

## A Measure of Students' and Teachers' Level of Tolerance Towards Religious and Social Factors

Shaista Khalid  
Department of Education,  
University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan.

Nasir Mahmood  
Institute of Education and Research,  
University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

The study aimed at exploring the level of tolerance of students and their teachers towards certain social and religious factors i.e. gender, ethnicity, caste, religion and religious sects. Tolerance was defined as low level of biasness towards these factors. A questionnaire was developed by the researchers based on above mentioned sub factors. The data was collected from eleven schools in Lahore and Gujrat Districts. Sample comprised of 742 students (349 female; 375 male) of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade and 71 teachers (29 male; 42 female) teaching these classes. The level of tolerance was examined by analyzing the data regarding the relationship between (i) level of students' tolerance and their teachers' tolerance level; (ii) students' and teachers' gender, caste and locale. Findings suggest that majority of participants fall below the tolerant category i.e.  $X. < 178-182$ . However; teachers were found less tolerant than students. Gender, locality, caste and age were not influential factors in determining the level of tolerance.

Key words: social and religious tolerance, students, teachers,

Pakistan is a progressive society and is composed of four different Muslim majority ethnic nationalities, distinct in culture and language: – Baloch, Pathans, Punjabi and Sindhis (Shahzad, 2007). Tolerance between social entities and institutions is essential for the attainment of peaceful environment throughout the country. But unfortunately, in the last two decades, the level of intolerance in Pakistan has reached to dangerously high levels.

In the situations where conditions are economically depressed and politically charged, groups and individuals may find it hard to tolerate those that are different from them or have caused them harm. Intolerance will drive groups apart, creating a sense of permanent separation between them (Peterson, 2003). To avoid such conditions it becomes necessary to explore the roots and causes of intolerance on a general and personal basis. Alport, (1954) states that "without the knowledge of the roots of hostility we cannot hope to employ our intelligence effectively in controlling its destructiveness" and to build tolerance and increase understanding of others.

Tolerance is "the willingness to accept or tolerate somebody/something, especially opinions or behavior that you may not agree with, or people who are not like you"(Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary, 2011). According to American Heritage Dictionary (1994), tolerance is defined as "the appreciation of diversity and the ability to live and let others live. It is the ability to exercise a fair and objective attitude towards those whose opinions, practices, religion, nationality and so on differs from one's own". In

its Declaration on the principles of tolerance, UNESCO (1995) offers another definition of tolerance. Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's culture, our forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is an entry point on a developmental process that leads to acceptance, respect and even an affirmation of differing opinions and ways of life (Nieto, 1996 as cited by Colesante & Biggs, 1999). Tolerance can also be viewed as a principled judgment which reflects propositional reasoning that is logical and verifiable, or narrative reasoning which leads people to understand how their actions can affect the lives of others (Colesante & Biggs, 1999).

In fact, it is difficult to 'define' tolerance because it is a concept 'open to several interpretations ranging from full or indiscriminate acceptance to forbearance or 'Putting up with'. (Oberdiek, 2001, as cited by Witenberg, 2007). Tolerance is defined slightly differently from one language to another, for instance : 'the capacity to accept ideas or opinions different from one's own'(Spanish), 'an attitude which grants that others may think or act in a manner different from that of one's self'(French), 'willingness to tolerate, forbearance'(English), 'allow, admit to be generous towards others'(Chinese), 'pardon, indulgence, mercy, forbearance... accepting others and forgiving'(Arabic), 'to admit/accept the being, existence of something/somebody, to reconcile oneself to something/somebody' (Russian) (UNESCO,1997,as cited in Developing Empathy & Tolerance) . These differences are mostly differences about the *concept* of tolerance, rather than the *practice* of tolerance. In other words, while different languages or cultures differ on the way they would define the word tolerance, the practice of tolerance, or its goals are widely accepted as essential to peace. Despite their differences, each definition encompasses the fundamental essence of tolerance: to respect the rights of others-'the different'- to be who they are, to refrain from harm because harming 'the other ' means to harm all and to the self.

Tolerance is fostered by knowledge and, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience, and belief. It is not only a moral duty; it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace. Tolerance is the foundation of democracy and human rights. Intolerance in multi-ethnic, multi-religious, or multi-cultural societies leads towards violation of human rights, violence or armed conflict (UNESCO, 1995).

There are reasonably diverse meanings and factors associated with tolerance, which on the one hand show the range of actions associated with tolerance but on the other hand confuses the reader. 'It is important to acknowledge that the concept of tolerance has limits, particularly in the realm of actions' (Hodge & Wolfer, 2008), therefore it is important to operationally define tolerance. For the purpose of this study tolerance is defined as "low levels of bias towards gender, caste, ethnicity, other religions and religious sects." Bias is a term used to describe an inclination or preference that influences judgment from being balanced. Prejudice is bias in pejorative sense (Business dictionary). It is an unfavorable attitude directed toward others because of their membership in a particular group. (Fishbein, 2002)

Most researches agree that prejudice (bias) is a learned behavior (Mileski, 1998). Parents and teachers are two important sources of behavior learning. Both play an effective role in shaping the personality of an individual. Teachers, in particular, are identified as 'enduring socializing influences' because they enter children's lives early, spend extended periods of time with them, and often remain close to them for years. (Johnson, 2008). Teachers can shape and reshape the opinion of students, they are the substantive opinion formers' (Garner, 1995, as cited by Pomeroy, 1999). This phenomenon of teachers influence on students suggests that teachers' tolerance level might affect the students' level of tolerance

This study attempted to identify the factors, which might be responsible for intolerant behavior. Various research studies suggest that people are usually biased toward opposite gender, people having different religion (minorities) and race or ethnicity (Prutzman & Johnson, 1997; Chang, 2002; Hurtado, 2001, Stangor & McMillan, 1992 as cited by Enberg, 2004; Klein, 1992; Brehm, 1998, Hendrson- King & Kaleta 2000, Christie & Dawes, 2001). So keeping in view the findings of these studies the factors of gender and other religion have been selected for the study. Race factor was modified as ethnicity. However, caste, and religious sects relate to our society particularly.

Keeping this context in mind, the researchers attempted to find out the answers of four questions through this study: firstly what is the level of tolerance of secondary level students? Secondly what is the tolerance level of their teachers? Thirdly, is there any difference between students' and their teachers' tolerance level? Secondly, is there any relationship among students' and teachers' level of tolerance and their gender, locale, and caste, respectively?

### Methodology

The data were collected from eleven schools in Lahore and Gujarat Districts. Schools were conveniently selected by having the prior consent of the head teacher to participate in this study. Sample comprised of 742 (348 female; 394 male) students of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade and 71(29 male; 42 female) teachers teaching these classes. The table illustrates the location of schools, number of teachers and students:

Table 1

*List of sample schools with locale, number of students and teachers*

School Name	Locale	No of students	No of teacher
<i>Male</i>			
Govt. C M S	Urban	76	8
Govt. HS T M	Rural	37	5
Govt. H SS	Rural	44	2
Govt. H S B	Urban	63	8
Govt. P H S S	Rural	173	6
Total	05	393	29
<i>Female</i>			
Govt. G H S	Rural	60	7
Govt. G H S	Rural	61	8
Govt. G H S	Urban	42	7
Govt. G H S	Urban	92	7
Govt. G H S	Urban	38	6
Govt. G I H S	Rural	57	7
Total	06	350	42

### Instrument

The researchers developed a five point Likert type scale on tolerance in Urdu language for this study. Initially it comprised of 95 questions based on six sub factors of tolerance. These sub factors included: gender, caste, ethnicity, disability, minorities (other religion) and religious sects. After applying factor analysis technique, five sub factors (excluding disability) and a total number of 61 questions were selected for the final scale to measure the tolerance level.

The table 2 summarizes the factor wise distribution of tolerance scale as well as some sample items constructed under each factor.

### Reliability and Validity of research instrument

The reliability of scale was calculated as: .802 with 61 items. Factor wise reliability for gender, caste, different religions, religious sects, and ethnicity was .680, .536, .588, .081, .344 respectively.

The tolerance scale was validated using two methods: first of all expert opinion was gained on the statements of questionnaire. And some items were reconstructed in the light of various opinions. The other method for measuring validity was inter-correlation matrix. The table 3 shows the result of inter -correlation matrix for sub factors.

The table 3 shows that the sub factors of the scale i.e. caste, gender, religious sects, ethnicity and other religion have a weaker inter correlation while, on the other hand their overall relation with scale is stronger. This fact confirms the validity of the scale.

### Results

The first two objectives of the study were to find out level of teachers' and students' tolerance. The obtained scores of both type of subjects on tolerance scale were divided into three levels to determine the least tolerant (teachers: 153-177.9, students: 143.68-182.12) tolerant (teachers: 178-202.9, students: 182.13-220.57) and highly tolerant (teachers: 203-228, students: 220.58-259) participants. Table 4 shows that majority of teachers as well as

Table 2

*Scope, number of items in each factor of the tolerance scale with sample items*

Factor	Scope	No of items	Sample items
Gender	Education Social status Domestic affairs Equality of rights	16	Boys and girls should be given equal educational chances. لڑکوں اور لڑکیوں کو تعلیم کے برابر مواقع ملنے چاہئیں۔ A woman can be economically independent ایک عورت کو معاشی طور پر خود مختار ہونا چاہیے Girls should be consulted of marriage matters شادی کے معاملے میں لڑکیوں سے ان کی رائے معلوم کرنی چاہیے۔ Husband should be final authority in home decisions گھر کی فیصلوں کا اختیار صرف شوہر کو ہونا چاہیے۔
Caste	Social caste system Discrimination based on caste Caste and social status	17	All castes are equal. تمام ذاتیں برابر ہوتی ہیں۔ Elite class people should be respected in any case. اعلیٰ ذات کے افراد کو یہ حق حاصل ہے کہ ہر حال میں ان کی عزت کی جائے۔ Education is not necessary for low caste people کمتر ذات طلبہ کے لیے اعلیٰ تعلیم ضروری نہیں۔ There is no harm in cross caste marriages دوسری ذات کے افراد سے شادی بیاہ درست ہے
Religious sects	Based on social practices Differences among various creeds. Acceptance of different sect	6	My creed is the best one so all others should adopt it. میرا مسلک درست ہے اس لیے تمام افراد کو میرا مسلک اپنانا چاہیے۔ One can offer prayer in the mosque of opposite creed کسی دوسرے مسلک کی مسجد میں نماز پڑھی جاسکتی ہے۔ The differences among various creed are of trivial nature تمام مسالک کے درمیان فرق معمولی نوعیت کے ہیں Discussion on different sects should be allowed in the classroom. کمرہ جماعت میں مختلف مسالک پر بات ہونی چاہیے۔
Ethnicity	Affective reaction against any other ethnic group.	10	Pathans honor their guests. پٹھان مہمان نواز ہوتے ہیں۔ Sindhis are hard working. سندھی سختی قوم ہیں۔ Balochi are not well wishers of Punjab. بلوچی لوگ پنجاب کے ہمدرد نہیں ہیں۔ Punjabis have the greatest contribution in country development. ملکی ترقی میں سب سے زیادہ حصہ پنجابیوں کا ہے۔
Other religions	Discrimination based on difference n religion acceptance for minorities segregation in society due to differences	9	Separate schools should be established for non-Muslims. غیر مسلم بچوں کے لیے الگ سکول ہونے چاہئیں۔ We should get awareness about other religions as well. معذور افراد و والدین کے لیے شرمندگی کا باعث بنتے ہیں۔ Non- Muslim children should not play with Muslims غیر مسلم بچوں کو مسلمان بچوں کے ساتھ نہیں کھیلنا چاہیے۔

Table 3  
*Inter-Correlation matrix for sub factors of Tolerance scale*

	Gender	Caste	Religious sects	Ethnicity	Other religion	Total
Gender	1.00					
Caste	.280	1.00				
Religious sects	.201	.257	1.00			
Ethnicity	.255	.141	.166	1.00		
Other religion	.328	.233	.175	.166	1.00	
Total	.715	.648	.511	.591	.580	1.00

\*P <0.05 \*\* p <0.01

Table 4  
*Teachers' and students' level of tolerance*

Participants	153-177.9			178-202.9			203-228		
	Least tolerant			Tolerant			Highly Tolerant		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Teacher	22	171.65	7.169	44	187.97	6.307	5	214	9.027
Students	239	174.610	6.973	479	195.786	9.4888	24	231	9.738
	Range: 143.68-182.12			Range: 182.13-220.57			Range: 220.58-259		

Table 5  
*Difference in Teachers' and Students' Level of Tolerance*

Type of subject	N	Mean	SD	df	t
Teachers	71	183.9470	12.69574	811	-3.317**
Students	742	190.1317	15.21009		

P\*\*\*≤0.001, p\*\*≤0.01, p\*≤ 0.05

Table 6  
*Regression analysis summary of variables predicting tolerance level of teachers*

Variables	B	S.E	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.07	.40		2.69	.009
gender	.27	.14	.25	1.90	.061
locality	.12	.13	.12	.93	.355
Age	.00	.05	.00	.01	.990
caste	-.03	.01	-.30	-2.36	.022

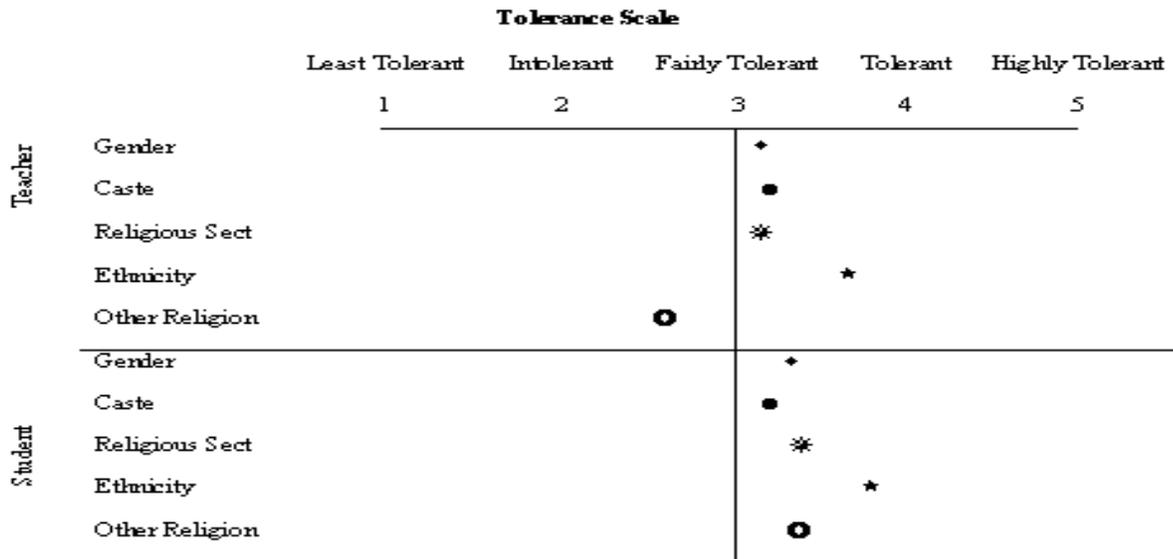
a Dependent Variable: Total Score on all Factors  
R square= .148, adjusted R square= .089  
P\* < .05

Table 7  
*Regression analysis summary of variables predicting tolerance level of students*

Variables	B	S.E	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.00	1.10		.00	.997
Gender	.45	.40	.04	1.11	.265
locality	.26	.41	.02	.63	.526
Age	.46	.40	.04	1.14	.253
caste	.03	.04	.02	.71	.475

a Dependent Variable: Total Score on all Factors  
r= .005, adjusted r sq= -.001  
p\* < .05

Figure  
Participants score on various factors of tolerance



students were on middle level (tolerant) only five teachers and 24 students fell under the category of highly tolerant. This number is very small as compared to their total number. Though, according to this categorization, majority of participants fall under the category of ‘tolerant’; it is interesting to note that even the highly tolerant participants are below the level of agreement on the Tolerance scale. Table 4 presents the distribution of participants on the basis of their acquired scores.

Another important result relates to the score of participants on various factors of the tolerance scale. In this regard, teachers are less tolerant on the factor of Other Religion as compared to students. Teachers and students both are more tolerant on Ethnicity than any other factor (see Fig. 1).

Comparison of teachers and students’ level of tolerance revealed a significant difference between the mean scores of the two. Students are more tolerant than teachers on tolerance scale. Table 5 illustrates the difference between teachers’ and students’ level of tolerance

Results regarding relationship among teachers’ level of tolerance and their age, caste, gender, and locale reveal that these factors have no significant relationship with the level of tolerance of teachers. Table 6 illustrates the details of regression analysis:

Results regarding relationship of tolerance level of students with their age, caste, locale and gender show that these factors are not influential in determining the level of tolerance of students (see Table 7).

### Discussion

The results have revealed some interesting facts about prevailing level of tolerance in teacher and students in Pakistan. It was helpful in filtering myths and realities.

A true representation is reflected in measuring the level of tolerance. According to the measure students are more tolerant than teachers. This finding implies that teachers as adults have conformed themselves to the norms of society. On the other hand students (age range 13 years to 17 years) are yet free to think independently without any pressure of getting accustomed to social norms. It reveals that the more interaction with society an individual has and more time it spends in society, the more he is prone to adopt the customs and norms of society. Societies prepare individuals gradually for compliance. (Vygotsky; 1978). Teachers are more involved in society that’s why they are more conformed to society’s norms. Despite the fact that teachers have an influence on students, students at this level are still free in their thinking hence more tolerant. By the growth of age, views of individuals get compliant with society. To find out the reality of this factor, further research can be conducted on students and teachers’ of higher grades.

The fact that society get people comply to its norms suggest that school education used to build greater influence through cross curriculum activities and inclusion of material promoting tolerance when students move to higher grades(classes) to balance the effect of social influence. The result also implies that if we want to make our nation tolerant we have to inculcate the lessons of being tolerant at an early level of schooling where it can be more effective.

Ethnicity, Religious sects and Minorities (on the basis of religion) are assumed as point of intolerance. The results reveal that teachers are less tolerant (on disagreement level) on the factor of other religions; however both teachers and students are more near to the level of agreement on the factor of Ethnicity. These findings suggest that awareness about these social factors should be given to decrease the discriminatory actions and attitude of people. Classroom can be the best channel for disseminating such awareness to society.

We claim to be a Muslim majority nation. Tolerance is the supreme virtue of Islam. But the findings of the study do not correspond with this claim. It is alarming to note that teachers are more intolerant toward other religions, though all the teachers included in sample were Muslims. Islam is the religion which promotes tolerance for other religions and preaches to accept the differences. The findings reveal that teachers have an insufficient understanding / a weaker fellowship of Islam. The source of their knowledge is not religion but society. We cannot avoid this situation, and it must be addressed to be resolved. In the light of this finding it is strongly recommended that teachers training programs should be organized in such a way to communicate the true teachings of religion hence to develop acceptance and tolerance for other religions.

Ethnicity is the factor where students and teachers are found to be equally tolerant. This finding is encouraging for the researchers. Four ethnic groups are present in Pakistan and if they are open to accept one another, they will be contributing towards a united and peaceful Pakistan.. This tolerance for different ethnic groups can be strengthened by inculcating some lessons on tolerance at all levels of schooling in tutorials and through embedding it in different school subjects..

Data revealed that participants were having 40 different castes. As the number was too large to run a meaningful analysis, the castes were collapsed into seven categories as: Castes based on Arab origin, Aryan origin: Rajput and allied castes, Jaat and allied castes, Kashmiri origin, Occupations based, Awan/Malik, Gujar and allied castes. Castes having very low frequency were omitted from the analysis. The division of castes was made after a detailed study of the book 'Zaton Ka Encyclopedia'. However the division of castes is not claimed as final and perfect. Other researchers may find some more accurate method of making such divisions.

Usually it is assumed that caste system is very strong in Pakistan and people are biased on the basis of their caste; especially cross caste marriages are considered an unpleasant decision in most of the castes. Likewise people living in rural area are considered more rigid and less tolerant on various social factors. The results suggest that level of tolerance is not influenced by the gender, age, locality and caste.

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