) of 1973 constitution). The constitution of 1973 prohibited the members of religious minorities from becoming the prime minister of the country too. (Article 91(3)). Furthermore, the Objective Resolution which spread the despondency in non - Muslim members at its very adoption was made preamble of the constitution. But the most glaring evidence of the discriminatory nature of the 1973 constitution of the country is article 260. According to this article, Ahmedis were pronounced non - Muslims via a constitutional amendment. It paved the way for further discrimination and marginalization of the religious minorities in the country. In short, all three constitutions of the country contain article which discriminate against religious minorities of the country.

The military ruler of the country from 1977 to 1988, General Zia - ul - Haq, started Islamization of the state and society. It further increased the problems of the religious minorities in the country. He took many steps in this regard including

amending the laws of the country. He introduced several provisions in the Pakistan Penal Code particularly regarding blasphemy. The most commonly used provision in cases of blasphemy, 295C, was also inserted by him. These laws have been misused by individuals to settle their personal scores particularly against the members of religious minority groups, particularly Christians. These legal amendments have made their lives very difficult (Ispahani, 2017). Under the provision of 298C the very practice of religion by Ahmedi was criminalized. These provisions along with other discriminatory laws enable the perpetrators to violate the fundamental rights of the members of various religious minority groups in the country.

The above discussion suggests that religious minorities have been facing issues and are living in an unfriendly environment. Therefore, there is a need to systematically review the literature available regarding the issues that religious minorities face in the country in order to understand the state they are living in.

Material and Methods

Inclusion Criteria

Empirical studies that dealt with issues of religious minority group(s) were explored and considered for inclusion in the study. Studies applying inclusion criteria of publication in peer reviewed journals from period of 2005-2021 were included. Newspaper reports, opinions, articles and any other piece of writing which did not meet above given criteria were excluded from the review.

Data Sources

In order to conduct the systematic review of the past empirical studies regarding the state of religious minorities in Pakistan, a thorough literature search was conducted to identify all relevant studies which could be included. Various search engines were used in this regard. Search engines which were used included Google Scholar, JSTOR, Emerald Insight and ProQuest. Key words searched for the literature search mainly included 'religious minorities in Pakistan', 'issues of religious minorities in Pakistan', 'state of religious minorities in Pakistan', 'religious minorities and Pakistan', 'problems of religious minorities in Pakistan', 'surroundings of religious minorities in Pakistan' and 'perception of religious minorities in Pakistan'. References of articles were taken into consideration to see any research study not available on the major search engines.

Data Selection and Extraction

The initial literature search resulted in 37 research studies which were thought to be possible candidates for the review. Out of these 37 two research studies were straightaway excluded as they were published before the period of 200-2021. Four more studies were also excluded as they did not exclusively discuss religious minorities of Pakistan. Remaining 31 research studies were found to be eligible to be included in the study. Therefore, 31 studies were finally selected for the systematic review. To extract data, a table was made. Table 2 provided about author(s) of study, year of publication, title of study, main purpose of the study, research design, source(s) of data and key finding(s) of study. Consequently,

broad areas where literature is concentrated and where religious minorities of the country face issues were identified and discussed.

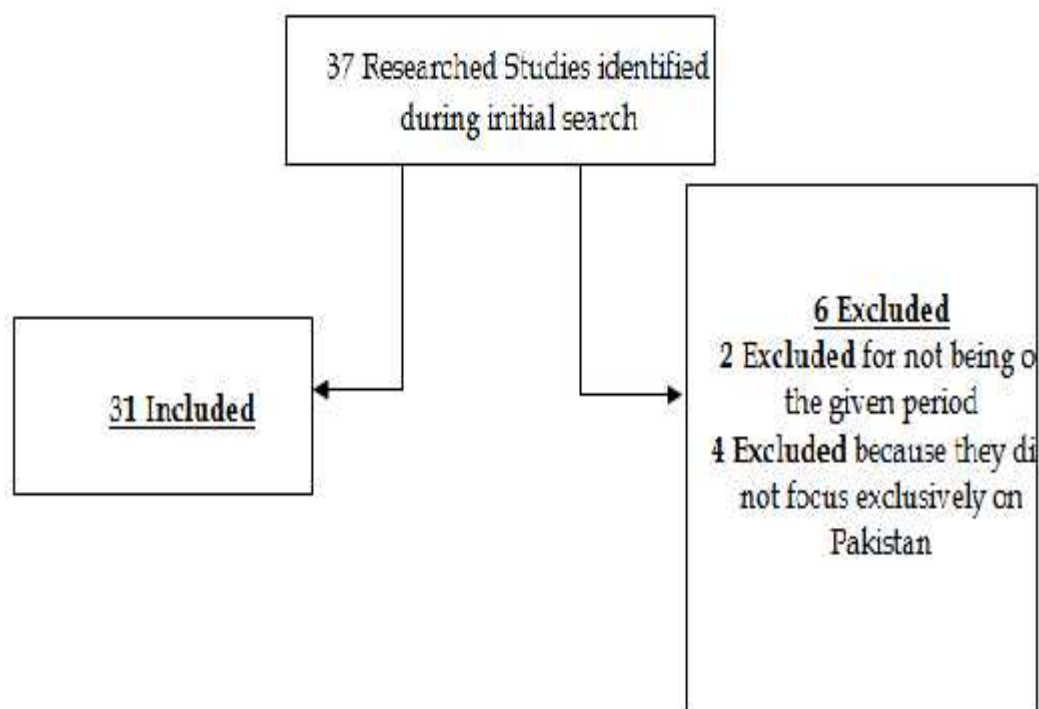


Figure 1: The flow chart of inclusion and exclusion of research studies

Results and Discussion

Overview of the studies

The overwhelming majority of studies, as evident from Table 2, were qualitative (n = 25) in nature. Out of remaining six studies, five were quantitative in nature and one was of mixed – method approach (see Figure 3). The themes which emerged from the studies included for the review were religious freedom, identity, media, social exclusion, extremism, education, economic deprivation and constitution and laws. The frequencies of research studies pertaining these broad areas are given in Figure 2 below. It shows that most of research studies about religious minorities pertained to the discussion of religious minorities with respect to media followed by constitution and laws and religious freedom. Important themes which emerged from the analysis of studies (see Table 2 for overview of the studies) are discussed as follows:

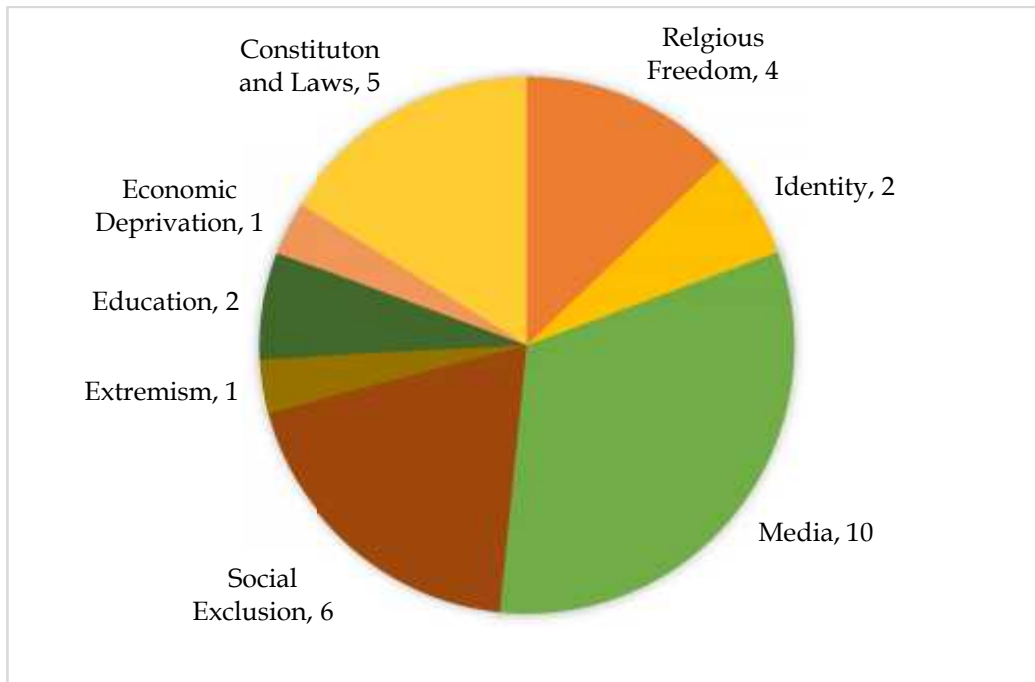


Figure 2: Frequencies of research studies with respect to broad areas of study.

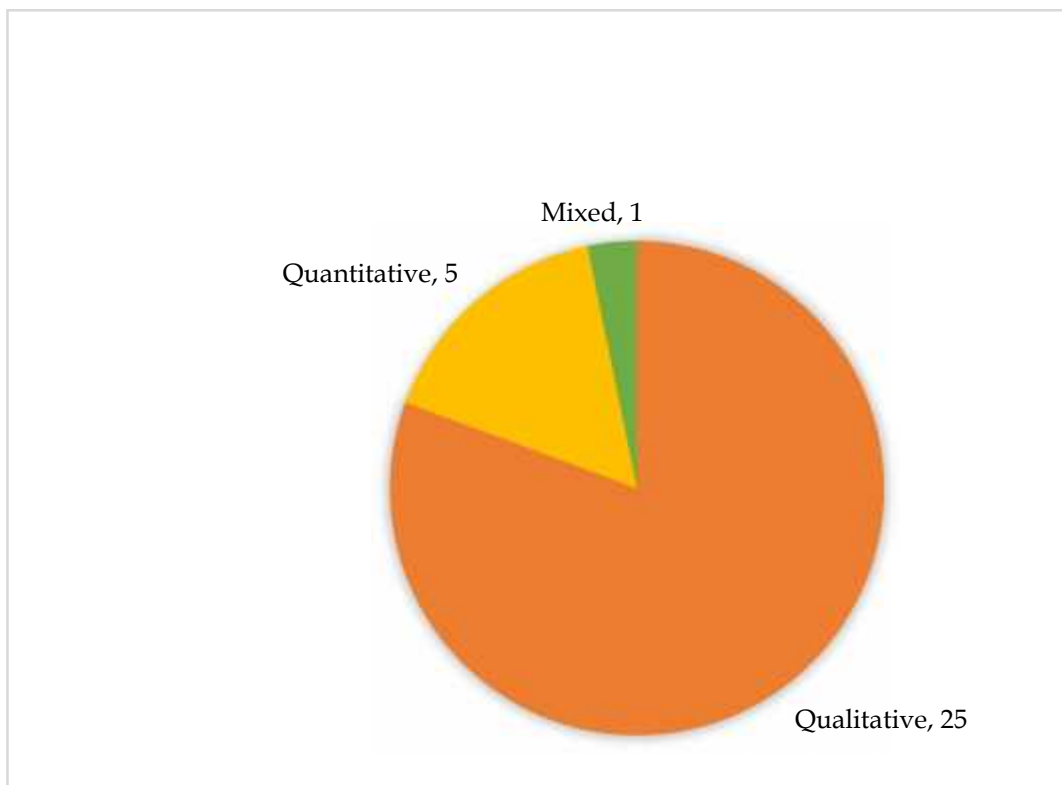


Figure 3: Types of Research

Table 2: List of research studies included for in the review

Author(s)	Year of Publication	Title of the study	Purpose of the Study	Research Design	Source(s) of Data	Important Findings
Din, N., & Jacob, P.	2019	Challenges in Exercising Religious Freedom in Pakistan	To study obstacles in exercising religious freedom.	Qualitative	Secondary	Religious freedom and rights given under constitution are violated. Consequently, there is a need to take concrete measures.
Schaflechner, J.	2018	Forced Conversion and (Hindu) Women's Agency in Sindh	To understand the phenomenon of forced conversion in Pakistani society.	Qualitative	Interviews, newspaper reports etc.	Forced conversion is characterized with a pattern of abduction–conversion–marriage and is used as an instrument to hide sexual violence against non - Muslim women and restrict them physically. Forced conversion instigates male identity politics.
Mehfooz, M.	2021	Religious Freedom in Pakistan: A Case Study of Religious Minorities.	To discourse the rights of religious minorities in Pakistan in the context of Islamic principles.	Qualitative	Secondary	Tolerance in Pakistan is wanting towards religious minorities. Rights of religious minorities are dishonored by extremist groups and they endure hatred by some segments of the society. Educating masses about fair and equal treatment of religious minorities is important. Both Islam and the constitution of the country provide comprehensively about the religious freedom.
Tahir, H. & Tahira, I.	2016	Freedom of Religion and Status of Religious Minorities in Pakistan	To study the position of religious minorities, understand the issues they face and pinpoint the gaps in the laws and policies and their implementation.	Qualitative	Secondary	Religious minorities are assigned low status and their rights are violated. Moreover, there are gaps in implementation and the laws and policies. Religious minorities face problems including stress, sexual harassment, rape and murder. However, a small percentage of religious minorities are doing good.
Ali, Z.	2015	Identity as a Form of Human Insecurity: The Case of Religious Minorities in Pakistan.	To study the causes of insecurity of religious minorities in Pakistan.	Qualitative	Secondary	The rise of Islamism otherizes religious minorities and facilitate identity – based institutional discrimination, their socio – economic insecurity and political exclusion.

Fuchs, M. M., & Fuchs, S. W.	2020	Religious Minorities in Pakistan: Identities, Citizenship and Social Belonging.	To review the literature on religious minorities in Pakistan.	Qualitative	Secondary	Religious minorities are pinpointed and targeted due to their religious identity. Muslims have internalized caste system and exhibit it towards non – Muslims. Literature gives a sense of homogeneity of experiences of all religious minorities. Moreover, the study shows that religious minorities have multiple identities.
Alam, A., Rehmat, A., & Jacobson, E.	2019	Narratives of Marginalization: Reporting religious minorities in Pakistani media	To provide an evaluation of quality and quantity of religious minorities' coverage in Pakistani media.	Qualitative	Secondary	Religious minorities in Pakistan get low coverage in media and are covered stereotypically. Media coverage of minorities is reactionary in nature. Whatever coverage they receive is mostly in the print media.
Rehmat, A., & Alam, A.	2019	Hate speech versus free speech -- shrinking space for minority voices online.	To study issues faced when exercising freedom of expression online.	Qualitative	Interviews	All respondents agree that hate speech is one of important obstacles in exercising the freedom of expression online.
Ittefaq, M., Ejaz, W., Jamil, S., Iqbal, A., & Arif, R.	2021	Discriminated in Society and Marginalized in Media: Social Representation of Christian Sanitary Workers in Pakistan	To understand how Christians sanitary workers perceive Pakistani media.	Qualitative	Interviews	Sanitary workers maintain that they do not get adequate coverage in the country's mainstream media to raise their issues. They object to their negative depiction by the media. They are aware of important role that media can play to highlight their issues.
Ahmad, A., Shaukat, B., & Saeed, M.	2016	A Survey of Social Exclusion, Media Portrayal, and Services for Christians Minorities in Pakistan	To explore the social recognition, freedom of religious practice and insecurity amongst minorities in Pakistan.	Quantitative	Interviews	Respondents face problems with respect to social recognition and freedom of religion. They feel isolated and excluded.
Jan, F.	2013	Jihadi Publications in Pakistan and Public Perception of Religious Minorities	To investigate the impact of Jihadi publications in making a bad opinion of religious minorities	Quantitative	Survey	Jihadi publications play significant role in determining public opinion and making readers intolerant towards religious minorities.

			in the country.			
Ashfaq, R.	2015	Coverage of incidents of violence against minorities in English press of Pakistan: A study of lynching of Christian couple	To examine the reporting of the incidents of violence against Christian minority in English print media.	Qualitative	Secondary	English print media gives adequate coverage of incidents of violence both in quality and quantity.
Khalid, B., & Daudpoto, A. F.	2014	Minorities' Stereotypes in Pakistani Films	To explore the causes due to which discrimination against religious minorities is rising within the society.	Qualitative	Secondary	Stereotypical approach for minorities in people's minds and portrayal of such approach in Pakistani films is a main cause of dishonor of minorities.
Mubeen, A., Qusien, R.	2017	Minorities in Pakistan: Role of Pakistani Private TV Channels in Highlighting Minorities' Rights	To understand the part private TV channels play in emphasizing minority rights.	Mixed	Survey	Respondents find T.V. channels fairly vocal about religious minority rights.
Joshua, R. A., & Zia, A.	2020	Exploring the Policies for Coverage of Minorities' Issues in Pakistani Electronic Media	To examine the policies of electronic media establishments and media regulatory body regarding coverage of problems confronted by minorities.	Qualitative	Interviews	The regularity body has clear policy in black and white for media content about the reporting of religious minorities according to which media should shun content which provoke hatred toward religious minorities. Electronic media have both written and unwritten polices about the content with respect to religious minorities.
Batool, S., Sultana, S., & Tariq, S.	2021	Social Media and Religious Minorities: Analyzing the Usage of Facebook Groups among Christian Minority to Highlight their Issues in Pakistan	To study the role of religious Facebook groups in highlighting the issues of Christian minority.	Qualitative	Survey	The use of Facebook motivates Christian community towards the resolution of their issues and it generates awareness amongst them.

Khalid, I., & Rashid, M.	2019	A Socio Political Status of Minorities in Pakistan	To study the problems of minorities in Pakistan.	Qualitative	Interviews	Minorities are nonviolent and tolerant. They want the annulment of Hudood ordinance. They have inadequate representation in the parliament and have objections about census. They also experience economic and political difficulties.
Raina, A. K.	2019	Minorities and representation in a plural society: The case of the Christians of Pakistan.	To assess political capacities of minorities by institutional evaluation of quality and quantity of minority's voice in democratic lawmaking framework.	Qualitative	Secondary	Institutionalized presence of Christian minority is inadequate and symbolic in nature. They lack authority in true sense.
Jan, A., Rehman, A. U., Khattak, A. H., & Khan, I. U.	2019	Association of Religious Activities and Social Interaction of Christian and Sikh Minorities with Muslims in Pakistan	To understand the adjustment difficulties confronted by minorities particularly Christians and Sikhs for observance of their religious practices.	Quantitative	Survey	Christians and Sikhs generally observe religious practices openly which refer to the robust interaction in the society between majority and minority groups.
Naveed, F., Munir, M., & Saeed, Y.	2014	Unveiling the situation of religious minorities: a case study of marginalized groups living in Lahore	To examine the condition of minorities in obtaining job opportunities, problems they face at place of work and in availing facilities in health sector.	Qualitative	Interviews	Minority groups are living in an impoverished state. They are ignored by state, face violence at the hands of extremist groups and endure hatred by the society. They are socially excluded and face issues in employment and health sectors.

Alam, P.	2016	Understanding Social World of Religious Minorities in Pakistan	To understand the reasons behind the constitutional and socio – political non – assimilation of religious minorities in Pakistan.	Qualitative	Secondary	Factors for non – assimilation of religious minorities in the country include religious inclination since the inception of the country, lack of political accommodation and failure to secularize the institutional framework.
Rais, R. B.	2005	Islamic Radicalism and Minorities in Pakistan	To understand the role of religion in Pakistan with respect to religious minorities.	Qualitative	Secondary	Politicians ignore religious minorities and they have been facing political exclusion. Political parties have shown no interest in their issues.
Khan, M. M.	2017	Violent Extremism: The Status of Religious Minorities as targets and Victims in Pakistan	To fill the gaps in the information and discernment of the issues of religious discrimination.	Quantitative	Survey, interviews	Minority rights are recognized in the all three constitution of the country. However, they lack power in the parliament despite having presence there. Their rights are at risk due to extremism. Besides this, blasphemy laws are misused against them.
Yunus, A., Khan, N.R., Ali, Z.	2012	Exploring the patterns of perceived discrimination among Hindu and Christians minorities, regarding educational opportunities	To understand the trends of discrimination towards religious minorities in education and social sectors.	Qualitative	Interviews	Minorities are face issues both in education and social sector. They live in a poor condition and are facing crisis with respect to their identity.
Munir, F.	2015	Understanding the role of education in promoting violence and terrorism in Pakistan	To understand the role of education in promoting violence and terrorism in Pakistan.	Qualitative	Secondary	Content taught promotes intolerance towards other religious groups. The very purpose of curriculum is to foster Islamic identity. Islam is presented not as a religious but as a political ideology.
Rehman, U., Amin, F., & Abbas, S. M.	2020	The Influence of Insecurity on Economic Deprivation Of The Minorities In Khyber	To examine the association between economic backwardness and insecurity.	Quantitative	Survey	It was found that religious insecurity, professional insecurity and financial insecurity are determinants of sense of insecurity and are positively associated with economic backwardness.

Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan						
Rumi, R.	2018	Unpacking the blasphemy laws of Pakistan.	To understand the role of blasphemy laws with respect to treatment of religious minorities in Pakistan.	Qualitative	Secondary	Blasphemy laws are misused to exclude religious minorities.
Wilson, A., Saeed, S., & Rahman, A. U.	2020	Constitutional Rights of Religious Minorities in Pakistan	To give synopsis of true implementation of constitutional rights given to religious minorities and to comprehend the constitutional scenario of Pakistan and discuss the image of the religious minorities and their religious freedom.	Qualitative	Secondary	Notwithstanding constitutional guarantees provided to them, religious minorities in Pakistan experience restrictions
Khalid, I., Anwar, M.	2018	Minorities under Constitution(s) of Pakistan	To explain and examine western concepts of human rights, Islamic concepts of human rights, minority rights in Pakistan along with rights of religious minorities in the constitution of Pakistan.	Qualitative	Secondary	Pakistan recognizes all internationally recognized rights for religious minorities and Islam also provides human rights. Therefore, all such rights are incorporated in the constitution of the country.
Ispahani, F.	2018	CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES AND THE TREATMENT OF PAKISTAN'S	To study the constitutional rights and treatment of religious minorities in	Qualitative	Secondary	Islamization of the country has created problems with respect to constitutional rights provided to religious minorities. Moreover, minorities are victims of discrimination

	RELIGIOUS MINORITIES	Pakistan.			legally and socially.
Mustafa, G., Ahmad, T., Arslan, M.	2020 Minorities of Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan	To understand the reason behind deteriorating state of religious minorities despite constitutional guarantees which are provided to them.	Qualitative	Secondary	Gap between law - making and its implementation is the main issue. Religious minorities face issues ranging from forced conversion to vandalism of their vicinities.

Laws and religious minorities

Five studies (Rumi, 2018; Wilson, Saeed & Rahman, 2020; Khalid and Anwar, 2018; Ispahani, 2018; Mustafa, Ahmad and Arslan, 2020) discuss the religious minority groups' rights as provided by the constitution of the country. Studies (Khalid and Anwar, 2018; Khalid and Anwar, 2018; Wilson, Saeed & Rahman, 2020) suggest that religious minorities are given a comprehensive set of religious rights in the constitution(s) of the country. However, their situation in reality is different as they, notwithstanding the acknowledgement of minority rights, continue to face problems due to their minority status (Wilson, Saeed & Rahman, 2020; Mustafa, Ahmad and Arslan, 2020). Moreover, studies (Khalid and Anwar, 2018; Wilson, Saeed & Rahman, 2020) suggest that religious minorities have contributed significantly in the development of the country. In contrast to these studies, two studies (Rumi, 2018; Ispahani, 2018) suggest that religious minorities have been facing constitutional and legal problems from the very inception of the country and these problems multiplied as the process of Islamization was accelerated. Blasphemy laws have been misused to exclude and target religious minority groups (Rumi, 2018).

Education and religious minorities

Two studies (Yunus, Khan and Ali, 2012; Munir, 2015) discuss issues that religious minorities face in education sector. They suggest that religious minorities have low literacy rate, that curriculum is biased against them and that textbooks contain content which encourages intolerance and violence against them in the society. Religious minorities are harassed in the education sector of the country (Yunus, Khan and Ali, 2012).

Religious Freedom

Four studies (Din & Jacob, 2019; Schaflechner, 2018; Mehfooz, 2021; Tahir & Tahira, 2016) pertain to religious freedom of religious minorities in Pakistan. They suggest that though the constitution of the country provides for the right to religious freedom, this right is violated in the case of religious minority groups (Mehfooz, 2021). Their situation in reality is different and they face various challenges as far as religious freedom is concerned (Din & Jacob, 2019). The members of the religious minority groups endure violence, attacks and hatred. Even at institutional level they are discriminated (Tahir & Tahira, 2016). Forced conversion of their women and girls is the major issue that religious minority groups are facing. Their women and girls are allegedly kidnapped, converted to Islam and married to Muslim men under pressure (Schaflechner, 2018).

Out-Group Identity

Two studies (Ali, 2015; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2020) discuss the identity of religious minority groups in Pakistan. Ali (2015) maintains that religious minority groups are

'otherized' due to their distinct identity as religious groups. Moreover, he argues that the members of religious minority groups endure identity - based institutional discrimination. Consequently, religious minority members develop insecurities due to their identities and considered out group. Fuchs and Fuchs (2020) suggest that religious minority group members have simultaneous multiple identities i.e. religious identity, caste identity and so on, and these multiple identities are continuously shaped. Moreover, they maintain that religious minorities experience issues because they challenge the boundaries of national identity that the state is trying to impose.

Religious Extremism

Khan (2017) maintains that religious extremism in Pakistan is due to various reasons. Its target include both Muslims and non - Muslims. However, religious minority groups have been most affected by the wave of religious extremism in the country. Religious extremists group target religious minority groups particularly and try to impose their ideology on them.

Economic Deprivation

Rehman, Amin and Abbas (2020) maintain that religious minorities are economically deprived and that this economic deprivation of religious minorities in the country is linked with sense of insecurity which they have developed. They further suggest that this sense of insecurity is shaped by religious insecurity, financial insecurity and professional insecurity. Therefore, government, in order to ameliorate the economic status of religious minorities in the country, should increase quotas for religious minorities both in employment and education sectors and should take concrete measures to curb the menace of religious extremism.

Media

Media is the field where most of the research studies regarding religious minorities were concentrated. Studies (Alam, Rehmat& Jacobson,2019 ; Rehmat&Alam, 2019 ;Ittefaq, Ejaz, Jamil, Iqbal &Arif, ,2021 ;Ahmad, Shaukat& Saeed, 2016 ; Jan,2013 ; Ashfaq, 2015 ;Khalid & Daudpoto,2014 ; Mubeen & Qusien, 2017 ; Joshua & Zia,2020 ; Batool, Sultana & Tariq, 2021) present mixed results as far as role of various kinds of media platforms with regard to religious minorities is concerned. On one hand, it is suggested that the English print media in the country gives adequate coverage to the issues of religious minority groups and condemns violence against religious minorities (Ashfaq, 2015). Similarly, private TV channels are also vocal about minority issues (Mubeen, Qusien, 2017). Moreover, it is also suggested that social media platforms like Facebook motivate the members of religious minority groups to resolve their problems and further create awareness amongst them about their issues (Batool, Sultana & Tariq, 2021). On the other hand, it is suggested that though religious minorities issues are highlighted in the media, they are given less coverage than other issues and their representation in

entertainment media particularly is almost zero (Joshua & Zia, 2020). Besides whatever coverage they get is stereotypical in nature and present religious minorities negatively (Alam, Rehmat& Jacobson, 2019). In addition to that they are negatively presented in films (Khalid & Daudpoto, 2014) and have to endure online hate speech (Rehmat& Alam, 2019). The publications of jihadi literature also increases intolerance towards members of religious minorities (Jan, 2013). Role of media is significant as far as their inclusion in the society is concerned because negative media portrayal of religious minorities is associated with their social recognition and social isolation (Ahmad, Shaukat& Saeed, 2016).

Social Exclusion

Studies (Khalid & Rashid, 2019; Raina, 2019; Naveed, Munir& Saeed, 2014; Alam, 2016) suggest that religious minorities in Pakistan experience social exclusion. They are marginalized in every aspect of their lives including employment and education (Khalid & Rashid, 2019). They are labelled as 'untouchable', are restricted from participation in the mainstream society and discriminated at the hands of the society and the state. (Naveed, Munir& Saeed, 2014). They have also been experiencing political exclusion in the society (Raina, 2019). However, not all studies present a gloomy picture. Jan, Rehman, Khattak& Khan (2019) suggest that religious minority largely and openly practice their rituals and observe festivities. The issues they face are few and of low scale.

Discussion

The review shows that the number of research studies conducted about religious minorities is not adequate. Moreover, the studies focus more on some particular areas and, overlook other areas. For instance, religious minorities' problems with respect to media, constitution and social inclusion are well – researched while the issue of extremism and economic deprivation are areas where little research is done. However, recently this trend is changing as more and more studies about religious minorities in the country are appearing. It is evident from the fact that out total 32 research studies included in the review, 27 have been conducted over the last five (2015 -2021) years. It is pertinent to mention that most of research studies about religious minorities in the country are qualitative in nature. Besides this, it has emerged that some research groups have been researched more than others. There are more studies in the review about Christians than other religious groups.

Moreover, majority of the research studies included in the systematic review are in agreement that religious minority groups in the country face issues in different spheres of life. Their religious freedom is restricted and they are portrayed stereotypically in media. Moreover, they endure discriminatory legislation, face educational discrimination, are deprived of deserved employment opportunities and are comparatively economically backward. The analysis leads to an overall understanding that religious minorities are socially excluded and are living in an impoverished state in the country.

Conclusion

The review show that religious minority groups are discriminated in various fields of life and face several and severe problems in the society. Be it media coverage, educational opportunities, legislation, employment opportunities or religious freedom, they face biasness and discrimination everywhere. In short, their lives in the country are characterized with numerous issues. Therefore, there is dire need to take concrete measures to resolve their problems to facilitate their participation in the society and achieve social harmony.

Strengths and Limitations

The review aimed to compile research studies regarding the problems of religious minorities in Pakistan. It provides a holistic picture of the literature available on the religious minority groups' issues as it included qualitative, quantitative and mixed method research studies. However, it also has some limitations. It included only those studies which focused exclusively on issues of religious minorities of Pakistan excluding any literature on the religious minorities whose scope went beyond the country's minorities.

Implications of the study

The review shows that literature on the issues of religious minorities in Pakistan is concentrated in some particular areas like media and constitution. Therefore, there is a need to study other aspects of the lives of religious minorities in the country. Moreover, the research studies are mostly qualitative in nature leaving behind a gap for quantitative investigation of issues pertaining to religious minority groups in the country. Furthermore, this study implicates that religious minorities are socially excluded and there is a need for a new social contract in the country based on equality, dignity and freedom. Therefore, policy makers should play their active role in this regard by developing a general consensus through involvement of all stakeholders. Sociologists and civil society is obligated to play their role for lobbying and advocacy in order to protect the rights of religious minorities.

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