

## Students' Concerns about Terrorism in Pakistan: Views from Madrassahs, Private and Public Schools

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Terrorism has cast a spell of fear on the nation of Pakistan. It has influenced every walk of life, but specifically it has had an horrific impact on educational institutions. The current research study was aimed at examining the concerns of students about terrorism. It was hypothesized that there is likely to be difference in students' concern about the influence of terrorism in different educational streams: Madrassah, Private and Public or between the genders. The study used descriptive research with a questionnaire survey-type design. A convenient sampling technique was employed to collect data from 180 students belonging to Madrassahs, and Private and Public schools in the urban and rural areas of Lahore District. A 24-item Students' Concerns about Terrorism (SCT) scale was developed to provide measures of *terrorism*, *peace* and *social context (Attitudes to modern female emancipation)*. Alpha reliabilities of subscales of SCT for the indigenous sample were satisfactory at 0.82, 0.75 and 0.84. Uni-dimensional factors provide evidence of validity. Results showed that *Anti-terrorism* scores were significantly lower in Public and in urban institutions. *Peace* scores were significantly higher for females in Madrassahs and males in Public institutions. A significant gender/institution interaction showed the *context of modern female emancipation* was strongly supported by females in Private institutions but not by males in Madrassahs.

**Key words:** *terrorism, concerns, madrassah, private, public, school*

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### Introduction

The impression of terrorism cannot be restricted to any one aspect as acts of terrorism may shake the whole life and society. Terrorism is the key goal to undermine the community and demoralize its sense of security; it verdures endless effects on the masses (Malik et al., 2010). However, an expansion of terrorist acts has occurred after the attack of 2001 on the 'twin towers' in New York (Perrow, 2006). The American attack on Afghanistan to eliminate Taliban forces (who were accused of the 2001 deadly massacre) compelled Afghani's to take refuge across the border in Pakistani area. Using this refuge as a shield, many militant groups started gathering and working from here. In the previous decade dozens of incidents have been reported in which thousands of innocent men, women and children have been killed. The recent deadly massacre at the Peshawar school is also part of this chain (Walsh, 2014).

Terrorism is engulfing our society slowly. It has a very bad impact on people's mental state

(DiMaggio & Galea 2007). Society has been influenced negatively in every aspect. The fear has trapped every mind, particularly after the Peshawar incident, where almost 145 of innocent children were brutally killed and leaving a very strong impact on the minds of the students that had survived (Saifi & Botelho, 2014; Bukhari & Rahman, 2006).

According to Irshad (2010) Pakistan has suffered due to terrorism in every walk of life including the division of society, political instability, food crises and economic recession (Myron & Collins, 2009). There is immense pressure on officials to control or even eradicate terrorism. Foreign funding agencies have attached conditioned grants with the effectiveness of efforts for controlling terrorist activities (Holbrooke 2009; BBC, 2009). However, any measures taken by government are not sufficient in themselves. For building peace, it is necessary for the public masses to recognize the severity of the situation.

Students, who are the future of the society, can play a very vital role in eradicating terrorism and

building peace. Their perceptions can be qualified by their attitudes to female emancipation. Although, research studies have proved that the sociopolitical influence of women is a strong predictor of less violence in the society (Weiss, 2001; Dhume, 2005; Malik et al., 2010). The implications of this for terrorism is that, if women are on average averse to engaging in or tolerating political violence, then their increasing involvement in leadership positions within civil society and over various interest groups will serve as a further constraint to violent, terror-type activities.

This aspect has not been ignored by the extremists in Pakistan, who are threatening women and female education by bombing schools. Even in general society, the idea of women's emancipation is uncommon. It has divided the nation into two, uneven groups, one who are in its favour while other are opponents of it (Weiss, 2001). The strongest opponents belong to conservative religious groups, particularly the Talibans (either Afghani or Pakistani), who are forcefully trying to keep women within four-walls. It can be assumed that one of the major targets of terrorists is female empowerment. This is obvious from bomb attacks on female schools in different areas of Pakistan. Similarly, there have been assassinations of female politicians and teachers, including the ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto (late) (Saifi & Botelho, 2014). There is a latent threat to women to stay in their homes and to perform their social duties. In addition to this, the obligation on women about exercising their rights in civil society (e.g. the right to vote) and dress code for example wearing veil (Chonghaile, 2014) are limitations on progression. A research study carried out by Robinson (2010) shows a negative correlation between women emancipation and terrorism, implying that societies which allow women to work freely are less prone to terrorist activities. It can be stated on the basis of the evidence presented that societies which are in favor of female empowerment are more peaceful, so attitudes to the female societal role is included in this research study of terrorism and peace.

Education can play a very crucial role in developing tolerance among students or prospective citizens (Exchange, 2001) In a society with different religious perspectives, it is difficult to bring

harmony in views about peace, terrorism, and the third variable of female emancipation (Sadruddin & Musa, 2012). The minds of younger people are more amenable to cognitive and affective change (Shabir, Abbasi and Khan, 2012). So once the links between peace, terrorism and female emancipation have been established, there is a framework for future policy changes.

The education system in Pakistan is fragmented and includes religious and general educational institutions, which are further sub-divided into private and public sector categories (Ahmed, 2012). As the fragmented system follows different objectives towards disparate goals, it is difficult to track and match them on a single linear path.

The religious schools are madrassahs and are commonly accused of spreading extremist views in the society (Shaheen, Yousafzai & Yousaf, 2011). Ahmad, Shaukat and Abiodullah (2009) carried out a research study on the role of different education system in the development of moral and social traits in Pakistani students. They employed data from madrassahs, private and public schools on social and moral development indicators such as honesty, tolerance, violence, respect for others and patriotism. Results indicated that students enrolled in madrassahs showed higher level of violence and patriotism and revealed lower level of tolerance.

Shaukat and Pell (2016) conducted a study to examine the perceptions of Madressah system of education. They determined the perceptions of Madressah students from five Islamic sects (Barelvi, Deo-bandi, Ahle-Hadith, Shia and Jama'iyate-Islami) about madressah system of education at five Lahore madrassahs. Semi-structured interview schedule was employed to collect the views of madressah students and results reported that students recommended reforms for curricular change with the introduction of more modern, secular subjects.

The religious schools are madrassahs and are commonly accused of spreading extremist views in the society (Shaheen, Yousafzai & Yousaf, 2011). They are blamed for training jihadists and using them as a tool to implement conservative religious ideas. It is a fact, that madrassahs form a large and important segment of the society. These were established in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century India (Islam, 2010) in order to provide free religious education to the underprivileged. After Pakistan’s formation in 1947, a general education system was set up to fulfill the needs of the society. However, these institutes continued working with the same administrative conditions and goals as before. In the era of the occupation of Afghanistan by the USSR, the establishment, supported by the United States and Middle Eastern countries (Johnson & Mason, 2007) used the madrassah system as a means for providing militants to fight against the USSR. Since then the madrassah system has expanded considerably as reported by Tariq (2011) and are considered by some to be centers of extremism, both potential and real. In addition to fostering potential militant activities, madrassahs are also considered sources for inculcating conservative beliefs in society, particularly those about gender discrimination.

In contrast, the general educational institutions approach learning in a relatively moderate manner, while the private sector is accused of even being liberal or secular. As there are effectively two parallel streams of educational institutions in Pakistan, showing perceptions of the concepts under study, so students of both streams were taken as participants in the research. Previously many research studies have been carried out in order to find opinions about terrorism (Rana, 2009). These

studies tend to focus on examining the perceptions of either madrassah teachers or the general public. With both samples, responses become polarized between groups of respondent. However, the most important element, i.e. the students, has generally been ignored. This study is an effort to identify concern of students regarding terrorism.

**Research hypotheses**

1. There is likely to be difference in concerns about terrorism, peace and female emancipation between students enrolled in Madrassahs, private and public schools.
2. There is likely to be differential impact of demographic variables on concerns about terrorism, peace and female emancipation for students enrolled in Madrassahs, private and public schools.

**Method**

**Sample**

The study was carried out by using descriptive research with a questionnaire survey type method. Data were collected from three types of educational institution; Madrassah, private and public belonging to rural and urban areas of Lahore district. Two madrassahs, two public schools and two private schools were approached for collecting data. Table 1 describes the demographic information of respondents. It is evident from the table that a large number of the participants were female and drawn approximately equally from Madrassahs and private and public institutions. The majority modal age range was from 14 to 18 years. Nearly two thirds were from an urban location.

Table 1  
*Summary of demographic variables*

Variables		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Men	88	48.9
	Women	92	51.1
Age	14 to 18	85	47.2
	19 to 22	73	40.6
	23 to 25	22	12.2
Institution	Madrassah	60	33.3
	Private	58	32.3
	Public	62	34.4
Locale	Rural	68	37.8

	Urban	112	62.2	
<b>Instrument</b>	<p>Items for the questionnaire were collected from the literature, particularly from Zalman &amp; Clarke (2009), Malik et al., (2010), Nayab and Kamal (2010), Rana (2009), Singer (2001), Shaukat, Siddiquah and Pell (2014). The items were grouped into three subscales;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Anti-terrorism</i>: comprising seven statements, specifically drawn from the studies of Malik et al., (2010), Ajmal (2010), Laghari, Abro and Jafri (2011).</li> <li><i>Peace</i>: comprising seven statements drawn from the studies of Kester (2008), Rana (2009), Ahmad (2012).</li> <li><i>Female emancipation</i>: comprising twelve statements drawn from the studies of Shaukat, Siddiquah and Pell (2014) and Khan (2016).</li> </ol> <p>Item responses were collected using a five point Likert scale response ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and then converted into a numerical scale of 5 to 1 (Cohen, Manion, &amp; Morrison, 2007; Youngman, 1979). Means and standard deviations were computed using IBM-SPSS software. An initial item analysis included an analysis of variance to confirm the relevance of the breakdown variables of terrorism, peace and women emancipation.</p> <p>Data analysis then proceeded by principal components factor extraction using IBM-SPSS software. This procedure reduces the data collected and tests the validity of the emerging factors (Duff, 1997; Munby, 1997). Oblique rotation of the factor axes followed to accommodate the very likely inter-</p>	<p>correlation of the attitudinal factors (Norusis, 1990, p.334; Youngman, 1979, p. 102). Alpha maximization was then applied (Youngman, 1979, p.185). The item scores of the extracted items were then subjected to a further principal components factor analysis to confirm the uni-dimensionality of the final item scale (Gardner, 1995, 1996). Factor scores were then analyzed by breakdowns of variance and multiple linear regression (Youngman, 1979, p.111) to test each of the research statements, taking into account the concept of effect size to qualify significant differences (Cohen, 1988).</p>		
		<b>Procedure</b>		
		<p>After obtaining permission from the heads of the institutions, random sampling selected a total of 180 students enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> classes. Survey questionnaires were distributed to students after taking the participants' consent and informing them about the anonymous nature of the questionnaire. It took about 20 to 25 minutes for each individual to complete the questionnaire. At the end the participants were also thanked for their kind participation and corporation. Incomplete forms were discarded before data entry.</p>		
		<b>Setting up scales: Instrument Development</b>		
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Students Concerns about Terrorism</i></li> </ol> <p>Items 1 to 7 had been provisionally allocated to the <i>Anti-Terrorism</i> scale. Oblique factor analysis shows two factors, the strongest of which takes just 44.7% of the total item variance. The two factors correlate at a significant 0.19. This subscale is unidimensional in nature with 61.43% of variance accounted for. The statistics of the 5-item main factor appear in Table 2.</p>		

Table 2

Factor loading for the items selected for SCT from Principal component factor analysis (N=180)

Item No	Statements	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>
		<i>Anti-terrorism</i>	<i>Peace</i>	<i>Female emancipation</i>			
		(5 items)	(4 items)	(6 items)			
1	Killing anyone without any reason is the big crime of the world.	.83			4.71	.84	.68
2	The suicide attack is not right in thinking of Islam.	.86			4.69	.76	.72
4	I dislike terrorism	.51			4.49	1.10	.38
5	Terrorism presents a wrong image of Islam to the world.	.83			4.52	.84	.68
6	Islam gives proper religious rights to fight against terrorism.	.83			4.56	.84	.68
9	The lives of all Muslims/non-Muslims are equally valuable.		.88		4.63	.75	.78
10	The best way to avoid war is through military strength and mutual deterrence.		.69		4.26	1.02	.46
12	Peace has stronger power than war.		.77		4.62	.99	.51
14	I support jihad for the struggle of Kashmiris		.74		4.12	1.20	.54
15	I should get a modern education together with religious education.			.72	4.66	.92	.57
18	There is no objection to women doing a job			.63	3.93	1.24	.51
19	I support the giving of equal rights to men and women.			.80	4.39	1.03	.70
20	We should educate girls as well as boys.			.84	4.55	.79	.74

21	An educated women can fulfil her responsibilities in better way in the society.	.73	4.47	.90	.58
22	Women should be given the right of vote casting.	.85	4.51	.82	.73

The item-whole correlations refer to a numerical scale of the item scores of the five items. Item 4 appears to be weak statistically. Indeed, omitting it raises the Alpha reliability to 0.87, but it was retained for its validity and it still contributes to the overall unidimensional concept of having a 'position' on terrorism. Six of the 180 respondents have mean scores/item of below 3.00 indicating a positive view of terrorism. This factor reported a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.82.

**b. Students' attitudes to Peace**

Items 8 to 14 were provisionally allocated to the *Peace* scale. Oblique factor analysis showed three factors, the strongest of which takes just 37.4% of the total item variance. This distinctly Pakistani scale reflects the tension with neighbouring India and the need for military strength and the disputed Kashmir. Seven of the 180 respondents have mean scores/item of below 3.00 indicating a negative view

of Pakistani peace. Six of the seven have a positive view of terrorism. This four-item unidimensional scale (60.4% of variance) has a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.75.

**c. Students' attitudes to Female emancipation**

The remaining items 12 to 26 were provisionally allocated to the concept of *Female emancipation*. Oblique factor analysis showed three factors, the strongest of which takes just 36.1% of the total item variance. This six-item scale is unidimensional taking 58.8% of variance and has a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.84.

**Inter-correlations between scale scores**

Table 3 shows inter-correlations of the three derived scale scores for males and females separately. Correlations for males are above the diagonal

Table 3  
Correlation matrix of the three Subscales (N=180)

Scale	Anti-terrorism	Peace	Female emancipation
Anti-terrorism	---	.688**	.536**
Peace	---	---	.704**
Female emancipation	---	---	---
<i>Mean</i>	4.60	4.41	4.42
<i>SD</i>	0.67	0.76	0.72

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed). \*\*p<1%

Table 3 shows significant correlation among three factors of students' concerns towards terrorism; anti-terrorism, peace and female emancipation.

**Results**

*a. Anti-terrorism*

Analysis of variance was used to determine the significant differences between students' attitudes to anti-terrorism and the demographic variables. Both main effects and interactions were explored. Only significant results are reported (Table 4). Location and type of institution have significant main effects. There are no significant interactions.

Table 4.

*Analysis of Variance for Anti-terrorism subscale*

Educational institution	Location	N	Mean score/item	SD
Madrassah	Rural	31	4.68	0.406
	Urban	29	4.72	0.348
Private	Rural	22	4.90	0.193
	Urban	36	4.60	0.452
Public	Rural	15	4.75	0.342
	Urban	47	4.20	1.065
All	Both	180	4.60	0.671

*F for Educational institution = 8.514, df= 2, p = 0.002*

*F for Location = 4.326 , df= 1, p = 0.039*

*F for interaction = 2.785 , df= 2, p = 0.064*

*Overall R =0.321, medium effect size*

Scores tend to be lower in public, urban institutions, which causes the overall significant effect, despite the interaction effect just failing at p = 0.064.

*b. Peace*

Statistical testing of Peace scores by analysis of variance for significant main and interaction effects shows that the gender/type of institution interaction effect is significant (Table 5).

Table 5.  
*Peace Scores Broken Down by Institution and Gender*

Educational institution	Gender	N	Mean score/item	SD
Madrassah	Male	30	3.97	0.320
	Female	30	4.55	0.422
Private	Male	22	4.75	0.419
	Female	31	4.60	0.460
Public	Male	31	4.71	0.544
	Female	31	3.90	1.332
All	Both	180	4.41	0.760

*F for Educational institution/gender interaction = 15.975, df= 2, p = 0.000*

*Overall R =0.262, medium effect size*

While in private institutions, male and females score similarly, in madrassahs males are less strongly committed to peace. In public institutions, females show the weaker resolve.

Statistical testing of Female emancipation scores by analysis of variance for significant main and interaction effects shows that the gender/type of institution interaction effect is significant (Table 6).

*c. Female emancipation*

Table 6  
*Analysis of Variance for Female emancipation subscale*

Educational institution	Gender	N	Mean score/item	SD
Madrassah	Male	30	3.77	0.412
	Female	30	4.66	0.378
Private	Male	22	4.67	0.379
	Female	31	4.79	0.262
Public	Male	31	4.71	0.325
	Female	31	3.92	1.218
All	Both	180	4.42	0.720

*F for Educational institution/gender interaction = 29.916, df= 2, p = 0.000*

*Overall R =0.312, medium effect size*

Both male and females in private education feel very strongly about female emancipation. In madrassahs, females are similarly supportive but males express much weaker views. This situation reverses in the public institutions, where the males are highly supportive but the females less so.

## Discussion

The study was carried out to investigate the students' concerns about terrorism in the context of Pakistan. Initial finding of the results showed that students enrolled in private schools have the strongest perception of the evil of terrorism. The lower ratings for urban institutions might be accounted for by slightly more questioning of the idea that 'terrorism is inherently bad. In other words, urban students are more influenced by the impact of the political norms of today's Islamic society. Nevertheless, mean responses are all in the 'agree/strongly agree' category for all groups.

Looking at gender and peace, male students enrolled in private schools were significantly more concerned for peace development in society than those male students who were enrolled in Madrassah. It may be due to that Madrassah students used to read Jihad and some also get Jihad trainings so they reflect more extremism in the society as their counterpart students (Hossain et al, 2011). Students in private institutions may tend to involve in social change activities and some tend to play a significant role as a social activist to bring about peace in a society and a stable state (Jooseop et al., 1999). This finding is consistent with the previous research study conducted by Rahman (2010) who found that students from private sector were more involved in social activities. It is interesting to know that madrassah female students were equally interested to promote peace in society like private female students. While males in public institutions do not differ from males in the private sector, females in the former show a more neutral attitude and are similar in this respect to males in madrassahs.

On the factor of female emancipation, male and females students enrolled in private schools showed very strong concerns about female emancipation. In private institutions, male and female students get equal chances of academic activities and perform leading role in curricular and

co-curricular activities, this enhances the confidence of female students this may explain why that's why they prefer to take prominent role in the society, this can also be attributed to educated mothers as presented by Lloyd, Mete, and Grant (2005, 2007). The similar finding was found in madrassahs females, who were likewise supportive but males expressed much weaker views. Madrassah males are being 'conditioned' into a strongly conservative mind-set and don't like females involvement in social activities. Females in a male dominated society (give reference from one of your papers) tend to be submissive and compliant with the prevailing socio-cultural view (Shaukat & Pell, 2015; Shaukat et al., 2014). Males are the "drivers" of society and need to be prepared. Females are expected to stay at home to look after the domestic chores.

Unbending views on women's emancipation and terrorism can be attributed to education of mothers as the locus of family development before schooling. Rehman (2008) has reported that, at school age, male students might have studied more concepts of jihad and are indoctrinated with rigid views on role of women so this might be a reason that they do consider women emancipation as western concept thus disliking it.

Female students in madrassahs have no social activity or games and sports (Pakistan institute of legislative development and transparency, 2015). They have to involve themselves in study all the time, this makes them bored from the routine work and a life of limited meaning. It may be assumed that many want social recognition and freedom to express their views and participate in a wider society. The opposite situation was found in public institutions where females were less concerned and supportive for female emancipation due to their limited social role, and is supportive of the hypothesis that this sample of females has become conditioned to a life of minimal expectation by passing through the public school system (Rahman, 2010).

## Conclusion

The answers from the discussion show that males in Madrassahs have less positive attitudes towards peace and female emancipation. Attitudes

for both males and females in private education are very firmly against terrorism and for a peaceful, more liberal society. Females in Madrassahs appear to have their feminine aspirations being suppressed by the nature of the religious curriculum. Mainstream public schooling, rather than that of the private sector, is still transmitting the conservative values of society with females in public institutions lagging behind a demand for emancipation.

One limitation of the study is the less representative sample to over-generalize the results, however, a larger survey is recommended to follow up the main outcomes of the present work.

On the evidence so far, it suggests that there is a need for curriculum similarities between school systems so students can approach the serious issues facing the country from a common base. The curricula and teaching methodology of good private and good public institutions might be critically evaluated as a first step to identify the optimum qualities of learning and thinking both males and females require. After this, issues in the narrowness of Madrassah education and its current negative impact on both males and females can be addressed.

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