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Sustainable Development Policy Institute

Synthesis Paper

# Exploring Factors in Countering Violent Extremism to Promote Resilience: Insights from Research in Pakistan

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Sustainable Development Policy Institute

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## 1. Introduction

This synthesis paper aims to provide a cohesive analysis by connecting and expanding on four research studies (Appendix 1) conducted under the Resilient Development Programme of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and published in various journals across the world. The primary objective of these studies is to explore various aspects and factors that need to be considered in order to promote resilience in countering violent extremism within the context of Pakistan. Each study offers valuable insights into different dimensions of this complex issue, shedding light on important areas such as the fairness of criminal justice system, the impact of community violence on youth behaviour, the underlying drivers of extremism, and the role of community resilience in preventing violence.

While considering violent extremism as a multifaceted challenge faced by Pakistan, this synthesis paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the contributing factors and implications of violent extremism in Pakistani society, as reported in the studies conducted (mentioned above). By synthesizing key findings from various studies, it sheds light on the socio-cultural, psychological, and political dimensions that shape the emergence and spread of extremist ideologies and behaviours. Furthermore, it evaluates the effectiveness of existing legislative frameworks and proposes strategies for countering violent extremism. The synthesis emphasizes the urgent need for multi-dimensional approaches that address social inequalities, discriminatory conditions, and ineffective governance to promote peace, stability, and social cohesion in Pakistan. By adopting evidence-based policies and interventions, policymakers can strive to create a safer and more inclusive society that is resilient to the influence of violent extremism.

In doing so, the paper delves into the complex relationship between social structural variables, violent extremism, and the implications for policy development in the context of Pakistan. By examining the influence of disorganized social conditions, ineffective governance, and relative deprivations, this synthesis paper sheds light on the motivational and driving factors contributing to violent extremism. Furthermore, it illustrates the importance of addressing grievances, trust deficit in the criminal justice system, and recognizing the unique challenges faced by vulnerable groups (such as ethno-religious minorities, youth, women). The findings underscore the urgent need for policy interventions aimed at improving governance, ensuring justice, and fostering trust among socially marginalized communities.

## 2. Background and Introduction to Reviewed Studies

One of the selected studies conducted in Pakistan focused on examining procedural and distributive fairness within the criminal justice system, specifically for juvenile and women prisoners. The researchers collected data from the Borstal Institute and District Jail Faisalabad in order to gain insights into the factors contributing to crimes and the experiences of prisoners with law-

enforcement agencies. The study aimed to shed light on the vulnerabilities faced by these groups and emphasized the critical importance of trust in the criminal justice system. The findings of this study emphasized the need for policy interventions to address the existing fairness and equity gaps within the system. It highlighted the significance of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their gender or age, receive equitable and just treatment.

Another research study examined the interplay between exposure to community violence (ECV) and violent behaviour among Pakistani youth. This study drew upon Bandura's social learning theory to explore the impact of parenting practices on the relationship between ECV and violent behaviour. By investigating the extent to which effective parenting practices can mitigate violence among Pakistani youth, the researchers aimed to fill a crucial gap in the existing literature. The findings of this study shed light on the potential role of parenting interventions in reducing violent behaviours, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of youth violence in Pakistan.

In the context of violent extremism, another research endeavour sought to understand the underlying factors driving extremism in Pakistan. This study emphasized the importance of addressing psychological unrest and anti-social outbursts resulting from the suppression and deprivation of fundamental rights within communities. Employing a mixed-method approach and psychometric analysis, the researchers explored the root causes of extremism and proposed a comprehensive "Cause and Act" response policy plan to counter this issue. This research underscores the significance of addressing psychological factors and ensuring the protection of fundamental rights to effectively combat violent extremism in Pakistan.

Additionally, a study highlighted the importance of community resilience in preventing aggression and violence. It recognized the central role that communities play in shaping individuals' perceptions and inspiring efforts to prevent violence. The study underscored the need to strengthen social connections within communities through strategies such as social bonding and social bridging. By harnessing and strengthening these social connections, communities can counteract social inequality and injustice, particularly among youths, who are at risk of radicalization. Community resilience was identified as a crucial aspect in facilitating recovery from emergencies and improving the lives of individuals facing violence.

Understanding violent extremism as an ideological outcome, another perspective argues that social structural variables play a crucial role in shaping and constructing violent extremist thoughts. The manifestation of violent extremism through violence and terrorism causes physical and psychological uneasiness, societal discord, and generates hatred among the general population. This highlights the significant challenges faced by law enforcement authorities and bureaucratic structures in preventing and controlling such conduct. Therefore, this article asserts that social structural variables should be considered when addressing and understanding violent extremism.

By connecting and expanding on these fragmented texts, this synthesis paper provides a comprehensive analysis of countering violent extremism and resilience in the context of Pakistan. The findings from these studies collectively contribute to the development of policy interventions aimed at creating a safer and more just society in Pakistan. This synthesis paper underscores the need to address fairness within the criminal justice system, the importance of effective parenting practices in mitigating violence among youth, the significance of addressing psychological factors to combat violent extremism, and the central role of community resilience in preventing aggression and violence. Moreover, it emphasizes the relevance of considering social structural variables when understanding and addressing violent extremism in Pakistan.

### **3. Understanding the Complexities of Violent Extremism: A Review of Factors and Implications**

Violent extremism remains a pervasive global challenge that threatens the stability, security, and social fabric of societies. Pakistan, like many other nations, grapples with the complex issue of violent extremism. This synthesis paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contributing factors and implications of violent extremism in Pakistani society. By synthesizing key findings from various studies, it delves into the socio-cultural, psychological, and political dimensions that shape the emergence and spread of extremist ideologies and behaviours. Furthermore, it evaluates the effectiveness of existing legislative frameworks and proposes strategies for countering violent extremism. The synthesis underscores the urgent need for multi-dimensional approaches that address social inequalities, discriminatory conditions, and ineffective governance to promote peace and stability in the region.

#### **3.1 Understanding the Complex Nature of Violent Extremism:**

Violent extremism is not a phenomenon with a single cause or explanation. It is a multifaceted issue that arises from a combination of social, political, and cultural factors. In the context of Pakistan, these factors have contributed to the proliferation of violent extremist ideologies, resulting in acts of terrorism and societal unrest. By synthesizing existing research on the subject, this paper seeks to unravel the complex nature of violent extremism, exploring the root causes, drivers, and mechanisms that fuel its growth within Pakistani society.

#### **3.2 Socio-cultural and Psychological Factors:**

The socio-cultural context plays a pivotal role in shaping the development of extremist ideologies. Socio-economic disparities, political grievances, identity crises, and cultural marginalization are among the factors that create fertile ground for the emergence of violent extremism. This synthesis paper draws upon research conducted in Pakistan to highlight the influence of these socio-cultural factors on the radicalization process. By recognizing and addressing social inequalities, promoting social cohesion, and fostering inclusive narratives, policymakers can mitigate the grievances that contribute to the adoption of extremist ideologies.

Psychological factors are instrumental in understanding the individual motivations and processes that drive individuals toward violent extremism. This synthesis paper examines research conducted in Pakistan that explores the psychological dimensions of radicalization. It considers the role of personal grievances, cognitive biases, group dynamics, and the quest for significance and belonging in fostering extremist ideologies. By comprehending these psychological factors, policymakers can develop targeted interventions that address the underlying psychological needs and vulnerabilities associated with violent extremism.

### **3.3. Political Factors:**

Political factors, including governance issues, systemic failures, and state-sponsored ideologies, are significant drivers of violent extremism. This synthesis paper examines the role of political factors in shaping the landscape of violent extremism in Pakistan. It considers the impact of weak governance structures, corruption, and the manipulation of religious narratives for political gains. By addressing political grievances, strengthening democratic institutions, and promoting accountable governance, policymakers can create an environment less conducive to the proliferation of violent extremist ideologies.

### **3.4 Evaluating Legislative Frameworks:**

In combating violent extremism, legislative frameworks play a crucial role. This synthesis paper critically evaluates the effectiveness of existing legislative measures implemented in Pakistan. It examines the strengths and weaknesses of counter-terrorism legislation, criminal justice procedures, and efforts to counter hate speech and incitement to violence. By identifying gaps and areas for improvement, policymakers can refine existing laws and policies to better address the complexities of violent extremism.

### **3.5 Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism:**

Building upon the insights gleaned from research, this synthesis paper proposes strategies for countering violent extremism in Pakistan. It highlights the importance of a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach that combines preventive measures, rehabilitation and reintegration programs, community engagement, and international cooperation. By promoting social inclusion, investing in education and skills development, facilitating deradicalization and disengagement processes, and fostering interfaith dialogue, policymakers can address the underlying causes of violent extremism and promote long-term stability.



## 4. Socio-Demographic Factors Contributing to Juvenile and Women's Crimes

Numerous studies have shed light on the unique challenges faced by juvenile and women prisoners in Pakistan, highlighting the need for reforms within the criminal justice system. A closer examination of these studies reveals important factors that contribute to juvenile crimes and the experiences of women prisoners.

Juvenile prisoners in Pakistan often come from rural areas and face a range of socioeconomic challenges. Research has shown that these juveniles are more likely to receive lengthy sentences compared to their urban counterparts. Deprivation, stemming from poverty and limited access to education and employment opportunities, is a significant contributing factor to juvenile crimes. The absence of positive role models and exposure to peer influence further exacerbates the situation, leading juveniles to engage in criminal activities as a means of social belonging and economic survival.

Similarly, women prisoners, particularly those who are under trial, encounter a myriad of challenges that contribute to their involvement in criminal activities. Spousal violence and conflict within the household are prevalent issues faced by these women. Poverty, violence by parents-in-law, and conflicts within the neighborhood further compound their vulnerabilities. These adverse circumstances create an environment that pushes women into criminal behavior as a means of self-defense, economic survival, or retaliation.

Importantly, both juvenile and women prisoners report instances of inappropriate behavior by the police during investigations. However, women prisoners face an even higher risk of physical and sexual harassment. Such misconduct by law enforcement agencies not only undermines the principles of fairness and justice but also perpetuates a cycle of distrust between these marginalized groups and the criminal justice system.

These factors collectively contribute to the prevalence of crimes committed by juveniles and women in Pakistan. Moreover, they erode trust in the criminal justice system, exacerbating the challenges faced by these groups. In order to address these issues, policymakers and stakeholders must prioritize reforms that promote procedural and distributive fairness, ensure the protection of rights, and provide support mechanisms for the rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile and women prisoners.

### 4.1 Psychological Factors and Violent Extremism

Violent extremism has emerged as a significant and deeply impactful issue in Pakistani society, causing social unrest and disrupting the fabric of normalcy. The prevalence of extremism in the

country is fueled by a combination of cultural, religious, and political motivations, which contribute to the adoption of extremist ideologies and the subsequent manifestation of violence. However, to effectively counter violent extremism, it is imperative to delve into the psychological factors that underpin this transformative process from extremism to violent behavior.

Living in an environment characterized by continuous violence exposes individuals to psychological fears, traumas, and distress. These psychological factors play a crucial role in shaping the development and progression of violent extremism. Research indicates that individuals who experience marginalization, oppression, and systematic discrimination may be more susceptible to extremist ideologies as they seek a sense of identity, belonging, and purpose. Moreover, the psychological impacts of violence, such as feelings of anger, resentment, and a desire for revenge, can drive individuals towards extremist groups that promise empowerment and a distorted sense of justice.

Understanding the psychological factors that initiate and sustain the journey from extremism to violence is essential for developing effective strategies to build resilience against violent extremism. By comprehending the underlying psychological processes, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners can design targeted interventions to address these factors and prevent individuals from embracing violent ideologies. These interventions may include psychological support, trauma-informed care, and mental health services to address the psychological distress experienced by individuals at risk of radicalization.

Promoting resilience against violent extremism requires a comprehensive understanding of the psychological vulnerabilities that individuals face within their respective contexts. This understanding can help inform the development of preventive measures and early intervention strategies that focus on countering the psychological factors that contribute to radicalization. By providing avenues for positive engagement, promoting critical thinking skills, and fostering a sense of belonging through inclusive social networks, communities can play a crucial role in building psychological resilience against violent extremism.

Furthermore, it is vital to address the underlying social, economic, and political factors that contribute to the environment conducive to the growth of violent extremism. By tackling socio-economic inequalities, promoting social cohesion, and ensuring inclusive governance, policymakers can create a conducive environment that addresses the root causes of violent extremism and reduces the psychological vulnerabilities that drive individuals towards extremist ideologies.

## **5. Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism**

The proposed "Cause and Act" response plan outlined in the study offers a comprehensive approach to countering violent extremism in Pakistan. This plan recognizes the importance of inclusivity

and understanding the complex dynamics that contribute to extremism. It emphasizes the need to consider gender dynamics, social narratives, and network groups in developing preventive measures and interventions.

One key aspect of the response plan is the utilization of socio-psychological profiling to identify individuals at risk of radicalization. By understanding the underlying socio-psychological factors that contribute to extremism, policymakers and stakeholders can tailor interventions to address specific vulnerabilities and risk factors. This profiling can aid in identifying individuals who may be susceptible to radical ideologies and allow for targeted engagement and support.

Another significant element of the proposed response plan is the recognition of socio-ethnic divisions within society. By acknowledging and addressing these divisions, policymakers can develop interventions that promote social cohesion, bridge divides, and counter the narratives that fuel extremist ideologies. It is crucial to understand the underlying grievances and dynamics that contribute to socio-ethnic tensions and work towards promoting inclusivity, dialogue, and reconciliation.

The study also emphasizes the need for multi-dimensional legislative frameworks to effectively address violent extremism. This entails reevaluating existing laws and policies to ensure they are comprehensive, proportionate, and respect human rights. Legislative measures should incorporate preventive measures, mechanisms for rehabilitation and reintegration, and provisions for addressing the root causes of extremism. Additionally, redefining stakeholder roles and responsibilities is crucial to enhancing coordination and collaboration among various actors involved in countering violent extremism, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and religious leaders. Furthermore, socio-psychological interventions are highlighted as a key component of the response plan. These interventions should focus on addressing the underlying socio-psychological factors that contribute to extremism, such as identity crises, grievances, and the search for belonging and purpose. By providing support, counseling, and opportunities for positive engagement, these interventions can help individuals disengage from extremist ideologies and reintegrate into society.

### **5.1. Evaluation of Legislative Frameworks:**

The review undertaken in this study critically evaluates the current legislative framework in Pakistan pertaining to violent extremism. It emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between violent extremism and terrorism and examines the effectiveness of existing laws in upholding citizens' constitutional rights while addressing the issue.

One key aspect highlighted in the review is the distinction between violent extremism and terrorism. While related, these terms encompass distinct phenomena, and it is crucial for legislation to acknowledge and address this differentiation. By understanding the nuances between violent

extremism and terrorism, policymakers can develop laws and policies that effectively target the root causes of extremism without compromising citizens' rights and freedoms.

The research also identifies shortcomings within the criminal justice system regarding the prosecution and conviction of individuals involved in violent extremism. Low conviction rates and delayed trials hinder the effectiveness of the legal system in addressing violent extremism. This highlights the need for reforms and improvements within the criminal justice system to ensure timely and fair trials, strengthen the evidentiary process, and enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies to effectively investigate and prosecute cases related to violent extremism.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of developing effective legislation for policymaking and law reforms. This includes formulating comprehensive laws that encompass preventive measures, mechanisms for rehabilitation and reintegration, and provisions for addressing the underlying causes of extremism. By establishing a robust legal framework, policymakers can create a conducive environment for countering violent extremism, ensuring that the rule of law is upheld and justice is served.

Strengthening the legal framework is paramount for combating violent extremism in Pakistan and ensuring justice for all. It requires a comprehensive approach that considers the protection of citizens' rights, effective prosecution and conviction processes, and the development of targeted legislation. By addressing the identified shortcomings within the current legislative framework and implementing necessary reforms, Pakistan can enhance its ability to counter violent extremism and create a society that upholds the principles of justice, fairness, and the rule of law.

## **5.2. Religious Differences and Discrimination:**

Islam is a sacred and peaceful religion highly valued by many individuals in Pakistan. However, the study reveals that religious differences and discriminatory elements are present in the lives of many people in the country. These differences, combined with misconstrued interpretations of religious inscriptions by some religious leaders and discriminatory attitudes towards others, contribute to the emergence of violent extremism.

The study identifies several contributing factors to violent extremism in Pakistan. Firstly, religious differences and sectarian tensions play a role in fueling extremist ideologies. Wrong interpretations of religious texts by certain religious leaders can lead individuals astray and encourage violence in the name of religion. Additionally, discriminatory attitudes towards individuals from different religious backgrounds contribute to a sense of alienation and marginalization, further exacerbating the risk of violent extremism.

Moreover, the study recognizes the impact of ineffective government policies, weak governance, and social and political inequalities in perpetuating violent extremism. These factors create an environment where extremist ideologies can flourish and provide individuals with a perceived justification for resorting to violence. By addressing these inequalities and strengthening governance structures, policymakers can mitigate the risk factors associated with violent extremism and promote social development.

The study emphasizes the need for effective educational and political policies to foster social development and restore faith in the government. Education plays a vital role in countering extremist ideologies by promoting critical thinking, tolerance, and understanding among individuals. By incorporating curriculum reforms that emphasize pluralism, interfaith dialogue, and the rejection of violence, educational institutions can contribute to creating a more inclusive and peaceful society.

Furthermore, political policies should focus on reducing social and political inequalities that contribute to feelings of marginalization and alienation. By addressing economic disparities, providing equal opportunities for all citizens, and fostering an inclusive political environment, policymakers can create a society where individuals are less susceptible to extremist ideologies.

## **6. Understanding Nexus between Social Structural Variables & Violent Extremism**

The understanding of violent extremism, particularly in the Pakistani context, has been limited due to insufficient attention to the role played by social structural variables. This review aims to bridge this knowledge gap by examining the impact of disorganized social conditions and weak governance on individuals' behaviors and thinking patterns. The paper also explores the link between these factors and the development of violent extremism. By analyzing the implications of these findings, policymakers can gain valuable insights for formulating effective strategies to counter violent extremism and promote social harmony.

### **6.1 Inadequate Governance and Social Inequalities:**

Inadequate governance and socioeconomic inequalities created by state policies and poor governance contribute to strains, frustrations, and relative deprivations among the population. Disorganized social structural conditions, coupled with weak justice systems, can motivate individuals towards violent extremism. A lack of understanding and resolution of social problems by governing authorities, irresponsible behavior of political leadership, and corruption among state agents further exacerbate chaotic conditions. These factors erode trust in the government and contribute to a sense of marginalization and injustice among marginalized communities.

## **6.2 The Role of Social Structural Variables:**

The review highlights the role of social structural variables in fostering violent extremism. It emphasizes the need to address grievances and disparities by implementing inclusive policies and interventions. Disparities in access to justice, discriminatory treatment, and social, political, and religious conflicts contribute to the emergence of violent extremist thoughts. The study underscores the importance of understanding the experiences of different social groups and religious communities in order to develop effective policy interventions.

## **6.3 Reforming the Criminal Justice System:**

The review calls for reforms in the criminal justice system to build trust and legitimacy among socially vulnerable groups. Wrongful convictions, delays in justice, and the use of violence by the police undermine trust and perpetuate a lack of confidence in the system. Recognizing the specific needs and rights of juveniles within the criminal justice system is crucial for their successful rehabilitation and reintegration. Similarly, women prisoners face unique challenges and vulnerabilities that require special attention and interventions. Improving police behavior, providing ethics training, and involving stakeholders in reformation and rehabilitation efforts are essential steps towards building trust.

## **6.4 Defining Extremism and Terrorism:**

The study emphasizes the need to address challenges related to defining extremism and terrorism, as well as issues of accountability and transparency within the security sector. It highlights the impact of global and regional power politics on violent extremism and stresses the importance of reducing horizontal inequalities. Developing a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of extremism and terrorism is crucial for designing effective policies and interventions.

## **6.5 Implications for Policy Development:**

The findings of this review have significant implications for policy development. Policymakers need to prioritize good governance, social justice, and effective counter-terrorism strategies. Addressing socioeconomic inequalities, promoting trust in the criminal justice system, and providing targeted interventions for vulnerable groups are crucial steps towards countering violent extremism. Inclusive policies that foster dialogue, promote social cohesion, and provide opportunities for marginalized communities are essential for long-term peace and stability.

## **7. Addressing Violent Extremism in Pakistan: Evaluating Factors and Strategies for Building a Peaceful Society**

The research also acknowledges the gaps in the protection of religious freedom in Pakistan and the importance of bridging the divide between international agreements and domestic legislation. It highlights that unjust and ineffective governance and justice systems contribute to angry and violent thoughts among religious and social groups. When the government fails to address citizens' grievances and difficulties, people are more prone to resorting to violent and aggressive actions. Moreover, contemptive, disrespectful, and disparaging attitudes from both local and international communities create an environment conducive to social and political tensions, religious fanaticism, and bloodshed.

However, the reviewed data demonstrates that violent religious extremism in Pakistan is primarily driven by conflicts between sectarian ideologies, the lack of effective government response to social, political, and religious matters, and Western propaganda that stigmatizes Muslims as terrorists. In brief it can be conceived that the relationship between exposure to community violence and violent behavior among Pakistani youth, emphasizing the role of parenting practices as a potential mitigating factor. Effective parenting practices have the potential to reduce violent behavior and contribute to a more peaceful and non-violent society.

The study also emphasizes the significance of community resilience in preventing aggression and violence, particularly through a community-based approach. It highlights the role of communities in shaping individuals' perceptions and inspiring efforts to prevent violence. Strengthening social connections and implementing strategies such as social bonding and bridging can help counter social inequality and injustice. The case study conducted in Shikarpur and Sukkur, Pakistan, provides insights into the impact of terrorism on community resilience and the challenges faced by individuals in these areas. Ultimately, building community resilience is crucial for fostering a society that promotes resilience, well-being, and peace.

Furthermore, the research underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving violent extremism in Pakistan. By employing psychometric analysis and a "Cause and Act" response plan, the study aims to develop effective strategies for countering extremism. It emphasizes the importance of addressing psychological factors, redefining legislative frameworks, and fostering resilience within communities. Taking a multidimensional approach is key for Pakistan to prevent and counter violent extremism, ensuring a more peaceful and inclusive society.

Based on the findings and inferences of the articles reviewed for this synthesis paper, it is suggested that the government of Pakistan adopts effective and result-oriented policies to address the social, economic, and political challenges faced by various social groups. Understanding why certain individuals, including social, religious, and political groups, become aggrieved and how they



develop violent attitudes and behaviors should be a priority for policymakers to derive meaningful results for policy-making outlines. Addressing frustrations and discriminatory behavior, resolving religious and criminal problems, and promoting social justice are essential steps in countering violent extremist ideas.

Moreover, improving the education system by designing unbiased and unprejudiced curricula, ensuring quality education that doesn't reinforce divisions, and promoting peace narratives within communities are crucial for preventing and addressing disputes and differences. Strengthening the role of social institutions and maintaining a strong rule of law by strengthening all components of the criminal justice system are essential for ensuring social justice across the country.

The government of Pakistan should demonstrate a serious commitment to addressing the structural problems that contribute to violent extremism and disorderly conditions. Monitoring and addressing the flow of immoral and anti-Islamic content in social literature and on social media is crucial. Furthermore, cultivating positive relations with international countries to devise constructive approaches for creating a peaceful and resilient environment within Pakistani society and Muslim communities worldwide is vital. It is important to focus on unity rather than policies that create divisions among the people of Pakistan and Muslims globally.

### **7.1 A Call for Effective Policies and Social Resilience**

This comprehensive synthesis paper also examines the factors contributing to violent extremism in Pakistan and highlights the need for effective policies and social resilience to counter this threat. By addressing socio-politico-economic challenges, as well as promoting interfaith harmony and inclusive education, the government can create an environment that discourages violence and fosters peace. Emanating from the consulted papers, this paper emphasizes the importance of understanding the grievances of marginalized groups and the impact of external factors on extremist ideologies. It calls for a comprehensive approach that encompasses legislative reforms, psychological interventions, community engagement, and international collaboration to tackle violent extremism in Pakistan.

Violent extremism in Pakistan is a multifaceted issue influenced by a range of factors, including social inequalities, political unrest, and external narratives. This review aims to analyze the root causes of violent extremism and propose effective policy interventions. It underscores the importance of addressing social grievances, improving governance, promoting trust in the criminal justice system, and countering negative narratives. By adopting a comprehensive approach, Pakistan can foster social resilience and create a peaceful society.



### **7.2 Impact of Social Structural Variables:**

The review emphasizes the impact of social structural variables on violent extremism. Poor governance, ineffective policies, and social inequalities contribute to a sense of relative deprivation and frustration among marginalized groups. In this environment, individuals are more susceptible to extremist ideologies. Additionally, external narratives and discriminatory attitudes towards religious and social groups can further fuel violent thoughts and actions. Recognizing and addressing these factors are crucial for mitigating the spread of violent extremism.

### **7.3 Building Trust and Promoting Social Cohesion:**

The study highlights the importance of trust in the criminal justice system and the need for policy interventions to address vulnerabilities. Trust is a key element in ensuring the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile and women prisoners. Improving police behavior, providing ethics training, and involving stakeholders in reformation and rehabilitation efforts are vital steps in building trust. Social cohesion initiatives that promote dialogue, understanding, and interfaith harmony are also essential in countering violent extremism.

### **7.3 The Role of Education:**

The review emphasizes the significance of education in preventing and countering violent extremism. The curriculum should be designed to promote unbiased and inclusive teachings, fostering a sense of unity and understanding among students. The quality of education should be improved, ensuring that students do not perceive differences in socioeconomic status or sectarian divisions. It is crucial to address the flow of immoral and anti-Islamic content in social literature and on social media platforms, monitoring and regulating such content to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies.

### **7.5 Addressing External Factors:**

The study highlights the importance of positive relations with international countries and the need for constructive approaches to counter violent extremism. Pakistan should focus on building positive narratives and collaboration with international partners to combat negative portrayals of Muslims. By fostering a peaceful and resilient environment, Pakistan can contribute to global efforts to counter violent extremism and promote interfaith understanding.

## **8. Policy Recommendations**

- **Recognize and Address Marginalized Groups:** Policymakers should acknowledge the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups and develop inclusive strategies that address their specific needs. This includes providing equal access to opportunities, resources, and services,

besides promoting their representation and participation in decision-making processes. By fostering trust and social cohesion among marginalized communities, policymakers can mitigate the drivers of violent extremism.

- **Promote Effective Governance:** Policy interventions should focus on improving governance structures and processes to ensure accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. This includes strengthening institutions, combating corruption, and promoting efficient service delivery. By promoting effective governance, policymakers can address social grievances, enhance public trust, and reduce the potential for violent extremism to thrive.
- **Ensure Justice for All:** Policymakers should prioritize the establishment of a fair and impartial justice system that upholds the rights of all individuals, regardless of their social or religious background. This involves addressing shortcomings in the criminal justice system, enhancing access to justice, and promoting human rights principles. By ensuring justice for all, policymakers can contribute to the prevention of violent extremism and build public confidence in the legal framework.
- **Foster Social Cohesion and Inclusive Education:** Policy interventions should aim to promote social cohesion and inclusive education. This includes creating opportunities for interaction and dialogue among diverse communities, promoting tolerance and respect for religious and cultural diversity, and countering extremist narratives through education. By fostering social cohesion and providing inclusive education, policymakers can cultivate a sense of belonging, understanding, and shared values that mitigate the appeal of violent extremism.
- **Strengthen the Criminal Justice System:** Policymakers should focus on strengthening the criminal justice system to effectively prevent and respond to violent extremism. This involves improving law enforcement capacities, enhancing intelligence and information sharing mechanisms, and establishing specialized units to handle extremism-related cases. Additionally, regulating online content and addressing the misuse of digital platforms can play a crucial role in countering extremist propaganda and recruitment efforts.
- **Foster International Collaboration:** Policymakers should prioritize international collaboration and exchange of best practices in countering violent extremism. This includes sharing information, resources, and expertise with other countries facing similar challenges, engaging in joint research and capacity-building initiatives, and participating actively in international forums and initiatives aimed at countering extremism. By fostering international collaboration, policymakers can leverage collective knowledge and experiences to develop effective strategies and interventions.
- **Address Socio-Cultural, Psychological, and Political Factors:** Policymakers should recognize the complex nature of violent extremism and develop comprehensive strategies that address socio-cultural, psychological, and political factors. This involves promoting religious tolerance, addressing discriminatory attitudes, implementing effective educational policies, and ensuring political inclusivity. By addressing these underlying factors, policymakers can create an environment that fosters inclusivity, justice, and social cohesion, thereby countering the growth of extremism.
- **Legislative Reforms and Comprehensive Legislation:** Policymakers should review and update

the existing legislative framework to effectively address violent extremism. This includes distinguishing between violent extremism and terrorism, addressing gaps and shortcomings in the criminal justice system, and developing comprehensive legislation that promotes justice and safeguards citizens' constitutional rights. Strengthening the legal framework is essential for countering violent extremism and creating a society based on the principles of fairness, equality, and human rights.

- Implement the "Cause and Act" Response Plan: Policymakers should consider implementing a comprehensive and inclusive "Cause and Act" response plan that addresses the underlying factors contributing to violent extremism. This plan should involve gender-sensitive approaches, social narrative interventions, network analysis, socio-psychological profiling, multi-dimensional legislative frameworks, redefined stakeholder roles, and socio-psychological interventions. By adopting such a plan, policymakers can effectively prevent and counter violent extremism, promoting peace, inclusivity, and social cohesion.
- Support for Rural Communities and Empowering Women: Policy interventions should provide targeted support to rural communities, addressing socioeconomic disparities and creating opportunities for education and employment. Efforts should also focus on empowering women through measures to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, promote gender equality, and ensure their meaningful participation in all spheres of society. Training programs for law enforcement agencies should prioritize gender sensitivity and the fair treatment of all individuals, promoting respect for human rights.
- Policymakers in Pakistan should adopt a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to counter violent extremism. This involves recognizing and addressing social structural variables, fostering trust, promoting social cohesion, and mitigating the drivers of extremism. By implementing the aforementioned policy recommendations, Pakistan can work towards building a peaceful, inclusive, and resilient society, contributing to global peace-building efforts.

## Appendix-1

No:	Title of paper (s)	Author (s)	Web-Link
1	Trust of Socially Vulnerable Groups on Criminal Justice System of Pakistan	Dr Khalil Ahmad	<a href="https://esciencepress.net/journals/index.php/JSAS/article/viewFile/3841/2025">https://esciencepress.net/journals/index.php/JSAS/article/viewFile/3841/2025</a>
2	Predicting the Violent Behavior in Pakistani Youth Exposed to Community Violence: Integrating Role of Parents in the Scenario	Musferah Mehfooz & Asma Imran	N/A
3	Psychometric Analysis of the Factors Driving Community to Violent Extremism in Pakistan; Developing Resilience by 'Cause and Act' Response Plan	Dr Sehrish Qayyum	N/A
4	Building sustainable community resilience and business preparedness through stakeholder perspectiveBuilding community resilience: lessons in business preparedness	Dr Shuaib Ahmed	<a href="https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/mcb/ijes/2023/00000012/00000002/art00005">https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/mcb/ijes/2023/00000012/00000002/art00005</a>