Educational Reforms Required to Fight Extremism in Society: A Qualitative Analysis

Dr. Abdul Basit

Senior Special Educationist, Department of Special Education,
Govt. of the Punjab, Lahore,
Email: basitranakkot@yahoo.com

Dr. Zahid Majeed

Director, Academic Planning & Course Production,
Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad
Email: zahid_majeed@aiou.edu.pk

Zarbakhat Ayesha

Clinical Psychologist
Rukhsana Shfqat Medical Center,
Bhakkar Punjab

Abstract

For the past twenty years, extremism has been an increasing worry, notably in Pakistan during this time. It is still necessary to make several efforts in order to improve the situation in order to address this problem. The elimination of such circumstances may require educational reforms as a fundamental component. This study was carried out with the purpose of analyzing the significance of educational reforms in the context of the struggle against extremism in society. The design of this study was qualitative, and this research was conducted by survey research. A questionnaire that was prepared

by the researcher was used to collect the data. To acquire the data, a technique known as non-random sampling, also known as purposeful sampling, was utilized. Through the use of the internet, the focus group discussion was organized. To this study, twenty teachers were chosen to participate in a structured focus group discussion. As a result of the recording of the debate and the subsequent thematic analysis, themes were derived from the discussion. Reforms to the curriculum, training for teachers, reforms to madrasas, access to excellent education, and community engagement were the primary themes that emerged from the conversation. To solve this delicate matter, there is a significant amount of work that must be done.

Keywords: Extremism, Educational Reforms, Teachers Training

Introduction:

Ignorance, bigotry, and misinformation are prevalent catalysts of extremism, which is escalating into a significant global issue. Education, as a crucial element of social advancement, can substantially aid in combating extremism by fostering critical reasoning, empathy, and acceptance of diverse perspectives. This research study examines the essential educational reforms necessary to prevent extremism and promote a more peaceful and inclusive society (Chall-Dabi, I.; Lenoble, N. 2016).

Following the events of September 11, 2001, the phrases "violent extremism" and "radicalization" have become integral to the development discourse. Currently, there is no clarity on the specific definitions of these terms, which impedes research, policy discussions, and programming initiatives (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011).

Notwithstanding its significant growth, CVE lacks a definitive characterization as a discipline; it has evolved into an ambiguous and unfocused category, as noted by Steven Heydemann (2014, p.1).In conjunction with other recognized sectors such as education, governance, democratization, poverty alleviation, and development, it has not succeeded in delineating clear boundaries that distinguish CVE initiatives from others.

374

To guide their endeavors, multiple bilateral donors have formulated operational definitions of violent extremism. The Department for International Development (DFID) defines violent extremism as "the use of violence directed at civilians to address grievances, whether real or perceived, that underpin the formation of increasingly robust exclusive group identities" (DFID, 2013).

The United Nations Security Council determined that VE "can be conducive to terrorism" (2014, para. 15) in Resolution 2178. The 2015 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) report states that terrorists employ "illegal force and violence" to attain political, economic, religious, or social objectives through fear, pressure, or intimidation.

In the past decade, there has been a significant increase in assaults conducted by VE organizations. The Global Terrorism Database states that violent extremist organizations were accountable for about 43,412 fatalities in 2014, a rise from 22,211 in 2013 and 3,329 in 2000.

The majority of terrorist attacks have occurred in five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, and Pakistan. These five nations have experienced significant declines in development metrics, including growth rates, tourism, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

Economic inequity, social injustice, and cultural marginalization can promote violent ideologies and actions that define extremism. Education can mitigate these underlying causes by providing individuals with the knowledge, principles, and comprehension necessary to combat extreme propaganda and promote peaceful coexistence.

Governments and donors often prioritize education as a developmental strategy to assist fragile states in peacebuilding during post-conflict recovery and in addressing long-term human development needs. Countries that have never encountered violence and those in a critical phase of post-conflict rehabilitation both necessitate preventative strategies. Prevention is essential in peacebuilding, as conflicts tend to reemerge frequently.

Literature Review

Violent religious extremism is having a wide-ranging and negative effect on many communities across the globe. During that time, our counterterrorism strategy stayed mostly reactive in nature. Rather than trying to construct a scenario that would prevent crises from happening, our approach has always been to respond to them after they have already happened. In order to reduce the prevalence of violent inclinations among young people, this paper argues that peace education should play a significant role in school curricula. This approach has the dual goal of preparing students to be resilient members of society and of countering the soft power—the narratives that extremists use to connect with and influence young people—through the ideological messages they spread. In reaction to the extreme use of soft power, the state will create an appropriate setting to inculcate the values of diversity, inclusion, and social harmony in the student body. There are many various approaches to peace education; yet, this essay will concentrate on how we might include peace education into our school curricula or use it as supplementary reading.

The best way to make sure that peace is a part of society is to teach people about it, in both official and informal contexts. As a person and a member of a community, you never stop learning and growing through all the different ways you interact with the world around you. Through peace education, students can learn to think critically and constructively, which in turn helps them find purpose in their lives and make positive contributions to their communities as active, engaged citizens. Exposure to peace education will affect students' worldviews because it encourages them to learn critically and reflectively in order to bring about real change, rather than mindlessly accepting existing facts.

Teaching   Nonviolence

In 1999, Fountain referred to peace education as "the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international level." Building 8 is associated with the idea of peace education. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Deutsch (1993) asserts that peace education revolves around conflict resolution. In most cases, people tend to focus on the behavioural and social components of confrontations.

The importance of peaceful conflict resolution via negotiation and mediation is highly emphasized.

"The process of promoting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavioural changes to enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, to resolve conflict peacefully, and to create conditions conducive to peace." (UNESCO) is the definition of peace education according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Goal 4.7, which is part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognizes peace education as a tool for advancing global development and peace (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011). A person who is peaceful and able to live in harmony with themselves, other people, and the environment is **what peace education aims to promote**?

Disseminating knowledge about the value of pluralism, social harmony, and the cultivation of peacebuilding abilities is at the heart of education for peace. Then, according to Blattman and Ralston (2015), teachers educate their students in the following areas: non-distortion, respect, and understanding; scenario analysis skills; conflict resolution methods like mediation; and democratic and participatory pedagogics.

Cultural Studies and Education

As per CGCC and Hedayah (1993). While Pakistani students do have access to a wealth of material, the country's curricula nevertheless fall short of meeting the needs of modern students. Pakistanis should be proud of how they have neglected to inculcate in their children the values of love, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence that run deep in our society. Teaching material, administering tests, and grading assignments are only a few of the many components of education. Preparing students to be contributing members of society, it addresses their personal growth, their enthusiasm for and commitment to the school's principles and culture, and their outlook on life in general. Because education is the means by which we transmit our cultural values to subsequent generations, it is critical that our educational and learning environments reflect our culture. Therefore, education and culture are mutually supportive.

Bhatia, K., and Ghanem, K. (2017) state that many young people in our country today do not understand or appreciate their heritage or its importance.

Teacher Education Resources and Capacity Building:

Education for peace is based on the abilities of teachers. Consequently, developing teachers' skills in various areas of peace education's curriculum is crucial. Teachers should have the ability and capability to address violent behaviours and tendencies that arise in the school setting and among their students. In contrast, for peace education techniques to have a transformative impact in the classroom, teachers must embody and demonstrate the core principles and behaviours of these approaches. Teachers should be trained in critical thinking skills, participative teaching methods, and different facets of peace education in order to teach peace education. Doing so will allow them to set an example for others to follow in terms of compassion, open-mindedness, diversity, and nonviolent conflict resolution (CVE Research Brief. 2014).

a student's character, enthusiasm for the school's ideals and culture, and an optimistic outlook on their future as contributing members of society. Culture and education go hand in hand because teaching one generation's ideals to another is an essential part of any society's cultural heritage. That is why it is crucial that our classrooms and learning spaces are culturally sensitive.

Young people today know very little, if anything, about our country's storied past and customs, and they certainly don't understand its relevance. Guess who gets the intervention?

Education for peace is based on the abilities of teachers. Consequently, developing teachers' skills in various areas of peace education's curriculum is crucial. Teachers should have the ability and capability to address violent behaviours and tendencies that arise in the school setting and among their students. In contrast, for peace education techniques to have a transformative impact in the classroom, teachers must embody and demonstrate the core principles and behaviours of these approaches. It is crucial that educators who wish to teach peace education get professional development in critical thinking, interactive teaching approaches, and the many facets of peace education. The goal is for them to set an example of compassion, open-mindedness, pluralism, and nonviolent conflict resolution in their own lives.

For students to grow into contributing members of society, it is essential that they have a good outlook, a strong sense of school spirit, and a positive personality. Culture and education go hand in hand because teaching one generation's ideals to another is an essential part of any society's cultural heritage. That is why it is crucial that our classrooms and learning spaces are culturally sensitive. In 2015, Fair published... Young people today know very little, if anything, about our country's

storied past and customs, and they certainly don't understand its relevance.

Safe Schools

A magazine's front page (2017) Everyone who attends a school, from instructors to students, ought to feel comfortable there. Establishing a secure environment within the school is facilitated by a variety of factors, including but not limited to: boundary walls, separate female latrines, water stations, and cleanliness. Concurrently, it aids in creating a feeling of community among students and faculty by making it harder for anyone from outside the school to enter the premises. The most important thing is that female students are more likely to enlist if they believe the school is clean and safe.

Critical Thinking and Life Skills

Reasoning, critical thinking, problem solving, and negotiating are abilities that children should learn from an early age and continue to develop throughout secondary school. The capacity to listen, compromise, respect others' ideas, approach topics with an open mind, and so on are just a few of the many skills that young children learn. It is crucial to provide students with the skills they'll need for life by educating them to think critically, examine ideas, generate rational thought, and engage in fruitful debate. The education sector can make a big difference in a society that values math, science, and engineering and other "hard sciences"—but not enough—attention paid to other topics, like civic engagement and life skills (Dietz, S., & Montague, M. (2006).

Dealing with Trauma

Many vulnerable and post-conflict areas have seen horrific acts of brutality and poverty against families and children. Furthermore, we are cognizant of the fact that children who witness violent acts are at a higher risk of being radicalized and recruited by violent gangs. Regardless, many school systems lack the necessary infrastructure to handle crises of this kind. It is critical that CVE programs prioritize this guarantee so that schools and education authorities can provide children with the attention and help they need (Spandagou, I., 2020).

Sports and Extracurricular Activities

The average number of hours that youngsters miss school each week is between twenty and twenty-five. There is a higher likelihood of drug use, criminal

behaviour, and violent behaviours occurring during this time for youngsters. According to research, after-school programs are a terrific way to help kids in these situations, and they might even have a bigger impact on their life than regular classrooms. In addition, youth might be offered a choice other than radicalization and violence through the inclusion of extracurricular activities in CVE program curricula. Participation in extracurricular activities, whether they be athletic, artistic, or cultural, can help students develop desirable traits including leadership, social skills, and good aspirations. The development and execution of CVE programs can make use of mentoring and coaching strategies (Finnvold, J. E., 2018).

Role of the Family and Community

Without the necessary support and reinforcement from family and society, educational institutions can only exert a limited amount of influence over a child. So, CVE programs need to reach out to more than just schools; they need to engage local religious institutions as well as families and communities. Establishing trust between schools and communities and promoting community involvement in their children's education should be among the main objectives of community-based education (CVE) programs (Velasco Garasa, M. Á., 2017).

Opportunities for community service, events that welcome families, activities that bring people of different religions together, team sports, adult literacy programs, and other similar initiatives can all help to enhance the bond between the school and the neighborhood.

Interventions that are not centralized.

As a means to combat violent rhetoric and encourage youth to participate in community development, it is critical to enhance the ability of local governments to communicate positively to specific neighborhoods and online groups. One example is the discovery that 60% of Al Qaeda's tweets from Yemen were about the country's progress.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The purpose of the study was to investigate and analyze the educational reforms that are necessary to combat extremism in society.

Significance of the study:

The significance of this research lies in the fact that it has the potential to offer vital insights into the ways in which education can play an important role in the fight against extremism. Through the identification of educational practices that are effective, this research has the potential to contribute to the development of societies that are more resilient and inclusive.

Objectives of the study:

1. To identify and analyze existing educational practices and policies that have been successful in countering extremism.
2. To explore the effectiveness of specific educational strategies, such as inclusive curricula, critical thinking instruction, and community engagement programs.
3. To examine the role of technology and media literacy in promoting critical thinking and countering extremist narratives.
4. To assess the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing educational reforms in diverse contexts.
5. To develop recommendations for policymakers and educators to enhance educational practices aimed at combating extremism.

Research Question:

- What educational reforms are most effective in fostering critical thinking, empathy, and tolerance among youth, thereby mitigating the risk of extremism?

Research Method:

In this study, descriptive research was conducted using the survey method. All the information will be gathered through the use of a qualitative research approach. Structured interviews are going to be carried out with the individuals who are participating in the study. The information was gathered using a method known as purposive sampling. Interviews were done and recorded online due to certain constraints, including time constraints and financial constraints.

Data collection:

Data was collected from teachers' groups of the population. A total of twenty teachers were participants in structured interviews. Data was collected on a self-made instrument having five sections followed by basic questions.

Research Method:

In this study, descriptive research was conducted through the use of the survey method. All the information were gathered through the use of a qualitative research approach. Structured interviews are going to be carried out with the individuals who are participating in the study. The information was gathered using a method known as purposive sampling. Interviews will be done and recorded online due to certain constraints, including time constraints and money constraints.

Data Analysis:

Data was analysed using thematic analysis. After listening to the recorded interviews, researcher draw the themes from answered questions.

Questions for interview

Section 1: Demographics

1. Age: _____
2. Qualification: _____
3. Gender: _____
4. : Experience _____
5. Location (Urban/Rural): _____

Section 2: Perceptions of Extremism

1. What do you understand by extremism?
2. How prevalent do you think extremism is in our society?
3. What factors contribute to develop extremism in our society?

Section 3: Educational Reforms

1. Do you think education can play a role in preventing extremism?
2. What educational reforms would you suggest to combat extremism?
3. How important is teacher training in combating extremism?

Section 4: Curriculum and Content

1. Which curriculum reform can support to eradicate through education
2. What subjects/topics should be prioritized to combat extremism?

Section 5: Community Engagement

1. How important is community involvement in preventing extremism?
2. Should schools engage with local communities to promote social cohesion?
3. What role can parents play in preventing extremism?

Section 6: Open-Ended Questions

1. What do you think is the most significant challenge in implementing educational reforms to combat extremism?
2. How can education help foster social cohesion and prevent radicalization?

SECTION I

Distribution of sample is presented in these tables

Data Analysis:

Data were analysed using thematic analysis. After listening to the recorded interviews, researcher draws the themes from answered questions.

Table 1: Qualification of the respondents

Degrees	Valid Percent	Frequency	Percent
Masters	10	10	50.0
MS/ M.Phil	09	09	95.0
PhD	1	1.0	100.0
Total	20	20.0	100.0

The majority of respondent's qualifications, 50% had a master's degree, 45%of respondents having Ms/M.Phil degrees while 5% of respondents had PhD degree holders

Table 2: Ages of Respondents

ages	Valid Percent	Frequency	Percent
20-25	3	3.0	15.0
26-30	7	7.0	50.0
31-35	2	2.0	60.0
36-40	2	2.0	70.0
41 & above	6	6.0	100.0
Total	20	20.0	100.0

The majority, 35% of respondent's ages were between 26-30 years, 30% of respondents ages were 41 years and above, while 10% of respondents were 36-40 and 31-35 same having years of age.

Table 3: Experiences of Respondents

Experiences	Valid Percent	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	7	7.0	35.0
6-10 years	9	9.0	80.0
11-15 years	1	2.0	85.0
16-20 years	2	2.0	95.0
20 years and above	1	1.0	100.0
Total	20	20.0	100.0

The majority, 45% of respondent's experiences were between 6-10 years, 35% of respondent's experiences were between 1-5 years, while 10% of respondents were having16-20 years of experience.

Following themes were derived from the study.

Educational Reforms Required to Fight Extremism in Society

Major Finding	Derived Themes
(1) **Curriculum reform**	Inclusive,
Diverse	Critical Thinking-focused
curriculum	
(2) **Teacher training**	Educators need training
address extremism	promote tolerance
. (3) Madrassa reform	Integrating modern subjects
	promoting critical thinking.
(4) Access to quality education	Increasing access,
	especially for girls and
marginalized groups	
(5) Community engagement:	Involving parents,
local leaders,	civil society

Findings

1. It is possible to combat extremist narratives through the implementation of a curriculum that is inclusive, diverse, and centered on critical thinking.
2. Training for educators: In order to combat extremism and encourage tolerance, educators in the classroom require training.
3. Reforming madrassas by incorporating contemporary topics and encouraging critical thinking is the third step.
4. Increasing access to quality education, particularly for females and members of under-represented groups, is the priority number four.

5. Involving parents, local leaders, and members of civil society is the fifth step in community   participation.

Recommendations:

1. Education policies that are inclusive may be developed.
2. Critical thinking and media literacy are also important.
3. The cultivation of emotional intelligence and empathy, respectively
4. communication between people of different cultures and faiths may be developed. Frameworks for monitoring and evaluating performance may be developed

References:

Blattman, C. and Ralston, L. 2015. *Generating employment in poor and fragile states: Evidence from labor market and entrepreneurship programs.* Available at: https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/Blattman_Employment%20Lit%20Re view.pdf.

Bhatia, K. and Ghanem, K. 2017. *How do education and unemployment affect support for violent extremism? Evidence from Eight Arab Countries.* Brookings Institution. Brookings. Available at:https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-do-education-and-unemployment-affect-support-for-violentextremism/

CGCC and Hedayah. 2013. *The role of education in countering violent Extremism.* Available   at:http://www.hedayah.ae/pdf/role-of-education-in-countering-violent-extremism-meeting-report.pdf

CVE Research Brief. 2014. E*ducation and Countering Violent Extremism.* Available at:
http://www.hedayah.ae/pdf/cve-research-brief-2.pdf

Department for International Development (DFID). 2013. *Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism(CVET): DFID's Approach and Contribution.* Department for International Development.Devarajan, S.; Mottaghi, L.; Do, Q.; Brockmeyer, A.; Joubert,   C.;   Bhatia,   K.;   Abdel   Jelil,   M.;   Shaban,   R.; Chall-Dabi, I.; Lenoble, N. 2016. *Economic and Social Inclusion to Prevent Violent Extremism.* Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Economic Monitor. World Bank. Washington D.C.

EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011. The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education. UNESCO Publishing.

Fair, C. C. 2015. "Explaining Support for Sectarian Terrorism in Pakistan: Piety, Maslak and Sharia."*Religions* 6, no. 4: 1137-1167.

Frontpage Mag. (2017). *Symposium: When Does a Religion Become an Ideology?*. Available at:http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/61861/symposium-when-does-religion-become-ideology-jamieglazov

Dietz, S., & Montague, M. (2006). Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder comorbid with emotional and behavioral disorders and learning disabilities in adolescents. *Exceptionality*, *14*(1), 19-33.

Finnvold, J. E. (2018). School segregation and social participation: the case of Norwegian

Spandagou, I. (2020). Understanding Disability. In *Inclusive Education in Schools and Early Childhood Settings* (pp. 13-22). Springer, Singapore.

Velasco Garasa, M. Á. (2017). Methods and metrics for the improvement of the interaction and the rehabilitation of cerebral palsy through inertial technology.