



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan: An Analysis**

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**ABSTRACT**

Educational institutes are the backbone of society because they built an individual's narrative toward society. Pakistan is an Islamic republic that was established on the ideology of Islam. Like other Islamic countries of the world Pakistan also got entangled in the wave of sectarianism, the major reasons were the rising sectarian conflicts in neighboring countries like Iran and Afghanistan. The Islamization policy of General Zia-ul-Haq instantly gave birth to sectarianism in Pakistan. Gilgit Baltistan also got entangled in the wave of Sectarianism after the Iranian revolution. Afghanistan's invasion by the Soviet Union is also the cause of the rise of sectarianism in mainland of Pakistan. Consequently, it resulted in a weakening political system and religious extremism within educational institutes throughout the province. The theory of Constructivism is applied to this research. Constructivism is a social theory. Social Theory is concerned with the study of the relationship between agent and structure within a society and other patterns in world politics. This research has been explored through quantitative research methodology. The researcher selected students, civil servants, and academia as a unit of analysis in the universe of Gilgit Baltistan. The total sample size was 118 respondents. Primary data has been collected for this research. The data was analyzed through the cross-tabulation method which showed that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This study has been a revelation for the future of the youth studying in educational institutes across GB and learning sectarianism.

**Keywords:** Constructivism, Gilgit Baltistan, Islamic Ideology, Pakistan, Religious Extremism, Sectarianism

**Introduction**

This area was prominent in trading during the ancient silk route. It also has a very significant geo-strategic worth for the whole of central Asia and can change the economic and political scenario of the region. Gilgit Baltistan is a Diversified province containing distinct ethnic groups with considerable folklore and tradition. The people of GB have managed to protect their culture by linking culture with tourism. The People of the Region follow Islam and are further divided into various sects. The Shia Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Ismaili Muslims, and Noorbakshis. Noorbakshis are also classified as minorities. Religion evolved through the Sufi travelers during the ancient silk route.

The tourism Industry and Natural Resources of the region can significantly contribute to the economy of Pakistan. Tourism has played a significant role in the region's socioeconomic development. Specifically, after the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Renovation of the old silk route currently known as The Karakorum Highway (KKH), development in Infrastructure, and the Region isolated from the mainland due to the absence of proper transportation now gets access to the mainland of Pakistan. The province

also has considerable potential for religious tourism. Besides this, Sports, Historical, Cultural, and adventure tourism are also possible in Gilgit Baltistan. Tourism has improved many people's lives within the province, creating employment opportunities and making it one of the essential drivers of sustainable economic growth.

Like other countries around the world, Pakistan also suffered from Sectarian conflicts; it acutely influenced its political system, Economy, and Peace of the country. Gilgit Baltistan got entangled by the wave of sectarianism, specifically after the Iranian Revolution, the Afghan War, and the Islamization Policy of General Zia-ul-Haq. Sectarian violence significantly impacted the people's socio-economic, political, and religious lives. Due to the weak Political System and lack of political knowledge, the people of GB were indoctrinated by Religious Groups and Influential Leaders, which compelled them towards violence and terrorism.

The province remains deprived of its constitutional Rights and substantive powers. The fragile political system and the absence of exceptional governmental educational institutes across the region have witnessed madrassas spreading sectarian distaste among sects. The native people believe that the lack of political consistency in the province and the deprivation of the ordinary people from politics were the critical factors of the rising sectarianism in the region, creating a vacuum between politics and religion. Another reason for sectarian violence in the province can be considered as an exclusion from the political system of the nationalist parties.

Sectarianism significantly impacts the socioeconomic lives of the province's inhabitants, prompting demographic changes. This research focuses on addressing and identifying the critical internal factors contributing to the rising of sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan. This study can be helpful for the extension of literature on the issue of sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan and can further support future research on this topic. This study stipulates a new dimension for the continuing issue of Sectarian Conflict in Gilgit Baltistan. This paper attempts to analyze how the fragile political system contributed to the rising of Sectarianism across GB. What was the role of local government and federal government in lessening the escalation of sectarianism? What are the other Internal Factors contributing to sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan? How do the differences in ethnicity, culture, and demographic change contribute to the rising of sectarianism in the province? And how has Religious Extremism within Educational Institutes changed the youth's perception of the youth toward other sects? Moreover, it will further enrich the knowledge of the issue for the people of the province and beyond the province. Therefore, the coming section discusses the Historical background, Geo-Strategic Significance of Gilgit Baltistan, and Literature review in detail. (Karamat, Muzaffar, & Shah 2019).

### **Historical Background**

The Gilgit Baltistan was previously known as the Northern Areas. Initial History shows that the province was ruled by the Kushan, Chinese, and Tibetan Empires. During the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, Chinese and Persian travelers passed through this province via the Silk Route and inscribed its history by placing various indications. According to the Persian Chronicles, this province is named Palolo or Bolar (Hussain, 2021). The state of Kashmir was further divided into four units, the province of Jammu, the province of Kashmir, the Gilgit district, and the District of Ladakh. Before the Amritsar Treaty, Gulab Singh annexed the Baltistan Region of GB, merged it with the Ladakh District, and made Skardu its tehsil district (Ahmad, 2020).

In 1947 the partition of the sub-continent the British Indian Government canceled the lease of the Gilgit Agency and offered the Maharaja of Kashmir to take over the Gilgit Agency. On 1<sup>st</sup> August Ghansara Singh took the control of Gilgit Agency as a political agent by replacing the current British agent col Roger Bacon (Ahmad, 2020). On 1<sup>st</sup> November 1947 new government was formed in Gilgit and Major Brown convinced Ghansara Singh and

released him he then joined the GB government as a political advisor. The people of the Region were very patriotic towards the state of Pakistan which compelled them to fight alongside the GB Scouts to liberate themselves from the Dogra Rule and after running an independent government for 15 days the People and government representatives of the Region decided to merge GB into the state of Pakistan (Dani, 2001). In the year 1970, the Gilgit Agency and the Baltistan District previously known as Ladakh were merged and collectively named the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) or the Northern Areas of Pakistan but in the year 2007 name was changed to Gilgit Baltistan and gave self-Governance order in 2009 to the Region. On 29 August 2009 under the government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP), President Asif Ali Zardari passed the Gilgit Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance order; under this order, the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly and Gilgit Baltistan Council were made (Ahmad, 2020).

### **Geo-Strategic Significance of Gilgit Baltistan**

In the words of K.N Knights, He states that here is where the great three empires meet; the Chinese, Britain, and Russian empires. This province border China's Xinjing Province in the north and northeast at Shimshal pass and khunjreb pass, on the North the Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan meets Gilgit Baltistan at the mintika pass, where Afghanistan, Russia, China, and Pakistan meet. The Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir lie to the Southeast (Knight, 1897). This province not only played a significant role in trading during the ancient silk route but also connected India to Central Asia and China to the West with Roman Empire. Hermann Kreutzmann argues that in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the crossroads of the Pamir region remained a great game between Britain and Russia (Kreutzmann, 2020).

### **Literature Review**

Izhar Hunzai, explains that religiously inspired violence is a new practice in Gilgit-Baltistan. Its origins may be traced back to population shifts, poor facilities for political entities, and awareness of increasing religious radicalism in mainland Pakistan (Hunzai,2013). According to the author, one of the unique features through which each ethnic group identifies itself is religion. Secondly, the researcher disagrees with the author about inter-caste or inter-sect marriages. It was not typical for the ordinary people residing under a monarchy system of government; monarchs used it as a diplomatic tool to gain the interest of other states. From the researcher's perspective, inequality, racism, marginalization, and perception are the foundational pillars of extremism. The factor of inequality still exists in many parts of Gilgit, Hunza, and other parts of GB; a person's identity is their clan. They put their third name as their clan's name (Hunzai,2013).

Muhammad Rizwan and Hafiz Nasruddin discuss after getting independence, political activities rapidly started in the province. Gilgit Baltistan United Organization (GBUO), Gilgit Baltistan Student's Federation (GBSF), Ladakh Baltistan United Front (LBUF), Central Organization of Students (COS), Anjuman Tahafuz Haqooq-e-Baltistan (AJJHB) and the Ulema Council (UC) emerged as prominent political actors for the rights of the local people. With the help of bureaucracy, the federal government is destroying nationalist movements by labeling them anti-state (threat to state) to stop them from working in Gilgit Baltistan due to the high nationalism of the people of GB. The state keeps them deprived of practicing their political rights and depriving them of their freedom of speech, which is against democracy. Currently, the local government also does not possess all the authority (Rizwan & Nasiruddin, 2018).

From the researcher's perspective, this study contains a major void addressing GB's political and constitutional rights. It signifies the principal reason for active religious groups and evangelists functioning in the area. Through them, universities, colleges, and schools, people obtain a fallacious understanding of the Quran and Sunnah (Rizwan & Nasiruddin, 2018). Being marginal in politics, these parties, whether mainstream political parties or

religious parties based in GB. Bureaucracy or the federal government exploits these people by dividing them along sectarian lines.

Chaudhry Muhammad Azam indicates no involvement in organized religious groups and no physical violence (Ali, 2010). After proclaiming martial rule, Zia-ul-Haq financed national-based religious groups like sipah-e- sahaba Pakistan (SSP), which was then called to Millat-e-Islamia and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LEJ). A Deoband Sunni radical and jihadist movement in Pakistan and Afghanistan created their strongholds in Gilgit City (Chahudary, 2014). According to Muhammad Rizwan and Hafiz Nasir Uddin stated that the federal government, with bureaucratic support, has kept away the nationalist parties of Gilgit-Baltistan from the legislature and drew lines in the society on a sectarian basis. By taking advantage of the situation, both civil and military bureaucracies of the region exercise solitary powers but without any involvement of the local political leadership. A military General of Force Commander in Northern Areas exercises enormous influence over the administrative affairs of Gilgit Baltistan (Rizwan & Nasiruddin, 2018). The local government has a very nominal role directed by the Ministry of Kashmir affairs. It is one of the factors governments and bureaucracy frequently confront over laws and the exercise of authority. The Chief Minister of GB has minimal power given by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs; however, most of the power is possessed by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs.

Aziz Ali Dad proclaims that the lack of political consistency and exclusion from mainstream politics left a barrier between religion and politics, which was the primary reason for the province developing nationalist and religious movements (Dad, 2016). The grand strategy of the Federal government remained to exclude the nationalist parties of GB from politics to deter the nationalism of the people of GB. The Federal Government involved Mainstream political Parties and Religious Groups to attain this purpose. Nosheen Ali demonstrates that Gilgit Baltistan is always depicted as an idealist society, yet it is a security zone on the inside. She says that the state deprives GB of its political rights to wield direct authority (Ali, 2019).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Constructivism Theory**

Constructivism is a social theory concerned with the study of the relationship between agent and structure within a society and other patterns in world politics. Constructivism is a rational choice, by rational choice it intends to explain that the theory provides an understanding between the agent and environment. Constructivists claim that some of the significant aspects of international relations are historically and socially constructed. Constructivism focuses on norms rather than structure, the role of identity in shaping world politics, and the relationship between the agent and structure.

A classic example of constructivism can be taken as the Two-Nation Theory which laid the foundation for an Independent Muslim state with Islam as its Core Ideology. Based on a distinct culture, heritage, civilization, and History the Two-Nation theory was based. This study has been justified by the theory of Constructivism extended by Nicholas Onuf. Constructivists are of two types; conventional and liberal both believe that the development of a human perspective towards other concepts within and beyond society is built through social interaction. Constructivists argue that social norms and behavior of society play an integral role in the development of society rather than a structure; influential citizens and elites reshape society through their actions and interactions to attain their interests. The American and French Revolutions can be taken as an example of political constructivism.

Constructivists depict that society is constructed socially (by the interaction of people), which Combines this theory with the Research topic. When people live in a diversified society like Gilgit Baltistan, a highly diversified society people usually remain in clash due to different cultures, Ideology and interests, when these components are

implemented in a system it creates discrimination because the Influential ones will get a chance to exert their Ideology, culture and are likely to gain their interests.

Sectarianism in GB is a socially constructed phenomenon, First, Shia is the majority population in GB in a Sunni-dominant state; to counter Shia dominance in GB the Zia regime implemented a policy to make demographic changes by settling Sunni Punjabis in the Gilgit city and started indulging the youths in a religious organization. Secondly, the Shias are the majority in Gilgit city and were able to gain all the seats in GBA1, GBA2, and GBA-3 (Gilgit District constituency) more likely, but after the demographic changes made by the Zia Regime Sunni candidates triumphed the seats of this constituency and all the high-level jobs in each sector (Government or Private) were given to the Sunnis. This created insecurity among Shias that the government is working against them. Thirdly, Sunni-friendly curriculums were implemented throughout the province in Educational Institutes whether it was Government or Private. After these changes, the sect became people's identity.

Ethnicity is socially constructed and a multi-ethnic society can trigger violent conflicts sometimes. In multi-ethnic societies, the conflict of ethnic dominancy occurs when one group wants to dominate the other group residing in a particular area if the rest resist this can create conflict. Gilgit Baltistan is a diversified province with various ethnic groups and is already divided along cultural and ethnic lines. The people remained divided along ethnic and cultural lines which made it easier for external as well as internal forces to keep them divided along sectarian lines too. Human perception is built on how an individual interprets information after listening to and observing a piece of information. In Gilgit city, various madrassas were created by both sects the Shias were getting funds from Iran to build madrassas, and the Sunnis from the mainstream religious organization during the Regime of General Zia-ul-Haq. Due to the lack of fine educational institutes and the wrong interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah the youths were getting indoctrinated.

According to Nosheen Ali, the sectarian conflict in Gilgit was state-sponsored. First, by making demographic changes by settling Sunni Punjabis in Gilgit city. Second, in the Shia massacre of 1988 thousands of troops entered Gilgit from the NWFP and perished hundreds of Shias. The reason it is said to be state-sponsored is that entering a different province is not possible without the help of local authorities and the number of troops was around 7 thousand. Influential Leaders of respective sects used various techniques to indoctrinate their people through wrong interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah. Re-education is a technique in which the agent breaks the identity of a person or a group of people and indulges their version in that particular group to gain their interest. There are various tools present within a society that is considered the most effective tools for re-educating or instilling one's belief in society including, Language, culture, and Religion. Sometimes Leaders during their speeches or other community gathering use the tool of language to inspire or persuade the people.

Constructivists argue that foreign policy is influenced by language and the elements of political and moral constructivism. In the case of GB, the people were already deprived of their political rights they just followed their ideals whether they were competent or not. The Decision-making bodies of the Region were designed in a way that they cannot formulate their policies without the Federal Government. The politics in GB is institutionalized but has very little access to decision-making, policy Recommendation, and other substantive power.

### **Application of the Theory**

This theory is exploring the relationship between society and knowledge in the development of an individual. The Theory suggests that *the social world* plays an integral role in developing a person's narrative toward other objects. According to the constructivist theory, the most effective way of interaction with the social world; is through various community or social gatherings. *Social changes* affect people's lives remarkably. The influence and expansion of Western culture in a non-western society is also an example of

social changes. Change in a society occurs through these mediums they all are interrelated means a change in one area can bring a change in all of them.

The Term *Technology* refers to the application of scientific knowledge to gain, method, system, and device as a result to obtain any objective used for practical purposes. Technology affects the way a person, think, learn and communicates. According to William Ogburn's theory of social change, technology has the potential to bring about a cultural Revolution culture includes codes of manner, dress, language, Religion, and ritual. *Communication* is the complex process of receiving, selecting, processing and interpreting information. When a person engages in Interpersonal communication a person gives and receives information by verbal or non-verbal means it provides and helps relate with another person. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was known for his astonishing speech and communicative skills. In Religion the main barrier to credible communication is the lack of knowledge of the audience about the other religion or Sect. So, this affects a person's communication to a great extent. Ethnocentrism provides the basis for Extremism in a society.

### Proposition

1. Social gatherings are recognized as the most effective and powerful means of social interaction in a society. These include face-to-face interaction, community gatherings, religious gatherings, sports, and cultural festivals, and religious tourism. Other than this mass media, and personal interaction.
2. In most parts of Gilgit Baltistan there is no easy access to mass media, and the internet thus people use social networking modes of propagation till high authorities.

### Hypotheses

The rise in sectarian tension across GB is mainly due to the staggering political system of the province, the rampant Religious Extremism within educational institutes, and Ethnicity. A peaceful GB can contribute enormously to the economy of Pakistan from its tourism industry, natural resources, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CEPC).

H0 (Null Hypothesis): Political System, Religious Extremism, and diversity do not affect Sectarianism within GB.

H1 (Alternative Hypothesis): Political System, Religious Extremism, and diversity are likely the reasons GB got entangled in the wave of Sectarianism.

### Material and Methods

The researcher conducted research in Gilgit Baltistan, being an inhabitant of that area, it was easier to collect data and access every need easily. For data collection questionnaire was distributed online to get primary data. The researcher has used the quantitative method to collect and analyze data.

- **Universe:** The universe of the research was Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan. The researcher selected this universe due to certain reasons.
- **Unit of Analysis:** The researcher conducted research in three categories, students, civil servants, and academicians, thus both males and females were targeted.
- **Sampling Frame:** A Random sampling method was used for collecting samples. It was difficult to target every individual to fill out the questionnaire accordingly. Therefore, the researcher decided to choose a random sampling method where the

targeted audiences were willing to fill out the questionnaire precisely filled the questionnaire.

- **Sample Size:** The researcher collected data from a chosen sample of hundred and eighteen (118) respondents.
- **Tools for Data Collection:** The questionnaire was designed and distributed online for a fill-up.
- **Techniques for Data Collection:** The researcher contacted academicians and civil servants and send the questionnaire to the educational institutes for a fill-up.
- **Pre-Testing:** The researcher took ten respondents to pre-test the questionnaire. All the respondents were targeted from the same area where the researcher conducted her research work. The pre-test results showed that there were no flaws in the questionnaire.
- **Data Analysis:** The whole data was analyzed through a proper statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 21. The researcher used a cross-tabulation method for checking out the significance level of the data.

## Results and Discussion

The research questions were, how has the fragile political system contributed to the Growth of Sectarianism across GB, what are the other internal factors contributing to sectarianism in the province, how do the differences in ethnicity, culture, and demographic change contribute to the growth of sectarianism in the region and how has religious extremism within educational Institutes changed the youths' perception towards the other sect. When the researcher exerted it, findings clearly said that the people of the province are divided into ethnolinguistic lines, which also divided them politically and socially. So, the Null Hypothesis was rejected after analyzing the data collected through the questionnaire and the H1 (Alternative hypothesis), which says that, the political system, Religious Extremism within educational institutes across GB, and difference in Ethnicity are the major causes of Sectarianism across the Gilgit Baltistan.

**Table 1**  
**Sectarianism exists in Gilgit Baltistan**

	Academia		Total
	Yes	No	
Academia	10		10
Total	10		10

This Table above shows that in response to the statement Sectarianism exists in Gilgit Baltistan 15 Academicians out of the total 115 including males and females 100% agreed with the statement.

**Table 2**  
**The division of people on ethnolinguistic lines is the reason for weak government and sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan**

	Academia		Total
	Yes	No	
Academia	9	1	10
Total	9	1	10

The above table highlighted that majority of the respondents agreed with the hypothetical statement that the division of people on ethnolinguistic lines is the reason for

weak government and sectarianism within the province. The table shows that 90% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 10% disagreed with the statement.

**Table 3**

**The GB Council strengthens the role of bureaucracy because the chief secretary in the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs is a federal bureaucrat and the Governor of GB is a political appointee of the President of Pakistan and is the major cause of weak government**

	Academia		Total
	Yes	No	
Academia	8	2	10
Total	8	2	10

The Table above shows 80% of the respondents agreed with the statement, The Federal government governs GB through the Ministry of Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs and Bureaucracy and 20% disagreed with the statement. The Majority of respondents agree that bureaucracy holds more power than the Government which gives the Government little power for decision-making for the province.

**Table 4**

**With a weak political system and incompetent leaders, sectarianism increased in GB**

	Academia		Total
	Yes	No	
Academia	10	0	10
Total	10	0	10

The table above shows 100% of the respondents agreed with the statement, with a weak political system and incompetent leader sectarianism increasing in Gilgit Baltistan.

**Table 5**

**All the major decisions are taken by the Federal government through the GB Council which should be the cause of the weak political system of the province**

	Academia		Total
	Yes	No	
Academia	10	0	10
Total	10	0	10

The above table shows that 100% of the respondents agreed with the hypothetical statement, All the major decisions are taken by the Federal Government through the GB Council which should be the cause of the weak political system of the province.

**Table 6**

**The administration of the institute should hold a neutral point of view towards every sect within Islam**

	Academia		Total
	Yes	No	
Academia	10	0	10
Total	10	0	10

The above table shows that 100% of the respondents agreed with the statement, the administration of the institute should hold a neutral point of view towards every sect within Islam.

**Table 7**

**Education could play a strong role in creating awareness about diversity**



	Academia	Total
	Yes	
Academia	10	10
Total	10	10

This table highlighted that 100% of the respondents agreed with the statement, Education could play a strong role in creating awareness about diversity.

**Table 8**  
**Education could play a strong role in creating awareness about diversity**

	Civil Servants	Total
	Yes	
Civil Servants	10	10
Total	10	10

The table above highlighted that 100% of the respondents agreed with the statement, education could play a strong role in creating awareness about diversity.

**Table 9**  
**Knowledge and tolerance of every sect practice residing within GB should be delivered to students through educational institutes**

	Civil Servants		Total
	Yes	No	
Civil Servants	9	1	10
Total	9	1	10

The table above uncovered that 90% of the respondents agreed with the statement, knowledge, and tolerance of every sect practice residing within GB should be delivered to students through educational institutes and 10% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

**Table 10**  
**The chairman of GB Council is the prime minister of Pakistan and all the important decision-making power that belongs to him is the cause that (GBLA) has very limited power**

	Civil Servants		Total
	Yes	No	
Civil Servants	8	2	10
Total	8	2	10

The table above shows that 80% of respondents agreed with the statement, The chairman of GB Council is the prime minister of Pakistan and all the important decision-making power belongs to him because GBLA has very limited power and 20% disagreed with this statement.

**Table 11**  
**Teaching practices and curriculum designs have fair shares of dividing students along sectorial lines**

	Civil Servants		Total
	Yes	No	
Civil Servants	4	6	10
Total	4	6	10

19 confessed that 60% of the respondent disagreed with the statement, teaching practices, and curriculum designs have fair shares of dividing students along sectorial lines and 40% agreed with the statement.

## Discussion

In the first stage problem of any particular phenomenon is find out then, it becomes easier to cure. The same theory is applied in this research. Sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan has a huge impact on the socio-economic as well as the political life of the residents of Gilgit Baltistan. This research focuses on the root causes of the ongoing sectarian rifts in the province. The hypothetical statement, the rise in sectarian tension across GB is mainly due to the staggering political system of the province, the rampant Religious Extremism within educational institutes, and Ethnicity. A peaceful GB can contribute enormously to the economy of Pakistan from its tourism industry, and natural resources and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CEPC) proved to be correct. After analyzing the data collected through the questionnaire the results show that the staggering political system, religious extremism within educational institutes, and ethnicity serve as the foundation for the rise in sectarianism within the province.

To analyze the data, the researcher collected data from 118 respondents, the researcher finds out that differences in ethnicity, weak political system, and religious extremism within educational institutes were the major causes of sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan. The data was carefully analyzed by a cross-tabulation method which shows that majority of the respondents agree with the statements. It was primary data; the benefits of primary data are numerous, enlisting some are that it is unique and is never published anywhere before, and it is authentic and reliable.

Furthermore, Gilgit Baltistan is a diversified region with different ethnic groups. Ethnic conflict is a conflict between two or more ethnic groups residing within the same territory; the conflict arises when one group fights to dominate its position within that particular territory. The sources of such conflicts are economic, power, social status, and political. Ethnic conflicts are thus similar to other political conflicts because both contain some sort of interest. In Gilgit Baltistan ethnic conflict is another major source that actively contributes to dividing people along ethnolinguistic lines.

The results of the data analysis uncovered that majority of the respondents disagree with the H0 (Null Hypothesis), Political System, Religious Extremism and diversity do not affect Sectarianism within GB and highlights that majority of the respondent's responses recorded agree with the H1 (Alternative Hypothesis) which says, Political System, Religious Extremism and diversity are likely the reasons GB got entangled in the wave of Sectarianism.

Moreover, Gilgit Baltistan is home to the world's highest mountains Skardu is its hub. Each year numbers of mountaineers visit Skardu for expeditions. Moreover, Gilgit Baltistan is famous for its flora and fauna due to their natural ecological zones around 1000 species of vascular plants and endemic plants are found in the GB. Gilgit Baltistan provides the shortest trade route to china which connects it to the rest of the world.

According to world travels the total contribution of tourism to the GDP of Pakistan in 2016 was US\$7.6 billion and the average predicted for 2025 is US\$1 trillion. Tourism in GB can enhance the lives of the residents and can contribute greatly to the economy of Pakistan from its natural resources, tourism industry, and trade routes. The maintenance of peace in Gilgit Baltistan is also necessary for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

## Conclusion

Gilgit Baltistan not only holds importance for India and China but also holds great importance for Pakistan. Gilgit Baltistan is known for its beauty which attracts several

tourists including locals and foreigners. Tourism in the region has benefited not only Pakistan but has also helped in making the living standards of the people better. Gilgit Baltistan is the region where one of the corridors of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) the China-Pakistan economic Corridor (CPEC) exists. Furthermore, GB is famous for its natural resources.

The region got independence on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1947 from the Dogra rulers of Kashmir and after 15 days of self-governance, the Gilgit Agency decided to join the state of Pakistan. Sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan is not a new phenomenon many of the activists and youth think that it is state-sponsored. Sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan amplified after the Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Islamization policy of General Zia-ul-Haq. Sectarianism not only affected the socio-economic lives of the residents but also affected the political and educational system of the region. Despite being an important region for Pakistan GB is still deprived of its constitutional rights, and the federal government has always kept its stronghold in the political system of the province. The federal government holds all the important decision-making powers for the region which is why Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) has limited power for legislation for the province. It is structured in a way that the Federal Government passes the bill made by the GBLA through the GB Council and the GB Council is headed by the prime minister of Pakistan. So, eventually, all the legislation for the province is done by the federal government. The Government of GB is institutionalized but does not possess power (Muzaffar, Khan & Karamat, 2017).

In the first stage problem of any issue is find out then it becomes easy to design a conflict management mechanism. The same theory is applied to this research. After carefully analyzing the data collected through questionnaires in three categories including students, civil servants, and academia, the researcher finds out that the majority of the respondent's response recorded agrees with the hypothetical statement that, weak Political System, Religious Extremism within educational institutes and diversity are likely the reasons GB got entangled in the wave of Sectarianism.

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