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Tolerance on Trial: Unearthing the Determinants of Political Tolerance among Youth

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ABSTRACT

This research embarked on an investigation of the factors influencing political tolerance amongst young adults, specifically in the District of Sargodha. The primary focus of this study was to identify both individual and environmental variables associated with political tolerance in this demographic. The exploration scrutinized political tolerance in Sargodha's youth through the lens of various political and socio-economic determinants, including factors such as sexuality, educational attainment, political allegiance, and political mobilization. Furthermore, the study also assessed the influence of social capital, personality traits, and exposure to social media on the political tolerance of young inhabitants in the District of Sargodha. The research employed a quantitative methodology. Data collection was executed via a survey method, with a sample size of 431 students, derived using a multi-stage sampling approach from the target population. Insights gathered from the study reveal that a significant portion of students refrained from engaging in political dialogues with peers who share similar views or from participating in public assemblies organized by their respective political affiliations. Interestingly, these students prefer to utilize social media platforms as a conduit to express their political allegiance and opinions on pertinent political issues. The students also exhibited a substantial understanding and respect for varying political beliefs and ethnic backgrounds, asserting the importance of everyone's right to hold and express their viewpoints. This recognition and appreciation of the cultural diversity of political perspectives amongst different ethnic groups were prevalent amongst the majority of youth participants. Most notably, the consensus amongst these

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young adults demonstrated an acceptance, appreciation, and respect for diversity, thereby fostering an environment conducive to political tolerance within their society.

Keywords: *Political Tolerance Political Diversity, Political Loyalty, Youth, Political Mobilization*

Introduction

Political tolerance may be conceptualized as an individual's willingness to uphold political liberties for entities whose constituents adhere to ideologies and lifestyles that another individual may find objectionable (Stouffer, 1955; Marquart-Pyatt et al., 2007). In contrast, political intolerance denotes a refusal to grant basic or legal freedoms to political dissidents. Instances of significant extremism, even in the most democratic nations, have been recorded, particularly during periods of crisis or danger (Merolla & Zechmeister, 2009). The situation is expected to exacerbate in developing nations such as Pakistan. In light of its paramount importance for enduring peace (Heyd, 2003), political tolerance has been identified as a vital factor for human progress, making it a focal point of concern in recent times (Gerber et al., 2010; Sullivan et al, 1993). This importance extends across culturally diverse and Universalist communities worldwide (Saleem, 2016).

Political tolerance can also be portrayed as an individual's preparedness to entertain differing viewpoints and opinions, which they might disagree with and reject (Oskarsson & Widmalm, 2016). This includes entertaining ideas that could potentially undermine one's lifestyle (Vuji, 1995; Sullivan et al, 1979; Crick, 1973), which is viewed as a desirable characteristic trait (Knutson, 1972) and holds potential benefits for the political sphere (Sullivan et al., 1981).

Tolerance constitutes a foundational element of a democratic republic and consensus. This idea is echoed in the United Nations Charter's Preamble (UN 1945), which emphasizes the aspiration of its member countries to "exercise tolerance and live together peacefully as good neighbors." Subsequently, UNESCO delineated tolerance as encompassing "empathy, understanding, and recognition of the myriad cultures, modes of expression, and ways of being human in our world... Tolerance is the capacity to discover peace in the midst of conflict" (UNESCO, 1995).

In their analysis of 20th-century research on political tolerance, Sullivan and Transue (1999) identified four principal predictors. Firstly, education plays a crucial role in fostering tolerance (McClosky & Zaller, 1984); educated individuals tend to respect the civil freedoms of opposing factions (McClosky & Brill, 1983). Such individuals are typically politically active and well-educated elites (Sniderman et al., 1996). Secondly, individuals who internalize democratic principles (Nunn et al., 1978) tend to form more consistent judgments (Prothro & Grigg, 1960). Thirdly, threat perception is a predictor of intolerance (Sullivan et al., 1982); the more one perceives a group as a threat, the less tolerant one becomes (Sullivan et al., 1982). Finally, psychological traits like flexibility, self-esteem, openness to new experiences, and trust have been identified as significant predictors of tolerance.

As delineated by Gerson (2002), political tolerance can be examined along two dimensions: demographic and psychological. However, psychological variables are

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considered more crucial for gauging democratic resilience than demographic ones. Yet, Gerson criticizes past research on political tolerance for emphasizing psychological and demographic factors over cultural and social factors that shape tolerant and intolerant behaviors and attitudes. Existing research on political tolerance has overlooked the connection between culture, social interaction, and individuality. Should such a correlation exist, the focus of political tolerance should shift from the individual to the cultural and social contexts.

While the value of tolerance within societies has been discussed, studies have primarily investigated methods to augment tolerance among citizens, particularly in Pakistan. This paper seeks to fill this gap in the research by focusing on the factors that shape political tolerance and intolerance. The study's objective is to evaluate the political tolerance among the youth of Sargodha, considering the role that political and socioeconomic elements, such as gender, educational level, class, political affiliation, and political mobilization, play in this context. This section will review the concept of tolerance, notions of political tolerance, and factors influencing political tolerance in the Pakistani society.

Problem Statement

While a multitude of research has delved into the significance of societal tolerance and its influencing factors, the present study strives to address a lacuna in the existing literature by scrutinizing the elements that shape political tolerance or intolerance among the youth in Pakistan (Ali et al., 2021; Yasmin et al., 2020; Mahar and Malik, 2021). Factors such as gender, educational attainment, political alignment, and participation in electoral activities are considered instrumental in evaluating the degree of sociopolitical tolerance among the youth population of Sargodha.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of Individual factors on political in/tolerance among youth?
2. What are the contextual determinants of political in/tolerance among youth.?
3. What is the relationship between ethnic identity/affiliation and political intolerance?

Research Objectives

1. To explore the role of Individual factors on political tolerance among youth.
2. To examine the relationship between education and political tolerance
3. To find out the impact of personality types of individuals on political tolerance among youth.
4. To explore the role of social factors on political tolerance among youth
5. To explore the impact of social capital on political tolerance among youth.
6. To find out how exposure to social media affects the level of political tolerance among youth.

Significance of the Study

Political tolerance is increasingly recognised as essential to human advancement (Sullivan et al., 1993; Gerber et al., 2010; Saleem, 2016; Oskarsson & Widmalm, 2016) and its role in sustaining peace across culturally diverse and universalist communities worldwide (Heyd, 2003). Political tolerance enhances society (Saleem, 2016; Sumon, 2015; Yusuf, 2013). Thus, several factors affecting political tolerance have been studied.

Societal structures (Stouffer, 1955; Nelson et al., 1997; Ehman, 1980; Vuji, 1995; Mutz, 2001) and academic institutions (Vuji, 1995; Lawrence, 1976; Nunn et al., 1978; Yusuf, 2013; Sumon, 2015) are major contributors in political tolerance. Democratic institutions may also affect tolerance (Ehman, 1980; Sullivan et al., 1981; Vuji, 1995; Chzhen, 2013). Despite widespread discussion of cultural tolerance, academic research has focused on ways to increase tolerance, particularly in Pakistan. This study examines political tolerance and intolerance factors to fill this knowledge gap. This study examines Sargodha youth's political tolerance based on sexual orientation, education, political affiliation, and mobilization.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework used for this study is shown below. As it can be seen, there are three main independent variables i.e., Social Capital, Personality Type, and Exposure to social media; and dependent variable is Political Tolerance.

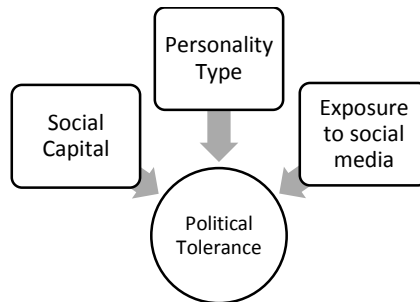


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a significant association between education and political tolerance.
2. There is a significant association between social capital and political tolerance.
3. Exposure to social media is negatively associated with political tolerance

Literature Review

Human tolerance is generally perceived as the willingness to extend certain human rights to individuals considered undesirable. Immanuel (2008) characterizes political intolerance as a deficit of respect, endorsement, and empathy towards others when they exercise their rights and freedoms unrestrainedly. Political intolerance manifests when an entity or individual prohibits others from expressing, acting, or believing according to their convictions, thereby often leading to prejudice based on political identity.

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Political intolerance has emerged as one of the most extensively examined themes in contemporary political science (Gibson, 2006). The appraisal of tolerance for others' civil liberties is tied to the endorsement of fundamental democratic "rules of the game" that necessitate tolerance (Mutz, 2001). However, the appropriate methodology to measure tolerance remains a subject of debate (Gibson and Bingham, 1982; Gibson, 1992, 2005), with scholars questioning if the numerous ways tolerance is assessed influence its purported determinants (Mondak & Sanders, 2003, 2005). Gibson (1992) contests this assertion, at least in relation to intolerance. Stouffer's comprehensive study on political tolerance in the United States in 1954 serves as a benchmark in this field.

The concept of tolerance has been a cornerstone of philosophical discourse from the era of Marcus Aurelius in the 2nd century, as enshrined in his work, *The Meditations* (Casaubon, 1692), to the present day. Philosophers have promulgated tolerance as a mechanism to bridge disparities among diverse groups, especially those of different religions. This predates the adoption of tolerance as a governing principle by contemporary democracies. The notion of tolerance, as a counter to oppression and tyranny, has been espoused long before it became en vogue to utilize the term "tolerance". During Europe's tumultuous 16th century, scholars began to introduce the term tolerance in their writings to combat religious persecution and heretical punishment (Goudsblom, 2007).

Tolerance and intolerance encapsulate the dynamics of human interactions (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999), and both imply an absence of social justice, necessitating a power imbalance among social factions (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Tolerance is irrelevant if a group's societal role is uncontested. The existence of a "social hierarchy" of groups, in terms of their acceptance or rejection, is evident (Hagendoorn, 1995). To understand variations in intolerance levels and shifts in the targets of intolerance over time, it is essential to acknowledge the uneven power dynamics underpinning (in) tolerance. As expected, research on (in) tolerance reflects these trends. 20th-century tolerance studies were primarily concerned with ethnic minorities and issues of prejudice. Post the September 11, 2001, terrorist incidents in New York, Muslims and Islam emerged as the new focus of anti-Muslim prejudice (Sullivan and Hendriks, 2009). Consequently, the political discord and intergroup relations within societies are inevitably mirrored in social studies, with the peril of becoming redundant.

The degree of tolerance or intolerance in a society or government is not merely a function of interpersonal social relations but also reflective of the broader societal or governmental context. Tolerance is predominantly interpreted in the light of liberal democratic theory (Gibson, 2006). Given democratic tenets such as equality of individuals, direct democracy, and protection of minorities' rights, tolerance is inextricably tied to democratic nations that have institutionalized these principles (Gibson, 2006; Sullivan et al., 1982; Walzer, 1997). A distinction exists between tolerating, which is an interpersonal process of enduring dislikes, and toleration, which is a process of accepting dislikes (Vogt, 1997). Toleration pertains to societal rules and principles established by governments and institutions to reduce inequality and prohibit specific infringements on individual liberties. In essence, tolerance has a societal aspect; it encompasses laws, institutions, and concepts of equality and fairness in society and governance.

Mutz's (2001) 'democratic rules of the game' encapsulate what Vogt refers to as toleration. Rather than a specific measure of tolerance, a spectrum exists within societies (Vogt, 1997). Vogt (1997) posits six societal conditions that foster tolerance: a diverse population; free markets; representative government; uncertainty about epistemology; predominance of rationality over tradition; and a multitude of skilled professions. These conditions make tolerance more likely, but they do not guarantee it. The connection between public tolerance and tolerance as a societal attribute is often alluded to, but empirical evidence remains inconclusive (Sullivan & Transue, 1999).

Material and Methods

This research, based on the positivist paradigm, aimed to ascertain the factors that influence political tolerance among young individuals residing in the Sargodha district. According to Ponterotto (2005), positivism utilises a hypothetico-deductive approach to substantiate a pre-existing hypothesis, typically articulated in quantitative terms. This methodology facilitates the deduction of functional associations between causal factors (independent variables) and outcome variables (dependent variables). The research design employed a realistic ontology that is based on the existence of the material world and recognizes the presence of cause and effect relationships (Ahmed, 2008).

The present study employed a cross-sectional design, wherein the outcomes of interest were measured concurrently among the participants. Consistent with the quantitative research approach, data was gathered by means of a survey. The data collection was conducted at two educational institutions, namely the University of Sargodha and the University of Lahore (Sargodha Campus), both situated in the city of Sargodha.

Using a simple random sampling method, two faculties, namely Arts & Humanities and Science, were chosen from each institution. Subsequently, specific departments within these faculties were picked. A random selection was made, comprising an additional 5% of the overall strength of each department, to approach the prior participants. A survey was conducted, consisting of individual administration of questionnaires, with a total of 431 students participating. In order to accommodate students who were unable to be contacted in person, the questionnaire was made available via a Google survey.

The data that was gathered was subjected to processing and analysis through the utilization of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The replies were subjected to descriptive analyses, wherein mean scores were computed to ascertain the criterion. The ultimate instrument utilized in this research was determined to be on an interval scale, encompassing a spectrum from very low to exceedingly high.

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Hypothesis Testing

Table 1. *There is a significant association between education and political tolerance*

Correlations			Educational Level	Political Tolerance
Spearman's rho	Educational Level	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.195**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	431	431
	Political Tolerance	Correlation Coefficient	.195**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	431	431

Data shows variables correlate positively. Education fosters political tolerance. Education fosters political tolerance. Education and political tolerance are strongly linked, supporting our alternative hypothesis. Research contradicts this association. Political tolerance and education were not linked by Sullivan et al. (1982). Schweck (2019) found no correlation between education and political tolerance. Between the 1950s and 1970s, society and institutions, particularly education, made Americans more tolerant, according to Nunn et al. (1978) and Davis (1975). Education improved American tolerance, Nunn and colleagues said. Education fosters rationality, civil liberties, and democracy, they say. According to Avery (2001), education enhances youth political tolerance. Political tolerance requires political education, according to Mahar & Malik (2021). Thus, educated elites accept competing political views. Martens (2012). Citizenship education fosters tolerance, multiculturalism, and democracy (Kuran, 2014).

Table 2. *There is a significant association between social capital and political tolerance*

Correlations			Political Tolerance	Social Capital
Spearman's rho	Political Tolerance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.599**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	431	431
	Social Capital	Correlation Coefficient	.599**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	431	431

The findings of above table suggests that as respondents' levels of education grow, so will their political tolerance. As a result, our alternative hypothesis has been validated, leading us to the conclusion that social capital and political tolerance are significantly linked. The more an individual's social capital, the more tolerant he or she becomes. Multiple research has shown a correlation between social capital and political tolerance (Cigler 1991; Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Finkel, Sigelman

and Humphries 1999; Sullivan and Transue 1999; Cigler and Joslyn 2002). Other studies, however, found no correlation between social capital and political tolerance (Crowley and Walsh, 2021; Setterfield, 2020).

Table 3. *Exposure to social media is negatively associated with political tolerance*

Correlations			Political Tolerance	Exposure to social media
Spearman's rho	Political Tolerance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.065
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.177
		N	431	431
	Exposure to social media	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.177	.
		N	431	431

There is a weak negative relationship between social media exposure and political tolerance. Social media exposure lowers political tolerance. A P-value of 0.177 indicates statistical insignificance. Our alternative hypothesis is erroneous; thus social media exposure does not affect political tolerance. Multiple studies support comparable findings. Khan and Shahbaz (2015) say social media strongly affects netizens' social and political development, especially young people. Karamat and Farooq (2016) found that Pakistani social media users face serious political consequences. Students use online forums to share knowledge and opinions on politics (Arshad & Hassan, 2014). Young Pakistanis prefer Facebook to Twitter for political discourse. Pakistan's political dynamics are influenced by its second-largest youth population, behind Yemen (Ittefaq & Iqbal, 2018). Pakistani political parties have aggressively used social media since last two decades, changing Pakistani politics (Eijaz, 2013).

Discussions

This study analyses the association between political tolerance and social capital, personality type, and exposure to social media. The results of the study reveal that young people in Sargodha have a high degree of political tolerance for differing opinions. Possible contributing factors include, but are not limited to, differences in sexual orientation, educational attainment, race, party membership, and political mobilization among young people. The majority of students (76%) agree that they feel that other political groups also have a right to hold public meetings to disseminate their ideas. They (76%) also feel that community participation is necessary for promoting democratic values in their society and that's how multiple political parties can peacefully co-exist in the same society. However, literature has emphasized the significance of political and civic involvement in raising more tolerant people, since these activities expose people to a wider range of political ideas and encourage them to seek compromise to settle disagreements (Hiskey et al., 2013).

The majority of students (70%) agree that regardless of their political ideology I will cooperate with my political rival if they are working for the betterment of society. The students (57%) disagree that they do not like to share their political views with

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other people and 62% of students disagree that they do not feel comfortable when other people share their political views with them. The majority of students (79%) agree that the freedom of expression of every person must be respected regardless of the fact they agree or disagree with your political opinion. This is consistent with the research of experts like Stouffer (1955) and Bobo and Licari (1989), who found that tolerance rises along with educational attainment. One possible explanation for this pattern is that persons who have had a higher level of education have had more opportunities to interact with and learn about people and cultures different from their own (Peck, 2016).

The research participants were of the view that other political parties have legal rights to organize public meetings where their members can voice their ideas. Students said that intolerance in politics should not be condoned since individuals should be permitted to hold and publicly express any political views they choose. In addition, they contended that people had the freedom to express their political views without fear of retribution. A strong democratic system or tolerant society requires citizens who can appreciate one another's political views, even if they disagree with their own (Marquart-Pyatt & Paxton, 2007).

The majority of respondents were loud about their political views on Facebook and other social media platforms. Internet prevalence in Pakistan is significantly lower than in other Asian nations, although things are beginning to improve. Even though just 19% of the population in Pakistan has access to the Internet, the extensive use of social and new media in domains as diverse as politics, healthcare, and education has prompted research on the impact of such media (Ittefaq & Iqbal, 2018). It urges residents to engage in the next national elections by offering a place for their opinions on the numerous issues facing Pakistani society (Ahmad & Sheikh, 2013). College students' offline political engagement is favorably connected with their political engagement on social networking platforms like Facebook. Due to their exposure to this social media site, students at Punjab University have become more politically involved and have evolved a new viewpoint on political issues, according to the study's findings (Zaheer, 2016).

According to past research, using social media to gather knowledge can lead to greater political engagement (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2012). Social media serve the same objective as conventional media: to inform and amuse its users. While the majority of social media users do not intend to provide valuable information with their posts, likely, some of their interactions do so (Kim, Chen, & Gil de Zuniga, 2013). Those who are more engaged in forming relationships on social media have larger networks and are therefore more likely to encounter political content (Chan, 2016). Due to this, the study did not focus on how frequently people shared specific types of content via social media. While there is a theoretical separation between the interactive, expressive, and informative applications of social media, there is substantial overlap in practice. Numerous social media applications raise worries regarding their effect on political participation (Boulianne, 2015; Skoric, Zhu, Goh, & Pang, 2016).

Conclusion

Briefly, this study revealed that the youth of Sargodha is tolerant of divergent political perspectives. This is due in part to the influence of traits such as sexual orientation, degree of education, race, identification with a political party, and political mobilization. This study examines how factors such as education level, personality, and social media activity influence the political tolerance of individuals. Studies indicate that the majority of students do not discuss their political ideas, attend public events sponsored by the political party they support or maintain frequent touch with party members. However, it is not unlawful for other political parties to organize demonstrations where their members can express their views. Students argue that intolerance in politics is not tolerated since people should be allowed to have and publicly express whatever political beliefs they want. Moreover, they argued that people have the right to express their political opinions without repercussions for others. It was acknowledged that a healthy democratic system benefits from citizens who can accept, appreciate and respect one another's political opinions even when they differ from their own.

Recommendations

Following are the recommendations based on the findings that have been presented below.

1. Tolerance education must be made as a part of curriculum so that it can be taught and promoted at all the educational institutions
2. The importance of political tolerance must be promoted through seminars, workshops etc.
3. Community participation must be encouraged in order to promote political tolerance.
4. All political parties must ensure that their social media accounts must not be used to promote political intolerance, hate speech and negative propaganda against their opponents.

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