

The Effect of Educational Status on Political Tolerance: A Research Study conducted in District Lower DirSharif Ud Din^{*1}, Syed Rashid Ali², Ahmad Ali³**Original Article**

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Abstract

The study examines the association of educational status and political tolerance. The fieldwork for the study is carried out in Lower Dir, a northern district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Respondents belong to a traditional society of Pakhtun ethnic group. Pakhtunwali, the cultural code of life, deeply regulates their behavior. The total number of respondents is 1200 consists of both gender. The data is collected through a structured questionnaire. The collected data is analyzed by applying regression statistics. The results reveal that educational status is positively and significantly associated with political tolerance ($P < 0.05$). Moreover; educational status brings about 6% improvements in political tolerance of the people. The results further reveal that non-literate people have higher political tolerance than highly educated and less educated people respectively. High political tolerance among non-literate might be due to the informal socialization process.

Keywords: Educational Status, Political Tolerance, Traditional Society, *Pakhtunwali*, Regression

1. Introduction

According to Sullivan, et al. (1982) and Gibson (2013) political tolerance is reflected to be one of the essential traits of democracy. Researchers argue that stable democratic system is due to citizens' high political tolerance (McCabe, 2010; Nizah et al., 2015; Peterson, 2020; Sullivan et al., 1981). Even in a dynamic and complex society in terms of variations in educational level of the citizens, scholars are of the views that political tolerance exhibits sustainable and functional democracy (Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003). As it is believed that freedom of expression and political participation are the rights of every citizen (Eisenstein & Clark, 2014; Sullivan et al., 1981), these rights are enveloped in a democratic system even if political approaches of the parties are diversified (Gibson, 2013; Hazama, 2010).

However, in a traditional society, usually it is observed that socio-cultural system is comparatively close and run through customs and traditions (Carney et al., 2008; Horton, 2011). Generally, members of a traditional society have closed and uniform interactive patterns (Omotola, 2009). Mostly they develop a uniform approach to life (Flanagan, 1989; Kerth & van Schaik, 2012). In such traditional societies, researchers claim that accommodation with opposition groups is difficult (Carney et al., 2008; Jost et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, in the current study, the researchers investigate the status of political tolerance in a traditional *Pakhtun* society. Besides, a traditional and homogenous set-up, there are some factors which may influence the level of political tolerance. Such factors as reported by

scholars are age, gender, use of mass media, religion, political affiliation, social status, and political knowledge (Ali *et al.*, 2021; Djupe & Cafano, 2013; Stouffer, 1955; Todosijević & Enyedi, 2015). Among these variables, one could be educational status that could predict the level of political tolerance. Therefore, for the confirmation of this assumption we formulated a hypothesis, if educational status significantly predicts political tolerance.

2. Theoretical Debate

According to the literature on toleration and liberal theories, political tolerance is considered to be one of the prominent traits of democracy (Cholakov, 2015; Moreno-Riano, 2002). People with high education will tend to be more politically tolerant (Hinckley, 2010; Sullivan *et al.*, 1993). In the light of socialization theories, education develops in the process of learning where a person internalizes democratic norms and values (McIntosh & Younis, 2010). This sort of socialization is very effective in a stable democratic system. Peffley and Rohrschneider (2003) report that those countries where democracy have been practiced uninterruptedly for a longer, level of political tolerance of the citizens would be high in comparison to newly emerged democracies. Hinckley (2010) and McCabe (2010) argue that education is one of the chief predictors of political tolerance. However, they also predict that variation in societies in terms of its characteristics like culture, political history, ideologies, and educational level may result into variation in the level of political tolerance of the citizens.

3. Educational Status

According to the Oxford Language Dictionary (2022), education is the process of receiving or giving systematic instructions by human beings to transfer ideas through learning environments such as formal (i.e., school, college, university, etc.) and informal (i.e., family, peer group, Madras, etc.) agencies. Educational status includes the non-literate and literate respondents. Non-literate or illiterate consist of those respondents who have no schooling. While, the literate respondents are those who can write, read and have the ability of simple calculation. The literate respondents are further categorized into different levels i.e., primary, matric, intermediate, bachelor, master, and PhD.

According to Werfhorst and Graaf (2004), there are two theories on the impacts of education in relation to political tolerance that need more attention for justification. According to the first theory, the cognitive model holds that education increases cognitive qualities that broaden the individual ability to look at social issues from a different point of view (Hyman & Wright, 1979). Following this model, the findings of the research showed that people, whose educational level is high, will be more inclined toward a tolerant attitude. They will adjust themselves to the opposing views due to their educational maturity (Nie *et al.*, 1996; Werfhorst & Graaf, 2004). The second is the socialization theory that which education socializes the students in their political orientation. For example, history, political science, law, etc. are the school-level books that are being taught to students and they get knowledge about their political system (Galston, 2001) and those who have more political knowledge and information, will be more politically tolerant (Hall, 2018; Skiple, 2020; Sullivan *et al.*, 1981).

5. Political Tolerance

Political tolerance fundamentally develops as a result of one's personal expressions to differing viewpoints. In the political process a person challenges the ideas of the opposition and finally both sides come to accommodate by compromising the contradicted views (Huckfeldt *et al.*, 2004; Mutz, 2002). Hence, political tolerance is a willingness to put up with the political interest and ideas one opposes (Eisenstein & Clark, 2014; Peterson, 2020; Sullivan *et al.*, 1993).

Political tolerance is defined as “the willingness to extend civil liberties to political out-groups” (Karpov, 2002, p. 267). Political tolerance is essential to the proper functioning of democracy (Sullivan *et al.*, 1993). In a tolerant society, even members of marginalized political out-groups have the ability to express views, which encourage political participation and diversity in political perspectives. It is essential for the democratic system of government that it provides space for freedom of speech, movement, and religion (Cholakov, 2015). John Lock hypothesizes that high political tolerance among the citizens will ensure peace, civility and stable democracy in the country (cited in Cholakov, 2015; Moreno-Riano, 2002).

Mostly the research studies on political tolerance are conducted in pluralist, heterogeneous and advanced societies or countries (Guerin & Pelletier, 2000; Morgan & Kelly, 2021). Rarely studies on political tolerance are carried out in homogenous, traditional and underdeveloped countries (Maruyama, 2007; Ali *et al.*, 2021). This is one of the reasons that we commence the present study in remote, traditional and underdeveloped society with dominantly homogenous culture.

6. Educational Status and Political Tolerance

Education is being reported as the most effective predictor of political tolerance. Early studies on tolerance found a positive relationship between the level of education and political tolerance. Stouffer (1955) reported that most college-educated individuals were found more tolerant than those who were less educated. The findings revealed that tolerance is a learned attribute (McCabe, 2010). Similar results are reported by Jennings and Niemi (2015); and Bardes and Oldendick (2012). They argue that individuals with more education will be more politically tolerant. Due to their high level of education, they have liberal feelings, sophisticated thoughts, and ways of communicating with different people that increase the level of political tolerance (Moroni & Weberman, 2016). Attributed to education, other factors are investigated educated people have more political knowledge, political information, and awareness about the political system, and those who have more political information are found more tolerant (Galston, 2001; Hall, 2018). Nevertheless, Gibson (2013) argued that educated people have more commitment to democratic norms and willingly follow the principles of democracy, while McCabe (2010) reported that education had no impact on the level of political tolerance in Western Germany, demonstrating that the effects of education are not universal (Weil, 1982). However, Golebiowska (2019) explored that education promotes tolerance, whether political, racial, ethnic, religious, or tolerance of sexual minorities.

There is a great deal of research from the 1950s to the present that shows that education is positively associated with political tolerance (Golebiowska, 2019; McCabe, 2010; Skiple, 2020; Stouffer, 1955). Social scientists emphasize the influence of education on cognitive processes and perspectives on diversity, which leads to greater tolerance. They concluded that education is associated with more sophisticated styles of reasoning that promote political tolerance (Bobo & Licari, 1989). Katnik (2002) argued it is mainly education that has the most significant effect on political tolerance.

Keeping into view the above detail works it is concluded that the early studies have revealed the effect formal education on political tolerance. However, this research study is intended to check the effect of education status that consist both, the non-literate and literate people on political tolerance. Besides this those previous studies are being conducted in advanced and heterogeneous societies, while, the current study is carried out in a traditional and homogenous society.

7. Research Methodology

A quantitative research design, considered appropriate, is utilized for the current study. The methodology consists of sub-headings i.e., universe of the study, sampling procedure, collection and analysis of data.

7.1. Universe of the Study

The study is conducted in Lower Dir, a district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. District Lower Dir is located in the North-Western part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The major valleys of Lower Dir include *Timergara, Jandool, Maidan, Samarbagh, and Asbanr*. Lower Dir is the lower part of the old District Dir (Development Profile Lower Dir, 2015; Ullah et al., 2013). The area is dominantly inhabited by *Pakhtun* ethnic group majority are Yousafzi. The *Pakhtun* have its own way of life under a permanent social structure that is called, "*Pakhtunwali*" (Afridi et al., 2016; Orakzai, 2011). This *Pakhtunwali* is integral to *Pakhtun* identity (Ali et al., 2021; Kakar, 2004). *Pakhtunwali* is the code of conduct encompassing every aspect of their life (Afridi et al., 2016; Johnson & Mason, 2008).

7.2. Population and Sample Size

The study population comprises of the residents of the three selected tehsils i.e., Tehsil Lal Qila, Timergara and tehsil Adenzai. The total households of these tehsils are 113,858 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistic, 2017). Population below the age of 18 is not part of the current study. The sample size for each tehsil is statistically calculated through Yamane's formula (1973), which came in the range of 394 to 399. For convenience, the researchers selected 400 respondents from each tehsil. The total sample size for all the three tehsil is 1200 respondents.

Yamane's statistical formula for sample size:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where, n = corrected sample size N = Population size

e = Margin of error (MoE), $e = 0.05$ based on the research condition

7.3. Tool of Data Collection

A well thought out questionnaire, consists of closed ended questions on both the variables i.e., political tolerance and Education status, is used for data collection. The reliability of the questionnaire is checked and the alpha value is recorded more than .7, which is acceptable in social sciences research (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). Educated respondents filled the questionnaire by themselves while illiterate were interviewed.

7.4. Data Analysis

Data is analyzed through the application of simple linear regression test to find out if there is a relationship between the independent variable (explanatory) i.e., educational status (ES) and dependent variable (response) i.e., political tolerance (PT) (Hanif et al., 2014).

8. Results and Discussion

Hypothesis

H_1 = There is a significant impact of educational status on political tolerance.

Educational status (ES) significantly predicts political tolerance (PT), $F(6, 1193) = 13.626$, $P < 0.001$, which indicates that the *ES* plays a significant role in shaping *PT*. Further, the statistical findings clearly indicate that *ES* reveal different results on level of *PT*. The following table depicts that all the educational level of respondents showed lower *PT* than illiterate respondents, illiterate is a reference category. All the educated level of respondents scored less than illiterate

respectively on *PT* scale such as, Primary level of respondents ($\beta = -1.863$, $P < 0.001$), Matric level ($\beta = -2.247$, $P < 0.05$), Intermediate level ($\beta = -2.880$, $P < 0.001$), Bachelor level ($\beta = -3.335$, $P < 0.001$), Mater level ($\beta = -3.341$, $P < 0.001$), and PhD level ($\beta = -3.373$, $P < 0.05$). The $R^2 = .064$ indicates that model explains about 6 % of the variance in *PT*. The following table shows summary of the findings.

Table No. 1 Educational Status and Political Tolerance

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	B	R ²	F	T	P-value	Hypothesis Supported
H ₃	Constant (Ref Cat)	21.373	.064	13.626	71.304	0.000	Yes
	Cat)	-1.863			-3.196	0.001	
	Primary→PT	-2.247			-4.620	0.000	
	Matric→PT	-2.880			-5.744	0.000	
	Intermediate→PT	-3.335			-6.624	0.000	
	Bachelor→PT	-3.341			-8.039	0.000	
	Master→PT	-3.373			-2.747	0.006	
	PhD→PT						

Note: N=1200, *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .01$, Ref Cat: Reference Category (Illiterate), ES: Educational Status, PT: Political Tolerance

The empirical findings of the study revealed a positive and significant result between educational status and political tolerance. However, the results are in contrast with those of McCabe (2010); Stouffer (1955); Filsinger (1976); Hinckley (2010); Karpov (1999); Katnik, 2002; and Stouffer (1955), who argued that high level of education positively contributes to political tolerance, while the research findings of this study showed different results where the non-literate showed higher political tolerance than the respondents with high and low education respectively. It is argued that illiterate respondents might have been socialized through informal socialization process, as we mentioned in the methodology section (i.e., universe of the Study) that people of the study area has their own cultural set up that is called *Pakhtunwali*. They have adopted *Pakhtunwali* in their practical life. *Pakhtunwali* is a code of conduct where *Pashtuns* are being taught the principles of tolerance and patience as reported by Ali et al. (2021); and Naz (2011). Moreover, the findings further reveal that respondents with less education showed higher political tolerance than highly educated respondents. Actually, highly educated people have more intellectual attitudes, traits of elitism, overconfidence, deeper understanding, and unique and specific political beliefs and ideologies, due to which might they show different responses to people who have different opinions. Sometimes the above factors push someone towards a conservative and dogmatic attitude where scholars revealed that conservative and dogmatic attitudes decrease the level of political tolerance (Gibson, 2013; Sullivan et al. 1981). Moreover, the respondents with high education are mostly young people. On the basis of learning theories, youth are more exposed to the antagonist political behavior that is being taught by their political leaders, particularly in Pakistan as reported by Hussain and Khan (2021). This type of political socialization leads them toward a hating and prejudiced attitude, due to which they might reveal low political tolerance. Keeping into view the above discussion therefore highly educated respondents showed lower political tolerance than less educated and illiterate respondents respectively. Although the current study suggests it to explore the level of political tolerance in traditional societies as the past studies mostly carried out in advanced and heterogeneous societies. On the basis of empirical findings, the hypothesis is approved i.e., *H1 = There is a significant impact of "educational status" on "political tolerance"*.

9. Conclusion

The empirical findings of this study affirmed that non-literate have higher political tolerance than educated respondents. Further the results revealed lower political tolerance for high-educated than the respondents with low education. The findings of the present study are different with that of previous researches. However, those studies have been conducted in advance and heterogeneous societies, while this study has been carried out in a traditional and homogenous society. It could be concluded that (traditional) cultures might have norms and values that are being internalized by the people through their informal socialization processes. In this context, the non-literate that are mostly aged people, use their rational approach by valuing their local structure and relationship than demonstrating political antagonism and differences. Similarly, highly educated people have more intellectual attitudes, traits of elitism, overconfidence, deeper understanding, and unique and specific political beliefs and ideologies, due to which might they show different responses to people who have different opinions. On the basis of learning theories, youth are more exposed to the antagonist political behavior that is being taught by their political leaders, particularly in Pakistan as reported by Hussain and Khan (2021). This type of political socialization leads them toward a hating and prejudiced attitude, due to which they might reveal low political tolerance.

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