

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES OF MINORTIES IN SOUTHERN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Minorities are usually defined in terms of ascribed status characteristics such as race, gender, and ethnic or religious background, as well as acquired statuses such as sexual orientation. The objectives of this study were to access the different issues of religious minorities in South Punjab; to explore the protection of minority regarding their issues; to identify the social condition of minority in South Punjab and to examine the role of Government for the protection of minorities. A sample of 150 respondents was drawn from the total population and structured interview schedule was administrated. Data were analyzed and interpreted by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 19.0 version software. The structured interview was discussed with two experts of the Sociology Department (>8 years' experiences) working in the University. It was revised to incorporate recommended improvements. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to analyze the data that includes: frequency, percent, mean, standard deviations. The study was focused on examining the socioeconomic issues of minorities of Southern Punjab. The study of the universe was the District Multan and the target population of the present were consist of minorities which are resident of Multan City. The purposive of sampling was used for the data collection. Interview schedule was used for the collection of qualitative data from uneducated respondents and for quantitative data; questionnaire constructed for educated respondents. The study summarized that rights should be given to the all human beings, especially minorities religious rights are important.

Keywords: Social, Economic, Issues, Minority, Pakistan

1. INTRODUCTION

"A minority is a social category of the people singled out for unequal and inferior treatment simply because they are identified as belonging to that category. Minorities are usually defined in terms of ascribed status characteristics such as race, gender, and ethnic or religious background, as well as acquired statuses such as sexual orientation. Unlike numerical minorities, social minority may be in the numerical majority, as blacks were in South Africa before the end of apartheid and as females still are in virtually in the every society in the world. (Dictionary of Sociology p. 196)". The more frequently visible minority groups residing in Pakistan are Christians 2092902, Hindi 2111271, Qadiani 286212, and Schedule Caste 322343, others 96142 which includes Parsi, Buddhist and Bahais etc (Ministry of Minority Affairs Islamabad). According to Rehman (2010) religious minority refers to the group of people whom belief, practices and code of life is different from state

religion. It is the group of people, which is less acceptable in any society of the world. They have to face discrimination and remain under the supervision of majority. They are restricted in offering their rituals, discriminated in social behavior, economically marginalized and don't seem to be part of mainstream of society. It is observed that religious intolerance and oppression have been remained the oblivious factors in the sermon of human history. There are several types of the minorities in Pakistan, but in special context the emphasis is given to religious minorities. They have to suffer socioeconomic injustice and discrimination. Minorities in Pakistan seem isolated and insecure. They are economically poor and educationally backward. They have menial jobs, low income and a lot of social issues. Due to prejudice they are not given job securities and promotion. Unfortunately the leadership of minorities has been divided and failed to play its role accordingly.

Minorities are deprived of proper residence and basic health facilities and security (Micheal, 2008). On the other hand (Hussain, 2008) mentioned that 4 million religious minorities living in Pakistan with Hindu and Chitians. Whenever an unwanted incidence occurs in Indian, in response Hindus in Pakistan become a target. Similarly, Christians in Pakistan are facing lot of problems after America's attack on Afghanistan. They are being discriminated in Government employment and there should be a reserved quota for them Government in jobs at local, Provincial or federal level. In syllabus history of books are promoting hate and develop hostile attitudes in Muslim students towards religious minorities. The role of Minority Population in Pakistan movement never gets space in textbooks of the syllabus. They have as an unfair business environment and face hardships in recovery of credits and property. Hindu women are suffering from kidnapping and forcible conversions. They are generally depressed, under education and underemployment.

Saleem and Naveed (2011) described that curriculum in textbook promotes hate and discrimination towards minority students. This hate turns out in to extreme aggression and deviant behavior which may involve violating the basic rights of minority people. After reading the textbook the students learn that minorities are less valuable or second class citizens and are generally not viewed as a part of the social group of Pakistan. The behavior of teacher is biased towards minority students. Those textbooks which were published after curricular reform in 2006 failed to follow the mandated guidelines.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To access the different issues of religious minorities in South Punjab.
2. To explore the perception of minority regarding their issues.
3. To identify the social condition of minority in South Punjab.
4. To examine the role of government for the protection of minorities.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher used the quantitative as well qualitative methods in this study. Quantitative method is used to collect numerical data to explain, predict and control phenomenon under study (Gay, 2000: 6230). Through quantitative method, the researcher is used to find a cause-effect relationship between or among different variables. In addition, the researcher used qualitative research method to "gain insights not possible using other research" (Gay, 2000: 6230). Through a qualitative research method, the researcher was collect narrative data, i.e. inductive, subjective and process oriented. The present study is focused on examining the socioeconomic issues of minorities of Southern Punjab. The study of the universe was District Multan and the target population of the present were consist of minorities which are resident of Multan City. The purposive of sampling is used for the data collection. Interview schedule was used for the collection of qualitative data from uneducated respondents and for quantitative data; the questionnaire was constructed for educated respondents. The study was limited in the District Multan because the researcher easy to access the units.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Of the 150 respondents 100(66.7%) were females while 50(33.3%) were males. About 59(39.3%) respondents were aged between 18-25 years, 72 (48.0%) were aged between 26-40 and 1(1.4%) were aged between 41-60 year. A greater part of the respondents 122(81.3%) were Urdu speaking and 28 (18.7%) were Punjabi speaking. The majority of the respondents 118(78.7%) were literate and 32(21.3%) were illiterate. Most respondents were belonging to urban areas 91(60.7%) while 59(39.3%). Of the 150

respondents majority of the respondents were doing an ordinary job in government sector 77 (51.3%). The majority of the respondents (93.3%) monthly income were less than 10000/- PK rupees (table 1).

Table 1 Demographic information of the respondents (N=150)

Variables	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Male	50(33.3%)
Female	100(66.7%)
Age	
T the 18-25	59(39.3%)
26-40	72(48.0%)
41-60	17(11.3%)
60 and above	2(1.4%)
Ethnicity	
Urdu	122(81.3%)
Punjabi	28(18.7%)
Education	
Literate	118(78.7%)
Illiterate	32(21.3%)
Residential Area	
Rural	59(39.3%)
Urban	91(60.7%)
Occupation	
Government Employee	77(51.3%)
Private Employee	30(20.0%)
Business	11(7.3%)
Unemployment	9(6.0%)
Student	23(15.4%)
Monthly Income	
<5000	65(43.3%)
5000-10000	75(50.0%)
11000-15000	10(6.7%)

Of the 150 respondents majority of the respondents 99(66.0%) were not having their own property in the district, while 51(34.0%) were having their own property. The question was asked to the respondents regarding the celebration of their religious ceremonies freely, the greater part of the respondents 118 (78.7%) response "yes" while 32(21.3%) were not freely celebrate their religious ceremonies. The majority of the respondents were living for the generations, so the other religious community members participate in their joys and happiness 107 (71.3%) while 43 (28.7%) were responding that other religious community members not participated. The respondents faced discrimination at their job places 85(56.7%) while 65(43.3%) were not faced any discrimination in their workplace. Of the 150 respondents majority of the respondents 115 (76.7%) replied that the Government is not taking interest to solve their issues. Most of the respondents were explaining that they compelled to convert Islam 82 (54.7%) and 68(45.3%) replied never other community persons they forced to change the religion. Respondents 80(53.3%) were expressed that due to religious identity they faced obstacle to get admission in academic institutions while 70(46.7%) were not faced any obstacle at the time of admission. The majority of the respondents was having their national identity card and they were registered for the casting of their votes (table 2).

Sr.#	Statements	Yes	No
1	Do you have any property in your residual District	51(34.0%)	99(66.0%)
2	Do you freely celebrate your religious ceremonies	118(78.7%)	32(21.3%)
3	Do you have freely worship	122(81.3%)	28(18.7%)
4	Do the other religious community members participate in your joys and grief	107(71.3%)	43(28.7%)

5	Do you face any discrimination in job opportunities	85(56.7%)	65(43.3%)
6	Do you think that Goveernment is taking interest to solve your issues	35(23.3%)	115(76.7%)
7	Have you ever been discrimated at your workplace	63(42.0%)	87(58.0%)
8	Was every suggestion made to convert to Islam	82(54.7%)	68(45.3%)
9	Due to religious identity is an obstacle to get admission in the school/college/university	80(53.3%)	70(46.7%)
10	Do you hold a computerized national identification card	109(72.7%)	41(27.3%)
11	Are you register voter	116(77.3%)	34(22.7%)

5. DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to examine social and economic condition of minorities and the role of Government for the protection of minorities in South Punjab. Of the 150 respondents two minority groups Hindus and christian were recruited in this study similar studies were done in Pakistan by the (Jivan, Jacob, 2012) that 50% respondents were from Punjab and 50% from Sindh with 46% Hindi and 53% being Christian women. The study respondents were belonging to the Punjabi and Urdu speaking background likewise in another study, 47% were Punjabi speaking 11% Sindhi, 11% Marwai, 8% Urdu and 23% were speaking other languages. The majority of respondents were discriminated in their educational Institutions. Of the 150 respondents, 40% were expressed that they faced discrimination from their teachers on account of their religious identity. The respondents indicated that due to the limited choice the vast majority of non-Muslim students are obliged to take Islamic studies as the only other choice available is the subject of Ethics. Religious discrimination has been experienced as hate speech, work related offenses, be it working on a holidays, refusal of a holidays, low wages, no increments, no promotions, terminations and transfers. Minority women are compelled to go outside and work in the field for the basic needs of their children and the household and their husbands be drug addicts. Due to the inequality, lack of opportunities in landholding or business, the minorities mostly work for low wages in hospitals, petrol pumps. Minorities faced systemic oppression in both the private and public spheres in three levels. The society is dominated at the all levels be its caste system, diverse environment in the society made living difficult for minority as sub-cultures. Several Islamic customs and traditions are becoming part of minorities' cultural life unknowingly (assimilation effect).

6. CONCLUSION

The life of the minority in South Punjab, Pakistan is truly an experience of living on the margins. Poorly education or a fairly low literacy ratio, low socioeconomic condition, which such factors are addressed in all urgency, sincerity and seriousness by all the stakeholders. The present condition of the minority requires enormous improvements, however there is no substantial evidence to quote of the efforts made by the Government of Pakistan in this regard. The educational institutions should be free from prejudice, bigotry and discrimination. The Government of Pakistan should take initiative to provide the equal job opportunities. The state and the political parties must ensure adequate representation of minority people in the Provincial and National assemblies especially for the women. Education is the key to bringing behavioral changes so the Pakistani Government should educate citizens on equality basis. Hindu marriages must be registered to resolve their social, legal and family problems. Scholarships should be provided to the minorities for studies. The Government and non government organizations must collect the data of minority at the national, provincial and district levels and upgrade their status. Family laws must be enacted for Christian, Hindu, Sikh and other minority for marriage registration and other important safeguards and human rights. Minority people should be uplifted by the Government and non government organizations or create special opportunities and programs for the soft business loans, trainings, enhancement of training skills and employment.

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