

INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF MINORITY RELIGIOUS IDENTITY ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN PAKISTANI EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Received: 18 November, 2023 **Revised:** 19 December, 2023 **Accepted:** 29 December, 2023 **Published:** 18 January, 2024

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study, grounded in Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, explores the impact of minority religious identity on educational outcomes in academic settings. Social Identity Theory, which emphasizes the importance of group membership on self-perception and behavior, serves as a lens to understand how identifying with a minority religion affects students' academic experiences and achievements. The study reveals that minority religious identity significantly shapes students' experiences in educational settings. Key findings indicate that students from minority religious backgrounds often encounter unique challenges, including instances of discrimination, a lack of representation in the curriculum, and feelings of isolation. These experiences can lead to decreased academic engagement, lower self-esteem, and hindered academic performance. The research also highlights that the visibility of religious identity, through dress or practice, can exacerbate these challenges. The research was meticulously carried out using a qualitative methodology that involved an in-depth analysis of documented articles and established literary canons. However, the study also uncovers instances where educational institutions have successfully fostered inclusive environments. These settings are marked by culturally responsive teaching practices, supportive peer networks, and institutional policies that acknowledge and accommodate religious diversity. In such environments, minority religious identity becomes a source of strength and resilience, positively influencing educational outcomes. This article contributes to a nuanced understanding of how religious identity intersects with educational practices and policies, which are crucial in mitigating the negative impacts of minority status on educational outcomes. The findings are significant for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in the education sector, providing insights into creating an equitable academic environment that supports the diverse needs of all students.

Keywords: minority Religious Identity, Educational Outcomes, Social Identity Theory, Academic inclusivity, and cultural responsiveness

INTRODUCTION

The influence of minority religious identity on educational outcomes in academic settings in Pakistan is a complex and multifaceted issue that has garnered increasing attention in educational research. Grounded in the social identity theory by Henri Tajfel, this study seeks to explore the ways in which minority identity influences students' experiences, sense of belonging, and academic performance in

predominantly majority religious contexts. The experiences of religious minority students in higher education have been shown to have a significant effect on their retention, with challenges such as discrimination and a lack of institutional support potentially hindering their academic success (Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016).

Understanding the influence of identity on behavior is a pivotal concern across various scholarly disciplines (Gupta, 2013). The centrality of identity in shaping behavioral patterns emerges from the premise that shared symbols or identities foster a sense of comfort and assurance among individuals, as articulated by Riis (2011). In the realm of social sciences, particularly sociology, there is a discernible shift towards re-engaging with the interplay between religion and identity. This emerging focus is driven by an increasing academic interest in exploring how religious and spiritual beliefs aid in the recognition and formation of individual and collective identities. Despite this growing interest, the intersection of religion and spirituality in the context of identity formation remains comparatively underexplored, presenting fertile ground for future research (Steward, 2013). This trend underscores the need for more comprehensive studies that delve into the nuanced ways in which religious and spiritual beliefs contribute to the construction and understanding of identities in contemporary social contexts.

Research indicates that being a minority religion significantly affects the influence of a denomination on educational outcomes, highlighting the importance of understanding the dynamics of religious identity in educational settings (Science Direct, 2011). Furthermore, the experiences of various students within educational spaces have been a subject of scholarly inquiry, shedding light on the intersection of religious identity and academic achievement (Ahmed and Garcia, 2020). By delving into the implications of religious diversity on educational outcomes in this region of Pakistan, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on religious identity and its influence on students' academic trajectories.

Background of the Study

Religious diversity has become an increasingly important topic in educational research, particularly in the context of minority religious identity. The experiences that students encounter in postsecondary education could be detrimental to their retention, with challenges such as discrimination and a lack of institutional support potentially hindering their academic success (Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016). Moreover, the experiences of Muslim students with education spaces have been a subject of scholarly

inquiry, shedding light on the intersection of religious identity and academic achievement (Ahmed and Garcia, 2020). This study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on religious identity in Pakistani institutions and its influence on students' academic trajectories, grounded in the Social Identity Theory by Henri Tajfel.

Social Identity Theory of Henri Tajfel

One well-known social psychology theory, social identity theory by Henri Tajfel, tries to explain intergroup conflict by showing how group-based self-definitions affect it (Islam, 2014). According to the theory, people get some of their sense of self from belonging to social groups, and these groups are significant sources of pride and self-worth (Olivia, 2023). According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), belonging to a group may be a significant source of pride, and people work hard to develop and preserve a positive feeling of distinction for their group memberships (Leaper, 2011).

The theory tries to shed light on the social dynamics and mental processes that underpin behaviors between groups, especially those that are associated with bias, discrimination, and prejudice (Olivia, 2023). A person's sense of self-determination based on their membership in one or more groups is known as their social identity (Leaper, 2011). Group identities are formed through social comparisons between the two groups as well as the classification of one's own "in-group" in relation to an "out-group" (Islam, 2014). The result is identification with a collective, depersonalized identity based on group membership that is imbued with virtue (ibid.).

The social identity theory has been applied in various fields, including organizational behavior, intergroup relations, and political psychology (Black & Fred, 1989). The theory has also been used to examine the impact of religious identity on educational outcomes, particularly for religious minority students (Tajfel, 1974). The theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the dynamics of religious identity in educational settings, particularly in the context of religious transformations during college years (Ibid.).

Overall, the social identity theory of Henri Tajfel provides valuable insights into the role of social identity in shaping individuals' experiences and behaviors in group settings. The theory has been

applied in various fields and has contributed to our understanding of intergroup relations, organizational behavior, and political psychology. The theory underscores the significance of religious identity in influencing students' experiences and academic outcomes in relation to minority religious identity outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

There is still more to learn about the intricate and varied topic of how minority religious identification affects academic achievement in Pakistan. In environments where Islam is the main center of existence, students from religious minorities may encounter particular difficulties that could impede their academic progress and sense of community. This study intends to investigate the ways in which minority religious identification affects students' experiences, sense of belonging, and academic achievement in educational environments.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to examine the effects of religious diversity on academic performance, with a focus on minority religious identification. In order to better understand how minority students navigate different educational environments and how institutions in Pakistan may support their success, this research looks at the association between religious identification, social identity, and enlightening outcomes.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it provides an in-depth analysis of the effects of a minority group's religious identity on educational outcomes, contributing to the broader discourse on religious diversity and its influences on students' academic trajectories. The findings of this study may inform educational policies and practices that better support the academic success and sense of belonging of religious minority students.

Research Question

How does minority religious identity shape students' experiences in predominantly majority religious educational settings? What specific challenges do these students face, and how can institutions enhance

their academic success and sense of belonging in the country of Pakistan?

Definition of Key Terms

Minority Religious Identity: It refers to the religious identity of individuals who belong to a religious group that is in the minority within a given context.

Educational Outcomes: It refers to the academic achievement, retention, and sense of belonging of students in educational settings.

Social Identity Theory: This is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the importance of understanding how individuals identify with and feel a connection to their social groups, which can include their religious identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In educational studies, the effect of religious identity as a minority on academic outcomes is becoming more and more important. The present level of knowledge on this subject is examined in this review, with an emphasis on how minority religious identification affects students' experiences, sense of association, and academic achievement in the learning environment.

The intersection of minority religious identity and educational outcomes is a complex and multifaceted area of study, gaining increasing attention in academic research. This review synthesizes key findings and theoretical perspectives, particularly focusing on the implications of minority religious identity in academic settings, drawing upon Henri Tajfel's social identity theory as a foundational framework.

Research has consistently highlighted the unique challenges faced by students from minority religious backgrounds in educational settings. Studies like those of Mutakabbir and Nuriddin (2016) underline the impact of discrimination and a lack of institutional support on these students' academic experiences. The concept of religious identity in educational settings is not just limited to personal belief systems but extends to how these beliefs interact with the predominantly majority religious contexts of many educational institutions.

The connection between religious identity and educational effects is complex. For instance, Ahmed and Garcia (2020) explored the specific experiences of Muslim students, revealing nuanced ways in

which religious identity interacts with academic achievements. These studies often reveal a pattern of minority religious students facing additional challenges, including discrimination and alienation, which can diversely affect their academic success.

Tajfel's social identity theory provides a valuable lens for understanding these dynamics. The theory suggests that social group membership plays a significant role in shaping individuals' self-concepts, such as religious affiliation. In academic settings, minority religious identities can influence students' self-perception, their interactions with peers and faculty, and their overall sense of belonging, all of which are crucial for academic success.

The role of educational institutions in supporting minority religious students is critical. Research indicates that when schools and universities acknowledge and accommodate religious diversity, it positively impacts minority students' academic engagement and achievements towards greater inclusiveness and understanding of religious diversity (Jenny & Nicholas, 2012).

Beyond the direct educational outcomes, minority religious identity in academic settings also has broader social implications. It touches on issues of equality, inclusiveness, and the role of education in shaping a diverse and tolerant society (Meon, 2021). Understanding and addressing the challenges faced by minority religious students is not just about improving educational outcomes but also about fostering a more inclusive and empathetic societal ethos.

Muslim students, a racial and religious minority in the US, can be more susceptible to prejudice because of their religious background. Nonetheless, considering critical race theory (CRT) can aid in providing more insight into how their religious upbringing influences their educational experiences (Rodaina El-HajIbrahim, 2022). Studies have indicated that religion can have a favorable impact on academic performance and can also have an effect on educational outcomes.

The impact of this statement is not well-researched on religious affiliation and university satisfaction, but some research has indicated that religious affiliation may have a strong impact on institutional satisfaction and other outcomes (Nicholas, 2013). Although the exact direction of the effect on outcomes is unknown, being a minority religion is a

significant factor in determining how a determination affects educational attainment (Meon & Ilan, 2019)

In the study by Jenny & Nicholas (2011), the influence of religious affiliation on educational outcomes is investigated in a longitudinal analysis encompassing more than 14000 undergraduate students in the United States, with a particular focus on the dynamics of majority and minority religious identities.

Patrick F. Fagan (2010) wrote an article on "Religious Practice and Educational Attainment." The paper discusses the significant impact of religious practice on educational outcomes, particularly for low-income individuals. It highlights its potential to increase moral norms, discipline, and expectations, stabilise parental marriage, improve family life, and protect against delinquent behaviour. Shaunquelle A. D. Sapp in an article titled "The Role of Religious and Spiritual Beliefs in the Academic Success of College Students" (2017), did research on the relationship between college students' GPAs and their levels of spirituality and religion. Higher degrees of spirituality and religiosity were thought to be correlated with higher GPAs. Results demonstrated a negative association between religiosity and spirituality and student GPAs. Subsequent investigations ought to delve into the variables that impact the adverse associations between spirituality, religion, and GPAs.

Stephanie Litizzette Mixon, Larry Lyon and Michael Beaty described in one of the articles "Secularization and National Universities: The Effect of Religious Identity on Academic Reputation" (2004) that private national American institutions, such as Harvard, are highly regarded for their intellectual standing, but they have lost much of their religious character. This research attempts to evaluate the conundrum of upholding one's religious identity while pursuing intellectual greatness.

Brian Barrett (2010) wrote an article titled "Religion and Habitus: Exploring the Relationship between Religious Involvement and Educational Outcomes and Orientations among Urban African American Students." The paper uses the ideas of Bourdieu and Smith to identify gaps and suggests strategies as The study investigates the correlation between religious participation and educational outcomes, with a focus on urban African American adolescents.

Theoretical Framework

Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory is used in the research topic "Investigating the Influence of Minority Religious Identity on Academic Achievement in Pakistani Educational Institutions" to investigate how students' educational outcomes are affected by their minority religious identity. The theory emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend how people relate to and identify with their social groups, including their religious identities. It also discusses the psychological issues brought on by one's religious identity.

Under Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, the research topic focuses on how students' educational outcomes are affected by their minority religious identity. The theory emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend how people relate to and identify with their social groups, including their religious identities. A minority religious identity can foster psychological turmoil and a sense of community, both of which can enhance academic achievement. Studies indicate that the experiences of religious minority students in higher education may be potentially harmful to their retention, with obstacles including discrimination and a lack of institutional support possibly impeding their ability to succeed academically. Addressing these difficulties requires an understanding of the dynamics of religious identity in educational contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This investigation employs Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory as a theoretical framework to examine the influence of minority religious identity on students' academic experiences and outcomes within educational settings in Pakistani institutions. The methodology adopted is qualitative, incorporating an array of literary sources to enrich the analysis. Through the application of thematic analysis coupled with narrative techniques, the study aims to elucidate the nuanced impact that minority religious identity has on educational outcomes.

One of the limitations of this study is its reliance on qualitative methods, which may introduce potential personal biases and limit the generalizability of the findings from the documented observation at institutions in the territory of Pakistan. Furthermore, the research design encompasses a detailed timeline that methodically outlines each phase of the study,

from data collection to analysis. Data presentation is meticulously undertaken, with an emphasis on providing rich, detailed descriptions and insightful case studies that offer depth and context to the findings.

Findings

The findings on the impact of minority religious identity on educational outcomes in academic settings, religious transformations during college years, and the relationship between racial and academic identity reveal significant insights. According to the research, religious diversity directly affects students' educational outcomes, in addition to the concept of educational experiences as a whole (Rodaina El-Haj-Ibrahim, 2022). For minority religious students, who comprise a racial and religious minority, there is a clear correlation between race and religion, which shapes their experiences and ways of navigating higher education environments (Ibid.).

The Impact of Minority Religious Identity on Educational Outcomes

Due to their combined racial and religious heritage, students in higher education are subject to an increase in racism and prejudice, which shapes their experiences there (Rodaina El-Haj-Ibrahim, 2022). It is important to comprehend the experiences of religious minority students in higher education because this minority status has a substantial impact on Muslim students' educational experiences and creates a more acceptable campus climate (Ibid.).

One major aspect influencing minority religious students' educational success is the interaction between their religious identity, acculturation tactics, and perceptions of acculturation orientation at the institution. Students from backgrounds of religious minorities benefit from this interaction in terms of their experiences and academic accomplishments (Sapp, 2014). The experiences of religious minority students in Pakistani higher education could be detrimental to their retention, as obstacles including prejudice and a lack of instructional assistance could make it more difficult for them to succeed academically (Mutakabbir, 2016).

Religious Transformation During College Years

According to the research, a denomination's influence on educational outcomes may be significantly influenced by its membership in a minority faith, highlighting the importance of religious identity in influencing students' educational experiences and accomplishments (Moen, 2019).

The connection between acculturation techniques, religious identity, and attitudes towards acculturation orientation in the educational setting is an important factor in the educational outcomes of minority religious students. This relationship influences the experiences and academic achievements of students from religious minority backgrounds (Fagan, 2010).

Racial and Academic Identity

The involvement of pupils in higher education, particularly in the context of their dual minority status, significantly impacts their educational experiences and academic achievements (Rodaina El-Haj-Ibrahim, 2022).

The educational outcomes of minority religious students are significantly influenced by the advantages of religion for academic performance as well as the potential effects of religion on educational outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The Identity of Religious Minority

The identity of religious minority students has been found to have a significant impact on their academic achievement. The research scholar article examines the role of religious identity in academic settings, particularly focusing on the impact of minority religious identity on academic achievement. This study emphasises the effect of knowing teachers' religious identity on students' academic performance (Amaliyah & Lubabin, 2017). This suggests that the religious identity of teachers can have a direct impact on students' academic achievements.

The paper examines the education outcome and achievement of minority religious students in Pakistan, including the impact of national and cultural identities on their academic performance (Panjwani & Daniel, 2017). The study emphasizes how crucial it is to take into account the particular difficulties and advantages that members of religious minority groups encounter and the elements that

support these students' academic achievements. The experiences of religious minority students in higher education may be detrimental to their retention, with obstacles like prejudice and a lack of institutional support perhaps impeding their ability to succeed academically (Mutakabbir, 2016); the problem needs to be highlighted for educational institutions to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for students from religious minority groups. Religious affiliation has a strong impact on institutional satisfaction and other outcomes (Nicholas & Cynthia, 2013). It elaborates on how the religious affiliation of students can have a significant impact on their overall satisfaction with their educational experience.

The impact of religious diversity on pupils' academic performance and its contribution to the broader concept of educational experiences (Rodaina El-Haj-Ibrahim, 2022). It represents the necessity for educational establishments to foster an environment that is more welcoming and encouraging for students who belong to religious minority groups in Pakistan. It also calls for the promotion of cultural competence and an awareness of the dynamics of religious identity in learning environments. The study emphasizes the significance of taking into account the particular difficulties and advantages that members of religious minority groups encounter in educational environments, as well as the necessity of further research into the elements that support these students' academic achievement.

One important aspect of a person's identity is his religious affiliation (Martin & Nakayama, 2009). Since it has been demonstrated that people prefer their group members over strategies (Gupta, 2013), Religious affiliation constitutes a significant component of individual identity, as underscored in various studies (Martin & Nakayama, 2009). This aspect of identity often influences social dynamics, as evidenced by the tendency of individuals to show a preference for members of their own group (Gupta, 2013). Riis (2011) elaborates on that phenomenon, explaining that a shared symbol or identifier, such as religion, fosters a sense of comfort and assurance among group members. This dynamic plays a crucial role in the development of discrimination based on religious identities.

Duriez and Hutsebaut (2002) further explore this concept, positing a potential link between levels of

religiosity and racial prejudices. Their insights suggest that the depth of one's religious conviction might influence their attitudes towards other racial or ethnic groups. Additionally, stereotypes play a role in fueling tensions between different faith communities. These stereotypes often lead to the creation of divisive narratives, positioning one religious group against another and exacerbating interfaith misunderstandings and hostility. This body of research collectively highlights the complex interplay between religious identity, group presence, and the genesis of discriminatory attitudes and behaviors in various social contexts.

Religion in an Academic Setting

Religion in an academic setting is an important factor in shaping students' experiences and outcomes, particularly for religious minority students. Religious minority students' experiences in higher education may have negative effects on their retention, with challenges such as discrimination and a lack of institutional support potentially hindering their academic success (Mutakabbir, 2016). This highlights the need for educational institutions to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for students from religious minority groups.

One important factor influencing how a denomination affects educational achievements is whether or not it is a minority religion, emphasizing the significance of religious identity in shaping students' educational experiences and achievements (Meon, 2014). This underscores the need to consider the unique challenges and opportunities faced by students from religious minority groups in academic settings.

The research suggests that religious affiliation has a strong impact on institutional satisfaction and other outcomes, stressing the need to take religion into account and how it affects students' educational experiences (Rodaina El-Haj-Ibrahim, 2022). This underscores the need for educational institutions to promote religious tolerance and create a supportive environment for students from religious minority groups.

The review of research on religion and academic achievement identifies the broad mechanisms through which religion may affect people's educational outcomes, highlighting the need for continued investigation into the factors that

contribute to the academic success of students from religious minority backgrounds (Horwitz, 2021). This underscores the importance of considering the unique challenges and opportunities faced by students from religious minority groups in academic settings.

The literature on religion and education emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend how religion affects students' experiences and results. It highlights the necessity for educational establishments to foster an environment that is more welcoming and encouraging for students who belong to religious minority groups. It also calls for the promotion of cultural competence and an awareness of the dynamics of religious identity in learning environments. The study also emphasizes the significance of taking into account the particular difficulties and advantages that members of religious minority groups encounter in educational environments, as well as the necessity of further research into the elements that support these students' academic achievements.

Academic performance, a pivotal measure of student achievement, plays a critical role in shaping the quality of future graduates who are poised to contribute to national economic and social advancement in their capacities as leaders and workforce members (Norvidayah et al., 2009). The success of learning activities, which directly impact academic performance, is closely tied to the role of teachers. Setiawati emphasizes that teachers are integral to the educational process, not only imparting knowledge but also significantly influencing student academic outcomes (Kimani et al., 2013).

Global studies have delved into the factors underlying variations in academic performance across schools. These investigations influence teachers and individual student factors (Vistor, 2011). Dunkin highlights that a teacher's performance, shaped by variables such as gender, personal life experiences, and socio-cultural background, is a significant determinant in influencing student academic achievements (Yani, 2012). This body of research underscores the multifaceted nature of academic performance, pointing to a complex interplay of familial, educational, and personal factors that collectively shape the educational journey of students.

Impact of Minority Religious Identity on Academic Achievement

The impact of minority religious identity on academic achievement is a complex and multifaceted topic that has been explored in various studies. The research scholar article examines the role of religion in academic settings, particularly focusing on the impact of minority religious identity on educational outcomes. The relationship between religious identity and academic achievement suggests that students' academic performance is significantly impacted by teachers' knowledge of their religious identities. (Amaliyah et al., 2017). It elaborates that the religious identity of teachers can have a direct impact on students' academic achievements.

Religious minority discrimination in higher education and a lack of institutional support are two issues that may negatively impact religious minority students' retention in higher education and perhaps impede their academic progress. The study follows the need for educational institutions to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for students from religious minority groups (Mutakabbir and Nuriddin, 2016). Elder and Conger provide a comprehensive analysis of how the church community influences adolescents' attitudes, expectations, and academic performance.

“Surrounded by adults and peers who care about worthy accomplishments, religiously-involved youth tend to score higher than other adolescents on school achievement, social success, confidence in themselves, and their parents' reports of their personal maturity (p. 161). Regular participation in church services and programmes strengthened self-concepts of academic achievement, work habits, or discipline... within the church, young people found guidance and encouragement from congregation members with whom they establish strong ties (p. 158).

Students' educational outcomes are impacted by religious variety, which also adds to the entire concept of educational experiences (Rodaina El-Haj-Ibrahim, 2022). Religious affiliation has a strong impact on institutional satisfaction and other outcomes (Nicholas & Cynthia, 2013).

In the realm of sociological and educational research, the relationship between religious socialization and academic achievement has garnered significant attention. Diane and Lawrence's study in 1991 sheds

light on this intricate connection, particularly within Pentecostal families. Despite socio-economic challenges and generally lower educational attainment compared to other demographics, these families exhibit a notable correlation between religious socialization and heightened educational achievement. This phenomenon suggests a unique, positive impact of religious engagement on academic performance.

Elder's research in 2000 further corroborates this relationship, revealing that high school students who increase their religious involvement often see an improvement in their academic ranking. This positive correlation extends beyond high school, as evidenced by a study of Iowa families, which found that religious involvement in the eighth grade predicted higher academic competence by the twelfth grade.

The influence of religious practices on academic outcomes is not confined to younger students. A study conducted in 1989 at a secular liberal arts college by David observed a similar trend among college-age students. The research indicated that over 75% of students who became more religiously active during their college years achieved above-average academic performance. Additionally, Loury's research in 2004 highlights that frequent religious attendance can positively affect educational longevity. Students who regularly attended church services during their upbringing were found to have a significant increase in total years of schooling by their early thirties compared to those who did not participate in such religious activities.

A well-known authority on the subject of youth and religion, Christian Smith is a professor of sociology at Notre Dame. He highlights the significance of church attendance and positive views of religion in promoting positive attitudes towards education by referencing the research of Muller and Ellison (1988) and Regnerus (2000). Bankston and Zhou clarify this relationship:

“Ethnic religious participation... promotes adjustment to the host society precisely because it promotes the cultivation of a distinctive ethnicity, and membership in this distinctive ethnic group helps young people reach higher levels of academic achievement and avoid dangerous and destructive forms of behavior (29–31).

Jonathan Gruber discovered that residing in a community where the majority of people follow the same religion is linked to significantly higher levels of religious involvement as well as better results in terms of income, education, and marital status (2005). This finding has something to do with the influence of culture and community.

Religious Transformation during College Years in Pakistan

It has been the subject of scholarly inquiry, with research indicating that numerous religious shifts are a result of teenage religious socialization, in which they attempt to establish their own identities and rise in the religious community (Regnerus & Jeremy, 2006). The transformation of higher education in the United States during the twentieth century has also had a significant impact on the role of religion in academic settings (Robert, 2021). Religion is inextricably entwined with colleges and universities in their evolution and transformation in the United States (Waggoner, 2023).

It has been discovered that religious minority students' experiences in higher education negatively impact their retention, with obstacles including prejudice and a lack of institutional support perhaps impeding their ability to succeed academically (Mutakabbir, 2016). However, research has also highlighted the special chances for spiritual growth available in faith-based colleges and universities and the development of the whole person (Santa, 2020). The example of Jesuit higher education provides a model for guiding principles in higher education that prioritize the whole person and the development of cura-personals or care for the whole person (ibid.).

Building on the findings of the International Centre for Religion and Diplomacy (IVRD) study found by USCIRF, future research could examine how religious minorities are portrayed in textbooks and other educational materials used in Pakistan's public schools, madrassa systems and at college levels. This study could examine the connections between how religious minorities are portrayed, prejudices that are held against them, and actions of extremism or discrimination brought on by these prejudices (Hussain & Salim, 2011). This study looks into how national and cultural identities affect Pakistani students who belong to religious minorities in terms of their academic performance. an examination of

Muslim students' academic performance in light of their national and cultural identities, as shown by the literature now in publication, may fall under this category (Panjwani, 2017).

Examining the possibilities for religious literacy in Pakistani education as it has been mentioned in the literature could be a worthwhile area of study. This might entail a thorough analysis of the function of religious education in Pakistani schools, how it affects students' comprehension of various religious traditions, and what this means for students who identify as religious minorities (Azeem, 2019). Expanding upon previous studies, additional exploration of obstacles and biased encounters encountered by students belonging to religious minorities in Pakistani higher education could yield significant understandings. This study may investigate the elements that have a detrimental impact on religious minority students' retention in postsecondary education (Mutakabbir, 2016).

Documentary analysis may be used in this study topic to pinpoint issues and prejudice encountered by kids from religious minorities in Pakistani public institutions. This could offer a thorough grasp of the difficulties and unfair encounters that religious minorities encounter in the public sector (Khuda Bakhsh, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Deep insights into the relationship between identity, education, and societal structures can be gained from examining the impact of minority religious identity on educational outcomes, especially when viewed through the prism of Henri Tajfel's social identity theory. The main conclusions, theoretical interpretations, and recommendations for future study and policy implications are synthesized in this conclusion.

Minority religious identity in academic settings is a nuanced phenomenon that goes beyond mere religious affiliation. It encompasses a sense of belonging, community, and sometimes, a feeling of being 'othered' in a predominantly different religious or secular environment. Henri Tajfel's Social Theory provides a crucial theoretical framework for understanding these phenomena. The theory suggests that individuals derive part of their self-esteem from the social groups to which they belong. In the context of minority religious identities in academic settings,

this theory helps explain how students' perceptions of their religious group membership can significantly influence their academic experiences and outcomes. The sense of belonging or exclusion, shaped by their religious identity, can have a direct impact on their academic motivation, engagement, and performance.

The role of educational institutions is paramount in shaping the experiences of minority religious students. Institutions that actively work towards inclusivity, recognising and accommodating religious diversity, tend to foster a more supportive environment for these students. This, in turn, can lead to improved academic outcomes. Therefore, the policy implications stemming from this research are clear: educational institutions need to implement inclusive policies, provide resources for religious minority students, and cultivate an environment where diversity is celebrated and respected. This includes training for educators, the development of inclusive curricula, and the establishment of support systems for minority religious students.

The impact of minority religious identity on educational outcomes is not just an educational issue but a societal one. It reflects broader themes of diversity, inclusivity, and social justice in our societies. Education systems that successfully support minority religious students not only enhance their educational outcomes but also contribute to a more equitable and tolerant society.

While minority religious students face unique challenges, these experiences also present opportunities for personal growth, resilience, and cross-cultural understanding. Educational settings, when inclusive, can become spaces where students from diverse religious backgrounds engage in meaningful dialogues, fostering mutual understanding and respect. This aspect is crucial in today's increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

Furthermore, the psychological impact of navigating a minority religious identity in educational settings extends beyond academic outcomes. It affects students' overall well-being and their social responsibility to ensure that the psychological implications of religious identity are acknowledged and addressed, contributing to the development of their students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research into the "Investigating the Influence of Minority Religious Identity on Academic Achievement in Pakistani Educational Institutions" the following recommendations can be proposed to enhance the educational experience and outcomes for students from minority religious backgrounds:

Educational institutions should incorporate diverse religious perspectives into their curriculum to validate minority students' experiences and promote inclusiveness and understanding in the learning environment.

Regular training sessions should educate educators and administrative staff on diverse religious backgrounds, fostering empathy and effective teaching strategies for minority religious students.

Institutions should establish dedicated systems for minority religious students, including counselling services, religious accommodations, and student-led support groups, to provide a safe space for expressing and addressing their concerns.

Strict anti-discrimination policies should be implemented and enforced, with clear procedures for addressing incidents of religious bias or harassment. This ensures a safe and respectful learning environment for all students.

The programme aims to enhance religious literacy and foster interfaith dialogue by addressing stereotypes, promoting mutual respect, and fostering understanding among students from diverse religious backgrounds.

The ongoing research on minority religious students' experiences can provide valuable insights and inform policy and practice by incorporating qualitative research to capture their nuanced experiences.

Establish partnerships with diverse religious communities to offer resources, support, and insights into their youth's educational needs, thereby fostering culturally and religiously sensitive practices.

Implement peer mentoring programmes, involving senior students from similar religious backgrounds, to facilitate the academic transition and foster a sense of belonging among new students.

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