

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON YOUTH RADICALIZATION – A CASE STUDY OF DISTRICT MULTAN

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Abstract

Recruiting teenagers by extremist and violent non-state outfits became more prominent in the post 9/11 scenario in Pakistan. Several factors have contributed to radicalization and luring youth into extremist and militant organizations, i.e. illiteracy, growing inequality, and poverty. District Multan in South Punjab remains one of the areas identified over the years as the breeding and recruitment ground of extremism. Given the alarming level of youth radicalization in South Punjab, this paper highlights mother-child relationship as vital to respond to and pre-empt extremist influences. Though difficult to analyse the complete process leading to radicalization, however, by applying John Bowlby's Attachment theory (1958), the study demonstrates social status, education, and religious beliefs of mothers' significantly impacting teenage radicalization, and their inclination towards extremist views and behaviour. Furthermore, it corroborates grievance leading to anger, which may develop due to lack of resources, deprivation, and poverty as one of the drivers of violent extremism.

Keywords: *Radicalization, Attachment Theory, Teenagers, NAP, Violent Extremism*

Introduction

The dominant international security discourse analyses aspects, such as radicalisation, either through the traditional security or socio-political lens. However, such complex notions can be viewed and analysed through multiple lens, which at the individual level, may include the influence of family, kinship relations, social upbringing where the role

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and influence of mothers as the first seat of learning in a child's life cannot be emphasized enough.

A mother not only influences a child's behaviour but also has a deep impact on the children's orientation and patterns of social interaction. This study explores the relationship between mothers and teens in preventing and countering violent extremism within the district of Multan as a case study, given the latter's significance as a sectarian hotbed. To accomplish this aim, the study investigates the association between socio-economic attributes of a mother and attitudes of teens (aged between 15 and 17) towards violent extremism. Pakistan has been facing enormous challenges relating to various kinds of conflicts. However, since 2019, terrorist attacks have "decreased by around 13 percent as compared to 2018, and the number of people killed in these attacks plummeted by 40 percent."¹

This declining trend might be attributed to joint efforts made by Pakistan government and military against violent extremism. The 2015 National Action Plan (NAP) prepared to curb violent extremism was a result of a national consensus among all stakeholders including political leaders, state institutions, religious scholars and faiths' leaders, military, and civil society. Several actions were suggested in the NAP including, "disallowing armed militias to function, ending hate speech and regulating madrassas."² These actions played an important role in fighting and contributing a downward trend in violent extremism, yet the underlying root causes of extremist activities persisted.

The study focuses specifically on the role mothers play in countering violent extremism as a reference to the extent to which she is involved in a teen's day-to-day life based on the former's demographic profile. The study applies the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire used in several related studies,³ as a tool to explore a meaningful relationship between teens' conduct issues and parenting problems. There appears an

¹ Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS), "Pakistan Security Situation 2019," *Research Journal of Conflict and Peace Studies* 12, no. 1 (Jan - June 2020):11, <https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/sr2019.pdf>

² Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Insurgency and Violent Extremism in Pakistan," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Taylor & Francis Group, UK [Preprint], (2017): 49.

³ K. K. Shelton, P. J. Frick, & J. Wootten, "Assessment of Parenting Practices in Families of Elementary School-Age Children," *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology* 25, (1995):317-329; P. J. Frick, R.C. Christian, and J.M. Wootton, "Age Trends in the Association Between Parenting Practices and Conduct Problems," *Behaviour Modifications* 23,(1999):106-128;C. A. Essau, S. Sasagawa, and P. J. Frick, "Psychometric Properties of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 15, (2006):595-614,<https://doi.org/10.1007/>

agreement among scholars including Dadds,⁴ Dishion⁵ and Prinz & Jones⁶ on the role of various factors such as ineffective parenting in “the development and persistence of conduct problems such as aggressive, intolerant, and antisocial behaviour.” While the target population of the present study is from the Multan district (Southern Punjab) with distinct socio-cultural attributes, the Alabama Questionnaire was applied with minor alterations to address the following research questions in this study:

1. What is the possible link between religious belief of a mother and non-violent attitudes of teens to prevent radicalization in the Multan District?
2. What has been the role of mothers in countering violence and extremist tendencies among teens (mainly aged 15–17)?
3. To what extent do variables such as education, socio-economic status and religious belief of mothers impact teens’ attitude to be non-violent in order to prevent and counter violent extremism?
4. What is the causal relationship between mothers’ education and non-violent attitudes among teens in countering violent extremism?

Tracing the History of Extremism in Pakistan

Gleaning through history it is observed that madrassas in Pakistan existed prior to independence “as welfare institutions providing free education, boarding and lodging to the needy students who otherwise could not afford joining formal education schools.”⁷ Until the 1970s, these religious seminaries contributed positively in the socio-economic uplift of Pakistan.⁸ However, by the late 1970s, these institutions were used effectively to sponsor jihadis (militants) against Soviet invasion in

⁴ Mark Dadds, *Families, Children, and the Development of Dysfunction*, (New York: Sage Publishers, 1995)

⁵ T. J. Dishion, G. R. Patterson, M. Stool Miller, & M. L. Skinner, “Family, School, and Behavioural Antecedents to Early Adolescent Involvement with Antisocial Peers,” *Developmental Psychology* 27, (1991):172–180.

⁶ R. J. Prinz, & T. L. Jones, “Family-Based Interventions,” in C. A. Essau (Ed.), *Conduct and Oppositional Defiant Disorders: Epidemiology, Risk Factors, and Treatment*, (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003): 279-298.

⁷ Muhammad Ramzan, “Sectarian Landscape, Madrasas and Militancy in Punjab,” *Journal of Political Studies* 22(2), (2015):428.

⁸ Umbreen Javaid, “Pakistan’s Struggle against Extremist Onslaught, Assimilating Women in Pakistan’s Counter-Extremism Efforts; A Critical Appraisal,” *Journal of Political Studies*, (2018): 25(1) http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/pols/pdf-files/7%20-%20RAMZAN_v22_2_wint2015.pdf.

Afghanistan and then later for the Kashmir conflict.⁹ During that time, religious schools not only grew rapidly in numbers “but they also had exposure to Jihad (armed struggle).”¹⁰ Several factors contributed to the dramatic growth of radicalization in Pakistan during the late 1970s to 1980s including the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet occupation and resulting war in Afghanistan.¹¹ As a result, the country has witnessed a mushroom growth of madrassas since the 1970s.

Coupled with charities set up by local philanthropists, these “madrassas were reportedly funded by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and some friendly, conservative Muslim countries as well.”¹² A prime decision of General Zia ul Haq was to boost the growth of Islamic schools in order “to expand the growth of Islamic extremists,”¹³ who would be ready to fight against the Russians. Among other places of Pakistan, South Punjab (in particular Multan district) became a “hub of madrassas and most of the terrorist activities have been carried out by members of these madrassas”¹⁴ as well as “a base and recruiting ground for militant outfits”.¹⁵

While looking at extremist structures in South Punjab, Multan district is at the top position with such 1,108 religious institutions compared to other cities of South Punjab where they were “taught ‘jihadi philosophy’, deployed to regional training/indoctrination centres”.¹⁶ Other than madrassas, teens have also been vulnerable to radicalisation, driven by several factors including “socio-religious, politico-economic and

⁹ Swati Parashar and W John, *Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Implications for South Asia* (New Delhi: Pearson Education India, 2005).

¹⁰ M. A. Raheem, *A Comparative Study of the Attitudes of Students Attending Urdu Medium, English Medium and Seminary Schools in Pakistan*, (University of Glasgow, 2015): 63.

¹¹ Swati Parashar, and W. John, *Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Implications for South Asia*.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Shaista Malik, and Z. Iqbal, “Construction of Taliban Image in Pakistan: Discourse Analysis of Editorials of Dawn and the News,” *China Media Research* 7(2), (2011): 23.

¹⁴ Zille Z. Naqvi, and S. Riaz, “Women in Pakistan: Countering Conflicts and Building Peace,” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 21(3), (2015): 334.

¹⁵ *Countering Violent Extremism*, Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, Pakistan, (2019): 11, http://i-saps.org/upload/report_publications/docs/1632132634.pdf

¹⁶ Shaista Malik, and Shafqat Munir, “Content Analysis of Hate-Speech Discourse in Religious Publication in Punjab, Pakistan,” *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 8 (1), (2018).

cultural-psychological” aspects.¹⁷ It is vital to see various other factors responsible for driving people towards violent extremism such as the overpopulation of the Multan district, which has increased rapidly from 3,116,851 in 1998 to 4,745,109 in 2017.¹⁸ Another major component for the development of radicalization can be poverty that may inevitably lead to violence as social and economic deprivation propel people to be part of violent activities. The World Bank estimates that Pakistan had 31.3 percent national poverty ratio in June 2018,¹⁹ which jumped to 39.3 percent by 2020-21.²⁰ Likewise, a similar trend can be noticed in Multan district where 38.9 percent inhabitants are living below the poverty line.²¹ Rehman revealed that “out of 37 percent poor households’ 29 percent urban and 71 percent rural households are poor.”²²

These socio-economic indicators of Multan district show that poor living standards is one of significant contributors towards nurturing of radicalization. Correspondingly, low economic status has been a strong driving force for “drifting the social fabric from tolerant to extremist trends as the locals are getting inclined to the radical elements operating in the region.”²³ It has also been observed that people from underdeveloped areas are willingly adopting extreme ways and agenda of radical organizations.²⁴ However, it is erroneous to make a general statement concerning the effects of poor socio-economic conditions on the lives of the residents of the Multan district.

With regard to religious beliefs, no official data on sectarian division has been gathered by the census organization of Pakistan “as the

¹⁷ Khurram Iqbal, and Zahid Mehmood, “Emerging Trends of On-Campus Radicalization in Pakistan,” *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/18335330.2021.1902551>.

¹⁸ Faiza Mazhar, “Population Growth & Distribution Pattern in Punjab, Pakistan (1998-2017): A Geospatial Approach,” *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, (2018): 510.

¹⁹ Muhammad Amir Rana, “The Evolution of Militant Groups in Pakistan,” *Conflict and Peace Studies*, (2014).

²⁰ “Overview, *The World Bank in Pakistan* (2021),” World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/pakistan/overview>.

²¹ Iram Khalid, and Mina Ehsan Leghari, “Radicalization of Youth in Southern Punjab,” *South Asian Studies* 29, no. 2, (2014): 537-551, <http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF>.

²² Saeed ur Rahman, Imran Sharif Chaudhry, and Fatima Farooq, “Gender Inequality in Education and Household Poverty in Pakistan: A Case of Multan District,” *Review of Economics and Development Studies* 4 (1) 2020, 115-26, <https://doi.org/10.26710/reads.v4i1.286>.

²³ Khalid and Leghari, “Radicalization of Youth in Southern Punjab.”

²⁴ Ibid.

state prefers not to make any distinction on sectarian basis.”²⁵ However, officials from provincial and local government estimate that Multan has a population with variant sects. Multan has the largest sect of Barelvis with 53.13 percent followed by the population of Deobandis with 25.93 percent then Ahle-e-Hadith with 10.08 percent while believers of Shia sect have 8.50 percent cohort in Multan. All maintaining their own seminaries where their specific interpretation of religion is taught.²⁶ Deobandis emphasize on receiving in depth knowledge of hadith, and consider teachings of Sufis and saints as Bida’ah (innovation).²⁷ In comparison, the Barelvis, a moderate sectarian group, believe that “the saints (Sufis and Pirs) act as mediators between believers and God.”²⁸ Ahle Hadith is also a hardliner group that has been engaged in various sectarian clashes, and known for distribution of hate material against other groups such as Barelvis and Shias.²⁹ Within this framework of sects, the study also considers multiple ‘religious beliefs’ associated with the population of Multan particularly women’s beliefs.

Mothers as Agents of Change

The common belief is that women irrespective of their sectarian belief system remain peaceful without exhibiting any extremist behaviour, even if they are rigid in their religious practices. In connection with the significance of mothers on teen radicalization, several attempts have been made to study mothers as the best source to identify early warning signs of radicalization. Schlaffer, Laura and Kropiunigg in a 2018 study asserted that the responsibility of mothers is crucial as they witness every stage of a child’s development.³⁰ Women as mothers are generally considered “the first to observe the early sign” of extremist thoughts and behaviour of their children.³¹ Mothers possess a distinctive capability to realize “early

²⁵ Muhammad Ramzan, “Sectarian Landscape, Madrasas and Militancy in Punjab”.

²⁶ Muhammad Arslan Raheem, *A Comparative Study of the Attitudes of Students Attending Urdu Medium, English Medium and Seminary Schools in Pakistan*, PhD thesis, (2013) <https://theses.gla.ac.uk/6425/1/2013RaheemPhD.pdf>

²⁷ Nahid A. Kabir, *Young British Muslims: Identity, Culture, Politics and the Media* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ E. Schlaffer, L. Laura, and R. Kropiunigg, *Mothers Preventing Violent Extremism: The Example of Mother Schools in Macedonia from Philosophy to Practice*, NATO/IOS Press, (2018).

³¹ E.R. Royce, *Hearing on Women’s Education: Promoting Development, Countering Radicalism; and Mark-up of H.R. 3583, Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act: Convened before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of*

warning signs of radicalization in their children enabling them to play a key role in curtailing violent extremism” as studied by the Mckinsey Institute.³² Subedi also discusses benefits and issues of “Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) system from the field of conflict prevention to the CVE domain.”³³ For instance, he argues that though mothers are an insignificant source of preventing radicalization and violent extremism, they can play a valuable role to “identify early warning indicators of radicalization in their social and cultural contexts, and have, in turn, contributed to preventing youth from being engaged in extremist violence.”³⁴ Moreover, mother’s perspective on radicalization can influence development of children’s behaviour. Similarly, where mothers can shape and influence attitudes of young generation and help counter harmful influences from the surrounding environment, such as violent extremist ideologies from religious seminaries, they can also be the main force behind children’s involvement with extremist groups.

Similarly, Kropiunigg highlights that mothers are deeply associated with factors responsible for defining their children’s identity, particularly related to attributes of personality formation process.³⁵ In this process, mothers as an effective agency help in determining the elements “that influence adolescents’ personality and are the best placed to understand what might prompt their descent into violence.”³⁶ Furthermore, Zeiger, Alonso and Herrera state that the role of women has been seen as an agent of “positive change in preventing extremism.”³⁷ At the same time, many studies i.e., Bloom and d’Estaing, found that females and mothers do not necessarily serve in a positive role in moderating extremism. Bloom discusses women’s participation in extremist activities with examples from Northern Ireland, Iraq, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Russia, etc.,³⁸ stating

Representatives, One Hundred Thirteenth Congress, Second Session (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2014), 33.

³² Gregory Treverton, *Intelligence, National Institute Council, Global Trends: Paradox of Progress* (U. S. Government Printing Office, 2017), 225.

³³ DB Subedi, “Early Warning and Response for Preventing Radicalization and Violent Extremism,” *A Journal of Social Justice* 29 (2017): 136–143, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2017.1308185>.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 139.

³⁵ Ulrich Kropiunigg, “Mothers’ Agency as an Alternative to the War on Terror,” *Security Informatics and Law Enforcement series* (2019)

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ Sara Zeiger, Rogelio Alonso, Jose Herrera, and Lilah El Syed, *Enhancing Women’s Roles in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)*, IOS Press (2019): 38.

³⁸ Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists*, (London: Hurst Publishers, 2011)

that females were engaged in suicide attacks for more than 230 cases during 1985 to 2008.³⁹ Likewise, d'Estaing brings two contrasting positions that women can engage in extremist roles such as "recruiters, propagators, mobilizers, suicide bombers, and targets," but can also be deterring agents in the role of "leaders working on de-radicalization, counter-messaging, and peacebuilding".⁴⁰

Lombardi also notes several contradictory opinions on mothers' role in CVE.⁴¹ For instance, the study quotes from experts' opinion that families can be supportive to their younger generation for engaging in violent activities.⁴² In contrast, Lombardi also suggests that parents can be the reinforcing force for morals and values learned from educational institution.⁴³ It can be argued that women can play either a positive or negative role in case they have to deal with radicalization among youth leading to violent extremism on the basis of various factors such as education, religious affiliation, and social status. As mothers, women may transmit their religious beliefs to their teenagers. As suggested by Clark, religious beliefs can be transmitted to adolescents through three types of variables: demographic, family, and religious relationship. Similarly, several other factors such as peer pressure, educational institution etc., tend to be responsible for transmission of religious practices to teens.⁴⁴

Qadeem in a 2018 study also explored the agency of mothers' access to extremist youth and role in their de-radicalization in multiple phases.⁴⁵ The author argued, "ethno-sectarian clashes in some parts of Pakistan can only be resolved by well equipping mothers and youth with tools of conflict transformation at the community level."⁴⁶ She emphasised the need to develop an integrated approach for women to combat violent extremism. However, the study does not highlight the preventive measures employed by her institution PAIMAN for female empowerment to deter against radicalization to violent extremism.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Sophie G. d'Estaing, "Engaging Women in Countering Violent Extremism: Avoiding Instrumentalization and Furthering Agency," *Gender & Development* 25(1) (2017): 103–118.

⁴¹ Marco Lombardi, et al. *Countering Radicalisation and Violent Extremism Among Youth to Prevent Terrorism*, IOS Press, (2014).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Clark, et al. "The Transmission of Religious Beliefs and Practices from Parents to Firstborn Early Adolescent Sons," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 50(2) (1988): 463–472.

⁴⁵ Musarrat Qadeem, *Engendering Extremism: Women Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan* (London: Centre for Women, Peace and Security, LSE, 2018).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Methodology

Like all other domains of life, the Covid-19 pandemic has made the collection of primary unbiased data for this study challenging. At the same time, given the risk and consequences associated with the topic of research, it was crucial to use multiple methods to robust the data collection of this study.

Moreover, the intergradation of multiple methods was indispensable in understanding the clear in-depth picture of the relationship between mother and teens, as the study assumes that it has a significance to address radicalization in society. With this notion, 'triangulation' was used to address the research questions of this study, and data was collected in three stages: 1) online/paper survey, 2) focus group discussions (FGD) and 3) key informant interviews. With these methods, study employed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis to answer the research questions.

Methods of Data Collection

Initially it was planned to conduct online survey to gather primary data. However, due to limited access to internet among respondents from Multan (i.e. mothers and their teens of aged between 15 and 17), both means, i.e., online as well as paper survey was used for collecting data. Moreover, prior to conducting focus group discussions and key informant interviews, it was crucial to collect quantifiable data at the first stage of data collection e.g. demographic characteristics (i.e. educational attainment, socio-economic class, religious beliefs) of mothers in Multan district in order to determine whom to invite for the focus groups and the key informant interviews.

At the second stage, a total of five FGDs each with mothers as representative of the sample groups from the Multan District were conducted.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Educated Women (minimum undergraduate) | (1) |
| 2. Rural women | (1) |
| 3. Urban Professional women (college-educated adult with well-paid professional job and who lives and works in or near Multan district) | (1) |
| 4. Women with diverse religious beliefs | (1) |
| 5. Women (uneducated or low level of education) | (1) |

The focus groups allowed the researcher to examine broader context of mothers with variant social status based on education, socio-economic condition and religious beliefs and their response to their children in curtailing the radicalization.

The third stage was the collection of qualitative data from key informants through a series of 12 interviews from religious clerics, community leadership, government officials, experts on CVE, policymakers, and researchers were conducted. The main purpose of these interviews was to gain a detailed description as to how mothers can serve as change makers in a society while supporting their families in preventing and countering extremism.

The researchers used various approaches to invite the participants from Multan district and also sought local assistants for collecting the data. For example, the researchers used a direct approach mechanism to approach community/social groups in the Multan district. Moreover, social media (such as Facebook) was used to gain the attention of the participants from Multan. As one of the researchers has working experience in South Punjab, her own contacts were used to gain responses from the target population. The data was collected from student of madrassahs (male and female) and their mothers to examine the relationship between mothers' religious belief and teens' attitudes to be non-violent to prevent and counter violent extremism. Similarly, madrassah teachers were contacted to collect qualitative and quantitative data. For sufficient responses, a university teacher and a student from Multan was also approached to connect with local people. The data was collected from May 2020 to November 2020.

Methodological Limitations

The research employed random probability sampling because of time and cost considerations. Thus, the key limitation of this study is the small sample size of five focus group discussions and 12 interviews with key informants and the survey. Another limitation of this study concerns the research tools for the online survey. The research tool involved several questions related to violent extremism, which might be difficult to understand, particularly for teens and mothers with low education levels or those who are uneducated. Therefore, the research tool was translated into their native language (Urdu) and a research assistant from the local community was hired to explain the questions in the local language to them as for better understanding while collecting the data.

Table 1: Demographic Attributes of Survey Respondents

| Items | Frequency | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--------|
| | No | % |
| Gender (Teens) | | |
| Male | 232 | 65.20% |
| Female | 124 | 34.80% |
| Income (PKR/Monthly) | | |
| Under 10,000 | 64 | 18.00% |

| | | |
|--|-----|--------|
| 10,000-30,000 | 224 | 62.90% |
| 30,001-50,000 | 44 | 12.40% |
| Over 50,000 | 24 | 06.70% |
| Educational Qualification (Teens) | | |
| No education | 16 | 4.5% |
| Can read and write | 12 | 3.4% |
| Primary | 64 | 18.00% |
| SSC & HSSC | 124 | 59.6% |
| Educational Qualification (Mothers) | | |
| No education | 112 | 31.50% |
| Can read and write | 20 | 05.60% |
| Primary | 109 | 30.61% |
| Higher Degree | 115 | 32.30% |
| Mothers Occupation | | |
| Housewife | 284 | 79.8% |
| Private & Public Sector | 56 | 15.8% |
| Working in Fields | 4 | 1.1 |
| Sales and Services/Dr/Eng/IT | 8 | 2.2% |
| Religious Affiliation (Mothers) | | |
| Ahle Hadith | 44 | 12.35% |
| Barelvi | 144 | 40.44% |
| Shia | 56 | 15.73% |
| Deobandi | 112 | 31.46% |

Source: Primary Quantitative Data Collected for the Study

According to quantitative data, the survey respondents declared themselves in three categories of economic status: lower class (92: 25.8 percent), Middle class (244: 68.50 percent), and Upper class (20: 5.6 percent). The larger portion of survey participants (67.40 percent) recognized that they had only one earning member at home. Mothers of the rest of the participants (32.6 percent) were working professionals in various fields.

Results

The following section presents three themes emerged through qualitative data derived from focus group discussions and key informant interviews around research question of the study: *The role of a mother's education in managing influences on their teenagers to counter violent extremism.*

The qualitative data indicated that educated women have more confidence in their ability to manage all forms of influences on their teenagers, which they considered as protective factors for them. The majority of the educated FG participants described maternal bond as key aspect in the formation of teens' attitudes to be non-violent. In contrast, less educated women appeared less confident and less equipped to manage these factors.

Majority of the educated FGD participants confirmed that mothers are integral to an enabling environment that is a friendly and protective space where teens easily share and discuss their problems. Educated mothers stressed upon the importance of everyday routine measures to strengthen relationship with their children to combat violent extremism. Provision of an enabling environment that is perceived both friendly and protective, teens easily share and discuss their problems. Moreover, friendly conversations provide an opportunity for them in expressing thoughts, ideas or any negative occurrences. Such an environment also helps build and maintain confidence and trust among teens and their family. Mothers can create a favourable environment for children by discouraging violent or aggressive behaviour among them through several interventions, such as developing trust and maintaining consistent communication, as identified by the participants in the group discussions. This helps mothers in engaging with and recognizing early warning signs of radicalization in teens.

Consequently, mothers can potentially shape attitudes of their children, especially teens towards tolerance, non-violence, and socially pluralistic approach through friendly conversation that encourages them to think and act for their own and others' security.

M (Educated Woman): It is important to have friendly communication with the kids on daily basis. As it strengthens your bond with them and they gain the confidence to share their problems with you.

M (Educated Woman): We keep our relationship strong by talking, playing games of their interest with them, feeding them, asking them their routine when away from me.

M (Educated Woman): they (teens) are very expressive in their emotions as they feel comfortable enough to express themselves to me.

The above statements show that mother participants understood drivers of radicalization and violent extremism, as they seemed to believe in various factors increasing chances of youth to be engaged in extremist acts including social, psychological and personal reasons.

As defined by Schmidt, "good mothers" are those "who are socially engaged and know what their children are doing."⁴⁷ A CVE expert also reiterated that mothers could play an important role by knowing their children's whereabouts, their out-of-home activities, their company, and their thoughts through having close interaction and friendship with their children. Mothers who participated in the discussion also self-validated about some similar good practices for preventing their children from engaging in any extremist activity.

⁴⁷ Rachel Schmidt, "Duped: Examining Gender Stereotypes in Disengagement and Deradicalization Practices," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, (2020): 10.

M (Educated Women): My elder son is not involved in any such activities. I always keep an eye on him and also I have a strong connection with his school teachers. If in the case in the future, I find him in any such acts of violence I have a dialogue with him or punish him.

Apart from the above stated preventive measures, the selection of an educational institution is an important decision for a family, particularly for parents as they wish to safeguard their children from radicalization and violent extremism. With regards selection of school, participants gave diverse opinions. In comparison to other groups, mothers from Barelvi madrassah affirmed that they preferred to choose a religious school or college where their teens could learn religious values as well as attain general/secular education.

M (Urban professional): I chose the school which can fulfil the needs of education of current era without imposing any extra burden on them. The school I feel is also capable to educate them about religious teachings.

M (Rural women/uneducated): As we belong to the Sunni sect so we wish our children follow the same.

M (Uneducated group): My kids go to the private English school although we are uneducated we wish them to have good schooling.

M (Educated woman): We have chosen the best school in terms of not only academics but ambiance as well.

M (Low Social Status): I chose an average school, neither too much expensive nor too low.

Rehman stated that most parents prefer to choose “the best possible educational environment.”⁴⁸ However, this selection is dependent on several factors such as economic, social, and cultural aspects. With a growing number of students being exploited by extremist groups,⁴⁹ it seems imperative to invest in educational institutions where children can gain knowledge, leadership skills, healthy minds, and good values. It is also crucial to choose an education system that encourages students to embrace diverse faiths, multiple ethnicities, and cultures, and educate young people to endorse collective prosperity, peaceful coexistence, and inclusiveness for all.

Without distinction, sports have and can also be a useful tool for boys and girls to achieve peace, inclusion and social cohesion. Sports and physical activities help in personal development of teens and inculcate

⁴⁸ Rahman, et al. “Gender Inequality in Education and Household Poverty in Pakistan: A Case of Multan District |Review of Economics and Development Studies,” *Review of Economics and Development Studies*, (2018): 4, <https://publishing.globalcsrc.org/ojs/index.php/reads/article/view/286>

⁴⁹ Zahid Shahab Ahmed And Qamar A Jafri, "Drivers Of Violent Extremism In Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 13(3), (2020):230-244.

values that inspire and show respect for fellow competitors. As a result, these healthy activities guide children to accept diversity and talents of companions and competitors. They refrain from indulging in extremist activities as they develop positive sportspeople's positive strengths, and they tend to prevent themselves and others from indulging in negativism that may lead to hate and discrimination and ultimately extremism. Although, sports and cultural activities do not directly counter or prevent violent extremism⁵⁰ but they create enabling conditions for social learning and inclusion among teenagers, which is a basic tool useful for prevention of violent extremism. In the same spirit, educated mothers were of the same opinion. "I used to arrange games for them in which whole family took part at home. And I also encourage my kids to take part in healthy extra-curricular activities at school," stated one of the educated mothers. Whereas another stated, "Exactly I prefer to engage my kids in extracurricular activities that can keep them relaxed, active and energetic as well as improve their mental health."

Unlike educated mothers, the qualitative data rendered that women from religious madrassas (Islamic seminaries) did not consider sports and physical activities as a potential source for preventing violent extremism. Therefore, they did not discuss the importance of out-of-school activities of children or they did not encourage their boys and girls to participate in sport-based interventions.

Social Status of Mothers and Teens Aptitude to Violent Extremism

The responsibility of mothers hailing from low socio-economic groups to countering extremist tendencies among their teens sometimes becomes challenging. This is due to being least empowered and having least resources to meet educational and recreational needs of the teens that can help prevent them from violence and extremist elements. Yet these mothers do play a role while dealing with their children. They have the least resources, but they at least instruct their children on what to do and what not to do. Hence, these mothers still maintain some degree of influence over their children and can play a role in imparting them the right direction so that they can refrain from indulging in extremist activities.

Participant mothers from educated group and urban professionals generally accepted the impact of financial hardship on mother-child relationship as they seemed to believe that in such circumstances, children could easily be exploited by violent extremist entities even just by offering and meeting their basic needs. Although this is also true that teenagers

⁵⁰ Lombardi, et al. *Countering Radicalisation and Violent Extremism among Youth to Prevent Terrorism*.

from any socio-economic class may adopt violent extremist beliefs, but children from poor families are more vulnerable to accepting beliefs that may lead to violent extremism. Lack of basic facilities of lives may push teenagers to become prey to hate mongers who lure them to certain ideologies by incentivising them with money.

On a similar point, an agreement can be seen among participants with varied background that children must be provided an opportunity to live with respect and have peaceful growth.

M (Urban Professional): I give them pocket money, preferably purchase new dresses and most importantly, I am greatly interested in their good health.

M (Rural woman from lower economic group): we do provide them all their necessities according to our own financial capacity

M (Educated Woman): I take care of all the needs of my children, as I want to see them perfect in their life.

M (Religious group): I manage to meet the basic needs of my teens as per my sources of income; such as their personal care, food, shelter and health care.

The key informants also expressed a consensus on the role of low social class of mothers in children's inclination to extremism. In particular, a CVE expert noted: "one of the drivers of violent extremism could be grievance leading to anger which is developed due to lack of resources, deprivation and poverty. It is much likely that the children hailing from the poor families become a breeding population that accept extremist views out of their deprivation that generates anger against social and economic injustices". An academic also asserted that economic factors are one of the key factors though not the only reason for violent extremism, as the latter is multifaceted. One could argue that mothers in their perpetual quest to protect their children provide them with all kind of basic amenities like education, healthcare, considering it their responsibility. However, lack of access to basic needs may develop insecurities among teenagers, which may push them into violent activities.

Mothers' Religious Beliefs and Impact on Teen's Views and Behaviours

While teens need enabling environment for sharing their thoughts and day to day experience, most mothers interviewed were concerned about communication of their religious values effectively to the teens. Such teachings from mothers may equip teens with an understanding to identify differences within a society based on varied faiths and beliefs. Many scholars have observed that religious diversity has positive association

with a tolerant society and absence of religious conflict.⁵¹ In such manner, it is important that mothers should teach mutual respect and tolerance for those with different beliefs in order to build a peaceful society. With such teachings, teens may perceive religious diversity as a strength, which could help them in becoming part of a pluralistic environment where people can live peacefully.

Ignorance amongst women is another important factor that supports extremism. For instance, women's participation in unsafe charities have directly or indirectly facilitated extremist groups' action. As Qadeem narrated the incident of a Begum from Swat who donated her own jewellery along with other relatives and friends' jewellery to Taliban as charity.⁵²

M (Rural women/uneducated): They (children) get their religious education from Qari Sahab. I keep on doing my daily chores while they are having the Quran lessons.

M (Religious background): Our religious education is very important to us so we used to sit with children to teach them our religious beliefs.

Mixed voices were heard from key respondents on the role of mother's religious beliefs in children's involvement in extremism. Children in a highly patriarchal society may be totally separated or isolated from their mothers and the father mainly influences their intellectual formation. Mothers teach children lessons from the religious beliefs they themselves subscribe to and are reflect from their behaviour. However, the probability of a change of mind-set as the children grow up and have other learning spaces available (educational institutions they study in and social groups they interact with, etc.) cannot be ignored. Such exposures may provide teens with opportunities to reorient their thoughts and beliefs and as a result, they may become moderates or further extremists. Similarly, if mothers happen to be moderate, the children may learn that from them but once they will have other learning spaces available, they may turn extremists or further moderate.

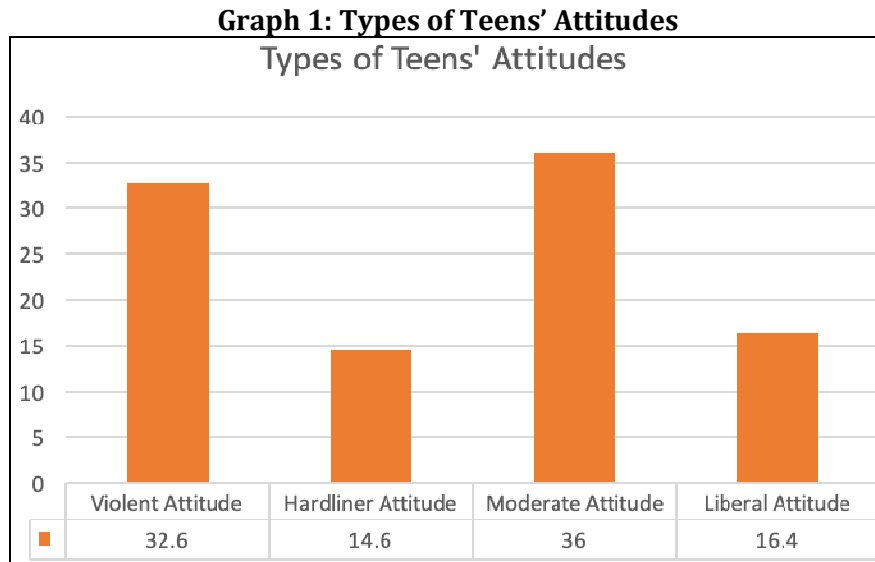
Quantitative Analysis

It is commonly known that parental supervision is inevitable to build young people's resilience to violent behaviour. However, the survey data delineates that over 50 percent of young participants had lack of parental supervision. The data also identified four types of attitudes

⁵¹ Robert A. Dowd, "Religious Diversity and Religious Tolerance: Lessons from Nigeria," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60, (4) (2014): 617-644, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002714550085>

⁵² Qadeem, *Engendering Extremism: Women Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan*.

among respondent teenagers in Multan based on their differences in responses related to their belief system including 1) violent extremist, 2) hard liner practitioners, 3) moderate and 4) liberal. This grouping is based on teens' self-reporting wherein teenagers may tell lies for presenting themselves as sympathetic to others' best interest.



Source: Primary Data Collected from Online Paper Survey for this Study

The above graph establishes that more than half (52.4 percent) of the respondents were tolerant citizens. Although the result also hinted an interesting fact that teens provide social acceptance of violence. For example, the quantitative data represents that nearly one-third teens from Multan (32.6 percent) expressed tendency towards violence extremism based on 19 item/attitudinal statements related to social, cultural and religious aspects. Such as just under a half (49.4 percent) of survey respondents agreed to the survey statement "Taliban who are fighting against law enforcing agencies are Mujahideen (holy warriors). These teens' thoughts might be influenced by their mothers, being too intimate to them, as mothers are the first learning platform for teens who hardly have any independent analytical thoughts. In fact the data results also indicated that teens largely structure most of their thoughts from the their mothers' thought. This relationship can be seen by the response of a question of this study that around a half of the respondents (49.4 percent) identified that their mother taught them that Islam permits Muslims to fight against the enemy (holy war). Moreover, almost two-fifths (40 percent) survey teenagers reported that their mothers do not allow them to make friends with those who belong to different sects. Furthermore 29.2 percent) teens gave their opinion that their mothers asked them to change their physical appearance as per their religious beliefs. This

discussion indicated an association between teens religious beliefs and mothers' teachings.

With quantitate data the research also examined the effects of religious beliefs of women participants and tendency of development of extreme behaviour among teens. The Chi-Square result presents that the religious affiliation of mothers is supportive of inclination of extremist attitudes among teens (Value= 57.618, df= 10, P= .000). This means the research has confirmed that mother's religious beliefs have an important association with teens' inclination towards adopting extremist views and behaviours.

The quantitative data also replicated the same result of qualitative data that educated mothers can act as a mean to prevent building violent extremist ideologies among teens. To examine it, the result of the Pearson Chi-Square revealed that there is a statistically significant association (Value= 8.975, df= 4, P= .062) between mother's education and children's thinking and views in terms of acceptance of violent extremist beliefs. This result indicates that educated mothers can act as a mean to prevent building violent extremist teachings among teens.

Children from poor families may likely be vulnerable to accepting extremist beliefs that may lead to violent extremism. Lack of basic facilities of lives may push teenagers to become prey of hate mongers who give them money, and identity with certain ideology. While following earlier studies, it is validated from quantitative data of this study that economic factors such as mother as a source of income and children's perception towards violent extremism have significant relationship (Value= 45.584, df= 06, P= .000). This result hinted towards justification of violent extremist behaviour of teens on the grounds of poverty. The following Table explains the religious beliefs, social status and education of mothers and teenagers inclination towards extremist views and behaviour.

Table 2: Religious Beliefs, Social Status, and Mothers' Education and Teenagers Inclination towards Extremist Views and Behaviour

| | Value | Df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|---------------------------|--------|----|--------------------------------------|
| Mothers' Religious Belief | 57.618 | 10 | .000 |
| Mothers' Education | 81.419 | 22 | .000 |
| Mothers' Social Status | 45.584 | 06 | .000 |

Conclusion

This study has been exploratory research in nature to investigate various aspects of upbringing dynamics that influence the process of radicalization as well as de-radicalization amongst teens from the city of Multan. The historic city/ division of Multan has been a hot bed of

sectarian radicalism, yet there has been little focus on how the youth especially teens are affected by radicalisation, starting from their homes. There is also a dearth of sufficient theoretical knowledge on the topic.⁵³ To build the theoretical base, this research analysed data using Bowlby's 'Attachment theory.' The research undertaken extended Bowlby's work by investigating three important features; economic status, education, and religious beliefs of mothers in terms of their tendencies to deal with violent extremism in teens from the Multan district. On this subject, the statistical findings cohere with the theoretical foundation and provide initial support to the 'Attachment theory' for examining the maternal bonding with teens explicitly significant in promoting resilience to radicalization.

The results demonstrated that mothers' education has a significant influence over children's thinking, orientation and views about violent extremism. The findings also signalled that an educated mother can herself acquire knowledge and also share knowledge on any issue (e.g., exploitation by any extremist group) faced by her children. In contrast, an uneducated mother may not herself comprehend and therefore unable to explain such issues, so that her children could learn about a complex subject as countering violent extremism. Hence, mothers need to be taught and made aware of these issues according to their circumstances. Although orientation and awareness programmes do exist in the country, they need to be tailored as per requirements of the specific target groups such as mothers who are in the process of upbringing their young children. This can only be possible if a need assessment is carried out on capacity and knowledge building of mothers on processes of radicalization and how to counter such tendencies among their children.

A well-informed and knowledgeable mother can help children in shaping their mind-set. Simultaneously this relationship requires a participatory approach to alleviate the negative effects of social disadvantages on teens such as violent extremism. The analysis also suggested that an educated mother is likely to understand the importance of this participatory approach. Therefore, a positive connection between mothers and teens is crucial to deter and prevent radicalization among teens from occurring in the first place. Making educated mothers better placed in being compassionate towards people hailing from different religious denominations, contributing towards a tolerant society can help countering violent extremism.

In line with the qualitative analysis, statistical results showed that a mother's own religious views and thoughts might influence children's thinking and views about violent extremism. In addition, both the

⁵³ Elga Sikkens, "Parental Influence on Radicalization and De-radicalization According to the Lived Experiences of Former Extremists and their Families," *The Hague, Netherlands*, NCTV, (2015): 198.

qualitative and quantitative data unfolded that a child must be provided with basic needs that is an opportunity to live with respect and peaceful growth. This will be possible if parents equally share their parental responsibilities including financial support to their teens, taking responsibility for their education, health and safety. A mother's financial empowerment not only raises the status of women in the family through financial support to their family members but the exposure and working experience educate mothers to take an active role in safeguarding their teens.

Based on the findings, this study has identified several good practices as CVE interventions that may strengthen communities particularly mothers to counter violent extremism. However, rigorous evaluation with extensive field work is needed before implementation of these interventions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on findings of the study.

- Multi-stakeholders including civil society, community leaders, government, multinational corporations should take steps to launch special training programmes and free counselling centres for women of low-socio-economic status especially in radicalised societies such as Multan to educate them about their role as real change makers. This is significant for educating children not to hate or discriminate against fellow citizens hailing from other religions and faiths by promoting interfaith harmony. Such programmes must also orient mothers about psychological issues of adolescence and teenagers and various ways to deal with these difficult issues. These trainings can be useful for women to recognize early signs of radicalization among teens and how to discuss it with their children. Through these trainings, women may learn various methods to help their children to handle unwanted situations.
- Increasing access to education can also be helpful in achieving the target of building a peaceful society. Teachers in Multan's schools need to be trained to integrate de-radicalization through peace education. Therefore, special curricula for all age groups and exclusive trainings for teachers in Multan should be initiated. The main objective of these educational initiatives would be to build critical thinking among young people which is important to improve their skills to resist violent extremist narratives.
- There is also a critical need to engage youth in healthy activities such as foreign/local exchange programmes, sports, extracurricular activities, art and literature, research, scientific activities, exhibitions and competitions. It is a known factor that when youth is given

opportunities to spend time in sports and extra-curricular activities, they channelize their energies positively.

- At the same time, awareness of women's rights and their participation in efforts to respond to violent extremism in Multan can strengthen community resilience. Women's participation in decision-making processes at various levels including family, community and national levels should be increased. Evidence based research exclusively in South Punjab on gendered dynamics of violent extremism is critical to reverse the growing trend of radicalization in society. Media particularly social media can play a vital role in countering extremism in Multan through setting up and deploying counter narratives and by providing alternative vision to young people on the basis of equality and human dignity.

