

Group Conformity And Individuals' Behavior Towards Adopting Sectarian Identities

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ABSTRACT

Religion is considered as an integral part of individuals' daily routine practices in the society. People perform religious obligations very rigorously and avoid all the religiously declared prohibited acts. This current study aims, to identify the role of group conformity towards adopting sectarian identities by individuals with the emphasis of exploring the practices of sectarian identities that causes an environment of inter-group disintegration in the community. This study will be significant in recommending initiatives that can create an environment of harmony between people belonging to different sectarian believers. Qualitative research method was applied to analyze group conformity and individuals' behavior towards practicing sectarian identities. Population was based on rural setup of Manddi Faiz Abad. Twelve participants were selected through purposive sampling technique. Structured interview guide was used as data collection tool and themes was extracted to describe existing trends and patterns regarding group conformity and sectarian identity construction. Results revealed efficacious role of group conformity to encourage individuals towards adopting and practicing any particular sectarian identity in the society. Results highlighted that, desire of getting religious hegemony and supremacy with the courtesy of group conformity that make individuals intolerant on sectarian grounds and creates an environment of disintegration in the society. Sectarian difference not only creates religious

boundaries among people but also causing socio-cultural cracks between individuals having different sectarian identities. Current study stated positive communication and paying respect to everyone without considering others' sectarian identity can terminate sectarian based hostility in the society.

Keywords: *Group Conformity, Identity Construction, Intra-group Harmony, Sectarian Disintegration, Manddi Faiz Abad.*

Introduction

Background of the Study

Pakistan is having diversified population that includes multiple ethnic and religious identities. This type of ethno-religious diversity becomes a rigid dilemma of disagreement between different groups. In our society, such diversified ideologies of particular socio-religious groups lead their individuals towards intolerance in the society. Due to the lack of dis-integrity on the basis of ethno-religious believes, people create an environment of intolerance for themselves in the society that leads them into immense sectarian disintegration¹. Sectarian fundamentalism is becoming such a rigid part of perceptual and practical lives of individuals that motivates them to make separate sub-religious identical boundaries on the basis of sectarian mind-sets and deny to accept other's ideological and practical religious believes². In Pakistan, sectarian conflicts were intensely observed in late 1970s and early 1980s. Due to internal socio-political changes, Islamic revolution in Iran and effect of the Arab world cause the birth to sectarianism in Pakistan³.

There are two main sects exist in Pakistan named as; Ahle-Sunat Wal Jama'at (Sunni) and the second one is Ahle-Tashe' (Shia). These both major sects are further divided into sub-sects. The Sunni sect is having three sub-categories as; Barelvi, Ahle-Hadis and Deoband, whereas Shia sect is consist of Isma'ilis, Bohras and Ithna 'Asharis. In Pakistan, Shias are having 15-20% of population whereas Sunnis are in majority; remaining 80-85%⁴. In Muslim societies, each sect has their

different ideological and conceptual believes regarding offering religious practices. Religious followers have some disagreements regarding certain religious matters and these disagreements create Ideological, perceptual and behavioral ties most of the times. Practicing and perceiving same sectarian identity facilitate individuals towards the formation of group conformity through which they enhance their inner-group integrity. These ideological percussion dents the cumulative connectedness in the society in terms of social, cultural and religious aspects.

Statement of Problem:

Sectarianism is one of the most lethal and disturbing issue of our society that damaging our social, cultural and religious integrity as a whole nation and a whole Ummah⁵. Pakistan is intensely divided into sectarian delimitation that dents the state of harmony and combines among socio-cultural, religious and ethnic groups⁶. Pakistani society had seen number of bomb blasts, suicide attacks and many terrorist acts as the result of sectarian conflicts. Such type of ideological collisions most of the time turned out as the grave threat to the sovereignty and stability of the country. As a nation, we hardly accept and bear the ideological presence of opposite groups either on the basis of social, political, cultural or religious sphere. Although it is very critical and ultra-emotional issue, but it is important to identify the logical and ideological causes which encourage people having strong group affiliation regarding sectarian identities that enables them to build a socially beneficial environment of out-group integration in the society. The issue comes when the inner group conformity lead towards opting particular sectarian identities and create an environment of abusing and taunting each other to prove that their particular sect is on the right path and follow the true believers of religion.

These types of actions and perceptions cause heavy indentation in the socio-cultural, political and religious proceeding of any society and create anarchy situation which cause disintegration and hatred relationship among citizens. So it is important to evaluate those factors and characteristics that lead group conformity

towards rigid sectarian identities and cause dis-integration in the society. In this case the role of academia and academic institutes is also very vital to induct the behaviors that are based on sectarian tolerance in the mindset of citizens at very personal and basic level.

Objectives of the study:

- To explain, how group conformity is creating sectarian identities on religious grounds?
- To identify, how individuals conceptualize any particular sectarian identity?
- To analyze the existing forms of practices regarding sectarian identities in the society?
- To understand the promotion of disintegration between different sub-religious groups.
- To find out solutions that can build an environment of harmony and integration among the different religious sectarian groups.

Research Question:

Q: 1 How group conformity is creating sectarian identities of individuals?

Q: 2 how do individual conceptualize and practice sectarian identities in the society?

Q: 3 How sectarian identities promote an environment of disintegration in the society?

Q: 4 what initiatives can discourage sectarian ties and create an environment of harmony between different sub-religious groups?

Significance of the Study

Pakistan is suffering from much diversified social, ethnic, political and religious conflicts which are now a hot topic for the researchers to perform various academic researches on these topics⁷. Sectarian extremism in Pakistan is becoming such a devastating matter which dents the social, religious, political, cultural and even economic activities of the nation. Religious rigidity dents the environment integrity

and harmony towards the progress of society on collective basis⁸. This study will identify the main ideological reasons on ground based circumstances that lead Individuals towards the practice of their particular sectarian identities which motivate them to build such sectarian wall around themselves just to contain their social conformity in their own group.

These social actions disable individuals and group of individuals to listen and tolerate other's perspective and believe about religion and cause disintegration in the society. The findings of this study will enable people to identify the best practices that can play a vital part to dismiss such lethal sectarian coverings regarding religious perceptions of individuals in any socio-religious groups. This study can be helpful to educate the importance of out-group integration and aware that the need of social bridging is also very crucial as along with inner group conformity.

Literature Review

The history of sectarianism in Pakistan is old as its independence, its intense beginning was observed during 1970s and 1980s, due to the political and religious reforms under the regime of Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, which promotes the sectarian divide into Sunnis and Shia's where Sunnis was further divided into three sub-groups. Results of a study revealed that, the existence of sectarian behaviors in any particular group have certain factors that lead their followers towards having intense sectarian believes, these factors can be based on external as well as internal factors. Most of the time, external applications provide healthy inducement towards conceptual forming of individuals⁹.

Individuals mainly involve in sectarian based violence due to two reasons, one is their intensity while performing religious practices and the second one is the personal preference of sub-believes and forms of Sharī'ah. The consistency of sharing same religious believes in any particular group motivates its individuals

keep their inner group bond stronger that attach their emotional belongings with that particular religious group. The attachment of individuals with their religious sub-groups unable them to strengthen their emotional linkages with other groups having different perceptions to understand and practice religion¹⁰.

A qualitative study was conducted to reveal the factors of sectarianism in Pakistan, which identify the lack of consensus as a nation regarding the understanding of religious sub-believes and practices¹¹. Sectarianism is such an intense phenomenon that covers all three aspects (micro, meso, macro) to understand multiple dimensions, sectarian groups have their intense belongings with their particular group members at very vast level, the inner group bonding increase the conceptual sameness regarding particular ideology and minimize the level of group bridging with other groups having some conceptual differences. These sectarian groups facilitate their followers in every thick and thin situation that allow them to marginalize those individuals or group of individuals those are having perceptual differences that lead these groups towards hatred activities and cause disintegration in the society¹².

A theoretical study based on religious sectarianism evaluate that, the socio-political factors are having much importance as the conceptual factors that generalize the Muslim Ummah in two different ideologies in Muslim heartland from Lebanon to Pakistan, one is named as Shi'as and the other one is Sunnis. These two groups having different thoughts regarding the religious practices are conceptualizing their differences on the basis of socio-political factors which lead their differences towards conceptual formation of religious deformation¹³. Sectarian activities create an environment of disintegrate in the society and cause of big hurdle in the path of peace maintenance and human solidarity in the society. The adaptation of sectarian behaviors by the individuals facilitate the intense environment in any community, people of different groups follow their particular group perceptions that damages the scenario of harmony and connectedness among different groups and sub-

groups of the society. The lack of tolerance in the thinking and behaviors of people having firm religious believes encourage them to perceive their religious authority over other groups that are having different practical values to follow religion¹⁴.

There is a huge lack of performing values and believes in our practical routine, the positive impact of education will not become fruitful without the true implementation in daily day routine, teachers have to become a role model for their students in understanding the existence of every single human being and promote the lesson to also aspect the ideologies and values of communities other than yours. Through utilizing individuals' capabilities in proper way we can create a healthy environment of integrity and harmony at cumulative social sphere. Parent-teacher meetings to address specific and particular issues of students also play a positive part to develop student's personality. Researchers concluded that, the role of university administrators and leaders in establishing harmony and eradicating radicalization is very crucial, there is highly need of policy making for hamper extremism in universities and eliminate intolerance through curriculum¹⁵

The insolation of intense sectarian perception in the minds of individuals lead them into extreme level of conflict activities, such type of mental insolation become highly lethal for the peace process in the society that impuissant the socio-political authorities to control sectarian activities¹⁶. A phenomenological based study was held to identify the causes of intense sectarian behaviors adopted by the people having firm group affiliation based on religious fundamentals, results revealed that there are such ideological as well as political factors those encourage them to make an emotional bond with the people which are having conceptual harmony regarding religious believes and practices. The conceptual harmony with in the group dents the holistic integrity at macro level in the society¹⁷. The conceptual differences regarding religious values create a hurdle in the way of social, economic, cultural and environmental prosperity in the society¹⁸.

These results are testifying the importance of this research on this particular study and provide credibility, authenticity and prior path to link this study with previous researches. Most of the results revealed the acceptance of sectarian identity construction through the encouragement of family socialization and peer groups. These sectarian identities lead individuals towards religious strife. The ways and procedures of following any particular sectarian identity are missing in the current literature, so this should also be explained to give more clear way and understanding about this particular topic. This study focused the forms of practicing sectarian identities under the umbrella of group conformity and to find out the solutions that can build an environment of harmony and integration among the different religious sectarian groups.

Methodology

Research Type

This study was based on qualitative approach of research under the umbrella of interpretivist paradigm that focused the unique and in-depth perception of participants. This study was based on explanatory form of research to explain the particular ideological and practical causes that lead people having firm sectarian identities on the basis of group conformity in rural setup of Manddi Faiz Abad.

Inquiry strategy

Phenomenological approach was applied as the inquiry strategy in this study that explains the phenomenon of sectarian identity construction on the basis of group conformity which leads individuals towards out-group disintegration in the society.

Defining Population of the Research

The population of this research was the region of Manddi Faiz Abad¹⁹ and the target population was particularly rural setup of Manddi Faiz Abad. The reason of selecting this area as research population is its sectarian diversity in very less densely populated area and large number of sectarian conflicts happened in this

town since last twelve years. People of this area are intensely associated with their particular sectarian groups. Rural area of Manddi Faiz Abad is having strong representation of major four sects (Barelvi, Ahle Hādīs, Ahle Tash‘ and Deoband). These sects are having their separate mosques to offer prayers; Barelvis are having eight mosques under their religious practices whereas other three sects have two mosques each under their authority for religious offerings.

Sample and sample technique

Sample was selected through purposive sampling technique and collect response from such respondents those are having firm sectarian identities and participate in their particular sectarian gatherings, because they could better identify and explain the ideological and practical features that motivate and encourage them lead by their groups to adopt a rigid stance regarding sectarian believes and practices. The sample size of data collection had same representation from four major sects (Ahle-Sunnat/Barelvi, Deobandi, Ahle-Hadees & Ahle-Tash‘), three participants will be selected from each sectarian group for the interviews, by that the total sample size of this study consisted twelve participants till the saturation point reached²⁰.

Exclusion and Inclusion criteria

For this study, respondent participants was males as a unit of analysis because, males are more dominant in Pakistani society, mostly males are considered as the representatives in religious matters and participate as the sectarian functionalities are concerned in the social community. These participants will be consist of mid aged from 20–30 age of years, because studies revealed that, individuals having age between 20-30 years are having more mental acceptance of identities that they want to associated²¹.

Data collection tool

Data collection tool for this study was comprised of structured and in-depth questions that focus the holistic and core perception of an individual regarding

those ideological and practical factors which are inducted through their particular groups that lead them towards out-group disintegration. The interview guide was having four main research questions those highlighted the role of group conformity towards creating sectarian identities, conceptualization and practices of sectarian identities, promotion of sectarian based disintegration and explanation of such initiatives those can discourage sectarian ties and create an environment of harmony between different sub-religious groups. These four questions were further divided into sub-question that describes the main phenomenon in more specific dimensions.

Data analysis technique

Response of the questions asked from participants through structure interviews was analyzed through thematic analysis, which explained the existing ideological and practical phenomenon and trends in different sectarian groups which motivate them to adopt a rigid sectarian identity in the society. Through thematic analysis, response of respondents was classified and summarized into different themes and categories to examine the most repeated responses got from the respondents regarding their mental attachment with any particular sectarian group.

Data Analyses

Thematic technique was used for analysis after the collection of data through structured interviews from selected participants for this particular study. The main objectives of this study was, to identify the role of group conformity towards creating sectarian identity on religious grounds, ways of approaching and opting any particular sectarian identity by individuals. Furthermore this study revealed the existing forms of conceptualizing and practicing particular sectarian identities in the society. Current study also explained the ways of promoting disintegration between different sub-religious groups. And at last but not the least to find out solutions that can build an environment of harmony and integration between different religious-sectarian groups.

To attain required research objectives, four main research questions were formed on the basis of these five research objectives. These four research questions further contain sub-questions to cover the multiple dimensions and aspects of this particular topic. Two pilot interviews were conducted before the official and proper data collection to test the overall credibility and perfection of interview guide that was based on structured sub-questions. Pilot interviews remained very useful, selected participants responded up to the mark and required data was gathered according to the interview guide designed for formal question answers from selected sample with in the research population. Few changings and additions were made in the interview guide after doing pilot interviews on reasoning and analytical basis.

After organizing a tour of selected population (Manddi Faiz Abad), data was collected from twelve selected participants of four different sectarian groups (3 from each sect) including Barelvīs, Deobandīs, Ahle-Hadīs and Ahle-Tashi's. On the basis of methodological criteria selected participants was interviewed under the consideration of research ethics. All the participants responded very freely and openly. Probing method allow them to provide in-depth answers related to present research topic. All twelve interviews were completed in five days. Responses of selected participants were transcript into written form and main themes were subtracted for making codes and further data analysis. Following part contains thematic analysis according to the research questions regarding group conformity and individuals' behavior towards practicing sectarian identities.

- **Group conformity is creating sectarian identities**

First question of this study was based on general conceptualization of participants about group conformity and its role towards creating sectarian identities. This question contained nine sub-questions those covers all basic dimensions of main concept about group conformity and formation of sectarian identities. Sub-

questions were based on the; general perception of individuals about terms like group conformity, identity and sect. Further questions were based on; why an individual own any particular sectarian identity, how an individual is connected with his/her family, peer and religious belongings and how these group based relationships facilitate or encourage them to construct any sectarian identity. Responses of these questions were analyzed in thematic form as following.

Participants were having consensus about the general explanation of term 'group conformity'. Respondents unfolded that, group conformity is a binding force that provide a way and method to individuals for the sake of constructing collective platform to implement their particular ideological practices with more feasibility and insurance. Participants further describe that, group conformity enhance the belongingness between particular set of individuals and enhance their level of self-reliance on each other and increase socio-religious intimacy in conceptual and practical meanings. Respondents from four different sectarian groups interpreted the word 'identity' as a symbol of self-recognition. Identity can be based on individuality and also group oriented. Identity provides a sense of cohesion to practice particular sectarian believes in daily day routine matters. Identity can be based on culture, cast, creed, color, nationality, religion, sect and many more.

All the participants responded very similar regarding their explanation of word 'sect'. Sect is a group of individuals having particular religious ideology and practical presentation. Participants considered sect as a platform to perform religious and sub-religious activities in their daily day routine. Sect is a group of people having same religious thoughts and perceptions which facilitate them to practice these ideologies and perceptions collectively and feasibly. Respondents described their close and emotional relationships with family members, peer groups, social relatives and other belongings. Mutual social, emotional and behavioral attachment promotes the sense of sectarian belongingness in the family or friends' circle. They proudly presented positive connection with their relatives

and encouraged the socio-emotional bond between themselves. Religious belongingness is so strong that these participants perform most of the religious activities together. The sense of positive association enhances their group conformity in more beneficial manner.

Participants affirm their strong and positive relationship with in their particular religious communities e.g. Madāris, Mosques, sectarian based societies and religious gatherings. They expressed enthusiastic attachment with their sectarian based religious belongings. Some of the participants though, practicing same culture become a way towards the enhancement of group conformity between set of individuals. Practice same functionalities in the society provide individuals to facilitate each other and become a collective unit to survive in the life. Culture involves each and every action of daily day routine and when people have consensus upon cultural attributes, things become smooth and easier and people get connected with each other. Culture provides identity to individuals and unites them under its umbrella. Culture is one of the strong connecting bonds that enhance the sense of group conformity between individuals or group of individuals in the society.

Some participants also thought that, same cast, religious sect and achievement of common socio-economic goals are also very important factors towards the enhancement of group conformity between individuals in the society. These factors provide commonality to the individuals to keep their belonging closer to them and make a strong socio-emotional relationship between them. Cast provides social identity to individuals which become a stretch when people own same cast get connected and create an environment of harmony in the society. Same is the case with people having same religious sect or common socio-political goals in the society. The entire participants admitted that, their family members and religious belongings encourage them to stay stick and be proud on their particular sectarian

identity. The role of group belongingness or group conformity is very vital towards the opting any particular sectarian identity for individuals.

- **Individuals' way of conceptualizing and practicing sectarian identities in the society**

Second research question was based on seven sub-questions those covered the dimensions related ways to approach and practice particular sectarian based identities. This section of the study described, how individuals follow and practice their sub-religious ideologies, who mostly motivates individuals to take practical part in religious activities, how much individuals familiar about the features and functions of their own sectarian practices, activities performed by the individuals having any particular sectarian identities, inducements those encourage individuals to practice particular religious believes and how individuals get satisfied while performing such sub-religious sectarian ideologies in the society? Responses regarding these questions were analyzed as following.

Participants revealed, they own their particular sectarian identity through socialization process like other social and behavioral characteristics. Respondents described, they perform religious activities according to their sectarian believes. These sectarian groups are having different ways to perform religious activities and their followers strictly implement particular sectarian practices while performing any religious act. Representations from Barelvī sect described their particular sectarian events where they participate very actively. Participants showed their great input towards having practical part in sectarian based activities. Participants were having strong affiliation with their particular sectarian groups. Representatives from four different sectarian groups accepted the role of family, peer groups and religious teachers to take practical part in religious activities. Participants described that, most of the time family members ask them to be active in religious practices and sometime friends and religious belongings become a

reason of motivation when we observe them while participation voluntarily. Participants from four sectarian groups were well aware about the feature and functions of their particular sectarian identities.

Participants highlighted the benefit and positive consequence in the shape of emotional and mental satisfaction while performing their particular sectarian based religious activities. All participants were agreed on the statement that, through practicing particular sectarian ideologies, individuals become a connecting force for each other with in the particular sectarian group. People perform sectarian based religious activities to unite themselves on the religious and sectarian fundamentals and create an environment of group conformity with in the community.

- **Sectarian identities promoting the sense of disintegration in the society**

Third question of this was based on eight sub-questions covering the dimensions of main research question regarding the promotion of disintegration between opposite sectarian groups in the society. These sub-questions contained the information based on communication pattern between individuals of different sectarian identities, level of participation in the events of opposite sectarian groups, relationship status between the participants of different sectarian religious groups, difficulties faced by the individuals while performing their particular sectarian activities, particular sectarian based activities those create disturbing environment in the society. This section also identified the personal experiences of individuals about the sectarian based conflicts happened in the community and how owning and practicing any particular sectarian identities become a cause of sectarian hostile and create an environment of disintegration between different sectarian group in the society. Abstracted themes about these questions are as following.

Individuals had inadequate social and religious based relationships with representatives of other sectarian groups and prefer to make any socio-cultural

relationship with people of their own particular sect which cause negative impact on community based relationships. Intra-group affiliation between individuals on the basis of sectarian entities dents the bridging process between different sectarian groups. Participants from different sectarian groups were having inadequate social based relationship between the people having the sectarian based differences. Representatives from all sectarian groups agreed upon the fact that, due to having different sectarian identities, individuals faces restriction to build strong social, cultural, religious or even political alliances in the society. All the participant agreed on the concepts regarding sectarian based differences that, people mostly do not positively engage their selves in the socio-religious matters and activities of opposite sectarian groups.

Respondents explained the negative effect of strong inner-group affiliation of individuals having same sectarian ideologies on connecting criteria of bridging opposite sectarian groups. Participant was the opinion that, lack of having patience about understanding and accepting the concept of opposite sectarian groups is one of the major reason why owning and practicing particular sectarian identities lead individuals and group of individuals towards conflicts and disintegration environment. Representatives of sectarian groups consider their sectarian ideologies and practices superior and other's way of perceiving and practicing religious acts inferior, that create an environment of animosity between opposite sectarian groups. Participant pointed out the absence of positive interaction between the higher ranked representatives of sectarian groups. The lack of interacting relationship between opposite sectarian representatives at group level entourage the sectarian based conflicting factors to promote the sense of negativity between individuals having opposite ways and perceptions to perform religious actions. Participants thought that, when individuals having opposite sectarian identities perform crude sectarian discussions without having enough grip and knowledge on the topic lead them towards individual based conflicts and matters

get more intense and become a shape of group based collision. Individuals defined their particular sectarian identity by hook or the crook and impose their own religious perceptions on each other. The war of talks becomes so ruthless that creates an environment of hostility and enmity between representatives of different sectarian groups.

- **Initiatives that can discourage sectarian ties and create an environment of harmony between different sub-religious groups**

Fourth and last question of this study was comprised on five sub-questions to describe those initiatives that can play a mediatory role to discourage sectarian based ties and become a cause to bring cohesion between different sectarian groups. These sub-questions was covered the practical conceptual framework explained by respondents. The questions was to find out; those factors that can create a sense of harmony between individuals having opposite sectarian ideologies, role of an individual to discourage sectarian based conflicts in the society, role of socio-religious communities to discourage sectarian based ties in the society, the contribution civil administration to discourage religious clashes and lastly, a framework to impart tolerance among the individuals of opposite religious sects and have an environment of harmony and respect for each other. The responses of selected participants and their suggestion regarding these questions are as following.

Participants was the opinion that, sectarian conflicts start from the initial discussions between the representatives of different sectarian groups on religious matters and try to inforce their own particular sectarian ideologies on each other. Participants suggested that, religious discussions between individuals of different sectarian ideologies should be discouraged in the community and promote the sense of religious collectiveness in the society. Respondents thought that, if we

give respect to each and every person consider him/her as a human being, not on the basis of sect, religion, cast, color or anything else.

Representatives of all sects agreed on the fact that, if we respect each other as a true human being, we will become closer to each other and live peacefully. They added that, we are first human beings, then Muslims then Barelvī, Shia, Ahle-Ḥadis or Deobandī, we should keep our self-unite on the basis of our first two identities. Participants intensely highlighted the point to terminate sectarian based hostility through avoiding blame game scenarios on sectarian and religious matters. Respondents also discourage the ways and patterns of taunting each other's sectarian ideological believes. Every person has his/her own religious perception and everyone proudly own and practice particular sectarian ideology, hostility arise when someone negatively hit the identity of others. Participant thought that, we can develop close relationships on the basis of social and cultural entities. Residents can make strong social connections through enhancing cultural based activities beyond of each other's sectarian identities. Humans are the social animals and enhancing social relationship with others makes them unite and firm in the society.

Participants also suggested that, positive communication should continue to abolish miss-understandings between the representatives of different sectarian identities. There should be committee including all individuals from all four major sectarian groups to resolve sectarian based ties between individuals having opposite sectarian identities. Socialization can play very vital role to induct positive characteristics in individuals. Parents have their core responsibility to impart such capabilities and qualities in the perceptions and actions of their children that enable them to become a sensible and interactive person in the society. Participant though, parents should educate their children from their childhood to respect every person, listen the perception of everyone and try to stay tolerate on hard situations. Socialization of individuals builds their personal

personalities and develops their way to perceive different things. Socialization patterns build individuals' capabilities to avoid sectarian based conflicts and stay connected with their belongings beyond considering any sectarian differences in the society. Participants consider very vital role of religious leaders towards terminating sectarian hostility between individuals in the society.

Individuals have very strong emotional and behavioral attachments with the religious leaders of their particular sectarian groups, and the sayings of religious leaders are considered very seriously by their followers. Academia can play a very critical part to develop the cognitive, analytical and technical skills of individuals. Teachers and students have a very close relationship; which can facilitate individuals towards better growth of their personalities. Academia should impart the sense of tolerance in students and educate them to be interactive and discourage sectarian rivalry between individuals having opposite religious ideologies in the society. Promotion of intergroup relationship and sense of creating harmony with all representatives of the sectarian and religious groups should include in academic curriculum.

Participants explained the role of media and civil administration to prevent sectarian based collisions in the society. Media should play its positive part to spread the importance of intra-group as well as inter-group harmony between individuals. Media should avoid promoting sectarian based differences in the society, media is a powerful tool to communicate and educate people and it should be utilized in a true manner. The role of civil administration is also having its vast importance to prevent and discourage sectarian based discords and religious clashes. Government administered bodies should protect the sectarian rights of every individual and force citizens to follow proper rules and regulations to run society in a more smooth and well manner way. Laws should be implemented on every person and punishment procedures should apply on the culprits without any type of discrimination.

Findings of Data Analysis

- Participants showed great affiliation with their particular sectarian group which enable them to get connected with individuals having common sectarian based religious identities. Owning same culture, cast and religious sect become strong causes towards having strong intra-group conformity between the individuals.
- Individuals revealed that, their family members, peer groups and religious belongings encourage them to proudly own and practice their particular sectarian identities in the society. Respondents considered socialization process as the most important factor towards the induction of sectarian ideologies in their mental perception and practical functionalities.
- Participants described their particular sectarian activities, proudly own and highly preferred these sectarian based ways and practices to perform religious obligations and fundamentals. Followers get mental and emotional satisfaction while performing their particular sectarian ideologies in the society. Performing common sectarian activities lead individuals own same sectarian identities towards collectiveness and conformity.
- Individuals had inadequate social and religious based relationships with representatives of other sectarian groups and prefer to make any socio-cultural relationship with people belongs to their own particular sect which cause negative impact on community based relationships. Intra-group affiliation between individuals on the basis of sectarian entities dents the bridging process between different sectarian groups.
- Respondents highlighted the causes of sectarian conflicts as: discussion between individuals having opposite sectarian ideologies on religious matters in Inappropriate way, lack of patience on sectarian matters, getting religious hegemony on the bias of sectarian supremacy and lack of positive communication between sectarian groups at macro level.

- Respondents suggested to terminate sectarian based conflict through, avoiding sectarian based discussions in the community. Paying respect to every person without considering his/her sect keep individuals in peace. Avoid blaming and taunting each other and develop relationships through utilizing socio-cultural strengths.
- Positive communication should continue to adjourn miss-understandings between people having opposite sectarian believes. Participants suggested that, there should be a committee to resolve sectarian ties and safeguard the religious rights of every sect.
- Socialization process and academia can also play its vital to build individuals' great capabilities and shape-up individuals' personality in better manner. Role of religious leaders to discourage sectarian hostility is also having quite important to create an environment of harmony in the society.
- Participants explained the role of media and civil administration to prevent sectarian based collisions in the society. Media should play its positive part to spread the importance of intragroup as well as intergroup harmony between individuals.

Discussion

- Discussion of current study was interpreted in the light of previous researches and theoretical framework. Main objectives of this study were; to identify the role of group conformity towards creating sectarian identity on religious grounds, ways of approaching and opting identities. Furthermore, this study revealed existing forms of practicing particular sectarian identities in the society and how sectarian identities promote disintegration between different sub-religious groups. This study also included suggested solutions by the respondents that can build an

environment of harmony and integration between different religious-sectarian groups.

- The present study revealed very important and crucial role of group conformity towards opting sectarian identities by the individuals and performs sectarian based religious activities collectively. This result constant with the study conducted by Wiatrowski (1978), which concluded that, individuals have mental attachment with their parents, peers, relatives and other social belongings through encouraging the environment of group conformity which enhance their conceptual and ideological bond on the basis of attachment, commitment, involvement and believes.
- Results of a study performed by Ahmad (2012) revealed that, the existence of sectarian behaviors in any particular group has certain factors that lead their followers towards having intense sectarian believes, these factors can be based on external as well as internal factors. Most of the time, external applications provide healthy inducement towards conceptual forming of individuals. This study also highlighted the factors like, mental and emotional satisfaction and fulfil the religious requirements that encourage individuals to perform rigid sectarian believes in daily day routine. Present study stated that, sectarian difference unable individuals to become a strong, collective and united force in society and never try to understand the religious perceptions of each other. This evidence was also explained by Haider (2014) that, the lack of consensus as a nation regarding the understanding of religious sub-believes and practices.
- Findings unfold that, socialization process and practices is having its vital part to induct socio-religious identities in individuals which is also verified by the findings of Andrew & Richards (2015), they concluded that, process of socialization also facilitates to transfer social, cultural, cognitive and religious values from one generation to other generations. Socialization

practices also inculcate particular habits, norms, customs and ideologies in the mind-set of people. This study indicated the involvement of individuals in sectarian conflicts due to emotional attachment with their sectarian ideologies and intensive participation in religious activities. Similar findings were also explained by Fair (2015) that, Individuals mainly involve in sectarian based violence due to two reasons, one is their intensity while performing religious practices and the second one is the personal preference of sub-believes and forms of Sharia. The results of this research described, lack of tolerance upon understanding others' religious perspective towards sectarian conflicts, these findings also verified the results exposed by E'jaz (2016). The lack of tolerance in the thinking and behaviors of people having firm religious believes encourage them to perceive their religious authority over other groups that are having different practical values to follow religion.

- Religious belongings encourage individuals to strictly follow their own sectarian ideologies which lead them to become rigid followers of their particular sectarian obligations and unable them to accept others' perception on religious matters which create an environment hostiles. This concepts was also evaluated by Zahab (2011), he concluded that, the insolation of intense sectarian perception in the minds of individuals lead them into extreme level of conflict activities, such type of mental insolation become highly lethal for the peace process in the society that impuissant the socio-political authorities to control sectarian activities. This study indicates sectarian difference to create social and cultural disparity between people having opposite sectarian ideologies which was also conclude by Vira & Cordesm (2011) that, sectarian based differences regarding religious values create a hurdle in the way of social, economic, cultural and environmental prosperity in the society

- Previous studies held by Durrāni & Dunne (2010); Kaukab & Sa'eed (2014), disclosed that, teachers can play a vital role in inducting well socialized behaviors to young buds, because they spend maximum period of time with them, and mostly remain close to them for long time. It should also be the integral part of teacher's duty to promote the good gesture of integrity among their students who have different socio-religious backgrounds. There should be a proper healthy involvement of such academic metrical in our institutes that promote an environment of harmony and endurance in the society. These concepts have relevance with the findings of current study regarding the role of teachers and academia to induct positive features and characteristics in their students to be patient and connected with everyone.
- Respondents of this study suggested to initiate such healthy activities to promote the sense of collectiveness and harmony beyond considering each other's' sectarian identity which was also highlighted by previous research conducted by Berggren & Elinder (2012) that, Intolerance should be overcome through organizing lecturers about various schools of thought so students develop a habit of hearing the point of view of others, focus should be on sports that strengthen discipline and tolerance in the behaviors of individuals. Participants of current study indicated the role of Media to discourage sectarian anility in the society and promote the positive consequences of tolerate and respect each other's religious based understandings which was also verified by Safdar, Ghazi & Gulap (2011), in which they highlighted that, religious tolerance should be publicize through media and education that will be help full for integrating people in the society at conceptual and practical level (Safdar, Ghazi & Gulap, 2011).
- The current study found the way to terminate sectarian enmities through enhancing positive communication and making connection between

opposite sectarian groups which was also proved by previous research conducted by Aḥmar (2010), which explained, sectarian disintegration among the individuals of different sectarian groups can be minimize by creating an environment of social bridging through implementing problem resolution criteria and enhance the environment of collectiveness in the society. The overall findings of this study were having consistency with the previous research conducted by different researches. Findings of current research showed relevance with identity construction theory that was applied in the study to describe group conformity and individuals' identity construction towards practicing sectarian identities.

- **5.1 Recommended Suggestions for future research related to this particular topic**
- This study was based on qualitative research method to examine group conformity and individuals' behavior towards practicing sectarian identities in the society, this perceptive can also describe through applying positivist research approach. This concept should be analyzed in numerical form to testify the association between group conformity and practicing sectarian identities, which will revealed the intensity and magnitude of relationship between these concepts. Quantitative method will facilitate to capture overall and general perception of individuals regarding the concept of group conformity its impact on practicing particular sectarian based practices in the society. Furthermore, political and cultural influences towards the adaptation and practice of sectarian identities should also be explored in future to explain the context of group conformity and sectarian identity construction in practical way. It should also be discovered that, how religious institutes (Madāris) insolate sectarian perception in the minds of individuals and how religious leaders encourage their followers towards opting particular sectarian ideologies.

Conclusion

Religion is considered as a very effective tool to create a sense of harmony and homogeneity in the perceptions and practices of followers. Structural functionalists explain the features and functions of religion as a united system of beliefs and practices related to the sacred things and set apart from forbidden matters. According to structure functionalists, religion is a combining force that brings people together which keep them more connected and integrated in the society. Religion gather individuals or set of individuals in single moral community to perceive and practices religious beliefs collectively in the society. On the other hand, Marxist perspective described the role of religion as “a tool that brings an environment of consolation and distressing between different classes of society”.

According to Marxist school, religion is a conceptual device used by authoritative and elite class of the society to control lower and poor class. Religion also become a unit of disintegration in the society through getting hegemonic religious power and control on religious sphere. These two opposite perspectives have very deep and critical relevance with this current study. Religion can become a combining factor in the society if its features and functionalities utilize in right manner and practice religion on collective basis. If we analyze the other side of the picture, religion also becomes a cause to create enmity and environment of hostility between individuals or group of individuals in the society. The actual part is to understand the practicalities of religion in different perspectives and explain its clinical and analytical functionalities in the society. Where religion become a combining force to connect people, on the other side, sectarian differences upon religious grounds become an element of disintegration between individuals having opposite sectarian-religious ideologies.

This study was aimed to analyze the role of group conformity towards opting any particular sectarian identity by individuals and how these individuals approach and

practice sectarian based identities in the society. Qualitative research design was used to describe group conformity and individuals' behavior towards practicing sectarian identities. The current research revealed that, participants showed emotional attachment with their sectarian groups, which enable them to get connected with individuals having common sectarian-religious identities. Present study stated socialization process as the most important factor towards the induction of sectarian ideologies in their mental perception and practical functionalities. Individuals proudly own sectarian ideologies and highly preferred these sectarian based ways and practices to perform religious obligations and fundamentals. Followers get mental and emotional satisfaction while performing their particular sectarian ideologies in the society.

Performing common sectarian activities lead individuals own same sectarian identities towards collectiveness and conformity. Individuals had inadequate social and religious based relationships between opposite sectarian groups and prefer to make socio-cultural relationship with people belongs to their own particular sect which cause negative impact on community based relationships. Intra-group affiliation between individuals on the basis of sectarian entities dents the bridging process between different sectarian groups. Discussing religious matters in inappropriate way between individuals having opposite sectarian ideologies, lack of patience on sectarian matters, getting religious hegemony on the bias of sectarian supremacy and lack of positive communication between sectarian groups at macro level become main causes those create an environment of discord and disintegration in the society. The study suggested that, discourage sectarian based discussions, Paying respect to every person without considering others' sectarian believes, avoid blaming and taunting each other's religious ideologies can play its vital part to terminate sectarian based enmities between people having opposite religious ideologies. Furthermore, Positive communication should continue to adjourn miss-understandings between people having opposite sectarian believes.

Role of parents, teachers, religious leaders, media and government administrative can also considered to prevent sectarian conflicts in the society.

As present study concludes, group conformity lead individuals towards the adaptation of particular sectarian identities which enable them to make socio-cultural and religious association with people having opposite sectarian believes which create an environment of disintegration in the society. Sectarian based differences unable individuals to enhance inter-group integrity and create an environment of discord in the society. There should be some sort of implementation criteria to terminate sectarian based conflicts in the community. Administrative based policies should implement in right direction to discourage sectarian enmities in the societies. Religion should use as the tool of harmony and integration to unite people on collective basis. Sectarian based difference should not be highlighted in the context of development religious and socio-cultural relationships in the society. Sectarian difference should consider as the element of diversity and we should respect each other on humanity basis and act like human beings. We should follow religious obligations to make harmony and connectedness in the society like Holy Quran Allah Almighty said, "And hold fast all of you together to the rope of Allah and be not divided among yourselves" (Qur'an, 3:103).

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