YOUTH CAN

VOICES OF PAKISTANI YOUTH

Lessons for Civil Society in the Development of Effective Counter-Narrative Campaigns

Jasmeet Sahotay, Sarah Ashraf, Zain Hakim

CONTENTS

YOUTHCAN

The Youth Civil Activism Network (YouthCAN) was founded in 2015 and works across the globe to empower young activists to challenge hate and polarisation, prevent extremism and promote peace. It fosters a global community of young activists created to understand, enable and amplify positive grassroots efforts against violent extremism and hate. By providing training, support and opportunities to act, YouthCAN enables young activists to find their voice and take action to help build a more peaceful world.

While it was created first and foremost to support grassroots action, YouthCAN also works to promote greater inclusion of youth in policy-making. In 2018 YouthCAN began working with the Strong Cities Network, another ISD Global programme, to better integrate young people into municipal approaches to countering hate and extremism through a new programme called Young Cities.

To help enhance the role of young people in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) globally, YouthCAN offers activists:

- Access to a community of over 1,800 activists, like-minded young people who are working to promote peace in their own communities and beyond the world

- Research and resources to inform and enable their activism, including up-to-date information about new trends in extremism, technology and media, as well as opportunities for young activists

- Holistic capacity-building programmes that offer a hands-on approach to training; these programmes not only increase an activist's knowledge and skills, but create opportunities for them to gain real-world experience by managing their own initiatives, building their local network and connecting with important stakeholders in their community

- Seed funding and campaign support to enable innovative P/CVE activities that are truly youth-led; from 2018 to 2019, YouthCAN awarded over £50,000 in grants to youth activists and facilitated the delivery of 29 community-based campaigns in Kenya, Senegal, India, Pakistan, Lebanon, and across Europe. These campaigns addressed challenges that young people faced in their communities and were delivered through a range of online and offline mediums, including: art, performance, research and dialogue.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, The Institute for Strategic Dialogue's (ISD's) Youth Civil Activism Network (YouthCAN) conducted eight focus groups with 70 young people in Islamabad, Pakistan, to explore how youth in the country understand extremism and hate speech, and how these issues affect their daily lives.

An investigation into the nexus between youth and extremism is particularly pertinent in Pakistan, where 55% of its estimated 207 million people are below the age of 25.[1] While the vast majority of Pakistani youth will never engage in any form of extremism, perpetrators of terrorist attacks have been almost exclusively young males in their teens or early twenties.[2]

There are a range of factors that make this particular demographic vulnerable, including an under-regulated ulama (scholarly class) system of religious education[3] that enables extremists to indoctrinate youth with their own interpretations of Islam; a lack of economic opportunities for young men;[4] and a growing sense of frustration among young people set against the backdrop of a state-driven Islamisation of nationhood in the country and a resentment of Western foreign policy in Pakistan and its neighbouring countries.[5]

Extremist groups have proven adept at exploiting these, and other, vulnerabilities through targeted messaging and recruitment campaigns. As a report from Bytes for All on the narratives of extremism in Pakistan puts it, the 'government is not doing enough, and the disseminators of hatred and extremism are far ahead in propagating their message'.[6]

In the digital age, extremist narratives spread quickly as their messages have the potential to reach many more people than in the past, can be targeted specifically to the audience that would be most vulnerable, and can be disseminated and adapted in real time.[7] Notoriously, the Islamic State showed the extent of this threat, adeptly combining effective media use with a narrative that can offer a 'participatory identity' to draw sympathy from its target audience.[8] Equally, therefore, in order to develop counter-narrative campaigns to counter or prevent violent extremism, civic actors must effectively employ a strategic approach: gather the perceptions of youth, draw on their own notions of their identity, and use social media to reflect the patterns of online behaviour of Pakistani youth.

To counter extremist narratives among vulnerable young people effectively, it is vital to understand how youth understand extremism and hate speech: how they define it, whether they encounter it in their lives, and whom they see as responsible for it. It is equally important to appreciate how notions of their own identity shape their perceptions, and what their media consumption patterns are, to provide a set of lessons for the development of counter-narratives in the country. It is, therefore, vital to speak with youth.

Although this study builds its recommendations on a relatively small sample for this study, YouthCAN decided to speak with young people directly through targeted focus groups that would allow for open and frank discussion in a safe space where anonymity could be guaranteed. In this way, any answers that the participants provided could accurately reflect their 'lived experiences' and help shape a common understanding of the issues.

Drawing from these focus groups and extensive desk research, YouthCAN compared youth perceptions with publicly available literature to establish ten lessons for activists, civil society organisations and others when implementing counter-narrative campaigns in Pakistan. The lesson structure has been broadly categorised in line with the methodology for creating counter-narratives that YouthCAN developed 2018.[9]

TOP-LINE FINDINGS

Youth participants' understanding of the definitions of extremism and hate speech varied across focus groups, with madrassah-educated participants offering definitions of extremism that characterise it as harbouring anti-state sentiments.

Most of the youth who took part in the focus groups had not been subjected to direct forms of extremism or hate speech in their daily lives. But they understood that minority groups – such as the Ahmadi community and women – experience hate and extremism with more frequency and intensity than other groups.

Only female focus group participants shared experiences of being directly subjected to extremism or hate speech. They emphasised the importance of their feminine identity and the need for female empowerment.

Youth identity in Pakistan is fluid, despite state narratives centred on Islamic nationalism. Most participants did not define themselves by stolid representations of simply being Pakistani Muslims, and were proud of the country's diversity.

Some madrassahs have been exploited by bad actors, who spread extremist, hateful or sectarian narratives among students. Most participants of the madrassah-educated focus groups were deeply troubled by these threats in their educational institutions.

Facebook is very popular among Pakistan's urban youth and offers a valuable platform for connecting them with different young audiences, though proliferation is still limited in much of the country and among women.

Youth participants have encountered the most misinformation on Facebook, and perceived it to be a platform where hate speech and extremism are rife.

Extremist groups are effective at deploying strategies that exploit cultural expressions that are preferred by Pakistani youth, such as qawwalis and nasheeds. These cultural strategies could be valuable when crafting counter-narratives.

Extremist groups have also overcome low literacy rates among some demographics and linguistic variation by deploying visual and audio content.

Young people view the central government and news media as complicit in the spread of extremism and hate speech. Therefore, these potentially valuable allies in the fight against extremism could actually hinder attempts to connect with some young people.

METHODOLOGY

In order to gain insights into the experiences and attitudes of Pakistani youth on extremism and hate speech, YouthCAN adopted a qualitative methodology. Marshall and Rossman describe this approach as 'pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people'.[10]
YouthCAN's research sought answers to the following questions:

- How do young people in Pakistan define, understand and experience extremism and hate speech in their daily lives?

- How do national and religious narratives surrounding Pakistani identity affect those of young people in Pakistan?

- To what extent do Pakistani youth experience extremism and hate speech on social media?

- What is the role of pop culture and cultural narratives in normalising extremism or hate speech in Pakistan?

- What role do Pakistani youth feel the government, political parties and media play in contributing to these issues in Pakistan?

A civil society organisation, HIVE Pakistan,[11] helped to organise a series of eight focus groups made up of individuals living in the Islamabad Capital Territory, bringing together a total of 70 young people. There were:

- two focus groups totalling 22 males, aged 22–26, who are or were educated at public and private schools

- two focus groups totalling 20 males, aged 18–21, from the same educational background

- two focus groups totalling 14 females, aged 18–26, from the same educational background

- one focus group of 9 males, aged 22–26, who are or were educated at madrassahs (religious seminaries, usually attached to a mosque)

- one focus group of 5 males, aged 18–21, from the same educational background.

To facilitate the focus groups, an extensive discussion guide was developed collaboratively between ISD and HIVE with an emphasis on sharing experience and perception. Questions were open-ended to encourage participants to express themselves in their own words. To ensure participants' safety and security, all responses were anonymised and only invited participants were allowed to attend the event. HIVE staff oversaw recruitment, while a research team from ISD facilitated the discussion. Two audio recordings and two transcriptions were taken to guarantee that discussion could be accurately and faithfully analysed.

To account for different rates of literacy, data collection relied solely on oral discussion rather than written or digital tools. Some terms were simplified for greater understanding – for example, the terms 'disinformation' and 'misinformation' were replaced with the perhaps more recognisable term 'fake news'.

LESSONS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTER-NARRATIVES IN PAKISTAN

Counter-narratives are an important tool in countering hate speech and extremism, and engaging with youth. They enable practitioners to address the drivers and motivations of hate speech and extremism by dispelling myths, challenging stereotypes and providing positive alternatives to extremist propaganda or to delegitimise and deconstruct the narratives on which they are based.

In Pakistan, certain extremist groups such as the Islamic State[12] are very effective at persuading young people of their ideologies, because they play on complex identities, use social media in a way that young people understand, exploit a lack of education or digital literacy, take advantage of government missteps and employ narratives that reflect otherwise mainstream norms and values. In creating counter-narratives that address this effort, it is critical, therefore, to work with young Pakistanis, both to understand their perceptions and to include their insights in the design process. They can provide on-the-ground experiences, understanding and knowledge of how and why extremism and hate speech affect them.

In the Pakistani context, while exploring young people's insights, it is important also to gauge what identity signifiers – the self-attributed markers that define them – are particularly salient, as well as what media they use and consume, especially in the digital realm.

This report ties together young Pakistani people's experiences of hate and extremism – with contextual research and questions put to young people in Pakistan, centred around their views on identity, media consumption patterns and perceptions of the state and national news media. This research has resulted in a series of ten lessons for creating more effective counter-narrative campaigns that will help practitioners better understand the perceptions, media habits and experiences of Pakistani youth in relation to hate speech and extremism. The lessons have been modelled according to the methodology for creating counter-narratives, as developed by ISD's YouthCAN project in 2016.[13]

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

LESSON ONE

Young people have a limited, and simplified, understanding of hate speech and extremism. Civil society organisations should work to help youth build more nuanced understandings so they can identify, and potentially help counter, hate and extremism.

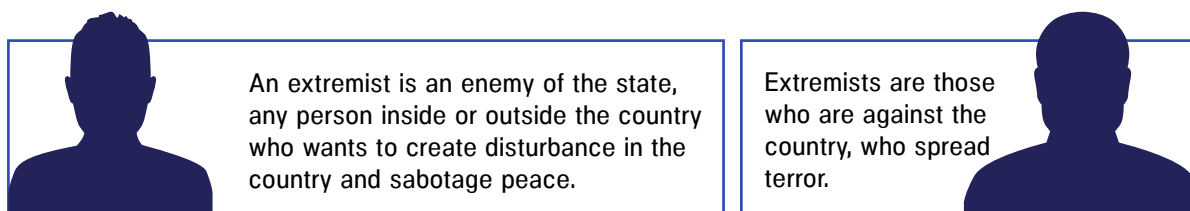| ✹ EXTREMISM	✐ HATE SPEECH
ISD defines extremism as: 'the advocacy of a system of belief that posits the superiority and dominance of one "in-group" over all "out-groups", propagating a dehumanising "othering" mind-set that is antithetical to the universal application of human rights. Extremist groups advocate, through explicit and subtler means, a systemic change in society that reflects their world view.'[14]	Defining 'hate speech' is more challenging, and its conception varies across countries, social media companies or international institutions.[15] The working definition applied to this research is the general presumption that most definitions envision a willing expression of hostility towards a certain group, minority or gender based on a set of xenophobic, racist, sexist or ableist values or attitudes.

It is important to gauge how youth define the concepts of 'extremism' and 'hate speech' before gauging how they understand how the issues affect their communities. By doing so, research can contextualise the experiences they share according to their frames of reference – thus enabling more nuance when developing a series of lessons for counter-narratives.

All the young participants in all the focus groups agreed that hate speech and extremism were important concepts and that understanding them within the Pakistani context was necessary. However, when asked to explain these complex concepts, most of them struggled to do so.

Some participants defined 'hate speech' as 'bullying', being 'hurtful' or 'hurting someone by words', but most were unable to capture some essential characteristics of hate speech, including anti-minority prejudice, racism or xenophobia, or attitudes reflecting in-group versus out-group thinking. Only a few participants gave more accurate definitions: 'attacking someone's background – their ethnicity, their religion', 'bashing [someone's] belief', and 'disrespecting diversity'.

Similarly, most participants offered over-simplified definitions of 'extremism', such as 'overreacting', 'being intense' or 'focus[ing] a lot on one thing', while just a few captured the weight of the concept, explaining it as, 'being inhumane', 'fanaticism' and 'religious or political intolerance'.

While there was little consensus between any of the focus groups about extremism and hate speech, it is interesting to note that the greatest differences could be seen between madrassah-educated students and others. In the two madrassah-educated groups, participants offered definitions that were characterised by their relation to the state. For example, 'extremism' was seen by some as harbouring treacherous or anti-state sentiments:

An extremist is an enemy of the state, any person inside or outside the country who wants to create disturbance in the country and sabotage peace.

Extremists are those who are against the country, who spread terror.

One consequence of this limited understanding is that the participants often failed to identify extremism or hate speech accurately in later discussions. Participants were more likely to use the term extremism too liberally, describing certain organisations or individuals as being extremist when research could not substantiate the claim. Conversely, participants were likely to under-identify hate speech; in some cases, participants would describe clear examples of hate speech, but failed to identify them as such.

The findings suggest that Pakistani youth have a limited or over-simplified grasp of these two key issues that affect them, as demonstrated in background research. This could pose a challenge to campaigns that try to address them or educate youth on their dangers. It is important, therefore, to build educational components into campaigns that enhance young people's knowledge and understanding of hate speech and extremism, in order to contribute to their resilience and to augment the role that young people can play as partners in P/CVE efforts.

Most of the youth who took part in the focus groups had not been subjected to direct forms of extremism or hate speech in their daily lives. But they understood that minority groups –such as the Ahmadi community and women– experience hate and extremism with more frequency and intensity than other groups.

LESSON TWO

Counter-narratives should draw on the keen awareness that Pakistani youth have regarding how religious groups are differently impacted by extremism and hate speech. They should represent the ethnic, religious and gender plurality of Pakistan.

Most of the youth who took part in the focus groups had not been subjected to direct forms of extremism or hate speech in their daily lives. Instead, many were exposed to it indirectly; some had been witness to it in their homes or at school:

> We see extremism at family gatherings over political and religious debates, for example against Hindus, Indians.
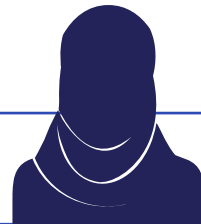
> We had a teacher here in Islamabad. There was a Christian boy in class and the teacher would hate on him a lot. Once he was talking to his friend during an Islamiyat class, and [the teacher] slapped him and kicked him out of the class, saying that a Christian shouldn't be here.

It was clear that these exposures had left an impression on focus group participants of the ways in which minority groups were impacted by extremism or hate speech.

In Pakistan, many cultural norms – stereotypes, myths and prejudices – drive religious discrimination. These include notions of a Sunni–Pakistani identity,[16] the denial of Ahmadis as Muslims,[17] the fear that Hindus could subvert the nation in favour of India,[18] or an assumed antagonism between Islam and Christianity.[19]

While Hindus and Christians were mentioned in specific examples, the consensus among most focus groups was that Ahmadis were predominant targets of hate speech and political or religious scapegoating. As one participant put it:

> If we bring to this Pakistan, this is about the Ahmadis. Like the incident that happened in Chakwal. They claimed that they found alcohol in their mosque so they burnt the mosque down.
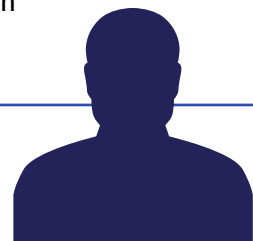
Focus group participants, therefore, understood extremism and hate speech to affect various religious minority groups in different ways – with Ahmadis perceived to be singled out. This reflects contemporary evidence with regards to the status of religious minorities in Pakistan. A survey gauging the perceptions of 199 university students from a range of religious backgrounds found that while Shia, Hindu and Christians were still more likely to feel persecuted than Sunnis –

who make up the majority in Pakistan – Ahmadis were especially likely to be 'subjected to religious intolerance' in the form of hate speech, extremism or persecution.[20] And much of this persecution is as structural as it is cultural: Ahmadis have been denied status as Muslims and the National Commission for Minorities has excluded them from a list of minorities with protected status.[21]

A female participant gave an example of this institutionalised marginalisation: a policy that requires passport applicants to declare that Ahmadis are not Muslim,[22] which she said dissuaded her from applying for one.

While private and public school educated participants were most concerned with religious persecution, for many of the madrassah-educated students, religious sectarianism was more relevant:

> If two people are of different religions, there is respect. But with particular schools of thought [within Islam], one will call the other 'Kaffir'.
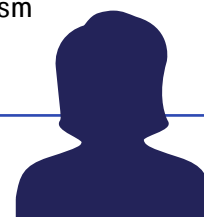
A 2012 survey measuring religious hostilities globally, conducted by the Pew Research Centre, found that 78% of Pakistanis believed relations between Sunnis and Shi'a were a 'moderately big' or 'very big' problem.[23] In another Pew survey a year later, 50% of Sunnis respondents did not consider Shi'a to be Muslims.[24] It is important to highlight this out-grouping because – in a country where the issue is already extremely divisive – madrassahs, especially, have become 'breeding grounds… for sectarianism'.[25] This fact perhaps demonstrates why discussions of extremism and hate speech revolved around sectarianism among both madrassah-educated focus groups.

The complexity of the relationship between religion, hate speech and extremism in Pakistan is apparent. However, it should also be noted that other groups suffer too. For example, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, plus (LGBTQ+) community has little to no protections offered by the state[26] in a religiously conservative country where homosexuality is taboo.[27] Additionally, some ethnicities such as Hazara are marginalised,[28] and lower caste Dalits must face intersectional ethnic, class and religious relegation.[29]

Participants clearly felt that the problems of extremism and hate speech were entwined with religious narratives, and that some religious minorities suffer more than others. There was also a palpable sense among focus groups – most of whom were from the Sunni majority – that these issues were deeply troubling, and the majority of participants expressed a desire to see them addressed. Campaigns would benefit from capitalising on these common concerns among youth of different communities, creating strategic networks of young activists who denounce any structural and cultural persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan.

LESSON THREE

When working with women and girls to counter extremism and hate speech, civil society organisations should consider the gendered dimension of religiously justified violence and cultural norms, empowering them and reflecting their unique lived experiences.

Several studies have shown that women are more likely to be victims of extremism than men.[30] Since the 1970s and the resurgence of Islam as a political doctrine, the contradictions and tensions between modern secularism and the demands of shari'ah (the religious law of Islam) have meant that the rights of women have become a policy and cultural battleground in many Muslim countries.[31] Certainly in Pakistan, systemic violence and limited education, economic opportunity and legal protections facing women[32] have made them especially vulnerable to discrimination and disempowerment.[33]

Pakistani news media has been noted to stereotype and disempower women as normal practice.[34] A study of two mainstream Pakistani newsprints – Dawn and The News – showed that women portrayed in the media were devalued, and subjected to ageist, female victimhood and sexist stereotypes.[35]

It is unsurprising then that gender bias and the normalisation of gender-based violence were named by focus groups as pervasive in Pakistani society:

> It's Pakistan's favourite thing – you bring women into everything and then you drag them.
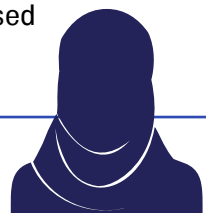
Only female focus group participants shared experiences of being directly subjected to extremism or hate speech. In one of the all-female focus groups, every participant claimed to have been subjected to a form of hate speech online. Generally, female participants were clear that, in their experience, issues of extremism and hate speech take on a gendered dimension:

> It's usually very subtle; someone will pass a comment on something very small.

One participant recounted her experience of being a victim of this gendered hate, which was not subtle:
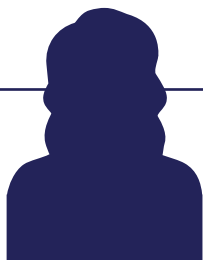
> I had this incident where a friend and I were taking a stroll at around 3 am. There were these men coming from the mosque, essentially after praying. And I heard one of them saying – he had this long beard – and he's like: 'Women like these should be strangled to death'.

During this section of the discussion female participants made it clear that in their experience, violence done to women was often justified on religious grounds:

> Someone said to me that if in Islam it was allowed to bow down to anyone after God, it would be the husband. And I was like, 'That's why it's not allowed!'

Many of the female participants therefore felt that being a Pakistani woman was very unlike being a Pakistani man, as one has to adhere to different norms, customs and laws. A significant majority of female participants in both focus groups emphasised the importance of their femininity, that being a Pakistani meant being a Pakistani woman. While most were proud of being a Pakistani, one respondent felt disempowered as a woman in the country:
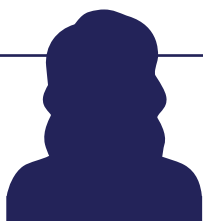
> So everyone said such nice stuff about being a Pakistani, but personally me – I feel like it's a major pain in the ass. Because being a woman in Pakistan is very hard. You can't be yourself. You have to sit in a certain way, you have to behave in a certain way. I would honestly jump at any chance I get to get out of here.

It's important that civil society organisations and their counter-narrative campaigns consider how women may uniquely experience extremism and hate speech in the country, and work to deconstruct the myths or cultural norms that exist at the intersection between religion and gender issues in order to reduce gender-based violence. Furthermore, they should work to empower women as active agents of change. In P/CVE practitioner circles, women are seen as hugely important in preventing and countering violent extremism – providing insights based on lived experiences into patriarchal norms and values, as well as having unique capacities in mobilising communities and facilitating trauma healing.[36]

CRAFTING A MESSAGE

▮ LESSON FOUR

Counter-narrative campaign messaging should build on a notion of a Pakistani identity that is broad and inclusive. It should reflect the diversity of religious, cultural, ethnic and gender groups that constitute the country, and resonating with their individual identities and histories.

Evidence consistently suggests that, regardless of the social, economic or cultural backgrounds of its adherents, extremism in Pakistan is intrinsically rooted in religious doctrine and practice. It was under General Zia's government that Pakistan went through a process of 'Islamisation' in the 1980s, professing among its population a sense of confrontation between Islam and 'Western' paradigms such as communism and capitalism.[37] Pakistan has a rich ethno-cultural heritage, although the vast majority of the population – estimated to be at least 85% – are Sunni Muslim.[38]

In Pakistan, a decades-long strengthening of religious institutions, and the financial and political empowerment of Sunni madrassahs, created a generation of youth whose identity was shaped by Sunni-centric, 'political Islam'.[39] Dunne et al. analysed Pakistani youth through focus groups, finding that 'for the Pakistani youth, Islam is the locus of the collective symbolism as it supplies them the myths, symbols and memories which serve to form the basis of Pakistani nation'.[40]

Those whose adolescence was defined by the rapid Islamisation of Pakistan and decades of sectarian conflict across the Middle East and South Asia are now the leaders, influencers and educators responsible for shepherding the country's future.[41] They have over time defined the Pakistani nation-state's narrative as centred on Islam and nationalism, and the lens through which many young, 21st-century Pakistanis view their identity is undeniably coloured by the zealous rhetoric of their forebears.[42]

Despite this, most focus group participants – who were predominantly Sunni Muslims themselves – did not see their Islamic and Pakistani identities as inextricably linked. Conversely, there was a significant breadth of opinion when discussing how national and religious narratives surrounding Pakistani identity affect those of young people in Pakistan.

Participants found the concept of having a Pakistani identity to be subjective and fluid, particularly those who were not madrassah-educated; they thought that being 'Pakistani' means potentially having a range of cultural, religious or ethnic heritages. They consistently recognised the diversity of Pakistan and saw the country as being part of an even more diverse Indian sub-continent:

> My paternal family is Muslim and Pathan; my maternal family is Punjabi and Christian; but my great-great grandfather converted from Sikhism. So there's a lot of difference.

They further associated Pakistan's national identity with a range of signifiers, some but not all of which were related to religion: being a nation founded on the principles of Islam; being a leader in the Muslim world and in world politics; being contextualised in the wider sub-continent – with a set of 'common cultural values and moral grounds that define [us]'; and as being inextricably linked to its colonial past.

The general consensus among this group was that there was no simple answer to what it means to be 'Pakistani'. Any narrative that reinforces the perception of a homogenised Pakistani identity, and the cultural and structural forces that underpin that narrative, could undermine a necessary self-reflection process. As one older respondent put it:

> In every conversation that we try to initiate on this [subject of identity], we are shunned because of the same very reason: that people themselves are not aware of who they really are, who they represent as Pakistanis.

Some focus group participants suggested that the variation between heterogeneous and homogeneous notions of the Pakistani identity could be factors in incidents of hate speech and extremism seen in modern Pakistan. One participant likened Pakistan's fascination with identity to a 'crisis' that is acting as a crucible for these issues. Two participants from different focus groups felt that because of the increasing equation between being Pakistani and being Sunni Muslim, there was an associated pressure to persecute those that do not fall into that category.

Perhaps these views and contradictions are not surprising. Dunne et al. found in their own focus group discussions with youth a deep sense of pride in being both Pakistani and Muslim.[43] They also felt that much of their pride stems from the religious and cultural diversity that the Pakistani state is founded on – they 'deploy discourses of secular democracy and citizenship in the construction of the nation'.[44]

Most participants were very aware that their country's internal pressures to synonymise being Pakistani with being Muslim were potentially damaging to its societal fabric. Many felt proud of being Muslim, but were equally proud of the diversity of the country's makeup, its history and the inclusive principles on which it was founded. Because of the comparatively limited size and highly educated nature of these focus groups, it is not clear whether these views would be reflected among Pakistani youth as a whole. Nonetheless, campaigns should build on these inclusive, multicultural views, and promote the same values – drawing on the rich heritage and constitution of Pakistan.

LESSON FIVE

Counter-narrative campaigns should address issues of sectarianism and rigid conceptions of identity among madrassah students. They should promote the pluralistic nature of Islam and religion in Pakistan, with an emphasis on developing dialogue channels between sects and encouraging tolerance and mutual respect.

Religion occupies an important role in the life of the average Pakistani youth. A British Council survey in 2009 of over 1,000 youth from all over the country revealed a growing religiosity and political awareness among the educated youth. It found that 92% of youth considered religion an important factor in their lives.[45]

Despite its importance across demographic boundaries, madrassah-educated youth are more likely than non-madrassah-educated young people to take their religious identity as a determining factor in other parts of their life.[46] The same determinant was reflected in discussions: while both madrassah and non-madrassah-educated groups agreed that being Muslim was as much a part of their identity as any other factor, the former were much more ready to conflate their religious and national identities. Only one student challenged the assumption that to be Pakistani was to be a Muslim. One example stands out from the discussion:

> Firstly, there are two groups of people in the world: Muslims and non-Muslims. Pakistanis needed a separate country because there were difficulties in India. Being a Pakistani is based on this two-nation theory. Firstly, there is Islam, then there is Pakistan.
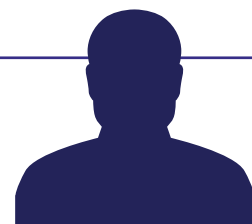
The participant was not only unquestioning of the association between Islam and Pakistan, but also an advocate for it. In contrast to the non-madrassah-educated groups, he downplayed the role of ethnicity or culture in Pakistani identity:

> Being a Punjabi or a Pathan are only differentiators for us.
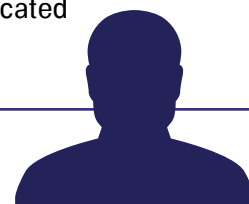
This association may also affect how madrassah-educated students feel about their national identity. Another student from the same group placed a great deal of salience on their Pakistani identity, demonstrating a zeal not observed among non-madrassah-educated participants:
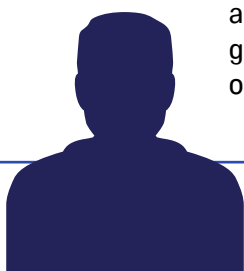
> I am ready to sacrifice my life for Pakistan. Whenever my life, my education, my money is required, I will be ready to give it.

As mentioned, participants in madrassah-educated focus groups almost universally identified sectarianism as the major issue with regard to hate speech and extremism in Pakistan. Similarly, while both nationalism and religion seemed to be key drivers in their identity formation, sectarianism was an issue that threatened to undermine the notion that to be a Pakistani is to be a Muslim.

Across Pakistan, sectarianism is an 'unfortunate product of the madrassah system'.[47] It has been shown that extremists have the ability to exploit this failing in the ulama (scholarly class) system of religious education, which has been noted as a 'neglected area of educational reform' that lacks the ability to adapt to 'cultural and intellectual modernity'.[48] Spurred by the financial and political empowerment over successive governments,[49] privately run madrassahs now wield significant influence on the tiny minority of the population they educate, and some take advantage of this by promoting sectarian values.[50]

Exemplifying this, one participant blamed particularly zealous molvis (religious scholars and teachers) in his home city of Mardan for the sectarian 'clashes between Deobandi, Barelvi and Ahl-e-Hadiths'.

Many madrassahs are under-regulated, financially empowered educational institutions; some of which have been exploited by bad actors. In some, extremist or hateful narratives have taken root, while others may be vulnerable. This helps explain why some madrassah-educated participants were deeply troubled by the threat of sectarianism in their educational institution. Together, these findings suggest that madrassah-educated youth should be a key priority target audience, and that messaging should help to build critical awareness and resilience in madrassahs. As one madrassah-educated participant put it:

> There should be a broader conversation that should be called 'Reinventing the Pakistani Identity', which should involve academia, scholars, and activists so that things get clearer. We're basically groping in the dark in that sense.
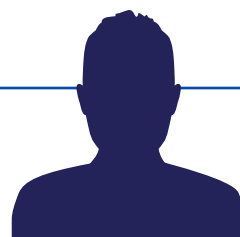
USING SOCIAL MEDIA

When designing digital campaigns, Facebook and WhatsApp are priority platforms. However, online campaigns cannot replace offline activities, especially when targeting rural communities and women.

Internet penetration in Pakistan is relatively low, standing at around 35%.[51] As a result, social media has limited reach in the country as a whole: in 2019 only 17% of the population had a social media account, compared with a global average of 49%.[52] Nonetheless, 17% of the population equates to around 36 million people, most of whom are urban youth between the ages of 18 and 34. Facebook is by far the most popular social media platform, and WhatsApp the most popular messaging platform in this demographic. Men are far more likely to have social media accounts than women, especially on Facebook where over 80% of users are male.

Perhaps because our focus group participants were aged 18–34, they were prolific social media users, some professing to use social media for up to 10 hours a day. The primary social media platform they used was Facebook, followed by WhatsApp for direct communication. Some participants of the female focus groups mentioned Instagram as their go-to platform.

Our focus groups were held in urban areas, and participants assumed that youth across Pakistan had access to Facebook and WhatsApp. They mistakenly identified rural areas as places where Facebook had significant reach:

> It's local, available and accessible. Even in villages two hundred kilometres from here, if people have a phone they would have Facebook. Everyone has an account on Facebook.
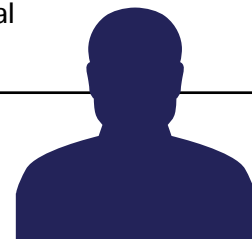
Digital sources such as news apps and podcasts, as well as traditional forms of news media, such as newspapers and television, were thought to be less popular than digital media.
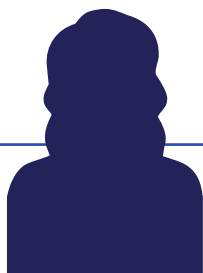
Madrassah-educated participants generally had similar preferences as and drew similar conclusions to those in the other groups, although, because of restrictions in using social media and smartphones during class at madrassahs, they consumed traditional news media slightly more:

> At the Jamiya [their madrassah], it's newspapers. [And] we have access to TV at some special events.

They were also more likely to consume news via radio during school hours than their non-madrassah-educated counterparts, although this happened rarely.

The findings of the focus groups reinforce the understanding that campaigns targeting urban youth should use Facebook and potentially WhatsApp. But campaigns that target rural youth or women should rely less on social media and more on offline initiatives to engage them.

LESSON SEVEN

In addition to addressing discrimination and extremism, online campaigns should educate youth about misinformation and disinformation, with a focus on improving digital literacy, verifying sources and countering 'fake news'.

As avid social media users,[53] Pakistani youth are increasingly turning to social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to consume both hard and soft news[54] and express their political views.[55] Furthermore, because journalism in Pakistan 'still enjoys a little more freedom' in the online space[56] and does not face the same restrictions as traditional media, news on social media is prolific and diverse.

A main challenge facing youth seeking information via non-traditional routes is that 'fake news' – misinformation spread unintentionally, and the more narrowly defined disinformation that is spread intentionally – is becoming ever more present on their news feeds.[57]

The high social media usage among focus group youth combined with the proliferation of misinformation, or 'fake news', could be why participants felt very exposed to it, but also were confident at identifying and countering it. They mentioned 'clickbait', 'a lack of references', 'clear bias', 'untrustworthy sources' such as political parties or unheard of news sites, or edited photographs as indicators that a piece of information or article could be fake. Googling facts, seeing how many followers a source has, and checking whether rival or international news sources had repeated a source were popular methods of testing for veracity.

Our focus group participants believed social media companies to be culpable precisely because algorithms that enable disinformation or misinformation to reach target audiences were seen as profit-enabling:

> At the end of the day social media is all about marketing. It's about SEO [search engine optimisation]; people make money from shared content, regardless of if its negative or positive content.
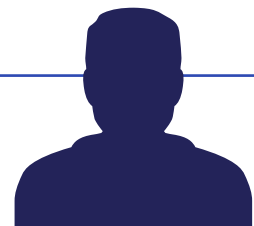
Focus group participants consistently identified Facebook as being the medium with the most 'fake news' – 'it's mostly fake', claimed one participant – with WhatsApp coming second. They suggested one explanation for the prevalence of misinformation on these platforms is that they're so widely used by people of all levels of digital literacy, especially Pakistani youth. Another explanation was that these two platforms relied mostly on sharing video content and links, which can be easily and rapidly disseminated. Twitter, in contrast, was perceived to host less misinformation.

Much of the online misinformation or disinformation participants have encountered demonstrate familiar characteristics, typically associated with fake news: videos taken out of context, news tickers that have been edited, memes, photo-shopped images, chain texts, conspiracy theories, health or security scares, and character assassinations of politicians or celebrities.

While some misinformation can be relatively harmless, other types of 'fake news' are not: bomb scares or threats of terrorism, anti-Ahmadi tropes, anti-feminism tropes, fake hadiths, religious 'miracles' and accusations of blasphemy. This last type was seen as particularly problematic across focus groups:

> If you don't like someone, you can just say that he has said something against the prophet. Basically for personal benefit. Two years ago they murdered Mashal [Khan] because of this.[58]
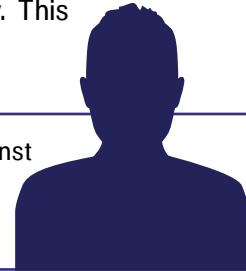
Reflecting their education, madrassah-educated participants were more likely to highlight religiously themed 'fake news' than others: 'Imran Khan saying something regarding the Sahabahs… being sinful' one participant suggested. Another claimed of the 'fake news' he has witnessed:

> It's sectarian. The differences that exist between different schools of thought in Islam, those differences are exaggerated and fake posts are created from them. Like somebody has committed blasphemy – they create hatred in people's hearts.
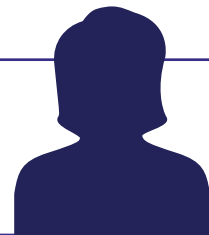
Sectarian misinformation and disinformation is propagated to an extent by religious political parties like the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan party, led by Khadim Hussain Rizvi, who have expanded their reach into wider society, particularly vis-à-vis their broad social media presence. They have been noted to further instrumentalise extreme sectarian-Barelwi Islamist rhetoric and symbolism to gain wider political influence, especially among youth.[59]

Extremists groups, in line with their increasing capability in controlling traditional forms of media such as newsprint and radio, are equally capitalising on these digital opportunities to spread their own forms of information as propaganda – spreading disinformation to sow dissent and recruit vulnerable youth.[60] According to a report on the narratives of extremism in Pakistan from Bytes for All, the 'disseminators of hatred and extremism are far ahead in propagating their message'[61] because of a lack of effective government control in the online space, growing use of social media and the strong religious identities held by youth,[62] despite strong censorship laws.

Campaigns deployed by civil society organisations should therefore try to build critical consumption of news on social media platforms among youth. Doing so will not only help to decrease the proliferation of misinformation, but will help young people identify and counter any disinformation or propaganda spread by malign actors, such as sectarian or extremist groups.

TAKING ACTION

■ **LESSON** **EIGHT**

Civil society organisations should harness pop culture trends effectively when campaigning, to appeal to different groups and embed critical narratives in content that young people seek out.

Pakistan has a rich history of popular culture stemming from their ancient antecedents in South Asian Sufi mystic music and poetry,[63] theatre[64] and dance.[65] Although pop culture is primarily made for entertainment, it wields substantial influence in shaping norms and values in Pakistani society, including how people understand their national identities and minorities are portrayed. As cultural theorist Nadine Dolby argues, popular culture is so much more than simple entertainment; it is a site of real power that can 'alter social conditions at the very foundation of people's lives'.[66]

During the 1970s and 1980s, as the notion of a singular Pakistani identity began to take shape, pop culture began to take on an increasingly nationalistic and religious dimension. For example, there are many examples of Pakistani films stereotyping minorities, especially Hindus and Christians,[67] and internationally renowned Pakistani films have been noted to have had a 'tumultuous relationship' with nationalism and gender-stereotypes[68] that rivals Bollywood.[69] This trend took root in mainstream television and news media too,[70] as well as in music where traditional Sufi music such as qawwalis [traditional Sufi devotional songs] and nasheeds [songs usually sung in a capella that often have Islamic themes], which have been noted to promote nationalistic and fundamentalist narratives.[71]

Focus group participants consumed a mix of global and Pakistani cultural outputs, including reading Sufi poetry or listening to their musical remixes, watching 'Lollywood' (Pakistan's answer to Bollywood) films, and listening to qawwalis and nasheeds. Many of the youth noted that Pakistani popular culture is rife with pro-government, pro-army and religious ('pop Islam') sentiments, especially in films and music. For example, according to one participant, '1968 war songs [are] considered cool' but amount to an 'institutionalised bias' towards the army. Another told us, 'a lot of it is propaganda'.

Further, cultural norms that focus group participants identified included values that prop up violence against and towards minorities, women and the LGBTQ+ community, in a context where these minorities don't have equal representation or a mainstream platform of their own.

For example, certain religious talk shows and celebrity mawlanas (religious leaders), which were popular among many participants of the focus groups, espouse sometimes controversial and potentially intolerant views. One example was Mufti Menk, whose 'Twitter page is viral', but who has described gay people as 'filthy' and 'worse than animals'[72] in the past. Another, Zakir Naik, was seen by participants as very popular among the broader Pakistani youth, but has advocated the death penalty to be used for homosexuals and justified domestic violence.[73]

Pop cultural norms deeply affect minority groups, especially women. In TV and films women are often stereotyped. One female participant told us that in most films:

> Women exist in boxes… Either they will sing songs or make good tea.

A male participant from a different focus group echoed this:

> Pakistani dramas are famous for this [stereotyping of women]. They have always set up this very sad setting where there is abuse happening, there is a pregnancy-related issue, there is the issue of [them] running away.

But just as popular culture has helped to entrench exclusionary values, it is also leading to some more inclusive perspectives developing. Some participants noted that feminism is increasingly perceived as being cool: 'men are considered cool if they talk about feminism'. Likewise, a burgeoning, if small, pro-LGBTQ+ movement is emerging, responding to liberal international influences:

> Taking influences from outside of Pakistan has become really cool in this generation, the millennial generation.

The contradiction in Pakistan is that despite the nationalistic and religious demands put on its media industry, with each generation Pakistani pop culture becomes more gender-inclusive, more representative and more socially liberal without losing popularity. It both reaffirms state-sanctioned values to establish its bona fides with conservative gatekeepers and older audiences… at the same time [as it allows] space for embracing artistic influences that are contemporary.[74]

Counter-narrative campaigns should build on this, carefully navigating the fine line that has been etched by certain elements of Pakistan's popular culture. By harnessing the influential power of popular culture, campaigns can capture the attention of youth and deconstruct stereotypes without overtly challenging the status quo or signalling that they are trying to exert strategic influence.

LESSON NINE

Campaigns should use visual and audio content to account for literacy rates and the preference of Pakistani youth.

In addition to using social media – especially Facebook – effectively, extremist and terrorist groups are often adept at using visual and audio content to propagate ideology.[75] Social media offers an invaluable platform that is unencumbered by government control.[76] Many social media platforms – most notably Facebook and Instagram – are designed for visual content, and highly emotive imagery delivers a powerful message that can bridge literacy gaps and language barriers.[77]

In the focus groups, participants agreed that visual content was crucial for any kind of counter-narrative campaign and suggested that campaigns use posters, songs and infographics. They thought short videos around three to four minutes long were the most effective content:

> Clips are good because when you create a clip of your own, using your [own] lyrics and expressions, it leaves a good impression.
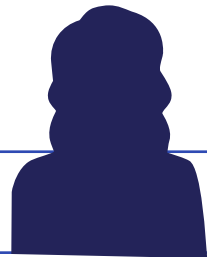
And although they were all prolific social media users, participants suggested balancing social media campaigns with offline activities in the communities:
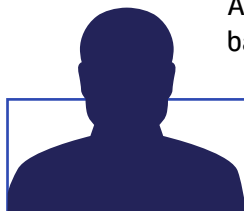
> It depends on what kind of people you are addressing and in what geographic location you are addressing.

No matter the content, participants though it important that any counter-narrative campaign should have emotional weight, comparable to whichever extremist narrative is being deconstructed:

> Exploiting the viewer emotionally is of paramount importance because that's what makes them remember.
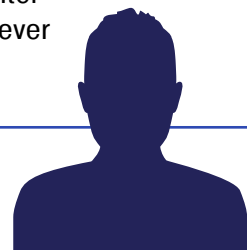
KNOWING YOUR ALLIES

■ LESSON TEN

Civil society organisations can benefit from working with governments and the media to strengthen their initiatives, but should also understand the drawbacks, using collaboration to address youth concerns and build trust.

THE GOVERNMENT

Extremist targeted messaging draws on individual vulnerabilities, including critical grievances that young people may hold towards the government.

This was reflected in a study in 2014 of 500 Pakistani security officials who ranked risk factors of extremism according to their perceived importance,[78] and a study in 2016 found that those related to poor governance were the most important, for example dishonest leadership, a lack of accountability and corruption.[79] A further study in 2016 found that government-led public education schemes were positively correlated with radicalisation, and that teaching and the curriculum may be a 'more effective radicalisation tool than madrasa [sic] education'.[80]

According to participants, one of the reasons the government is failing to address the issue of extremism properly is because it applies definitions of extremism and hate speech selectively and narrowly to mean sectarianism or seditious activity, which they viewed as potentially a mechanism to 'maintain power'. One participant called this:

> a conscious effort [by the Pakistani government], especially after the Zia-ul-Haq era. Before that Pakistan was very liberal.
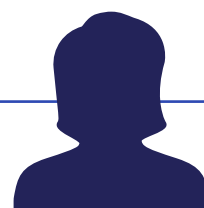
However, madrassah-educated participants showed some departure from others and did not rank the problem of extremism in Pakistan nearly as highly as their counterparts. Participants in one of these groups emphasised that levels of extremism have been drastically reduced over time and credited the government and army for this reduction: the army 'for holding them [the extremists] back' and the government for 'controlling [extremism] to quite an extent'.

Indeed, successive Pakistani governments have taken several multifaceted approaches to counter violent extremism, from effective counter-radicalisation strategies to 'contradictory' counter-terrorism policies.[81] For example, they have successfully limited the power of Lashkar-e-Taiba, the group responsible for the Mumbai hotel attacks. Nonetheless, shadow influences may be preventing the government from eliminating Lashkar-e-Taiba effectively through procedural justice.[82]

It's important to examine the variation between these focus groups' perceptions of the government's role in preventing and countering extremism. Where one group saw failure, another saw success, and it is evident that the government's efforts can be read either way. In the wider context, therefore, when deciding whether to bring government into implementing or supporting counter-narrative campaigns, it's essential to understand more deeply how each target audience might perceive the government, so as not accidentally to undermine the effort.

THE MEDIA

When trying to understand how extremism and hate speech spread, it is important to examine the role of media, misinformation and disinformation, as well as how these relate to youth. A report from the United States Institute of Peace, summarising a convention of Pakistani journalists and media experts in 2011, concluded: 'Pakistan's media landscape has increasingly been used as a battleground between those seeking to promote violent conflict and others seeking to manage or deter it.[83]'

According to participants – especially those from the private and public school groups – mainstream Pakistani news media, especially television channels and many newspapers, is widely distrusted for three reasons.

First, much of the media is seen as politically biased, usually either pro or against the government.[84] Participants had different but overlapping perspectives as to the political affiliations of various news channels. One stated, 'There's a reputation for every news channel, that's how it works in Pakistan.'

Second, these sources of news are perceived as being sensationalist[85] in order to increase their ratings and public consumption. Examples of sensationalism included exaggerating certain stories, encouraging overly heated televised debates, and focusing on violent incidents. One participant shared a personal experience of this:

> I had a business teacher who worked on the radio and then Pakistani news channels. They would wait for bomb blasts to happen so they could put it on screen. It was shocking to me that they were manipulating a loss for their own benefit.

Third, the government exercises high levels of censorship exercised on news channels in Pakistan.[86] The government either own, sponsor[87] or otherwise heavily regulate[88] almost all of the main television news channels and newspapers.

Being caught between a lack of a wider strategy for countering extremism, the demand for sensationalism, and government control and censorship 'leav[es] the anchor-person who comes from a certain perspective [the ability to use] the media for their own purpose and objectives'.[89]

Because of the unreliability of news on social media, the distrust of private news channels – digital and non-digital – and government censorship and control of the media, Pakistani youth are extremely mistrusting of national media in general: 'We're in a dilemma as to whom we should believe. The problem is that.'

In a country where the government and intelligence services exercise such high levels of censorship, with a media that relies on sensationalism to survive and forced to choose sides in a battle for the media space, it's not easy to bring these actors in as allies in a counter-narrative campaign. There is nonetheless clearly a willingness by the media and young people to tackle many of the issues the country faces, and media outlets have the potential to disseminate campaign messages to a very wide target audience.

DISCUSSION

In order to better understand how the findings of the eight focus groups might help shape the development of counter-narrative campaigns, it is important to remember that their members do not represent Pakistani youth as a whole. Instead they serve an important function in giving practitioners who work to counter violent extremism a snapshot into the lived experiences and perceptions of Pakistani youth, in order to appreciate and reflect on the wider context of youth and extremism in Pakistan.

Our review of the literature showed that hate and extremism are prominent phenomena in Pakistan, and young people are entangled by them – more often as victims than as perpetrators. While only a handful of participants in our focus groups came from minority backgrounds and did not experience hate and extremism first-hand, many were very aware of the issues in their communities and some had witnessed them. Women felt particularly vulnerable to hate and extremism, showing that any effort to counter extremism in Pakistan could benefit from examining wider gender issues in the country.

Even though sectarianism and anti-minority prejudice are problematic in Pakistan, our discussions demonstrated that young people have a particular concern with solving these issues – many celebrated the diversity of Pakistan and its rich inter-cultural history, and sought to build cohesion between divided communities. They identified the most common victims as being the Ahmadi, Hindu and Christian communities, which ties in with state and religious narratives surrounding their status – Ahmadis not recognised as Muslims, Hindus being associated with India, and Christianity being an import from the West.

Youth recognise that these issues are systemic, sustained by certain elements in government and minor political parties. The views of these actors are to a degree coloured by the decades-old convergence of Pakistani politics with Islam. Young people should be brought in to assist with running CVE programmes, but with the understanding that faith in their intention and ability is fragile.

Echoing our desk-based research, participants perceived that trends in pop culture, a demand for sensationalism in news media, and profit-driven social media companies undermine efforts to counter these norms, thus enabling them to spread further, more rapidly and without adequate mainstream narratives being offered as alternatives.

Lessons for developing effective counter-narratives can therefore be drawn from these findings, but it is equally important to consider future research that examines these perceptions in more detail and tailor programmes around it. Our participants had diverse types of educational background, but were relatively homogenous in the level of education they had achieved: they were mostly professionals or university students, and all lived in Islamabad Capital Territory. Future research and programming could benefit from looking into the perceptions of the less literate or digitally adept, in different areas of Pakistan, to get a truer picture of the experiences of extremism and hate speech among a wider group of Pakistani young people, and to counter them more effectively.

ENDNOTES

1. CIA, 'South Asia: Pakistan', in CIA World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, 2020, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html [accessed 25 June 2020].

2. M Yusuf, Prospects of Youth Radicalization in Pakistan: Implications for US Policy, analysis paper 14, Brookings, 2008, p. 1.

3. F Sajjad, D Christie & L Taylor, 'De-radicalizing Pakistani society: the receptivity of youth to a liberal religious worldview', Journal of Peace Education, vol. 14, 2017, p. 206.

4. Yusuf, Prospects of Youth Radicalization in Pakistan, 2008, pp. 4–5.

5. Yusuf, Prospects of Youth Radicalization in Pakistan, 2008, pp. 10–14.

6. J Haque, Pakistan's Internet Landscape 2018, Bytes for All, 2018, p. 18, https://bytesforall.pk/publication/pakistans-internet-landscape-2018 [accessed 18 June 2020].

7. A Dave, 'Transnational lessons from terrorist use of social media in South Asia', Global Research Network on Terrorism and Technology paper 13, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, 2019, pp. 5–7, https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/20190813_dave_lessons_from_south_asia_proof_3_final.pdf [accessed 18 June 2020].

8. C Winter, Media Jihad: The Islamic State's Doctrine for Information Warfare, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2017, p. 16, https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ICSR-Report-Media-Jihad-The-Islamic-State's-Doctrine-for-Information-Warfare.pdf [accessed 18 June 2020].

9. H Tuck & T Silverman, The Counter-Narrative Handbook, The Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2016, https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Counter-narrative-Handbook_1_web.pdf [accessed 18 June 2020].

10. C Marshall & G Rossman, Designing Qualitative Research, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2014.

11. HIVE, https://www.hive.org.pk/ [accessed 18 June 2020].

12. Winter, Media Jihad, 2017.

13. Tuck & Silverman, The Counter-Narrative Handbook, 2016.

14. J Baldauf, J Ebner & J Guhl (eds.), Hate Speech and Radicalisation Online, OCCI Research Report, The Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2019, https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ISD-Hate-Speech-and-Radicalisation-Online-English-Draft-2.pdf [accessed 18 June 2020].

15. A Sellars, Defining Hate Speech, Berkman Klein Center Research Publication 2016-20, Boston Univ. School of Law, 2016, https://ssrn.com/abstract-2882244 [accessed 25 June 2020].

16. M Zaman, 'Sectarianism in Pakistan: the radicalization of Shi'i and Sunni identities', Modern Asian Studies, vol. 32, 1998, pp. 689–716.

17. R Rais, 'Islamic radicalism and minorities in Pakistan', in S Limaye, M Malik & R Wirsing (eds.), Religious Radicalism and Security In South Asia, Honolulu, Asia-Pacific Center For Security Studies, 2004, p. 455.

18. Rais, 'Islamic radicalism and minorities in Pakistan', 2004, p. 453.

19. S Gregory, 'Under the shadow of Islam: the plight of the Christian minority in Pakistan', Contemporary South Asia, vol. 20, 2012, pp. 195–212.

20. T Khan, K Österman & K Björkqvist, 'Severity and reasons behind religious intolerance in Pakistan: perceptions of Sunnis, Shias, Ahmadis, and Christians', European Journal of Social Sciences, Education and Research, vol. 10, no. 2, 2017, pp. 193–202.

21 Human Rights Watch, 'Pakistan: Ahmadis kept off minorities commission', 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/08/pakistan-ahmadis-kept-minorities-commission [accessed 25 June 2020].

22 The oath that must be signed on application states: 'I consider Mirza Ghulam Ahmad an impostor prophet. And also consider his followers, whether belonging to the Lahori or Qadiani group, to be non-Muslims.' See M Hanif, 'Why Pakistan's Ahmadi community is officially detested', BBC News, 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8744092.stm [accessed 25 June 2020].

23 Pew Research Center, Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High, Religion & Public Life Project, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high [accessed 25 June 2020].

24 N Siddiqui, 'Sectarian violence and intolerance in Pakistan', Middle East Institute, 2015, https://www.mei.edu/publications/sectarian-violence-and-intolerance-pakistan#_ftn7 [accessed 25 June 2020].

25 M Shah, 'Sectarianism – a threat to human security: a case study of Pakistan', Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs, vol. 94, 2005, p. 624.

26 EqualDex, 'LGBT rights in Pakistan', 2018, https://www.equaldex.com/region/pakistan [accessed 25 June 2020].

27 Outright International, 'Inside the lives of Pakistan's LGBT: an interview with the filmmaker', 2015, https://outrightinternational.org/blog/inside-lives-pakistan-lgbt-interview-filmmaker [accessed 25 June 2020].

28 Minority Rights Group International, 'Pakistan', 2020, https://minorityrights.org/country/pakistan [accessed 25 June 2020].

29 S Jodhka & G Shah, 'Comparative contexts of discrimination: caste and untouchability in South Asia', Economic and Political Weekly, 2010, pp. 99–106; Minority Rights Group International, 'Pakistan', 2020.

30 See for example B Carter, 'Women and violent extremism', Helpdesk Research Report 898, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2013, p. 2, http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/hdq898.pdf [accessed 25 June 2020].

31 N Othman, 'Muslim women and the challenge of Islamic fundamentalism/extremism: an overview of Southeast Asian Muslim women's struggle for human rights and gender equality', Women's Studies International Forum, vol. 29, 2006, pp. 339–340.

32 S Saleem, Impact of Religious Extremism on Women in Pakistan, New Delhi, Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace, Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2006, pp. 10–19.

33 Saleem, Impact of Religious Extremism on Women in Pakistan, 2006, pp. 20–27.

34 S Talib & Z Idrees, 'Pakistani media and disempowerment of women', in T Carilli & J Campbell (eds.), Challenging Images of Women in the Media: Reinventing Women's Lives, Lexington Books, 2012, p. 27.

35 M Yasmin, A Sohail & R Mangrio, 'Myths broken or sustained: representation of women victims in Pakistani media', Open Journal of Social Sciences, vol. 03, 2015, pp. 209–219.

36 M Qadeem, 'Preventing and countering women's participation in violent extremism in Pakistan: a practitioner's perspective', Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2019, https://www.boell.de/en/2019/12/10/preventing-and-countering-womens-participation-violent-extremism-pakistan-practitioners [accessed 25 June 2020].

37 Sajjad et al., 'De-radicalizing Pakistani society', 2017, pp. 196–197.

38 CIA, 'South Asia: Pakistan', 2020.

39   H Alvi, 'Social forces and ideology in the making of Pakistan', in S Zaidi (ed.), Continuity and Change: Socio-Political and Institutional Dynamics in Pakistan, Karachi, City Press, 2003, p. 37; M Mamdani, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror, New York, Pantheon Books, 2004.

40   M Dunne, N Durrani, K Fincham, & B Crossouard, Troubling Muslim Youth Identities: Nation, Religion, Gender, 2017, p. 99, https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/978-1-137-31279-2 [accessed 25 June 2020].

41   H Haqqani, 'The role of Islam in Pakistan's future', Washington Quarterly, vol. 28, 2004, p. 91; J Bajoria, 'Islam and politics in Pakistan', Council on Foreign Relations, 2011, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/islam-and-politics-pakistan [accessed 25 June 2020].

42   M Rathore & A Basit, 'Trends and patterns of radicalization in Pakistan', Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 2010, pp. 1–13, https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/131-1.pdf [accessed 25 June 2020]; A Khan, Pakistan and the Narratives of Extremism, USIP Special Report 327, Washington, United States Institute of Peace, 2013, pp. 1–14, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR327-Pakistan-and-the-Narratives-of-Extremism.pdf [accessed 25 June 2020]; Sajjad et al., 'De-radicalizing Pakistani society', 2017, p. 198.

43   Dunne et al., Troubling Muslim Youth Identities, 2017, pp. 94–96.

44   Dunne et al., Troubling Muslim Youth Identities, 2017, p. 117.

45   British Council Pakistan, Pakistan: The Next Generation, Next Generation Research Series, 2009, http://www.britishcouncil.pk/sites/britishcouncil.pk/files/next-generation-report.pdf [accessed 29 June 2020].

46   MA Rana, 'Mapping the Madrasa mindset: political attitudes of Pakistani Madaris', Conflict and Peace Studies, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2009, p. 31, https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/05.pdf [accessed 29 June 2020].

47   C Fair, The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan, Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008, p. 95.

48   Sajjad et al., 'De-radicalizing Pakistani society', 2017, p. 12.

49   The Middle East Institute, The Islamization of Pakistan, 1979–2009, 2009, p. 25, https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/2009.07.Islamization%20of%20Pakistan.pdf [accessed 26 June 2020].

50   Shah, 'Sectarianism', 2005, p. 624.

51   S Kemp, Digital 2020: Pakistan, DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, 2020, https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-pakistan [accessed 26 June 2020].

52   Kemp, Digital 2020: Pakistan, 2020.

53   Kemp, Digital 2020: Pakistan, 2020.

54   W Zulqarnain & T ul-Hassan, 'Media reliance and information seeking habits of Pakistani millennial', Journal of Media Studies, vol. 33, 2018, pp. 95–106.

55   A Karamat & A Farooq, 'Emerging role of social media in political activism: perceptions and practices', Journal of South Asian Studies, vol. 31, 2016, pp. 381–396.

56   Haque, Pakistan's Internet Landscape, 2018, https://bytesforall.pk/sites/default/files/Internet%20Landscape%20Report%202018.pdf [accessed 26 June 2020].

57   Haque, Pakistan's Internet Landscape, 2018.

58 Mashal Khan was killed on 13 April 2017 by an angry mob on the premises of University Mardan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, following accusations that he posted blasphemous content online. A series of investigations under intense national and international media scrutiny led to his acquittal due to a lack of evidence. At the time of his death, Mashal was actively protesting mismanagement by the university and there is suggestion that leadership were complicit in his death. Eventually 58 people were charged in relation to the murder, with one being sentenced to death after admitting to shooting Mashal. See BBC, 'Mashal Khan case: death sentence for Pakistan 'blasphemy' murder', BBC News, 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-42970587 [accessed 26 June 2020].

59 A Hashim, 'Tehreek-e-Labbaik: new far right campaigns against "blasphemy"', Aljazeera. com, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/tehreek-labbaik-campaigns-blasphemy-180705154014562.html [accessed 26 June 2020].

60 K Hassan, 'Social media, media freedom and Pakistan's war on terror', The Round Table, vol. 107, 2018, p. 192.

61 Haque, Pakistan's Internet Landscape, 2018, p. 18.

62 Khan, 'Pakistan and the narratives of extremism', 2013.

63 'The Musical History of Pakistan', blog, Asia Society, 2010, https://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/musical-history-pakistan [accessed 26 June 2020].

64 N Hurwitz, 'East & Southeast Asian theatre: history & overview', Study.com, https://study.com/academy/lesson/east-southeast-asian-theatre-history-overview.html [accessed 26 June 2020].

65 J Miettinen, The Origins of Asian Theatrical Traditions, Asian Traditional Theatre & Dance, 2018, https://disco.teak.fi/asia/the-origins-of-asian-theatrical-traditions [accessed 26 June 2020].

66 N Dolby, 'Popular culture and democratic practice', Harvard Educational Review, vol. 73, 2003, p. 258.

67 B Khalid & A Fatah, 'Minorities' stereotypes in Pakistani films', paper given at European Conference on Film & Documentary, The International Academic Forum, 2014, http://papers.iafor.org/wp-content/uploads/papers/eurofilm2014/EuroFilm2014_00242.pdf [accessed 26 June 2020].

68 S Peerzada, Islamic Nationalism and Gender in Zerqa, Reel Pakistan, 2020, p. 132, https://reelpakistan.lums.edu.pk/sites/default/files/user376/reel_pakistan_vol_1_2020-19_peerzada.pdf [accessed 26 June 2020].

69 P Zinck, 'Disobedient bodies: gendered violence in South Asian and desi film', South Asian Popular Culture, vol. 17, 2019, pp. 269–282; S Ali, S Chaudhry, R-e-Aslam & A Faridi, 'Portrayal of Muslims characters in Indian movies', Pakistan Journal of History and Culture, vol. 33, 2012, pp. 137–159.

70 M Sabir, 'The role of media in creating values of nationalism in Pakistan', Journal of Political Studies, vol. 18, 2011, pp. 17–36.

71 P Manuel, 'North Indian Sufi popular music in the age of Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism', Ethnomusicology, vol. 52, 2008, pp. 378–400.

72 S Morrison, 'Universities cancel Muslim cleric's speaking tour over concerns about his anti-gay views', Independent, 2013, https://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/universities-cancel-muslim-cleric-s-speaking-tour-over-concerns-about-his-anti-gay-views-8927902.html [accessed 26 June 2020].

73 S Dhume, 'The trouble with Dr. Zakir Naik', Wall Street Journal, 2010, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704365204575317833268479268?mod=asia_opinion%7Ctitle%3DThe [accessed 26 June 2020].

74 F Zaka, "The Resurgence of Nationalism In Popular Culture", Herald Magazine, 2019, https://herald.dawn.com/news/1398795 [accessed 2 May 2020].

75   Dave, 'Transnational lessons from terrorist use of social media in South Asia', 2019.

76   Hassan, 'Social media, media freedom and Pakistan's war on terror', 2018.

77   Hassan, 'Social media, media freedom and Pakistan's war on terror', 2018, pp. 190–191.

78   M Malik, M Sandholzer, M Khan & S Akbar, 'Identification of risk factors generating terrorism in Pakistan', Terrorism and Political Violence, vol. 27, 2014, pp. 537–556.

79   D Johnston, A McDonnell, H Burbridge & J Patton, Countering Violent Religious Extremism in Pakistan: Strategies for Engaging Conservative Muslims, International Centre for Religion & Diplomacy, 2016, p. 5, https://icrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Countering-Violent-Religious-Extremism-in-Pakistan-White-Paper.pdf [accessed 26 June 2020].

80   Johnston, et al., Countering Violent Religious Extremism in Pakistan: Strategies for Engaging Conservative Muslims, 2016, p. 5.

81   A Basit, 'Countering violent extremism: evaluating Pakistan's counter-radicalization and de-radicalization initiatives', IPRI Journal, vol. 15, 2015, p. 65.

82   T Siddiqui, 'Why is Pakistan reluctant to bring Lashkar-e-Taiba to justice?', Aljazeera.com, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/pakistan-reluctant-bring-lashkar-taiba-justice-181121143620490.html [accessed 26 June 2020].

83   H Byam & C Neu, Covering and Countering Extremism in Pakistan's Developing Media, United States Institute of Peace, 2010, pp. 1–3, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/143662/PB_82.pdf [accessed 26 June 2020].

84   M Mezzera & S Sial, Media and Governance in Pakistan: A Controversial Yet Essential Relationship, Country Case Study: Pakistan, Initiative for Peacebuilding, 2010, https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20101109_CRU_publicatie_mmezzera.pdf [accessed 26 June 2020].

85   Z Yousaf, G Yasmeen & E Ali, 'Sensationalizing the news events by Pakistani media', Journal of Media Studies, vol. 34, 2019, http://journals.pu.edu.pk/journals/index.php/jms/article/view/1969 [accessed 26 June 2020].

86   H Ellis-Petersen & S Baloch, '"Extreme fear and self-censorship": media freedom under threat in Pakistan', Guardian, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/05/extreme-fear-and-self-censorship-media-in-pakistan-under-attack [accessed 26 June 2020].

87   K Hassan, 'The role of private electronic media in radicalising Pakistan', The Round Table, vol. 103, 2014, pp. 65–81.

88   Reporters Sans Frontières, 'Pakistan: under the military establishment's thumb', Reporters Without Borders, 2020, https://rsf.org/en/pakistan [accessed 26 June 2020].

89   Byam & Neu, Covering and Countering Extremism in Pakistan's Developing Media, 2010.

YOUTH
CAN

ISD | Powering solutions to extremism and polarisation

isdglobal.org

@ISDglobal

PO Box 75769 | London | SW1P 9ER | UK

August 2019