



RESEARCH PAPER

Minorities Rights Protection in Punjab (Pakistan): A Comparative Analysis of Christians, Hindus and Sikhs

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ABSTRACT

Since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 the miracle happened, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah the minority converted into majority. The Quaid addressed in 1st Constitutional assembly of Pakistan announced equal rights for every citizen of Pakistan and too much focused on minorities of Pakistan for their equal rights. The constitution of Pakistan 1973 guarantees the equal rights for every citizen but there is lot of marginalized groups neglected by the society. This paper focusing on the three minority groups including Christians, Sikhs and Hindus these groups are considering as marginalized. The study reveals the constitutional rights implementation for equal treatment for these minorities. The study also explores the response of society and institutions of Pakistan for equal treatment with these groups. The Study is the combination of both primary and secondary and data collected from 7 districts of Punjab. After the completion of the study, an analysis come to know that the lot these groups are neglecting by the society for their equal treatment. The government of Pakistan should have to develop new mechanism for providence of equal treatment, and implementations of constitutional guarantees.

Keywords: Equal Treatment, Institutions, Minorities, Religion

Introduction

It is famously narrated that Pakistan came into being as a state for the Muslim minority of India. Nevertheless, Pakistan was also the homeland of many other religious natives such as Christian, Sikhs, Hindus, Parsis, Buddhists. Even many Jews lived in Pakistan who were the natives of this land for centuries before the partition of 1947. All of these religions are completely different from each other and also have their rituals, traditions, language, caste system, creed, ethnicity. This researcher conduct this study explicitly in the context of Pakistan's Constitution, 1973, and Quaid's speech of 11th August 1947 that defines the certain freedoms and liberties for the religious minorities of Pakistan. The Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, has special provisions for the vulnerable segments of society that allow the political participation of religious minorities, share in the civil services and administration. So far as the population of religious minorities is concerned, religious minorities constitute 3.7% of the total population (Hanif & Chawla, 2020). Since the creation of Pakistan, there were a significant number of people who opted to live in Pakistan. As far as the remedies to accommodate religious minorities is concerned, the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, reserved ten seats on separate electorate basis. In the similar manner, the religious minorities have 5% reserved quota in jobs, and in 2% quota in higher education as well. In the context of political rights, the electoral reform introduced by General Pervaiz Musharraf regime has sustained the reserved ten (10) seats – out of 342 – for the minorities in the National Assembly. As the constitution of Pakistan 1973 transformed the unicameral to bicameral parliament system that has introduced Senate as upper house (Hussain, 2019), therefore, this house reserved four (04) seats – out of 100, for the religious minorities

(Mehdi, 2010). However, in the provinces the ratio is different as in Punjab 8 seats, Balochistan 3 seats, Sindh 10 seats and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 4 seats. As far as the historical perspective of Pakistan is concerned, the country is one of those third-world countries that came into being owing to the exit of the British colonialists from United India on August 14, 1947. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the leader of the movement, which gave birth to the new state of Pakistan. The leadership of Quaid-e-Azam was committed to the basic principles of a democratic society. Furthermore, Mr. Jinnah was in favour of equality of citizenship and opportunities (Khan, 2017). His first speech to the constituent assembly on 11th August, 1947 demonstrates such a vision as welfare state. He declared that every citizen is free to profess and practice their religion or faith. In the context of a nation, the religion or belief(s) is a personal affair of every individual, but as a nation, we are united (PIPS, 2017). He said in a presidential address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan 11 August, 1947:

"You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed, that has nothing to do with the business of State" (PIPS, 2017).

This paper focused on three minorities includes Christian, Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab province. Basically, study reveals the response of these groups and make a comparative analysis of these groups.

Literature Review

"Discrimination and Problems of Religious Minority Students in Public Schools of Pakistan" (2014) published by Journal of Education Research and Behavioral Sciences. The article focuses on the discrimination of minority students in public schools in Pakistan. Minority issues are global issues, especially in third-world countries where lack of privileges of basic needs and minorities are more suppressed. The education process is criticized in this research because of the intolerance they are discriminated in the education sector; they feel discrimination in the syllabus. Society has unaccepted them as in syllabus, eating food separately, calling them impure, cracking jokes and other hated views, etc. These types of views that established in the mind setup of children from their childhood. This article covers the previous research on minority education and relates this with this paper's current education status. The research is a comparative analysis of the education system of the different eras. As a result, minorities have many issues in the education sector, including public and private. This research is the focuses on the only education system that's why other minority issues need to explore (Mehmood, Mirza, Khan, Shabbir, & Iqbal, 2014).

"Effectiveness of Local Government System, Pro-poor Budgeting, and Policies for Marginalized Communities" (2020) is the research paper taken from the HEC Project written by Dr. Ghulam Mustafa, Naseem Anthony, and Muhammad Arslan, which was published in the Journal of Pakistan Social Sciences Review (PSSR). The research is focused on the grassroots-level issues of marginalized sections and their representation in local government. The research study under the light of the international agreements as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also mentioned reducing inequality and effort to promote gender equality. This study explored the problems related to marginalized sections at the grassroots level and developed an analytical study with ground realities. There is a lack of representation of minorities and a lack of toleration by society. The study is a great effort to highlight these issues with some recommendations about to counter these issues (Mustafa, Anthony, & Arslan, 2020).

"Minorities in Pakistan: An Analytical Analysis of the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan" (2020) is an analytic paper which is the joint effort of Dr. Ghulam Mustafa, Tooba Ahmad, and Muhammad Arslan. The well-reputed and renowned Journal,

i.e., Pakistan Social Sciences Review (PSSR) published it. The Research paper focuses on the constitutional rights given to the religious minorities in detail in all constitutions of Pakistan, while in constitutions of 1973 is elaborated these rights in detail with different articles. Quaid's vision has declared equality for everyone without any discrimination. The study elucidates the chasm between the given rights to the religious minorities and their lack of implementation. The radicalization in Pakistan with the war against terrorism influenced the minorities in general and religious minorities in specific (Mustafa, Ahmad, & Arslan, 2020).

"Conditions Required for Effective Political Participation Present Situation of Minorities in Pakistan" (2009) written by Dr. Sabir Michael. In this research paper, the author describes minority rights in detail, giving references from the constitution. Article 260 of the constitution has recognizes that the only religious minorities but do not mention anything about the ethnic and linguistic groups. In this paper, author elucidates the theory and practice regarding minority rights in Pakistan. The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has authorized every citizen to have equal rights before the law in Article 25. On the other hand, article 36 protects all political rights. The author tries to focus on the implications of their rights. This paper also elucidates the dissatisfaction with the party policies for the minority reserved seats. It also focuses on the particular group of minorities as Ahmadis as their separate voter list. On the other hand, the grass-root level of participation of religious minorities. This article elucidates and covers the different sectors of participation of religious minorities. However, there is a lot of Bert focuses on the hurdles they face in political participation (Michael, 2009).

"Religious Minorities in Pakistan" (2002) is the write-up of Dr. Iftikhar H. Malik and published by Minority Rights Group (MRG) International. This report focuses on both ethnic and religious minorities. This report elucidates the causes of less development of religious minorities with the political instability of the country and the military intervention. It also focuses on the issues of blasphemy and the use of extremism by the majority of Muslims. The report especially indicates the issues of minorities during the Pakistan military regime during the general Zia era and his policies. This report highlighted the various parts of the minority issues of Pakistan but also neglected their fundamental rights that given in the constitution (Malik, 2002).

"Minorities under Constitutions of Pakistan" (2018), written by Iram Khalid and Maqbool Anwar, published in Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan. This article is a comparative analysis of minority rights in Pakistan. This article also focuses on the comparative analysis of Human Rights according to Islam and the western point of view. This article describes the minority rights enshrined in constitutions of 1956, 1962, and 1973 and compares. Furthermore, this article has discussed several amendments in the constitution of Pakistan 1973 to address ethno linguistic and ethno religious issues (Khalid & Anwar, 2018).

"The Plight of Religious Minorities in Pakistan" (2016), written by Farooq Yousaf. The SADF-FOCUS based in Belgium published it. This research paper has focused on the constitutional rights of religious minorities with a little bit of criticism. He highlighted that such a country as Pakistan had defined the equality of citizenship and opportunities. Contrary to it, the local context does not allow religious minorities to exercise their right of equal status citizenship. The author elucidates that minorities have limited participation in social and state affairs. The research describes that the two schools of thought exist in Pakistan as liberal and conservative, which also causes the implementation of standard policies. This article mentioned the detail of incidents occurred with minorities in Pakistan and mentioned the actions taken by the governments (Yousaf, 2016).

"From Purdah to Parliament (2000)", by Shaista Suherwardy Ikramullah. It is published by Oxford University Press Karachi. Considering the research topic and its relevance to Pakistan's socio-political context, Shaista Suherwardy Ikramullah has given strong reasoning to illustrate the elements that strengthened the political intolerance in Pakistan and increased the marginalization of the vulnerable segment of the society, particularly minorities and women. According to her, the inordinate delay in approving the constitution, inadequate institutional setup, and frequent adjournment of the parliamentary sessions created a conducive environment for the non-democratic actors to hold powerhouses. She further defines that delay dispensing the citizens' services would mount frustration that would lead the country towards intolerance (Ikramullah, 2000).

"Purifying the Land of the Pure: A History of Pakistan's Religious Minorities" (2017) by Farah naz Ispahani, published by Oxford University Press New York. In the same fashion, the matter of religious minorities and participation in politics was discussed by Farah naz Ispahani. As per her viewpoint, once the population of religious minorities was 23%, it was now squeezed to 3%. She considers the dismemberment of East Pakistan from West Pakistan, inadequate legal frameworks, and discriminatory practices towards religious minorities. Her viewpoint - about the state of the religious intolerance and role of political actors - is an aide for understanding the trends and tendencies that gradually excluded the minorities from the decision-making processes at all levels (Ispahani, 2017).

"Electoral Reform and Political Representation of Religious Minorities: Working Paper" (2017), by Peter Jacob, published by the Association of Women for Awareness and Motivation (AWAM). In the context of religious minorities, Peter Jacob further provided grounds to examine the political participation of religious minorities in Pakistan. While giving his viewpoint about the plight of rights of minorities in Pakistan, he said that the quality of political representation is linked to political culture, which further depends on how the political culture developed. Suppose the political culture gets nourished in democratic norms. In that case, the participation of minorities can be claimed as active participation in which the minority has the authority to influence the decision related to the day-to-day affairs of their social life. Otherwise, it would be only limited for the sake of representation, not for actual participation (Jacob, 2017).

Material and Methods

This study would be combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The Primary and Secondary data has been collected to investigate and analysis the topic. To probe the rights given by the constitution, the researcher has to rely of Constitution of 1973 and different amendments of the constitution. Secondary data will be collected from books, articles published in national or international journals. For this purpose, the researcher visited different libraries like Allama Iqbal Library Lahore, Libraries of University of Punjab, Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad and different other Libraries.

To get knowledge form the grass root level, the researcher designed the questionnaire and collected data from 1000 samples within the Punjab Province territory. So, both Qualitative and Quantitative tools of research have been used to complete this research.

So, for this study, a compound mixed approach has been opted, consisting of official records, documents, analysis of the available data, media resources, reports, discussion papers, surveys within Punjab Province.

Target population

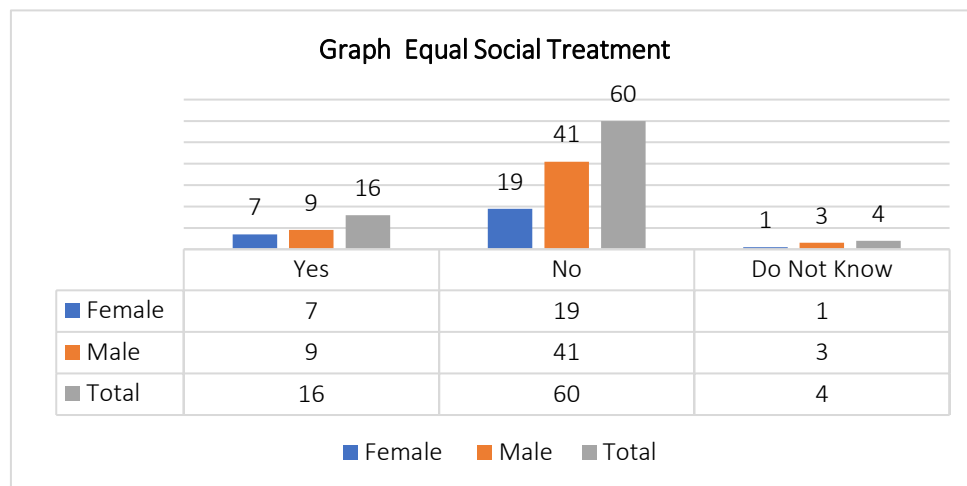
The target population for this research is non-Muslim citizens of the state, specifically followers of Hinduism.

Limitation of the Study

This research has been limited to Christians, Hindus and Sikhs within Punjab Province.

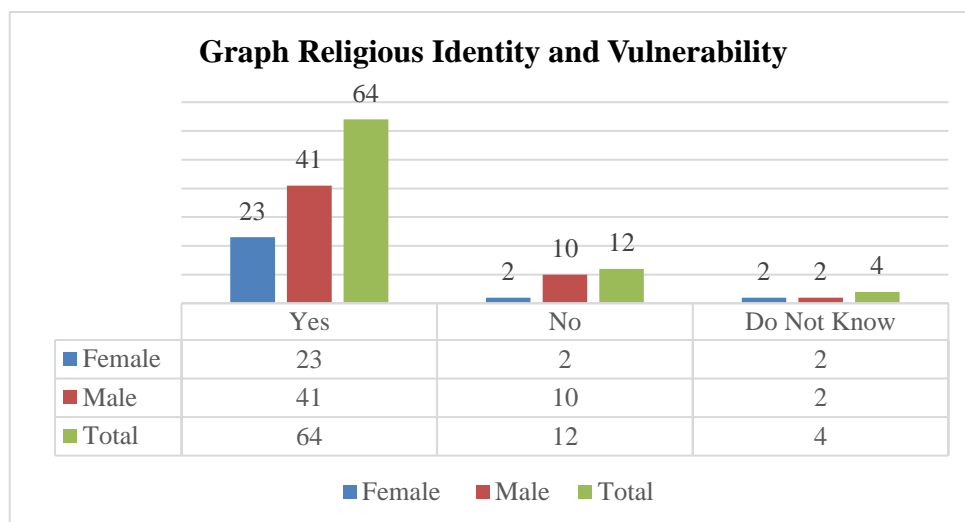
Hindu Community Response

Equal Social Treatment



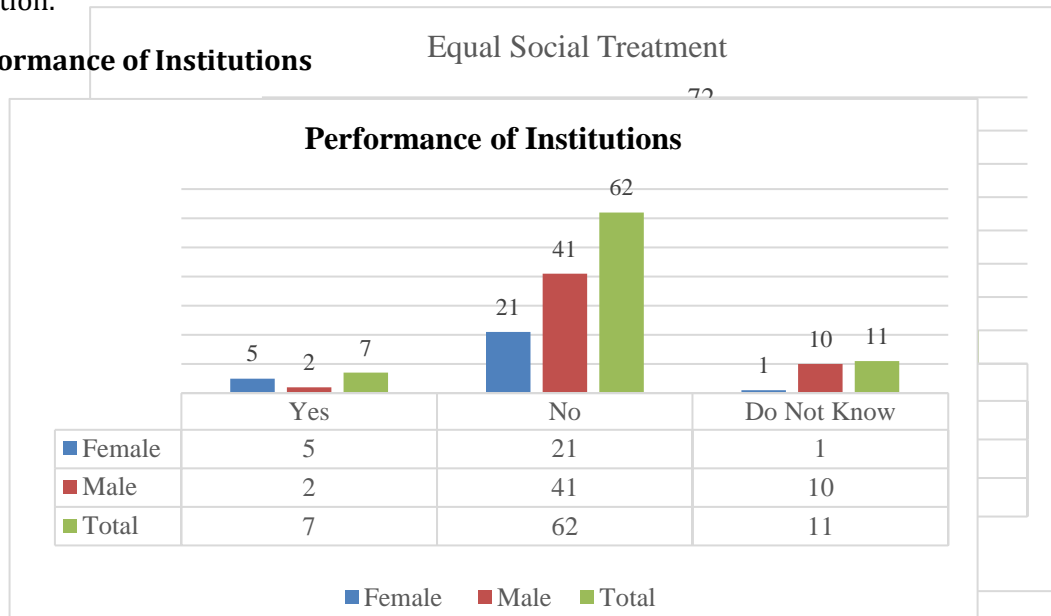
Whether the minorities in Pakistan are getting equal opportunities is asked to 80 Hindu community representatives. Of which 53 were males, and 27 were females. The question bore three categories 'Yes', 'No' and 'Do Not Know'. In this regard, 16 members, 7 Females and 9 Males, tick the 'Yes' category, and 60 members, 19 Females and 41 Males, pick the portion 'No.' Thereby four members, one female and three males, chose the portion 'Do Not Know'.

Religious Identity and Vulnerability



When the question about religious identity and vulnerability was asked to the minority community, the majority of 64 people, 23 females and 41 male members, selected the option 'Yes.' This shows that the minority community of 64 out of 80 are agreed to the asked question. Similarly, 12 minority members, two females and ten male members picked the 'No' portion as they fully denied the asked question. Thereby, the remaining portion, 'Do Not Know,' secured four people, two males and two females. Therefore, according to the remaining portion, the people of the minority community are not aware of the asked question.

Performance of Institutions



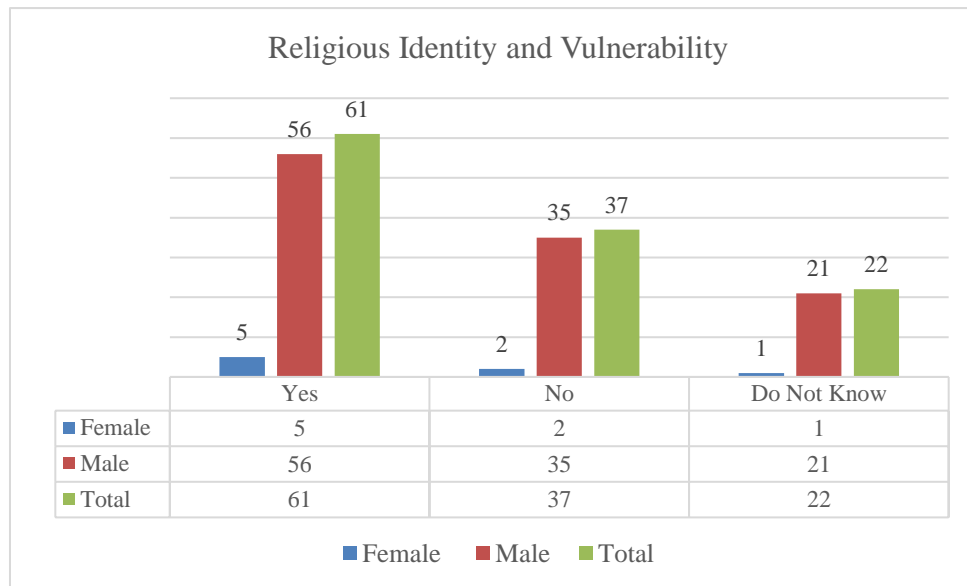
When the query is asked to the minority community people, 62 people - 41 males and 21 females, denied the performance of the institutes. The data shows that the ministries and departments concerned with religious minorities are not performing as per the aspiration of minorities. Furthermore, the other category, 'Do Not Know,' was chosen by 11 people, 10 males and 1 female. The ratio of the chosen category shows that 11 peoples of the targeted minority group - Hindu, have less knowledge about the posed query. The last portion of the question secured seven people, 5 females and 2 males, as they chose 'Yes'. This highlights that they are fully aware of the query. They said that they agree and accept that the ministries and departments concerned to religious minorities are failed to deliver as per the aspiration of minorities.

Sikhs Community Response

Equal Social Treatment

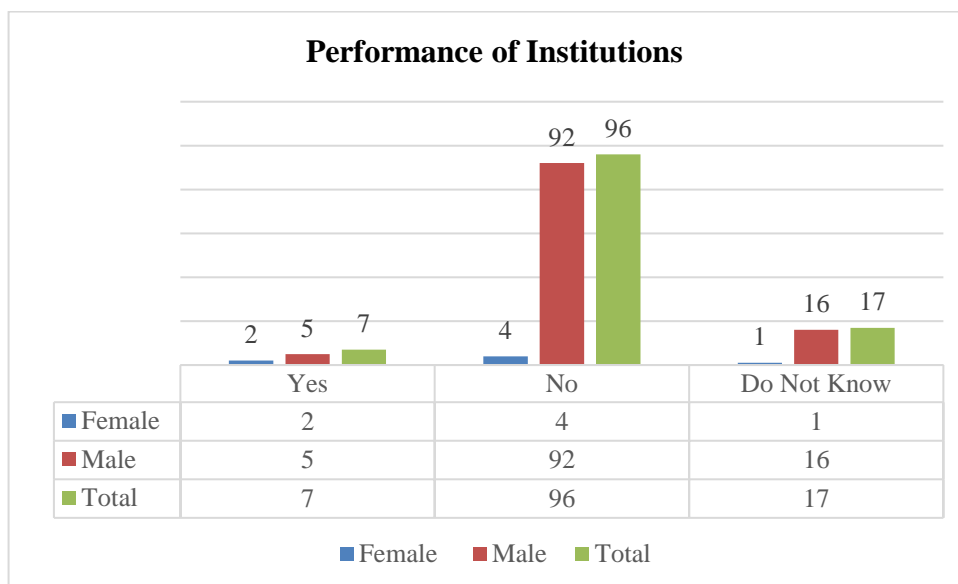
When the question is asked to 120 Sikh minority members, 112 males, and 08 females, it was assessed that the majority of the respondents pick the portion 'No', which shows that they are not getting equal social treatment. However, 38 people, three females and 35 males, chose the category 'Yes', which shows that being the minority, they believe they are treated equally in a social setup. The remaining portion of the question secured only ten people, a female, and nine males, and they were not aware of the question.

Religious Identity and Vulnerability



The reason behind bearing the question in the data is to collect the views of the respondents about the contribution of religious identity to increase vulnerability of non-Muslims. The question secured positive impression in the data as the 61 members - 56 males and 5 females, selected the portion 'Yes'. Besides, 37 respondents 35 males and 2 females mark the option 'No' as they deny the query. Similarly, the left 22 people 21 males and 1 female pick the portion 'Do No Know' as they do not know about the contribution of religious identity to increase vulnerability of non-Muslims to enjoy fundamental freedoms.

Performance of Institutions

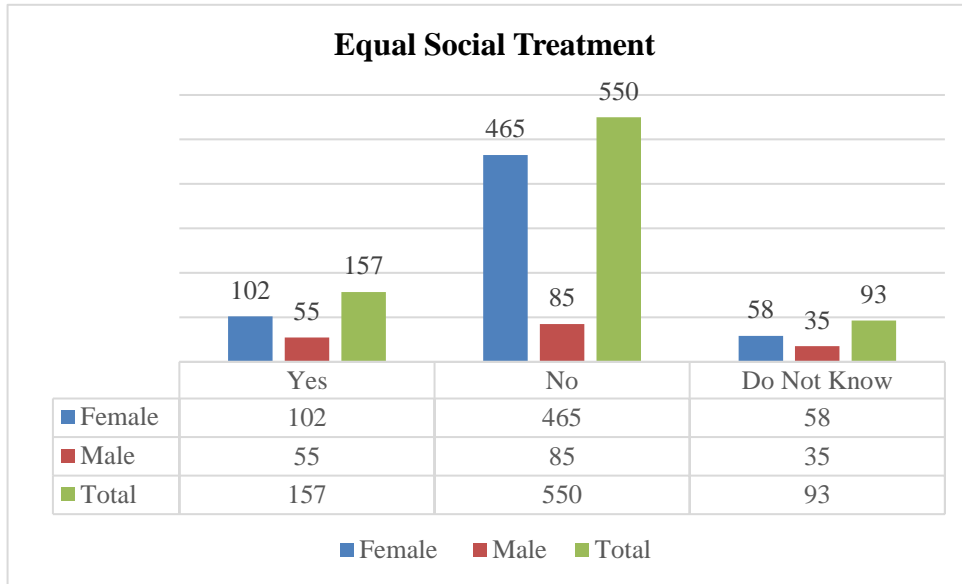


The query is asked to the 120 Sikh minority people. So, the majority of 96 people 92 males and 04 female members pick the portion 'No' and shared that they think that the ministries and departments are not concerned to religious minorities, and they are also not performing as per the aspiration of minorities. On the other hand, 17 respondents 16 males and 1 female chose the portion 'Do Not Know' were not aware about the question. Thereby, 7 respondents 5 males and 2 females pick the option 'Yes' as they believe that the ministries

and departments are concerned to religious minorities, and they are also performing as per the aspiration of minorities.

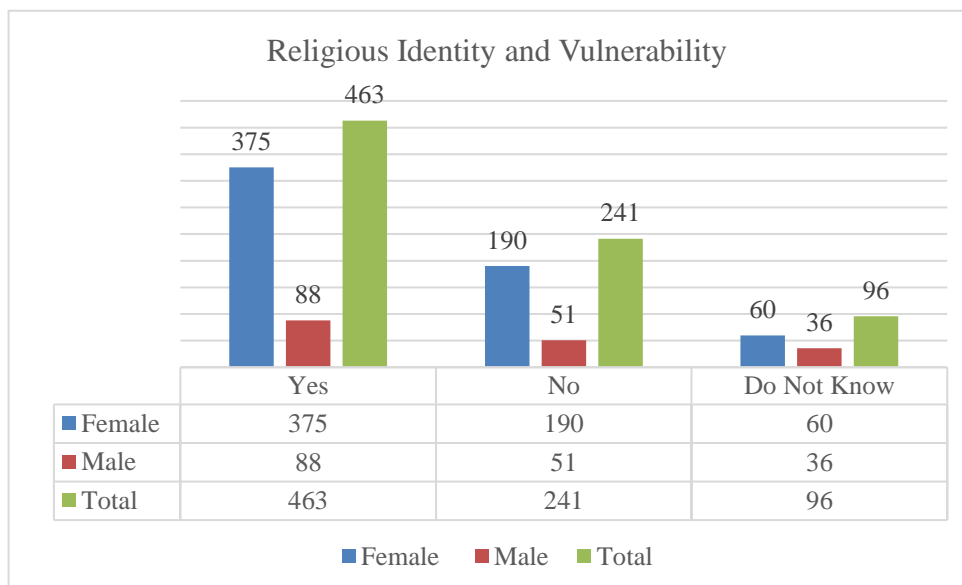
Christian Community Response

Equal Social Treatment



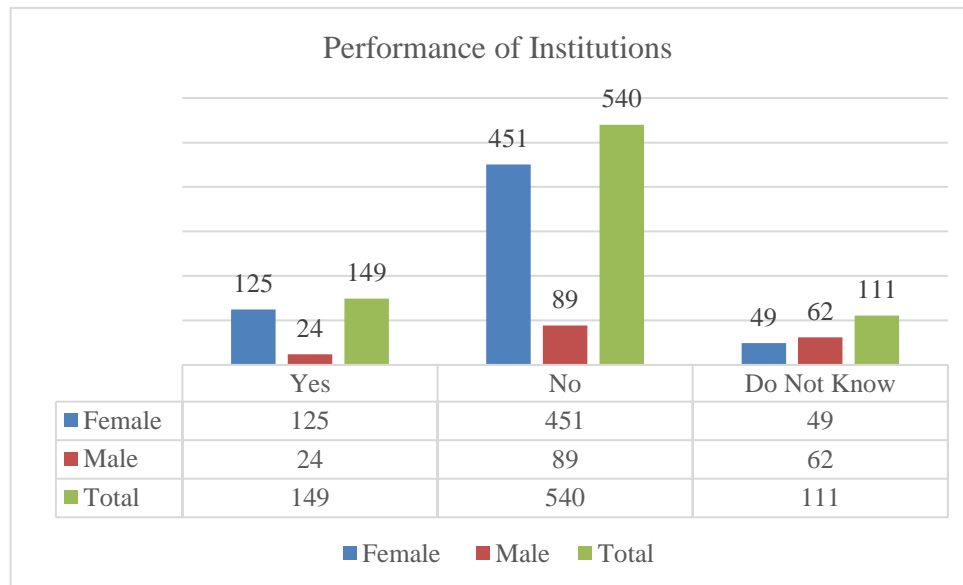
The targeted people of Christian minority community were 800 members 175 males and 625 females. In this regard, the majority of 550 people 465 females and 85 males fall under that category 'No' which shows that according to that data the people who select the portion are not enjoying the equal opportunities as compared to the majority community groups. On the other side, 157 minority members 102 females and 55 males became agreed that they are fully enjoying the equal social treatment as the other communities of the country are enjoying and the left category secured 93 people 58 females and 35 males pick the portion 'Do Not Know' which means that they do not know anything about the asked query.

Religious Identity and Vulnerability



The response of the people against the question regarding religious identity contributed to the increased vulnerability of non-Muslims. It was recorded 463 in which 375 females and 88 males in category 'Yes' as they fully agreed that religious identity is the cause of vulnerability with non-Muslims. However, 190 females and 51 males picked the portion 'No' under the total number of 241. According to their perspective, non-Muslims are enjoying fundamental rights despite their religious identity. Further, the last category of the 'Do not know' portion secured 96 respondents with 60 females and 36 males as they were neutral about the query.

Performance of Institutions



The people's response against the question secured 540 respondents regarding the category of 'No' 451 female and 89 males who were denied that the ministries and department are not concerned with religious minorities and are not performing as per the aspiration of minorities. Therefore, the other category, 'Do Not Know,' was chosen by 111 people, 62 males and 49 females. The ratio of this category shows that 111 people of the targeted minority community did not know the asked question. The last portion of the question's category secured 149 responses (125 females and 24 males) as they opted for the option 'Yes.' it highlights that they were fully aware of the query. They said that they agree and accept that the ministries and departments concerned with religious minorities are performing as per the aspiration of minorities.

Conclusion

The research work on this minority issues is a unique as it has focused on the minorities issues in the context of both socio-political. The study reveals that minorities not only having societal issues and also facing institutional issues. The research work focused on the three diverse minority groups in Punjab, whole study focused on the three basic issues or questions that was equal social treatment, identity issues and role of institutions. The study explored that every community facing these issues with different terms. In the light of responses, the study shows that all these communities suffering and facing issues about equal social treatment. The respondent shows that after their real identity society changed their behavior with them. Also institution for these minorities have lack of policies to fill this societal gap. The study also analyzed that these minority groups have in somehow positive response by society, for instance Christian and Hindu respondent shows more social acceptance issues rather than Sikhs, because they this study have focused on Punjab and Punjabi population treating Sikhs better than other two communities.

The country is also facing extremism issues that is very harmful for overall values of the society. It is high time to ponder and have serious deliberations as to how to come out of this grave situation. It will ruin the people and the country. The policy of appeasement of theocratic elements adopted by the successive governments by way of adhocism must be dropped. The approach has brought the whole nation to a precipice. If such moves are not averted the state structure would crumble down. I call upon the progressive and democratic forces to play their historic role by forging unity amongst their ranks in order to launch liberation movement and salvage the people as otherwise the spectre of sectarianism will sap the very vitals of this society. We have to save humanity and build a civil society. All nations are poised to enter into the next millennium with determination to have better quality of life, let us contribute our lot to fulfil the dreams of our people for a better tomorrow.

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