Social Identity and Uncertainty:
A Study of Responsible Societal Factors for Growing Extremism

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to investigate the issue of growing extremism with reference to the wider theme of societal factors as a reason for this growing menace. Society is responsible for developing particular behaviours amongst dwellers. Their attitudes are shaped up by multiple influencing factors around; it may be political, economic, or it may be merely an influence supported by culture. This study explores the said factors within two dimensions; 1. the effects of cultural and social identity on human behaviour; and 2. the influence of uncertainty on growing extremism and crimes. Quantitative data was collected from a highly educated segment of society from all over Pakistan. To obtain the data, a Likert scale was administered amongst research participants; who are working as educational leaders, teachers, scholars and tertiary level students. The findings of the research are thought-provoking and setting a direction to work forward and to dig up more.

JEL Classification: *Z1, Z12, Z19*

Keywords: *Extremism, Social Identity, Societal Factors, Uncertainty, Behavior*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Growing extremism is a matter of concern around the globe as it does not spare any sphere, and with the passage of time, it is getting strengthened. The core interest of this study is to explore the societal factors which are responsible for feeding extreme behaviours. In the present situation, seeking a solution for the growing issue has become the priority in making government policies in countries worldwide which are victimized by extremism and its damages. The policymakers do implement multiple methods to control the loss, and to some extent, they are useful too. Still, the educationists, intellects, and thinkers believe that the complete solution is only possible when the influencing factors would be identified and controlled. This study is designed to explore the influencing societal factors behind growing extremism. Socially when people live as a society, there are many differences and agreement which are the base of any community. Still, when the ratio of the balance in giving and take dealing gets imbalance, then reaction occurs in behaviours. Here the concern of the research is to digging out two critical factors first, the quest of social identity concept and its influence on biased behaviours and second prevailing uncertainty around and its role in growing extremism. The objectives of the study address the threat of societal insecurities and their effects on behaviours. Kundnani (2015) stated that the individuals' views are being focused and valued on the discourse on "War on terror". Societal factors cannot be studied separately without understanding human nature and individual behaviours which collectively form the

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human face (Cramer & Richards, 2011). In this regard, the study is a step ahead towards providing an understanding of the emerging ideology of extremism and radicalization. Thus, the study addresses two essential dimensions of the views for understanding societal factors which are responsible for the growing attitude of extremism. First, the notion of social identity is discussed and seconds the issue of uncertainty in society and how it is affecting the individuals' attitudes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kroskrity (2000) has explained the term social identity as a category which is built socially by individuals as members of the society. He also stated that groups and classes are a sort of pre-existing sections in any society and the construction of membership for a particular social category or group is based on the similarities of characteristics between individuals and specific category.

Tajfel and his colleagues proposed the social identity theory in the field of social psychology (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel, Turner, Austin & Worchel, 1979). They theorized that the hypothesis proposed a valuable distinction between individual and collective responses to social disadvantage and presented them as incompatible (Tajfelet al., 1979). To them, social identity is how people interact within a social group based on their own self-concepts and is an expression of their membership to those social groups.

This theory entails how addresses people's attitudes and behaviours regarding their in-group and the out-group help to build their social identities. These social identities are significant for an individual considers their attachment and membership to a specific group of immense value. Their self-concept is very much dependent on their association with that group. They may be associated with them on an emotional basis, too; however, this attachment is what defines their self-concept and augments their social identity. Such an association or even an affiliation is what develops self-esteem within that individual from the group. This helps in prolonging that social identity.

Leaper (2011) also been able to outline specific significant processes that help to define social identities. One of these processes is "within-group assimilation" which makes the individuals conform to an in-group's norms and helps to form "intergroup bias" (positively evaluating one's in-group relative to out-group [i.e., in-group favouritism] and possibly negatively evaluating the out-group).

Amongst the characteristics which laid the foundation for any categorization, linguistic approach and orientation are the foremost consideration, (Eckert, 1989). The aspect of linguistic negotiation also emerged with the concept of globalization; it works in multilingual societies (Blackledge & Pavlenko 2001). Cook (2000) presented the broader concept of change of linguistics identity, and he decentralized the concept of Language-based native identity. He stated that linguistic competence is more comprehensive than the native linguistic identity.

Mendoza-Denton (2002) reformed the concept of language-based identity to practice-based variation; according to this, the linguistic status is not permanent but varied, and this approach is a tracking approach based on the level of interaction. The very concept of tracking the shift

of identity provides more in-depth analyses of identity and its influencing factors to define the process and progress of social identity construction. All sorts of identities which are based on the language, can re-reform, and negotiate, (Mendoza-Denton, 2002). Through this study, it can be understood that individuals may have a choice for their identity association, or they may have multiple associations according to their linguistic behaviours at practice.

Extremism in the society is the source of massive human suffering and creates severely critical impact; the concern is to put forth a defence for the direness of understanding the brain science of societal extremism; to examine the different frames that radicalism can adopt, and to distinguish vulnerability as an associate of and perhaps precondition along with its connections with varying levels of extremism is the matter of consideration to be focused upon. These lines are outlined in the research studies in the present decade. There is a conceivable causal connection, amongst vulnerability and societal extremism (Hogg & Adelman, 2013). Radicalism and the psychology of uncertainty feature front line logical research to find the reason of growing extremism in society; it originates from driving worldwide researchers who concentrate on extensive social structures, realities and an indication of extreme conduct, (Hogg & Blaylock, 2011). At the point when individuals talk their inclinations towards specific differences and frequently move toward becoming intensified in their rights; their perspectives turn out to be more outrageous the consequent phenomenon to build up a division in society. This has been observed in many settings and cultures; moreover, it bears on the activities of juries, managerial tribunals, which can corporate securities and other institutions which are responsible for the growing uncertainty in the lives of individuals, (Glaeser & Sunstein, 2009). Effects of the varied preferences are contrastive on balanced practices, (Canetti, Rapaport, Wayne, Hall, & Hobfoll, 2013). Exposure to political violence & political extremism can cause various mental outcomes; exposure to conflict violence results in exchange in individuals' political attitude & conduct supplying a model for a stress-primarily based method of political extremism, (Canetti et al., 2013). Hogg and Blaylock (2011) addressed successfully that why do people become a part of extremist associations and have interaction in terrorist acts; and what are the mental effects of growing social, political and economic uncertainty around the world. According to them the theme that extremism can be rooted in lots of normal social-psychological techniques is challenging, with full-size scholarly and sensible implications; the discourse offers treasured insights, complementing analyses from other disciplines, right into a timely global difficulty which can open multiple diversions for the reasons of uncertainty and psychology behind the particular state of mind. Sociological explanations describe acts of terror as collective violence by a vulnerable group.
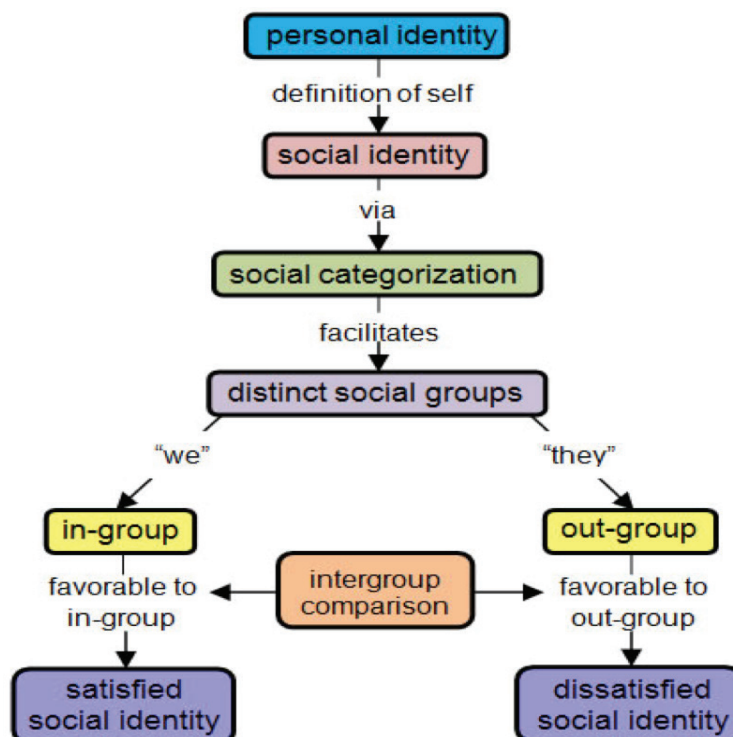
Forgas, Fiedler and Crano (2015) try to find out the answer to why people associate with political extremists or to put it in their way "how does political extremism rise?" To answer this question, they propose to approach this in several ways. The first could be from people's "predispositions, personality or cognitive styles". This means that the focus will be that people join, support or identify with political extremist groups due to factors like those groups encourage authoritarianism, prefer social dominance or need cognitive closure. These could be some of the reasons why people join or identify with extremist groups.

The theory of Uncertainty-identity (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2012, in press) clarifies how uncertainty plays a significant role in motivating people to identify with social groups. These

social groups could be either small task-oriented teams or organizations interacting with each other to achieve their objectives, or these could be large scale social groups based to achieve their own ethnic, national, political or religious agendas.

Hogg (2000) believes that this uncertainty-identity theory is not a new idea but the central part to ponder is that "a specific form of uncertainty, self- or identity-related uncertainty, is very effectively reduced and managed by identifying with a group". This is one of the reasons why Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) emphasize on the need of studying self and identity on three basic levels, that is on an individual, local, and global standards.

Social identification theory states that the in-group discriminate in opposition to the out-group to enhance a better image, social identity is an individual sense, and it leads the people to think that who they're. This sense is based totally on their group or community membership(s), (Hopkins & Reicher 1996). Peoples' concept of self comes from the associative communities to which those individuals belong. A character does not simply have personal selfhood; however, more than one people and identities associated with their affiliated cultures and livings (Tajfel et al., 1979). Language has two primary functions: communication and identification. Social identity understanding can be dealt with the communicative norms and linguistics (Bettie, 1995). The knowledge of, identification, and lifestyle is emphasized in language. Language is one of the significant factors which divides the society into groups, and this division cannot be ignored; it has some certain ground realities, and it incorporates human psychology as man is a social being and cannot survive without communication, (Bettie, 1995).

Figure 1: *Graphic presentation of the concept of social identity psychology by Tajfel et al.,1979*

Religious uncertainty is a critical issue in developing extreme behaviours (Ibraham, 1988). Radical Islamic beliefs are supposed to be the most significant motivating element for becoming a member of an Islamic terrorist network (Ibraham, 1988). The concept of Jihad has been emphasized through several Islamic extremist groups (Juergensmeyer, 2001). An influential Muslim identity and link with the wider Muslim community globally, the 'Umma', has consequences of the identity fact while Muslim groups appear as being mistreated. In connection with the religious and social influences referred above, a vigorous Muslim identity and link with the world overall provide a back of strong affiliation. Human beings' susceptibility to social impact beneath situations of uncertainty can have profound societal results by promoting the effect of certainty-promising demagogues of various types, discouraging open-mindedness to the diversity of viewpoints, and improving the attraction of rigidly simplistic, black/white ideologies, and fundamentalist belief systems and practices, (Altemeyer, 2003). Other comparable experiments have shown that evict can arise irrespective of how uncertainty is prompted. However, it is miles strongest, while the dimension of an individual's uncertainty is vital to self (Hogg, 2000).

Another voice on religious uncertainty comes from Hogg, Adelman, and Blagg (2010) who argue that religions are framed in a manner that they only help to decrease feelings of self-uncertainty. Indeed, people are motivated to reduce feelings of uncertainty about or reflecting on self; and identification with groups, particularly highly entitative groups, is a very effective way to reduce uncertainty (Hogg, Adelman & Blagg, 2010).

Numerous studies identify revenge as a key motivation for becoming a member of a terrorist group (Richardson, 2007). Criminological theories of Marxism can be linked to the notion of political revenge; both Engel (1845) and Marx (1848) believed crime has a political reason and that people devote violence which will trade their political circumstances, especially if they experience that their group is dealt unfairly by the authorities, (Martin & Frost, 2011). Some of the studies have located that individuals will go to extreme lengths to dedicate an act of revenge, which may be deadly (Fowler, 2005). Searching for retribution and their target, existential experience of loss, deprivation, and alienation, victimization of injustice also lead towards the intense behaviours and uncertainty in lifestyles, (Hudson, 1999). Exposure to extreme ideologies also radicalizes human beings and might facilitate entrance into the route of extremism (Hudson, 1999).

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study is built on perception-based responses from purposive sampling. The audience selected for participation in the study is a hundred percent educated and categorized into three major types of respondents.

1. Guests—included high profile academicians, entrepreneurs from the private sector, personnel from law and enforcement agencies and govt. Sector.
2. Presenters—included scholars nationwide.
3. Attendees—included faculty and university students.

The research participants responded to general perceptions regarding the awareness and understanding of uncertainty and the factors to prevail it in the society and also about the quest of social identity and its effects on social psychology. Data was collected on five level's Likert
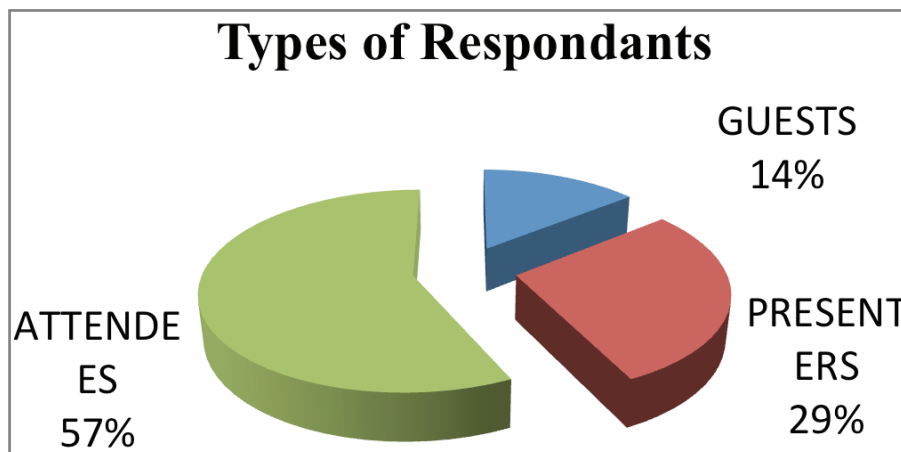
scale. Following were the conceptual items of the Likert scale questionnaire:
1. Understanding tolerance in society and its factors
2. Deprived social class and extremism
3. Social discrimination and uncertainty
4. Mother tongue and possessiveness
5. Group biasness
6. Lack of civil sense
7. Destructive attitudes towards the environment
8. Standards of revenge in personal and political situations.

Following is provided with the cumulative percentage, and its graphical presentation of the types of respondents included the ratio of all three categories:

Table 3:
Types of respondents

		Respondents			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	30	3	60.0	60.0	60.0
	60	1	20.0	20.0	80.0
	120	1	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	5	100.0	100.0	

Figure 2: *Types of Respondents*

Participants of this research are hundred percent educated. The level of education is between intermediate to postmasters. The purposive sampling served the aim to study perceptions and concepts of educated social class from all over the country to concretize the observed facts about responsible societal factors behind extreme behaviours.

Correlation Analyses

The data was collected on eight different perceptions to analyze two themes of the study, which are social identity matter and uncertainty in society. Items 1, 5, 7, 9 from above-provided concepts of the data scale were considered to analyze the perception of uncertainty around and its contributing factors as responsible societal reasons to growing extreme behaviours. The correlation between the selected items of the study is calculated as follows:
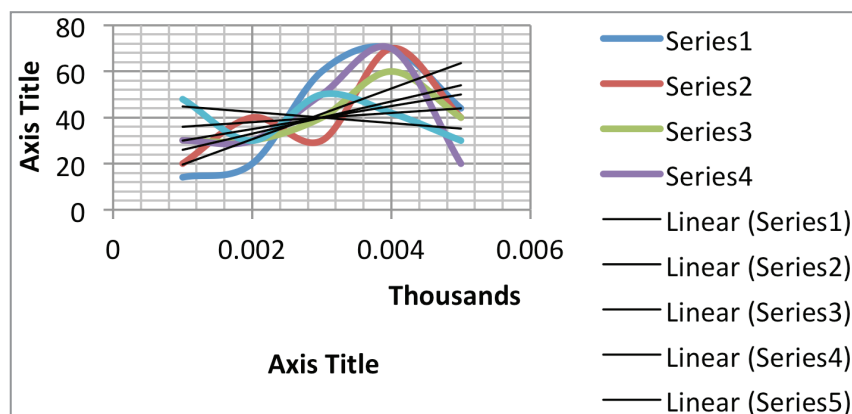
Table 2:

Scale of Items

1	5	7	8
Intolerance	Parental behaviour	Destructive human behaviour towards the environment and lack of civil sense	Standards of revenge in personal and political situations
14	20	30	48
20	40	30	30
60	30	50	50
70	70	70	42
44	40	20	30

Table 3:

Correlation Calculation

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Column 1	1			
Column 2	0.668468	1		
Column 3	0.887186	0.872872	1	
Column 4	0.758554	0.668153	0.816497	1

The correlation test provides positive results and shows strong correlation amongst societal factors which contribute to uncertainty growth which is one of the reasons for growing extremism globally. Following is the graphical presentation of correlation results.

Figure 3: *Graphical Presentation of Correlation Results*

Correlation calculation amongst items 2, 3, 4, & 6 is providing the following results for the discussion on the theme of social identity and its contributing factors.
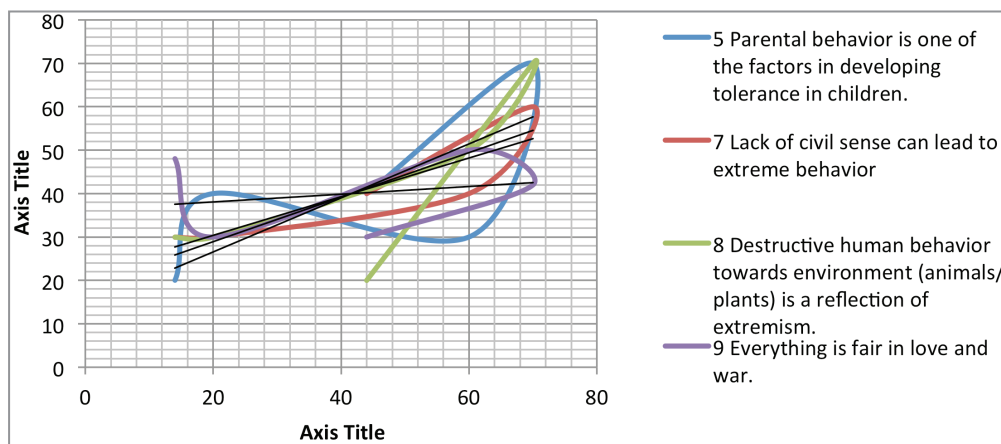
Table 4:
Correlation Test Results

Deprived social class	Societal discrimination	Possessiveness towards mother tongue	Group biasness
50	30	30	30
20	20	30	30
20	30	40	30
60	60	60	50
50	60	40	60

Table 5:
Correlation Calculation

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Column 1	1			
Column 2	0.785714	1		
Column 3	0.545545	0.763763	1	
Column 4	0.661438	0.944911	0.57735	1

The correlation test provides positive results and shows strong correlation amongst societal factors which contribute to promoting group biasness based on social identity factors which are another reason for growing extremism in society. Following is the graphical view of correlation results.
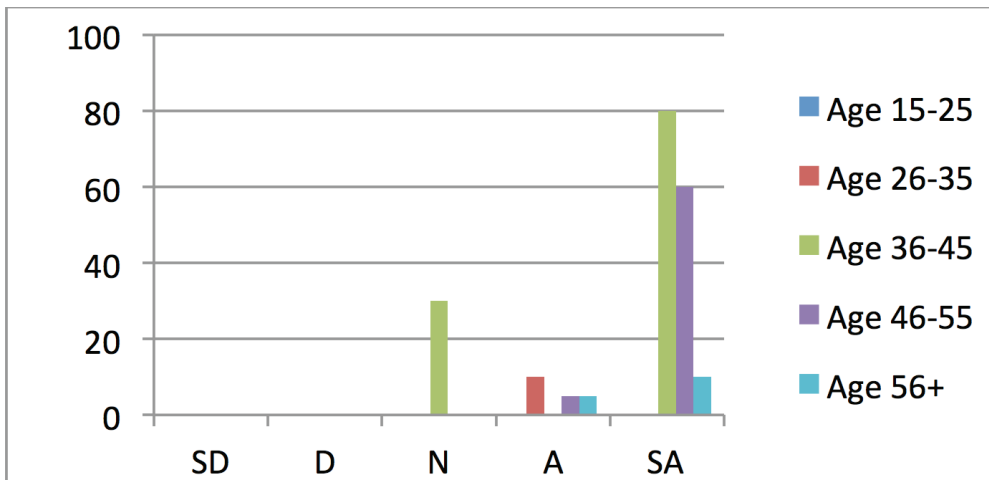

Figure 4: *Correlation Results*

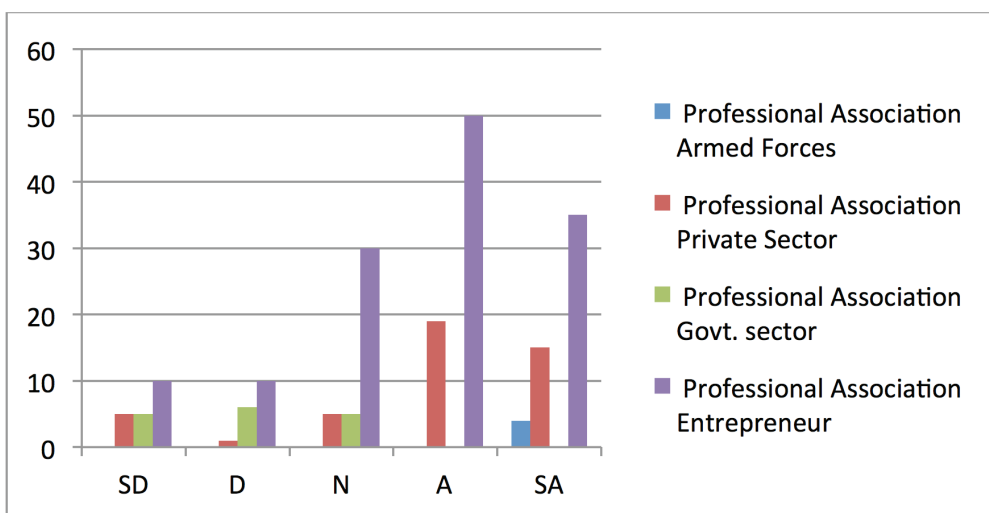**DATA INTERPRETATION**
Graphical presentation of the data

Following are provided with the graphical presentations and descriptions of the variables of the respondents on which bases data analyses were considered mature for supportive themes for the research subject.
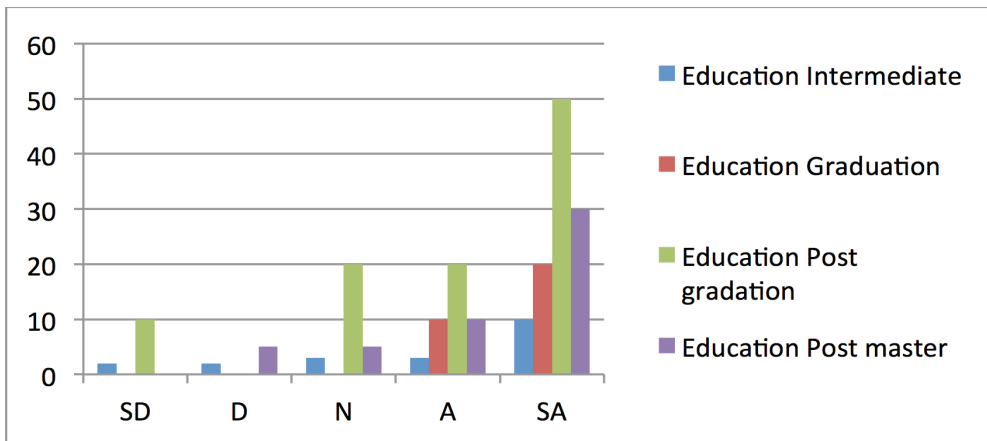
Figure 5: *Age variable in respondents*

Figure 04 shows that most of the respondents of perception items for the theme of uncertainty are of age between 36-45. This is the age when maturity affects the views. Most of the respondents have shown agreement with the perceptions presented on Likert scale tool.

Figure 6: *Variable of professional association amongst respondents*

In figure 05, the respondents who were agreed and strongly agreed belong to armed forces, and both the private and public sectors. The responses are considered mature in this regard as highly professional individuals have produced them.
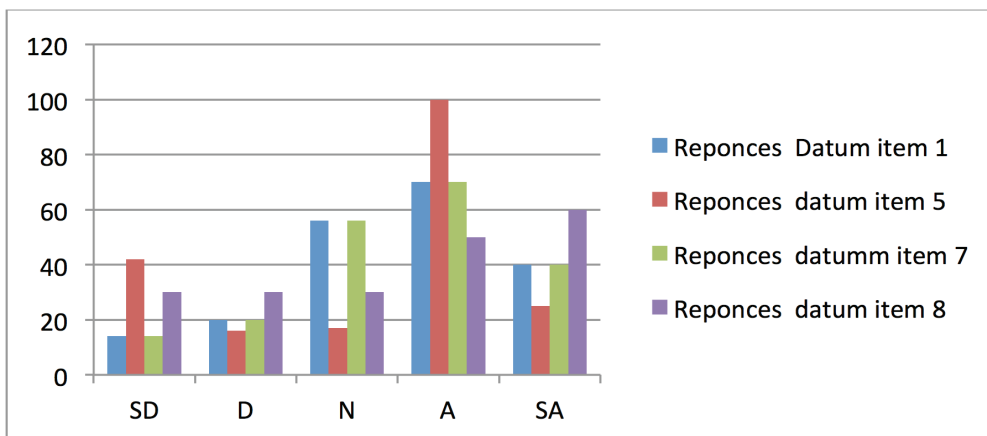
Figure 7: *Level of Education*

In the graphical presentation of figure 06, it is demonstrated that respondents of the perceptions were hundred percent educated and more categorically the highest recorded ratio is of post-graduation level of education. Post-graduation level suggests 16+ years of education. The variable of the level of education graphically demonstrated of the respondents is another consideration for the maturity of the responses received on the questionnaire scale.

Analytical Discussion Part 1

Uncertainty as a Societal Factor for Growing Extremism

Figure 8: *Responses for the theme of uncertainty and extremism*

Figure 07 presents the responses for all data items which were collected under the idea of uncertainty as one of the societal factors for increasing extremism around. It is transparently demonstrated that the responses of agreeing and strongly agree views are at the higher side in the total ratio of all options on the scale.

Following discussion is leading towards the interpretation of the data item wise. The data was collected in the form of perception based responses on the Likert scale, which is

self-explanatory. In total, 09 research items were inquired from the participants. Amongst 09 research items, 05 (1, 5, 7, 8) were related to the factors promoting uncertainty and the rest of 04 research items were linked with the theme of social identity and group biasness which is also another contributing factor for growing extremism.

Here is presented item wise interpretation of the data related with part 1 theme.

Datum item 1:

In item 1, it was inquired that intolerance level in masses leads to an increase in the level of extremism in society. The graphical presentation demonstrates that most of the respondents were strongly agreed with the fact that increasing intolerance level is the vital societal factor which is responsible for growing extreme behaviours. The second highest bar in the graph is of agreeing on responses. The ratio between the highest level of strongly agree and the lowest level of strongly disagree on the scale is justifiable in drawing the result is positive.

Datum item 5:

Research item 5 is related to the concept of social discrimination and bias attitudes towards individual differences and out-group association. For this view, the graph goes highest for agree responses from the participants. The second highest bar also goes in favour that parents are responsible for developing tolerance or intolerance amongst children when they get an active member of the society they practice the thoughts what parents had taught them, and they also follow the norms of their family which they have observed in their childhood. Here the idea is confirmed that according to the educated class of the society it is important to shape the behaviours of children and teach them the way to deal with out-group without any discrimination so that the society can practice tolerance for each other which can minimize the effects of radicalization and extremism.

Datum item 7:

Item 7 on the scale was about the standards of revenge in personal and political matters. The responses show the very interesting fact that even today's' world when the scientific decision making is the part of civilized and cultured society, the standards of personal and political dealing are different and purely based on the subjective view; even in the Muslim society, the standards of western theories are being followed. It has been observed that in one's life, the emotional matters of love and relationship are highly important in developing their overall attitude of revenge. The respondents agree in the majority for following the subjective standards in relationship dealings. The graph bar of agree responses goes the highest and the second-highest bar in contrary goes for disagree responses. It demonstrated that despite being educated and knowledgeable human beings, people cannot keep their emotions away from practical life; they incorporate emotions in their decisions. The ratio between the highest and lowest levels between agreeing and neutral responses on the scale is interesting and showed a great margin of intervention for shaping the behaviours. The statistics showed that there is a big gap in training of attitudes in people, and addressing the gap can provide a better solution to minimize radicalization.

Datum Item 8:

The responses for datum item 8 confirmed that political uncertainty and ambiguity around lead the people towards hostile behaviours and aggressive attitudes. Political uncertainty can also

create an unsafe environment where no one knows what is going to happen the next moment. In Pakistan, the political situations are not such level worse, but one fact is evident that people don't know their future as the government has not provided them with a vision of seeing ahead with confidence. There are plans from the government but not sufficient enough to address the needs of everyone. This gap is the way to have uncertainty in the lives of people, and the feeling of no stability makes them think and act differently. Their action can be considered as a reaction to the uncertain situations.

Analytical Discussion Part 2

Social Identity Influence on Societal Behaviors

The second theme concerned with the subject of the study is social identity as an influencing factor for extremism. The review was including four areas of concern which are associated with the effects of social identity on human behaviour. Here the study finds following interpretations of the data collected from the participants.
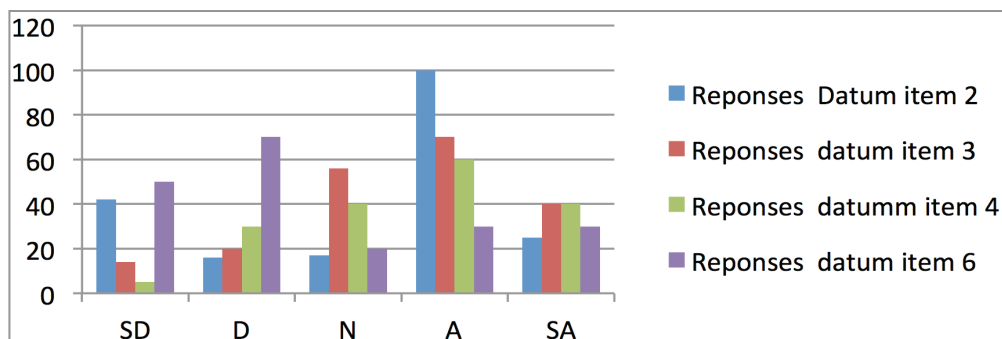

Figure 9: *Responses for data items theme 2*

Datum item 2

Item 2 at Likert scale was related to the concept of mother tongue association and its effects. This is positively responded in favour of the view that possessiveness does not allow the people to accept others at their level. Moreover, they don't allow outsiders to intervene and keep them distant. So the access to a good relationship is limited to some only broad-minded people who don't mind the differences around. When mother tongue is owned the one who belongs to that linguistic category is also accepted but the differences. Mother tongue association and belongingness to the similar group are also considered a matter of respect and regard for community members and when any outsider attacks to that identity or try to intervene it is thought as a hit to the self-respect of the members; so that the members show aggressiveness to any such advancements.

Datum item 3

Regarding social identity influence datum item 3 provides an insight into the solidarity of social class with the same fate. When the members of any social class see their rights are violated, and they are being served unjustly then they have a collective mindset towards such discrimination; whenever the affected class gets any chance to take revenge, they attack with unity. In this case of the study, this affected social class in Pakistan is an easy target for the extremist to intervene as they are already in a state of uncertainty about their future and lives so that they get affected with the idea of taking revenge or changing the system in their favour.

The data shown in the following graph is self-explanatory as agree responses are higher on the scale in support of this construct of discussion.

Datum item 4

Group biasness is a fact stated by Tajfel et al. in 1979. This attitude of group biasness is also shown as one of the reasons for growing extremism in behaviours. Such a response can occur for any unwanted situation around. The biased reactions don't have some limited reasons, but anything which is not tolerated by the group members can up as a reaction. The Likert scale responses are also similar to the fact. On the other side, it can be halted or shaped by promoting tolerance and respect to diversity, as discussed above (Datum Item 1).

Datum item 6

Likert Scale responses for datum item 6 provide an observation that intolerance in human nature and habitual of being not polite with people and surrounding is also the reflection of extreme behaviours. A south Asian political leader states that if people mistreat their animals, it reflects their inner dissatisfaction moreover another observed facts is that lack of civic sense and the rules also promote extremism. In this observation, most of the responses show agreement with the stated facts, and it stimulates the thought that human psychology reacts as it is tamed and taught. If some ignorance is being shown in training and education, then results would be disappointing in social practices around.

CONCLUSIONS

According to data interpretation, the following conclusions are drawn from the study. These are linked with the broader theme of influencing societal factors for growing extremism related practice worldwide. The constructs of the discussions are supporting the concept that societal factors are influencing on human behaviours and on shaping up behaviours:

1. Uncertainty in the lives of people lead them towards unseen expectation to fulfil their requirements, and they get a mindset which can be an easy target for any overwhelming influence from outside. (datum items 1,7)
2. The results are shown that intolerance amongst masses is also one of the reasons for growing extreme behaviours in society. In this regard parental behaviour plays an important role which can be both negative and positive. (datum items 5)
3. Social identity matter is a serious concern to pay attention on. It is one of the influencing factors which has been enrooted very strongly. The reaction against any unfavourable intervention can lead the community hostile and aggressive. The ownership of the language is the matter of identity, and individuals don't show flexibility for their identity status. (Datum items 2, 3, 4,)
4. Early training is essential to control the extreme behaviours in human, so the training institution of the society can play an effective role in taming up attitudes and teaching patience and tolerance, (Datum items 5, 7, 8)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the study are produced after having a close look at conclusions. The recommendation can be implemented in different departments of the state or community. Following is given the lists of recommendation which can be considered to eradicate extreme behaviours in people. The recommendations are categorized for three responsible institutions of the society the political lead, the educational institution and the family:

1. The political leaders should make such strategies which should be based on pure democratic attitude. Political and social class discrimination should not be reflected in any decision making. Moreover, people should be provided with an absolute path of life where they can manage their living needs and requirements, and they should not get lost at any point on that path. This way, uncertainty will not prevail, and people will not get overwhelmed by something fake.

2. Educational institutes should take up complete responsibility in promoting tolerance and patience. The curricula should be redesigned with highly required lessons to tame extreme behaviours. Pedagogical strategies should incorporate the ways of classroom handling correctly with any sort of discrimination amongst students; all students should be given equal respect and care in the group. Teachers' responsibility is substantial to cope up the issue.

3. The fundamental institution of the society like family and parents should also consider the training of their children serious in the broader perspective of humanity. They should not ignore the seeding of noble traits in their children so that when they get able to serve their soil, they should be strong enough to stand in front of any hard hit of a vanity around them.

4. Scholars and researchers are recommended to explore further in connections with societal factors and their effects on human behaviours. Moreover, psychological understanding is a vital area needed to be addressed thoroughly. This may affect the training, dealings, educational curricula, relationships and perceptions of individuals. Better psychological insight and understating will lead to better social adjustment and tolerance for differences.

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