

# STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN PAKISTAN: AN ANALYTICAL VIEW ON THEIR SOCIAL STATUS WITH REFERENCE TO ISLAM

Shakir Ullah<sup>1\*</sup>, Muhammad Zakriya<sup>2</sup>, Naeem Ullah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar, Pakistan.*

<sup>2</sup>*Government College & University Lahore, Pakistan.*

<sup>3</sup>*Faculty of Usuluddin, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.*

*Corresponding Author: Shakir Ullah, Email: shakirullah0003@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** This research paper is conducted to analyze the social position of Christians in the structure of social stratification of Pakistan under Galtung's theoretical framework. The social stratification in Pakistan is not original to the state of Pakistan rather it has roots in Hinduism and also it is a colonial construct that at largely carried out by Great Britain; a colonial power in pursuing the policy of divide and rule. Unlike India, the demography of Pakistan is religiously homogeneous but ethnically diverse. Historically, Christians would not be only marked as a religious minority but a lower social class as well. Unfortunately, it always has been treated as a lower stratum in the hierarchy of social stratification in the Indo-Pak region. In earlier works, scholars and academicians have defined Christians as a suppressed religious minority and marginalized citizens of an Islamic Republic. So, in the earlier works of researchers, the issue of violence against Christians in Pakistan has been explored from a religious dimension only. This research article aims to explore the socio-structural dimension of violence against the Christian community in Pakistan which mainly focuses on three points: the inherent structural position of Christians in Pakistan, the negligible role of Britishers in the improvement of their position, and the free will of Pakistani Christians as a problem. Furthermore, this article is very significant and insightful for policymakers and social researchers due to its theoretical framework and its historical analysis of the issue.

**Keywords:** Social stratification; Structural violence; Christian minority; Free-will

## 1 INTRODUCTION

It is a manifest reality that the human race is divided into multi-layer strata. Structurally, it could be a religious, racial, ethnic, and economic stratification. In the Indo-Pak region case of Hinduism is very prominent for rigid socio-religious stratification. The Christian social status in Pakistan is a historical manifestation of Hinduism. Structurally, in Indian society, there are four basic castes strongly rooted back to the Aryan social setup. At the top of its pyramid is Brahmins which is a priestly class, second to it is Kshatriyas; a ruling and guardian class, then is Vaishyas which is largely a business class and on the lowest stratum there are Shudras. It is also denoted as the untouchable and scheduled caste in Indian society.

The lowest and unprivileged caste formerly known as untouchable it is popularized after the 1970s referred to as Dalits, and historically converted to Christianity to get salvation from the structural violence and oppression which is prevailed in Indian society. So, the present Christian identity living generally in South Asia and particularly in Pakistan was a marginalized group since the social order was established in Aryan society. They never escape their marginalization even by conversion to Christianity. Christians in Pakistan trace their genealogy within the Indian subcontinent and have Punjabi as their mother tongue [1].

According to socio-historical perspectives, Pakistani Christians; as they are the descendants of some of Punjab's most marginalized communities worked as landless sharecroppers and menial laborers (ex. street sweepers). The shift in their national identity came in 1947 after the inception of Pakistan. As for the scope of the study, this work is conducted to investigate the situations facing the Christian community in Pakistan. It is widely said that they are socially and economically marginalized they don't have access to mainstream strata being the lowest social class. After the inception of Pakistan religious minorities had greater reservations about their civil and political rights, they made their objections to objective resolution on the ground that minorities would be deprived of their rights. Later on, the constitutional-making process was delayed because one of its reasons was minority resistance. In the framework of Galtung's theory, any systematic misbehaving with a group in society, due to the socio-cultural identity of the group or an object is called structural violence [2]. In the case of Pakistan Christian community faces structural violence in the form of hate, keeping the social gap with them, unemployment, and low-wage employment like sweepers, daily wagers, etc. For the past several years, according to Amnesty International reports, Pakistan has been charged with human rights violations against its religious minorities, especially its Christian citizens. Christians make up a thin minority in Pakistan they are around 2.5 million [3]. They are not originally Christian but converted, and almost originated from Hindu families. Slightly, more than 2% of the population. Many originate from Hindu families of lower castes and untouchables who were converted to Christianity by Christian

missionaries using incentives, force, and some by free will. Unfortunately, their fate remains the same although the British regime in India sponsored missionaries to convert the local population but did not enough utilized resources for change their social status which was needed for them[4].

The problem of structural violence against the Christian community in Pakistan has been explored by many researchers like: Lubna Nazir Chaudhry her study titled “Structural violence and the Lives of Pakistani Christians: A Collaborative Analysis” is a significant piece of literature that comparatively addresses the problem. Her work is centered on three points: the treatment of Christians in Pakistan as being religious minority, citizens, and human [1]. But her work is standing more on the first point which is focal to the explanation of structural violence. Almost all researchers have explored more about violations against Christians as a minority. Such as “Structural Violence and Christian Minority in Pakistan: The Monolithic Image to be Blamed” this work is done by using the pure lens of Galtung’s theoretical model on structural violence [5] but it is also centered on religion as a structure neglecting the structures that are other than religious.

## 2 THEORETICAL MODEL

A landmark work of John Galtung “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research” who is regarded as the founder of peace studies. It is possible to understand his place in peace studies by focusing on the works in which he has contributed directly or indirectly to peace studies. In the aforementioned work (Violence, Peace and Peace Research) which was published in 1969, Galtung stated that while revealing the relationship between violence and peace, it is necessary to define violence first. In this context, he defines violence as the effects applied to people to fall behind their physical and mental potentials and draws a wide-ranging framework from economic inadequacies to wars, from ideological pressures to threats. He developed his views on violence based on his work in 1969, which divides violence into direct, structural, and cultural violence. The connection of three types of violence with each. According to this distinction, Galtung states that structural violence is caused by political mechanisms, processes, and institutions that ensure the satisfaction of identity, reputation, and security needs. In contrast, cultural violence is fed by anger, fear, and hatred that arise from the parties’ not understanding or misunderstanding each other. According to Galtung structural and cultural violence is the source of invisible conflicts; this violence directly turns into violence and becomes visible. In this context, conflict is a variable process in which structural, cultural, and direct violence affects each other [2]. The former form of violence in Pakistan has been largely explored by other researchers the latter one has remained unexplored therefore the work in hand is more focused on exploring the latter problem.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

This research article is a qualitative inquiry into the problem of structural violence against the Christian community in Pakistan. The data collected for research is qualitative because it consists of opinions, analytical perspectives, and stories. Thus, the information collected from second-hand sources falls in the secondary domain. Sources for information include Google Scholar, websites, research journals, and e-libraries. Important documents were collected through purposive sampling and, thereafter were analyzed. The contents of the documents were thematically analyzed. The unit of the study is a Christian community. The universe for the study is Pakistan as a whole, not a unit. Moreover, this study has an exploratory purpose and having non-experimental research design.

## 4 ANALYSIS OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN PAKISTAN

### 4.1 Structural Violence

The term was originally coined by John Galtung (a Norwegian sociologist and pacifist) who introduced it in his research article; “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research” which was published in 1969. First, to start from very basic, he defines violence as the effects or gap between potential capabilities and actual capabilities. Further, he defined that violence exists when human beings are being affected so that their actual somatic realization is less than their potential realization. In common language according to Galtung; violence is any avoidable assault on basic human needs. The basic needs of people are survival, well-being, freedom, and identity.

He also explains his views on violence comprehensively by emphasizing the difference between forms of violence while focusing on physical and psychological violence on the one hand and the presence of an object and what or who the subject is on the other. Galtung, who developed his views on violence based on his work in 1969, divides violence into direct, structural, and cultural violence. The connection of three types of violence according to this distinction, Galtung argues that structural violence is caused by political mechanisms, processes, and institutions that ensure the satisfaction of identity, reputation, and security needs. In contrast, cultural violence is fed by anger, fear, and hatred that arise from the parties’ not understanding or misunderstanding each other. Structural violence is grounded in cultural and civilizational traits. The grand cultural trait that works as a mark for social stratification often embedded in base structure ultimately affects or influences the superstructure. Thus, in traditional societies, cultural stuff makes the base structure as well as the superstructure of society. According to Galtung structural and cultural violence is the source of invisible conflicts; this violence directly turns

into violence and becomes visible. In this context, conflict is a variable process in which structural, cultural, and direct violence affect each other. Some examples of structural violence as proposed by Galtung include institutionalized ethnocentrism, sexism, and classism. Structural violence and direct violence are said to be highly interdependent.

#### 4.2 Structural Violence Faces Christian Community in Pakistan

Islam has emphasized equal human rights for minorities. Islam teaches that there is no distinction of color, race, language, or caste among human beings but gives weightage to obedience to God. 1973 Constitution of Pakistan also proclaims fundamental rights to all citizens of Pakistan without any discrimination. While, Articles 11, 25, 26, and 27 of the constitution of 1973 also proclaim the equality of all citizens before the law, irrespective of race, religion, caste, and sex” [6]. Furthermore, Jinnah's vision of Pakistan also proclaimed religious freedom and equality of citizens, he stated that: “You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the state”. Stressing the religious freedom for all communities, especially for minorities in Pakistan he stated: “You are free; you are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or any other places of worship in this state of Pakistan.” [7]. The speech of Jinnah is competent with Islam in the sense that there is greater religious freedom in Islam than in other world religions. As Jinnah said; you are free to go to your temples. Islam (Islamic State) does not prohibit you from going to your temples. Despite overwhelmingly constitution of Pakistan is Islamic and has greater provision for minority rights as compared to other constitutions in the world. If we take the instance of the Indian constitution which is narratively a secular constitution in the region but still doesn't have such provisions for religious minorities as it is in the constitution of Pakistan. But despite a thick shell of provisions, the Christian community is still not secure and is most vulnerable to violence. There is multi-layered structural avoidance against it as it would be mentioned.

*Isolation in living space:* People do not mix up with them, especially middle- and upper-class Pakistanis avoid mixing up with them in towns, villages, or clubs. They hate them maybe not being Christian but having a specific color and profession, they are treated as if they were untouchable in India. They are socially isolated, reduced to janitorial work, and living in unhygienic conditions in slums, euphemistically called “colonies”. Some of the migrants did live in integrated and middle-class localities, mostly in urban areas where they would have proximity and access to their specific employment as it is largely sweeping and janitorial work in towns. Based on their personal experiences, they remark based on participant observations reported in the New York Times ‘that they are living in places where there is no electricity, no water supply schemes, and no adequate sewage disposal [8].

So, Christians in Pakistan are socially alienated from the rest of the population it is not justified by Islam. Islam does not allow such practice with the human race even encouraging them to spend on the welfare of the deprived as Allah says in the Quran “and their wealth is a right for the beggar and the deprived” (*Surah Al Zariat* verse no. 19). The non-believers are included in the domain of charity in Islam. Similarly, in the case of social equality among humanity, in a famous and authentic Hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said “Feed and clothe the slave as you eat, [dress] and drink and do not cause them more than their strength[9]” On the other hand, it can be argued that constitutionally, in Pakistan they have living equality being citizens of Pakistan. Article 23 of the 1973 constitution of Pakistan, it is provided that every citizen of Pakistan has the freedom to acquire, hold, and dispose of property in everywhere Pakistan. The violence faced by Christians in the whole region is a collective regional and social responsibility rather than blaming Islam and the constitution of Pakistan but it is not enough to write on a piece of paper and keep it aside, the government in power is responsible for implementing.

By calling *Chuhras; Derogatory Remarks about Christians:* the term *Chuhras* is a derogatory term over the centuries used for untouchables but now for Christians, it means those who are working in the cleansing of gutters and washrooms, the term signifies extreme grunting, it is forbidden in Islam as Allah almighty says in Holy Quran “O you who believed, let not a people ridicule (making a mockery of another) people; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them [who are being ridiculed]. And do not insult one another and do not call each other bad names [offensive nicknames] (surah al Hujarat verse no. 11). I think looking at this violence with a religious lens would be unjust because it is strongly prohibited in Islam's original text and it is considered the greatest sin according to shariah. The violence is strongly rooted purely in the social attitudes of people, tracing back to primitive Indian society. The data gathered by Lubna Nazir Chaudhry in Islamabad proved that even in Islamabad Christians were socially isolated, reduced to janitorial work and they are socially distanced. Islam does not believe in the segregation of humanity based on color, tribe, caste, and even belief because in early Islam Prophet and his companion lived in the neighborhood of non-believers. But Muslims did live in Indian society for centuries and have been influenced by the Hindu caste system. Now the converted Christians are no longer untouchable but centuries of regarding them as impure has become part of society's norm.

By calling it dirty; the remarks violate human dignity: Christians are grunting because they are working in washrooms and cleansing gutters, by employing them in such works making them structurally as they were untouchable in Hinduism. In an interview conducted by Kamran & Purewal in their study participant explained their experience of violence as in public service our dishes are kept separated from other servants' dishes. While cleaning and sweeping the floors households are afraid our impurity will rub off on them that they even move their furniture and pots away. The young man Saleem who was an engineer and worked at a private firm was also told to bring his dishes, and there was uproar in the office when he dried his hands with the same towel that everyone else in the office used. Therefore, this state of mind is not just directed toward

lower-class Christians [10]. It would be generally observed that people avoid handshaking and sitting with Christians in Pakistan as in schools' Christian students experience social distance all the circumstances portray the picture of Indian society. Otherwise, it violates human dignity and, in the Quran Allah, says "and we have certainly honored the children of Adam..." (Al-Isra verse no. 70) Similarly, in other places Allah says "Certainly we have created man in the best of stature" (surah At-teen, verse no. 4). These are the greatest messages from such a glorious entity that address humanity with the distinction of caste, color, and even belief. The constitution of Pakistan article provides that human dignity is inviolable. It would be assumed from the above circumstances and evidence that the structure of violence established in the Hindu caste system was never changed by the Britishers during their colonial rule and was also maintained by Pakistani society within the non-involvement of religion.

*Structure of violence Against Christian women:* women harassment is widespread in Pakistan any woman can be involved in sexual harassment women are unsecured but Christian women are more vulnerable to harassment because the lower-class Christian women are working in the houses of the upper class. Women who cleaned other peoples' houses had little recourse to any justice if they were molested by the men in whose houses they worked. They could be dismissed from their jobs if they lodged a complaint to the women of the households, and their likelihood of getting another job was very little since they would acquire the reputation of being a troublemaker. Lubna Nazir in her work explains the story of a woman named Hameeda she narrates: "If we are so dirty, why then men touch us? They keep their distance from us but not when their lust arises it comes to their pleasures, we don't like to talk about it because it makes us look bad even if a woman says anything, she gets the blame, not the man. Even our men treat us differently if we mention being harassed [1]." Every religion has some sanction against women's sexual harassment but Islam has specifications for the sake of protection of women's dignity and miniating of the best social order. Islam prevents the environment of harassment as Allah says in the Holy Quran "Do not even go near fornication for it is a very indecent flung and a very evil way" (Al-Isra verse no. 32). Similarly, in other places Allah says "Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is acquainted with what they do. When some go beyond such protective lines they would face sanctions as explained in the Surah Al-Noor verse no. 2.

I would assume that Christians in Pakistan are enslaved by the social structure, which means it is the legacy of the Indian caste system and colonial rule. The social structure is constituted by the common behavior of the people and attitudes and the way through which a large number of Pakistani populations pursue Christianity. Otherwise, they have Islamically and legally very strong fortifications.

**Opportunities and Challenges in Changing Status-quo:** being equal citizens of Pakistan, Christians constitutionally enjoy all fundamental rights given by the 1973 constitution of Pakistan, which have occupied the whole second chapter of the Constitution (starting from Article 8 and ending in Article 28). Being a minority in Pakistan has a particular provision as well which is given in Article 36 protecting the distinct rights of minorities. The largest portion of Pakistan's minority is covered by Christians. Christian has their own official print media platform allowed by the state of Pakistan known as 'Christian Post'. Despite constitutional protection of their rights, they face violence in the social structure. This paper tends to analyze violence against Christians in terms of social structure and culture. In academia, the investigation of violence against Christians at the state level has been overburdened. What we have been understood, that violence is grounded very in social structure and culture rather than in the constitution of Pakistan and Islam.

Islam literally means peace, as the meaning it is a religion of peace, that provides all kinds of peace and security to any humankind beyond race, religion, color, class, etc. It is a fact proved empirically in history. Montesquieu; a prominent French political philosopher explains in his book "The Spirit of Law" that it is history and Islamic law that has proved the insurance of minority rights, he specifically referred to the reign of Umar bin Abdul Aziz. Montesquieu was impressed by the relatively tolerant and inclusive nature of Islamic law [11]. It is a progressive view only regarding the context, in Pakistan the treatment of minorities either religious or ethnic is complex and varied it should not be limited to only religious minorities, violence prevailed in the social structure in Pakistan which is inherited from colonial India.

On the other hand, but again concerning Islam, it is always assumed and perceived by the minority and other researchers that the Islamization of Pakistan's constitution is a threat and challenge to the religious minority in Pakistan. It is a fact that the constitution of Pakistan is dominantly Islamic if some loopholes are taken aside. The constitution of Pakistan is the best guarantor of minority rights which are been aforementioned. No secular constitution in the region guarantees such an immunity. It is bad luck for Muslims and non-Muslims that the constitution of Pakistan has not been implemented yet in its full spirit otherwise there would be no threat to Islam as well as the minorities. If Christians or other minorities perceive security threats in Pakistan, then security is not a problem only for religious minorities, it is a bigger problem for the ethnic minorities than the religious minorities. All citizens of Pakistan are unsecured. The masjid is more unsecured than the church.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the Christian community faces structural violence in Pakistan, structural violence is mainly in the form of defined social status that has been ascribed to Christians by the society and how the rest of the people of society treat the Christian community. The rest of the people are 98% Muslims by religion but culturally Indians. Usually, Christians in

Pakistan are conducting as; to keep social distance from them, by calling them *chakras* and dirty due to their occupation. However, the Christian community in Pakistan inherent this violence from the Caste system prevails in Indian society. Unfortunately, Christian missionaries converted the lower stratum of the Indian caste system to Christianity but did not improve their status. Unlikely, the case of Islam is very different, with the advent of Islam in India similarly, the principle of justice and glory of Islam was very appealing to the lower class of Indian society so it largely embraced Islam. However Muslim rulers and reformers improve their status. Now such a class does not exist among Muslims.

Throughout the inquiry, it is found that: firstly, violence against Christians in Pakistan they inherent in their social status which is rooted in the caste system of Indian society, secondly, unlike Muslim invaders Christian missionaries and the British empire did not improve the social status of converted Christians. Muslim invaders had improved the social status of converted Muslims. Thirdly, Christians individual free will is a matter of fact, as they have to apply for other jobs as well where they are allowed by the state but they are feeling satisfied in their jobs. Once I met my hostel sweeper who was a Christian, I presented Islam to him he told me that due to my job, I couldn't change my religion because we wanted to do the job which could easily be achieved. Furthermore, we would recommend to Christians they should constitutionalize their demands against such ongoing violence against them. They should demand the implementation of the constitution. And state should end the structural violence against them by improving their social status and providing them with other jobs therefore, institutions should not specify them or other particular communities while advertising vacancies for such jobs which violate human dignity.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Chaudhry LN. Structural violence and lives of Pakistani Christians: a collaborative analysis. *Community Psychology in Global Perspective*, 2015, 97-113.
- [2] Galtung J. *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*. Volume, 1969, 4.
- [3] Fahlbusch E. *Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Grand Rapids, 2005, 4, 536-539.
- [4] World Bank. *Pakistan qualitative poverty survey*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001.
- [5] Riaz, Wakil. *Structural Violence and Christian Minority in Pakistan*. *The Dialogue*, 2016, 350, 4.
- [6] Gankovsky YV, Moskalenk. *The three constitutions of Pakistan*. People's Publishing House: Lahore, 1978.
- [7] Jalal Ayesha. *The Sole Spokeman: Jinnah, The Muslim League and the Demands for Pakistan*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- [8] Tavernise S. *Hate engulfs Christians in Pakistan*. *The New York Times*, 2009.
- [9] Muslim, A. H. (875). *Sahih ul Muslim*, Hadis no. 4315.
- [10] Navtej K. Purewal, Tahir Kamran. *Pakistan Religious Others: Reflections on the Minority Discourse on Christians*. The University of Manchester, 2016.
- [11] Montesquieu. *the spirit of the law*, 1748, book 26 chapter 7.