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THE IMPACT OF DEVOLUTION OF EDUCATION ON NATIONAL UNITY OF PAKISTAN: A CASE STUDY OF 18TH AMENDMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of the 18th Amendment's devolution of education on Pakistan's national unity. It aims to assess how decentralization influences national identity amidst diverse political dynamics and potential provincial biases. Using qualitative analysis of primary and secondary data sources, the study employs critical thinking methods to explore the causal relationship between education decentralization and its effects on national unity. Decentralization, as mandated by the 18th Amendment, challenges Pakistan's national unity by prioritizing provincial interests over a cohesive national identity. The dominance of local politics fragments educational priorities, hindering efforts to foster a unified national ethos. Policymakers should engage in inclusive dialogue to reconcile provincial autonomy with national cohesion, strengthen inter-provincial cooperation, and prioritize initiatives promoting a shared national identity through education to mitigate divisive tendencies.

Keywords: Education, National Unity, Decentralization, Amendments, Policymakers.

INTRODUCTION

National unity in Pakistan is a complex tapestry woven from various socio-political threads, each influencing the nation's cohesion differently. From religious education, and ethnic groups to political culture, understanding these elements is crucial to navigating the challenges and opportunities for unity in the country. Education is often hailed as the cornerstone of progress, a beacon guiding nations toward prosperity and enlightenment. Yet, in the complex tapestry of developing countries like Pakistan, the state of education serves as a mirror reflecting a myriad of societal challenges. Pakistan grapples with a low literacy rate, officially documented at 58%, though unofficial figures suggest a bleaker reality. This deficiency in education permeates multiple layers of society, presenting itself as a formidable barrier to progress and national unity.

The ramifications of inadequate education reverberate across various domains, exacerbating economic disparities, impeding technological advancement, and nurturing fertile ground for manipulation by societal elites. In a landscape where ignorance reigns, the populace finds itself ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of modernity. The inability to harness advanced technologies and conceive innovative ideas for business further entrenches Pakistan in a cycle of underdevelopment. Moreover, education serves as a crucible for nurturing critical thinking and fostering national identity. Yet, in Pakistan's fragmented educational landscape, divergent narratives and agendas vie for dominance, sowing seeds of discord and diluting the fabric of national unity. The decentralized education system, comprising government institutions, madrassas, and elite private schools, exacerbates these divisions, perpetuating disparities and hindering cohesive progress. Within the government education system, disparities abound, with quality education remaining a distant dream for many. Curriculum inconsistencies across provinces foster divergent perspectives and hinder the cultivation of a shared national identity. The proliferation of madrassas, fueled by geopolitical interests and socioeconomic constraints, further compounds these

issues, nurturing a generation susceptible to radicalization and extremist ideologies.

Conversely, elite education institutions, catering to the privileged few, perpetuate societal divisions, reinforcing class disparities and perpetuating elitist hegemony. The divide between the ruling elite and the masses widens, breeding resentment and undermining efforts towards national solidarity. The decentralization of education, ostensibly aimed at empowering provinces, has instead engendered a fragmented educational landscape rife with ethnic and religious tensions. Provincial autonomy, though ostensibly empowering, has become a double-edged sword, fueling regionalism and undermining national cohesion. Ethnic strife, exacerbated by provincial autonomy, festers in the fertile soil of educational disparities, perpetuating division and hindering national integration. From the rugged terrains of Baluchistan to the bustling streets of Karachi, ethnic fault lines threaten to tear the fabric of Pakistani society asunder.

Religious extremism, nurtured by sectarian agendas and religious indoctrination, finds fertile ground in the decentralized education system, further eroding national unity and fostering discord. The weaponization of religion by vested interests undermines efforts toward fostering a cohesive national identity. As Pakistan stands at a crossroads, the imperative for a unified national curriculum becomes increasingly evident. A single, standardized curriculum, devoid of sectarian biases and regional agendas, holds the promise of fostering a sense of common identity and promoting national cohesion. In the pages that follow, we delve into the multifaceted impact of education on Pakistan's societal fabric, dissecting the challenges posed by decentralized education and exploring avenues for fostering national unity in a fractured landscape. Through rigorous analysis and critical examination, we endeavor to unearth the roots of discord and pave a path toward a more unified, cohesive Pakistan.

Literature Review:

The literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of the implications of the 18th Amendment on provincial autonomy and education in Pakistan. Qayum (2021) identifies the three dimensions of provincial autonomy granted by the amendment, emphasizing legislative, administrative, and financial autonomy. Ghulam M.G (2021) explores the amendment's role in shaping the nature of the federation, while Siddiqui and Ahmed (2022) discuss the decentralization of education and its impact on transparency and accountability. Research by H Jamal (Year) supports the policy of devolving power to provinces, albeit with concerns about its implementation. Additionally, Parvez (2021) highlights the politicization of education post-devolution, warning of potential chaos from disparate curricula and partisan hero glorification. Sohni Siddiqui and Z. Ahmad delve into the administrative adjustments required for effective decentralization, advocating for its importance in addressing educational disparities. Adeney's work (Year) compares Pakistani federalism with other countries and emphasizes the increased autonomy of provinces post-amendment.

However, there is a gap in the literature regarding empirical research on the practical outcomes of devolution in education. While there is limited empirical evidence on how devolution has impacted educational outcomes, governance, and equity. Future research should focus on assessing the implementation challenges, educational reforms, and the effectiveness of decentralization in improving education quality and equity in Pakistan. Additionally, there is a need for comparative studies with other federal systems to draw lessons and inform evidence-based policy decisions.

Theoretically Framework:

Policy Implementation Theory: The devolution of education following the 18th Amendment in Pakistan represents a significant shift in governance structures and policy implementation mechanisms within the country's education sector. Policy Implementation Theory offers a lens through which to analyze the complex dynamics of translating legislative mandates into practical actions at the provincial level. In the case of Pakistan, the devolution of education through the 18th Amendment aimed to empower provincial governments with greater autonomy and decision-making authority over education policies and programs. However, the effective implementation of this devolution has encountered various challenges, influencing its impact on national unity.

Firstly, the implementation of the 18th Amendment in Pakistan's education sector has been marked by disparities in institutional capacity and resource allocation across provinces. While some provinces, such as Punjab and Sindh, have made

strides in decentralizing education governance and strengthening local educational institutions, others, like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, have faced significant hurdles due to resource constraints and administrative inefficiencies. These disparities have implications for national unity, as unequal access to quality education can exacerbate socio-economic disparities and foster feelings of marginalization among certain communities. Thus, the uneven implementation of devolution may inadvertently contribute to regional grievances and undermine the cohesion of the Pakistani nation.

Secondly, the devolution of education has reshaped the dynamics of inter-provincial relations and political power-sharing in Pakistan. Before the 18th Amendment, education policies were largely formulated and implemented at the federal level, leading to a centralized approach that often neglected the diverse needs and priorities of different regions. However, with the transfer of education-related responsibilities to provincial governments, there has been a shift towards greater provincial autonomy and decision-making authority. While this decentralization of power is intended to promote local ownership and accountability in education governance, it has also led to tensions between the federal and provincial governments, particularly regarding the distribution of financial resources and the standardization of curriculum and assessment frameworks. These intergovernmental disputes can impede the effective implementation of education policies and hinder efforts to promote national unity by exacerbating political polarization and inter-provincial rivalries.

In conclusion, the Policy Implementation Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the impact of the devolution of education on national unity in Pakistan following the 18th Amendment. By examining the challenges and dynamics of implementing decentralized education governance at the provincial level, we can gain insights into the complexities of translating legislative mandates into tangible outcomes. While the devolution of education has the potential to empower local communities, enhance accountability, and address regional disparities, its uneven implementation and intergovernmental tensions pose significant challenges to fostering national unity. Therefore, policymakers and stakeholders need to address these challenges through collaborative efforts, resource mobilization, and capacity-building initiatives to realize the full potential of devolution in promoting educational equity and social cohesion across Pakistan.

Research Methodology:

The Research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, manage, and analyse information or data about the research topic. This section of research plays an important role in the research process. A reader may be impressed by the methodology of a research paper. If the methodology is good then the impact of the paper will be great. This research methodology allows the reader to find out whether the study is valid or not. Research methodology explains mainly two things. One is how the data is collected and the second shows how the data is being analyzed. For this research study, a qualitative method has been used. This study will be analytical and the researcher will use critical thinking skills and evaluate the information and facts related to the study “Devolution of education and its impact on national unity of Pakistan”. This study is also causal because it showed the cause of the decentralization of education and its effects on the national unity of Pakistan. Researchers mostly focused on secondary data like research papers, journals, online sources, and books.

National Unity:

According to the Oxford Dictionary, "unity" originates from the Latin word 'unitas,' signifying the state of being united or in a state of oneness. In essence, unity refers to the collaboration towards a common goal. Specifically, in the context of national unity, it denotes the combined endeavors of a nation towards a brighter future. As Aristotle advocated, city-states should strive for the betterment of individuals. In the contemporary era, collective action is essential for pursuing the welfare of the masses within a modern state (Chang et al., 2013).

National Unity and Pakistan:

As we have elucidated the significance of national unity for a nation's development, let us now delve into a case study concerning Pakistan's national unity post the 18th amendment. This amendment bestowed immense powers upon provincial administrations, leading to a substantial devolution of authority. While this devolution has brought about various outcomes, both positive and negative, its impact on national unity has been profound. For example, the introduction of Article 25A, mandating basic

education for all children aged 5 to 16, regardless of discrimination, stands as a positive stride towards enhancing literacy rates in Pakistan. However, alongside these benefits, there have been notable inconveniences. It is observed that since the implementation of the 18th Amendment, national unity and cooperation have experienced considerable strain (Siddiqi et al., 2022).

As stated by Haroon, "The devolution should be revisited to remove the obstacles and to improve its implementation" (Haroon, 2021). This assertion underscores the need to reassess the devolution of power, particularly concerning education, to address existing challenges and optimize its effectiveness. It is imperative to analyze whether this devolution positively contributes to national unity and cooperation or conversely hampers it. While the amendment has generated both positive and negative impacts on the state, its effect on national unity warrants detailed examination. Hence, it is essential to address the elements crucial to national unity in this context.

Elements of National Unity:

National unity has some elements such as education, language, provincial policies, culture and political culture, religion, ethnic groups, and so on. These elements are crucial to comprehend because Pakistan is a heterogeneous country where all these elements directly and indirectly affect national unity and collective move for the common interest (Saat et al., 2021).

Education:

Education stands as a pivotal element steering nations towards their collective destiny. It shapes the future trajectory of a nation, making it imperative to thoroughly scrutinize the education system to discern its strengths and weaknesses. Education plays a vital role in shaping the public opinion of future generations, underscoring the necessity for meticulous design. In ensuring national unity, education must offer an equitable curriculum accessible to all parts of a country, transcending discrimination based on caste, creed, or color. However, the post-18th amendment scenario in Pakistan paints a contrasting picture. With education falling under provincial jurisdiction, the ability to alter curricula as per provincial whims poses a threat to national unity. This decentralization has allowed nationalist and religious parties within provinces to influence educational content, often promoting their agendas and heroes, thereby jeopardizing national identity and cohesion (Wongeh et al., 2022).

Nationalist and religious factions prioritize their vested interests over the nation's welfare, manipulating educational curricula to suit their objectives. For instance, in KPK, the ANP advocates for the inclusion of figures like Khan Abdul Gaffer Khan, who opposed the genesis of Pakistan (Khan, 1948), in educational materials. Similarly, religious parties such as JUI and JI seek to propagate their version of Islam, often alienating sects like Shia, which can breed discord and hinder national unity. Given the transformative power of education, it is paramount not to underestimate its influence. Nelson Mandela aptly encapsulated this sentiment by stating, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Education possesses the potential to mold nations and must not be undervalued. Leadership across political, judicial, and military domains must forge consensus in safeguarding broader national interests (Sirat, and Nadry. 2023). In light of these considerations, there is an urgent need to reconsider the jurisdiction over education, shifting it from provincial to federal governance. This move is essential for preserving national unity and fostering a cohesive educational framework that transcends narrow interests. By centralizing education under federal oversight, Pakistan can uphold a unified national identity and promote collective progress.

Language:

Language stands as a crucial element of national unity, serving as a unifying force for a nation. Since its inception, Pakistan has grappled with language-related challenges, with significant implications for its unity. The delay in drafting the constitution and the subsequent East-West Pakistan crisis of 1971, which culminated in the dismemberment of Pakistan, underscore the critical role of language in national cohesion (Aljazeera, 2019). The refusal to recognize Bengali as a state language in the early post-Partition years exacerbated tensions, contributing to the eventual rupture. Given the historical significance of language in shaping Pakistan's destiny, addressing the language issue warrants careful consideration to bolster unity and solidarity. However, the post-18th amendment landscape has seen provinces prioritize the promotion of their local languages over the national ones. While advocating for local languages

is not inherently detrimental, it becomes problematic in the context of Pakistan's developmental challenges (Giudici, and Grizelj. 2020).

As a developing country, Pakistan grapples with resource constraints, exacerbating tensions between provinces and the central government over resource allocation. This perpetual discord impedes ideal relations between Islamabad and the increasingly autonomous provinces. Unlike the United States, where states wield considerable power under a robust federal system, Pakistan lacks the resources and capital to accommodate such autonomy, particularly in the realm of education. Provincial authorities in Pakistan are inclined to elevate and promote their local languages within academic institutions, often at the expense of the national language. While efforts to preserve linguistic diversity are commendable, neglecting the national language undermines efforts towards national unity. Therefore, Pakistan's competent authorities must address the shortcomings stemming from the 18th Amendment to bolster national unity and cooperation (Han, 2023).

In essence, reconciling the promotion of local languages with the preservation of the national language is essential for fostering a cohesive national identity. By rectifying the imbalance resulting from the 18th Amendment, Pakistan can mitigate linguistic tensions and forge a stronger sense of unity among its diverse populace.

Culture

Culture stands as a pivotal element in shaping national unity within a state. During the Pakistan movement (1857-1947), Muslims highlighted the stark cultural differences between themselves and other communities. I.H. Qureshi's work, "Struggle for Pakistan," underscores the divergence in culture and way of life between the Muslim community and others, a factor instrumental in Pakistan's creation. Pakistan's diverse provinces exhibit distinct cultural practices, exemplified by the favored attire varying from "Silwar Qamis" in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to shirts and pants in Punjab, and Sindhi capes in Sindh. These cultural nuances extend to joyful and sorrowful gatherings, underscoring culture's profound influence on national unity.

Regrettably, elite interests often overshadow efforts to foster national unity, leaving provincial populations dissatisfied with federal governance. Exploiting these divisions, foreign actors seek to disrupt national unity, as evidenced by recent events such as the bombing of a police mosque in KP, sparking calls for independence. Amidst these challenges, national and provincial governments must prioritize unity over personal interests. Leveraging cultural differences positively through a unified curriculum can bolster national unity. By embracing cultural diversity as a unifying force, Islamabad can effectively navigate challenges and strengthen national cohesion (Qureshi, n.d.).

Political Culture

Political culture, closely intertwined with broader societal culture, profoundly shapes individual and collective political behavior. Gabriel Almond defines political culture as "the particular pattern of orientations towards political actions in which every political system is embedded." Similarly, Lucian Pye characterizes it as "the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process." Political culture encompasses citizens' perspectives on politics and governance, influencing their actions and interactions within the political sphere. Across a nation, political cultures may vary slightly due to regional differences, yet share fundamental similarities. Variables such as religion, tribal affiliations, and personal interests significantly influence voting behavior, albeit with varying degrees of emphasis in different regions (Ekemam, 2017).

Leaders and influencers within society play a pivotal role in shaping political culture by exerting influence over the masses. However, Pakistan's fragile economic landscape often leaves many citizens struggling to meet their basic needs. Consequently, a self-serving political culture emerges, driven by elites who prioritize personal gain over collective welfare (Almond, 2017). This culture is perpetuated by the elite's diversion of funds away from public welfare and into personal accounts, exacerbating societal divisions and eroding trust in the political system. This self-serving political culture poses a significant challenge to national unity, as it prioritizes personal interests over the common good. To foster unity and promote national development, it is imperative to address and rectify the prevailing political culture. By instilling values of collective interest and accountability, Pakistan can pave the way for a more cohesive and prosperous future.

Religion

Pakistan's inception was deeply rooted in religion, with other factors also contributing to its formation. However, religion emerged as the primary catalyst. Unlike many developed nations that have undergone a separation of religion and politics since the Renaissance, Pakistan, along with countries like Iran and Israel, was established based on religion. In the context of Pakistan, religion and politics remain closely intertwined, with religion serving as a fundamental force that binds the nation together. Pakistan's diverse cultural and linguistic landscape lacks a unifying factor other than religion. Therefore, religion is intrinsic to Pakistan's national unity, serving as a cohesive element. However, religious divisions within Pakistan pose a significant challenge to national unity. Sectarian tensions, particularly between Shia and Sunni Muslims, are pervasive and divisive. The differences between these sects, influenced by external powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, exacerbate societal fractures and hinder efforts toward unity (Wan Husin, 2022).

Moreover, internal divisions within sects further complicate matters. Within the Sunni sect, factions like JUI-F, JI, and Panjpeer clerics advocate for differing interpretations of Islam, leading to intra-sectarian discord and animosity. Such divisions undermine attempts to foster unity and cohesion. Religious diversity and sectarianism present formidable obstacles to national unity, necessitating measures to address these challenges. Implementing a single national curriculum, particularly in religious education provided by Madrassas, could help mitigate sectarian tensions and promote unity. However, the devolution of education to the provinces following the 18th Amendment has hindered efforts to implement such reforms, as provincial authorities, often influenced by religious parties, may prioritize their agendas over national unity (Khan, 1948).

In conclusion, while religion played a pivotal role in Pakistan's creation and remains integral to its national identity, religious divisions threaten to undermine national unity. Addressing sectarian tensions and promoting a unified educational curriculum are essential steps toward fostering cohesion and stability in Pakistan.

Ethnic groups

Ethnicity poses a significant challenge to national unity in Pakistan, both at a broad level across the country and within provinces and districts. The existence of diverse ethnic groups has been exploited by elites for their interests, leading to divisions and animosities that undermine the cohesion of the nation. At a broader level, Pakistan is home to various ethnic groups such as Punjabis, Sindhis, Pathans, Balochis, Kashmiris, and Gilgitis. These groups not only have distinct cultures but also harbor deep-seated resentments towards each other, often fueled by the divide-and-rule policies of the ruling elites. For instance, Pathans perceive Punjabis as responsible for their economic backwardness, while Balochis and Sindhis harbor similar sentiments towards Punjabis and Pathans. However, it is essential to recognize that the responsibility for resource distribution and injustices lies with the elite class of all provinces, not solely with Punjabis. Furthermore, nationalist elites within provinces exploit ethnic divisions to consolidate their power and enhance their vote banks. Parties like the Awami National Party (ANP) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the Balochistan National Party (BNP) capitalize on ethnic sentiments to garner support, thereby undermining national unity and development. This manipulation of nationalism for political gain exacerbates existing divisions and fosters a climate of mistrust and disunity (Wan Husin, 2022).

Moreover, ethnic tensions exist within provinces and districts, further fragmenting communities and hindering unity. For example, in KP, the Hazara community seeks autonomy due to grievances with the dominant Pashtun population. Additionally, smaller ethnic groups within Pashtun-majority areas, such as the Gujjar and Akhoonkhail tribes, perpetuate animosities against each other, fueling inter-ethnic conflicts. To address these challenges and foster national unity, education emerges as a crucial tool. However, the devolution of education to provinces following the 18th Amendment has allowed provincial governments, influenced by ethnic politics, to shape educational curricula according to their agendas. This decentralized approach has hindered efforts to promote a unified national narrative and has perpetuated divisive ethnic narratives (Wan Husin, 2022). Therefore, the federal government must assume control of the education sector and implement a standardized national curriculum that promotes inclusivity and tolerance. By prioritizing a curriculum that emphasizes national identity and unity while respecting cultural diversity, Pakistan

can mitigate ethnic tensions and cultivate a sense of belonging among its citizens.

Furthermore, efforts to address ethnic divisions must extend beyond educational reforms to include socioeconomic development initiatives aimed at addressing disparities and grievances. By addressing the root causes of ethnic tensions and fostering an environment of inclusivity and mutual respect, Pakistan can overcome ethnic divisions and strengthen its national unity. Ethnic divisions pose a significant challenge to Pakistan's national unity, both at a broad level and within provinces and districts. Addressing these divisions requires concerted efforts, including educational reforms, socioeconomic development initiatives, and political leadership committed to promoting inclusivity and tolerance. Only through such measures can Pakistan realize its full potential as a unified and prosperous nation (Khan, 1948).

Education and National Unity

Education lies at the heart of Pakistan's identity crisis, serving as the root cause of various societal problems. The education system in Pakistan can be broadly categorized into three main types, each producing individuals with vastly different perspectives and worldviews. These categories include government education, madrassas, and elite education Wongeh et al 2022).

How Education is the Mother of all Problems?

In developing countries like Pakistan, the low literacy rate poses a significant challenge to societal progress. Officially reported at 58%, Pakistan's literacy rate is likely lower in reality, hindering the population's ability to engage with advanced technology and critically assess information. This lack of education leaves individuals susceptible to manipulation by the ruling elite, perpetuating economic disparities and inhibiting national development. Moreover, an uneducated populace struggles to grasp the importance of national unity, making them vulnerable to divisive narratives propagated by various groups. The three-tiered education system in Pakistan exacerbates these issues, with each segment - government education, madrassas, and elite education - contributing to the confusion and lack of rational thinking among the younger generation.

Within the government education system, which serves the majority of lower-middle-class families, inconsistencies in curriculum and standards across provinces further compound the problem. Despite enrolling 69% of the population, this system fails to provide quality education aligned with international standards or promote national integration. Instead, it perpetuates divisions and provincialism, undermining national unity and cohesion (IPRI, 19). In essence, Pakistan's education system, particularly the government sector, is plagued by shortcomings that impede societal progress and exacerbate the identity crisis. Addressing these flaws is imperative for fostering a cohesive and forward-thinking society.

Madrassa's Education System

The madrassa education system stands apart from mainstream educational institutions due to its provision of free education, a trend that gained momentum after the Zia regime with support from Saudi Arabia. Madrassas are typically divided along sectarian lines, each offering its distinct curriculum. Predominantly catering to impoverished families seeking to alleviate financial burdens or evade parental responsibilities, these institutions, unfortunately, tend to foster radicalism among students, lacking emphasis on critical thinking and logic. Consequently, many such individuals are susceptible to extremist ideologies, diverging greatly from their counterparts in government or elite educational settings (Iqbal et al., 2023).

The popularity of Madrassas can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the perceived inadequacy of government education drives parents to seek alternatives they believe offer superior quality, with some Madrassas even expanding to include primary and secondary schooling. Secondly, religious leaders wield significant influence over the populace through religious narratives, bolstering the perception of Madrassas as superior to government schools. Additionally, Pakistan's burgeoning population exacerbates the strain on educational resources, compelling families with multiple children to opt for Madrassas due to financial constraints and societal pressures. Thus, the proliferation of Madrassas, particularly under provincial oversight, contributes to the increasing religiosity of the population (BBC News, 2016).

Elite Education System

The elite education system diverges significantly from both government and Madrassas education.

Emphasizing liberalism, modernity, and proficiency in English, elite institutions produce individuals adept at securing competitive employment opportunities and often ascend to leadership roles in various fields. However, this educational privilege perpetuates a divide between the ruling elite and the general populace, as elite individuals tend to isolate themselves from the common citizenry, either studying in prestigious international schools or residing abroad. This detachment fosters a sense of superiority among the elite, exacerbating societal divisions and hindering national unity (Nadim, 2013).

If educational reforms are not implemented to ensure equal access to high-quality education for all citizens, regardless of social status, the rift between elites and the rest of society will continue to widen, undermining efforts to foster solidarity and cooperation among Pakistan's populace. Therefore, addressing the disparities in educational opportunities is imperative for promoting national unity and advancing the country's development agenda.

Impacts of Decentralization of Education

Decentralization of education has both positive and negative impacts on society it is significant to comprehend these impacts. Both aspects of the coin are crucial to be addressed for the correct analysis of the state policy toward education (Rahim 2019).

Positive Impact of Decentralization of Education

The decentralization of education in Pakistan, exemplified by the 18th Amendment, addresses nationalist leaders' longstanding calls for provincial autonomy (Khan, 2020). This move aims to reduce the perceived dominance of the federal elite and empower provinces to make decisions independently (Hussain, 2018). While provincial governments may theoretically monitor and implement policies more effectively due to their localized focus (Khan, 2020), challenges arise. Education, being instrumental in shaping attitudes and behaviors, requires a broader perspective beyond mere implementation and monitoring (Hussain, 2018). However, decentralization can empower local governments to resolve issues efficiently (Khan, 2020). Nonetheless, concerns arise regarding potential delays and politicization by less-educated local representatives (Hussain, 2018). Such issues risk undermining the educational system and exacerbating societal divisions. Therefore, while decentralization may offer benefits, it must be approached cautiously to ensure national unity (Khan, 2020).

Negative Impact of Decentralization of Education

The decentralization of education has had detrimental effects on national unity, leading to lasting divisions within society. For example, this decentralization has resulted in the glorification of provincial heroes, fueling societal divisions and ethnic tensions. Moreover, it has given rise to nationalistic politics, exacerbating extremism and politicizing religion. As a result, hatred has been spread, further deepening the rifts within the populace. These consequences underscore the urgent need for corrective measures to mitigate the damaging impact of decentralization on national unity (Hinduja et al., 2023).

1). Decentralization of Education and National Heroes

Following the implementation of the 18th Amendment, education became a provincial subject, allowing provincial leaders to shape the curriculum according to their preferences. Unfortunately, this has led to the glorification of provincial heroes at the expense of national figures, exacerbating an identity crisis and fostering societal divisions. Such divisions pose a significant threat to national unity, which is indispensable for the progress of the state. Additionally, provincial governments sometimes succumb to influence from religious parties, seeking to promote their religious heroes in the curriculum. This further sidelines national heroes, jeopardizing their recognition and perpetuating the divide (Shah, 2023).

The elevation of provincial heroes not only fragments society but also undermines its cohesion, breeding mistrust among citizens. This erosion of trust fuels animosity and fosters an atmosphere of uncertainty, ultimately precipitating law-and-order challenges—a grave peril to the stability of the nation. Consequently, the decentralization of education has proven problematic for Pakistan, necessitating a reconsideration of governance in this realm. Centralized control over education, with a uniform curriculum across provinces, is imperative to safeguard national unity and foster a cohesive societal fabric.

2). Decentralization of Education and Division of the Society

The decentralization of education exacerbates societal divisions, as provincial leaders prioritize their interests and cater to specific voter bases rather than promoting national identity and cooperation. Anatol Lieven, in his book "Pakistan: A Hard Country," underscores Pakistan's tribal divisions, highlighting how a robust tribal affiliation is perceived as crucial for security in Pakistani society. Lieven characterizes Pakistan as fragmented, economically backward, and plagued by extremism, further emphasizing the corrosive impact of internal divisions on national integration and cooperation (Lieven, 2011).

Moreover, the pursuit of nationalist and religious agendas by provincial leaders fosters animosity among ethnic and sectarian groups, undermining national unity. Parties like the ANP, through nationalist politics, may stoke resentment against other ethnicities, while religious leaders, by promoting sectarian interests, perpetuate division. In light of these challenges, federal control over education is essential to counteract the promotion of ethnic and sectarian divisions within academic settings.

Ethnic Groups and Decentralization of Education

Since its inception, Pakistan has grappled with ethnic conflicts, a challenge that has even led to the country's dismemberment. The primary culprits behind these conflicts are the power elites, who exploit ethnic tensions for their interests. For instance, the Bhutto family leverages the "Sindh card" to maintain their political dominance, while the Sharif family utilizes the "Punjabi card." Similarly, parties like PTI and ANP capitalize on the "Pashtun card," and local Balochistan parties such as BNP wield the "Baloch card" to safeguard their interests. These tactics perpetuate ethnic extremism and deepen divisions within Pakistani society.

Ethnic Conflict and Education in KP

The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is plagued by internal divisions, with various factions within the provincial administration engaged in direct and indirect confrontations. For example, at the provincial government level, representatives tend to prioritize the interests of their specific tribes and communities. A notable instance occurred in 2008 when the national party assumed power in KP and favored their tribe, the "Khans" (comprising the Khumar Khail and Asan Khail sub-tribes). While many people across Pakistan perceive all Khans as a unified group, KP harbors a dominant ruling tribe, with its members occupying top positions across various political parties, particularly within the ANP. Consequently, the influence of this tribe extends across political lines, often resulting in their success in elections.

This hegemonic control over political power translates into efforts to shape educational policies in favor of their interests. In response to this dominance, other groups within KP, such as the Sayyeds and Gujjars, have emerged, seeking to safeguard their interests by educating their youth about the perceived injustices perpetrated by the Khan families. However, this informal education exacerbates ethnic tensions within the province, posing a significant threat to the national unity of Pakistan (Afzal, 2017).

Ethnic Conflict and Education in Baluchistan

In Balochistan, deep-seated grievances against the state of Pakistan have fueled not only ethnic divisions but also sentiments of opposition towards the central government, particularly among the Baloch and Pashtun ethnic groups. Many Balochistan residents perceive Pakistan as being controlled by Punjabi elites who prioritize their interests over those of the Baloch and Pashtun populations. This sentiment has contributed to a sense of alienation and disenfranchisement among Balochistan's inhabitants. The province is home to two primary ethnic groups, the Pashtuns and the Baloch, who often find themselves at odds with each other. These tensions are exacerbated by longstanding grievances, such as the discovery of Sui gas in 1952, which has not resulted in significant benefits for the local Baloch population, while Punjab has reaped substantial rewards from its exploitation. These genuine grievances have fueled resentment and resistance against the state. Furthermore, the education system in Balochistan perpetuates these sentiments of discontent. Teachers appointed in primary schools often hail from the same ethnic backgrounds as their students and may impart narratives that reinforce anti-state sentiments passed down through generations. Consequently, children grow up learning to view Pakistan as an oppressive entity rather than a unifying force. To address these challenges and foster national unity in

Balochistan, the state must reevaluate its policies and take proactive measures to address the grievances of the Baloch and Pashtun communities. This includes equitable resource distribution, greater autonomy for the province, and initiatives aimed at promoting a sense of belonging and unity among all ethnic groups within Balochistan (Khan, 2019).

Ethnic Conflicts and Education in Sind

Sindh, as one of Pakistan's major provinces, has been plagued by ethnic conflicts and the dominance of elites, leading to a loss of peace and harmony within the region. The province is fragmented into numerous ethnic groups, with three prominent ones being the Sindhis, immigrants (mahajjars), and Pashtuns, each harboring animosity towards the others. This discord mirrors Rousseau's depiction of a state of nature where individuals vie for power and glory at the expense of others. The ethnic tensions in Sindh, particularly between Pashtuns and mahajjars, have resulted in violent confrontations, especially in Karachi, the provincial capital. Trivial disputes escalate into full-blown conflicts, resulting in severe human rights abuses such as indiscriminate killings, mutilation of women, and targeted attacks on innocent civilians. Furthermore, those who hold power seek to impose their educational ideologies, further exacerbating the divide between ethnic groups.

Most concerning is the indoctrination of children by these ethnic groups, instilling hatred and prejudice against other communities from a young age. Such actions pose a grave threat to national unity and cooperation, as future generations grow up with deep-seated animosities towards their fellow citizens. Urgent measures must be taken to address these ethnic tensions and promote reconciliation and understanding among the diverse communities in Sindh. Only through concerted efforts to foster tolerance, respect, and dialogue can the province move toward a future of peace and unity (Bhattacharyya, 2017).

Ethnic Conflicts and Punjab

Lastly, Punjab, being the most populous province in Pakistan, also grapples with ethnic divisions among groups such as Punjabis, Saraikis, Butts, Aryas, Chohans, and Ranas. While Punjab has largely embraced a national Pakistani identity, ethnic tensions persist, particularly between Punjabis and Saraikis. Anatol Lieven underscores the importance of strong tribal affiliations in protecting individual rights, with Punjab's tribes occasionally clashing, notably over disparities in development between regions like South Punjab and Central Punjab. This has fueled demands for a separate province by some Saraiki groups. Despite Punjab's cultural unity, ethnic conflicts persist, undermining national integration. There is a lack of formal or informal education addressing provincialism, as Punjab's elites wield considerable influence in Islamabad, further exacerbating tensions with other provinces. The perpetuation of divisive politics by power elites impedes system reform. Intellectuals must step forward to raise awareness among the populace. Education also plays a vital role; if power elites are educated, they can address shortcomings and foster unity. Centralized education policies at the federal level may offer a more comprehensive solution compared to decentralized provincial approaches, mitigating ethnic conflicts and promoting national cohesion (Bhattacharyya, 2017).

Decentralization of Education and Nationalistic Politics

When Pakistan was first established, regional nationalists played a prominent role in politics. However, over time, their influence waned and became more localized to specific constituencies. Yet, the persistent failure of the government to address basic needs like clean water, education, communication, and healthcare has reignited the role of nationalistic politics. For instance, the Awami National Party (ANP) began gaining traction in politics around 1996, eventually forming the government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in 2008. The passage of the 18th Amendment in 2010 further bolstered nationalistic politics in Pakistan. This amendment granted maximum autonomy to provincial governments, including control over education. Subsequently, nationalists have capitalized on this autonomy, using education as a tool to garner sympathy and expand their vote bank. They propagate the idea to the younger generation that they, the nationalists, are the champions of their well-being, while portraying the federal government as indifferent, particularly focusing on Punjab. Consequently, the decentralization of education has not fostered national unity and cooperation; rather, it has exacerbated divisions within the country.

Decentralization of Education and Extremism

Decentralization of education has been instrumental in fueling ethnic and religious extremism in Pakistan. Nationalistic and religious parties exploit this decentralization to indoctrinate youths with their extremist ideologies, exacerbating tensions within society. Nationalistic parties often propagate grievances against other ethnic groups, blaming them for societal backwardness and instigating ethnic conflicts to bolster their support base. Similarly, religious parties capitalize on decentralization to advance their interests, promoting radical religious ideas that breed extremism. Many clerics manipulate their followers, restricting access to alternative viewpoints and fostering ignorance to maintain control. This environment of radicalization not only undermines national unity but also poses a threat to individual safety. Addressing this issue requires providing equal education opportunities to all citizens, regardless of caste, color, wealth, or religion, to promote tolerance, cooperation, and peace. Failure to do so perpetuates extremism and hinders societal development. (Rashid, 2016)

Decentralization of Education and Religion

Religion serves as a significant instrument of uncertainty within the state, where religious elites endeavor to impose their principles to maintain their influence in society. Religious parties wield considerable power in provincial politics and seek to incorporate their preferred principles into the education curriculum, both in madrasas and government-run schools. This influence weakens the central authority and undermines national unity. Moreover, religious elites not only shape the provincial government's education system but also control their network of madrasas. These institutions operate independently, allowing clerics to propagate their sectarian views unchecked. Additionally, clerics deliver sermons in mosques every Friday, further disseminating their narratives and consolidating their influence. Some clerics even organize large gatherings, or Ijtimas, to promote their specific ideologies, amplifying their street-level power. This exploitation of religion poses a significant threat to both societal cohesion and state unity. To combat this, efforts should be made to promote reason and rationality over dogma, ensuring that education and public discourse foster critical thinking and pluralism. (Khan, 2019).

Decentralization of Education Enhances Hatred in the Society

The decentralization of education has had a detrimental impact on society, with nationalistic and religious elites exacerbating animosities by promoting narrow nationalism and sectarianism. This divisive agenda hampers cooperation among people, fostering hatred and distrust instead. Provincial governments, empowered by decentralization, make decisions independently without adequate checks and balances, leading to the implementation of education curricula tailored to serve personal interests rather than the broader interests of the state. Consequently, decentralization has fueled hatred and division within society. The adoption of a single national curriculum overseen by the federal government appears to be the most viable solution to address these issues and promote national unity (Shah, 2023).

Discussion and Analysis

The decentralization of education, influenced by nationalistic and religious narratives, poses a significant threat to national unity. However, the imperative of national unity for the advancement and prosperity of the country cannot be overstated. As elucidated by Harari in his renowned work "21 Lessons for the 21st Century," global cooperation is indispensable for addressing pressing international challenges like terrorism, climate change, and technological advancements. He emphasizes that nations must maintain their unique identities without seeking supremacy over others. According to Harari, embracing uniqueness fosters cooperation and unity, enabling collective efforts to tackle complex issues effectively.

This perspective is particularly relevant to Pakistan, where provinces often vie for supremacy rather than fostering cooperation. Harari's insights underscore the importance of promoting unity and collaboration among provinces to ensure the nation's growth and development. By adopting a single national curriculum, regardless of individual preferences, Pakistan can foster a sense of shared identity and purpose. This can only be achieved by centralizing control over education policy and implementing a uniform curriculum nationwide. Such measures are essential to mitigate division, hatred, and extremism, paving the way for a more harmonious and prosperous society.

Conclusion

In this research paper, we have delved into the profound impacts of decentralization of education on national unity in Pakistan. The decentralization of education has not only undermined national unity but has also contributed to the emergence of rebellions and extremism within the country. By examining various facets of this issue, it becomes evident that decentralization has exacerbated divisions along provincial, ethnic, and religious lines, leading to a fracturing of the national fabric. One of the most glaring consequences of decentralization is the neglect of national heroes in favor of provincial figures. Provincial governments, empowered by the 18th Amendment, have promoted local heroes who may not align with the founding principles of the nation. This selective glorification of provincial figures undermines the shared national identity and erodes unity. Moreover, decentralization has fueled provincial nationalism and sectarianism, further dividing society along regional and religious lines. Rather than fostering a sense of belonging to a unified nation, decentralization has perpetuated sentiments of exclusivity and otherness among different regions and religious communities.

Ethnic groups have also been manipulated and exploited for political gains, leading to further fragmentation of society. The creation of ethnic divisions serves the interests of political elites who seek to consolidate power by pitting different groups against each other. This strategy not only weakens national unity but also perpetuates social discord and instability. Additionally, the decentralization of education has facilitated the rise of ethnic and religious extremism. By allowing provinces to control education according to their whims, extremist ideologies have found fertile ground to propagate. This has resulted in the radicalization of youth and the emergence of extremist groups that pose a threat to both national security and unity. Religion, once a unifying force in the creation of Pakistan, has been politicized and weaponized to serve narrow political agendas. Religious principles are manipulated by political parties to garner support, leading to the spread of hatred and intolerance. This further exacerbates divisions within society and undermines efforts to foster national unity.

In light of these detrimental impacts, the control of education must be returned to the federal government. However, a mere transfer of authority is not sufficient; substantive reforms must be enacted to ensure the promotion of a single national curriculum across the country. This curriculum should be designed to reflect the diverse cultural and linguistic heritage of Pakistan while instilling values of tolerance, inclusivity, and national pride. Furthermore, both federal and provincial governments need to prioritize national interests over narrow political gains. Democratic principles should be upheld, and elected officials should work collaboratively to address the challenges facing the nation. Lessons can be drawn from developed democracies where adherence to principles and ethical governance are paramount, regardless of political affiliations. In conclusion, national unity is indispensable for the development and progress of any nation. Without a cohesive sense of identity and purpose, a country cannot achieve its full potential. The decentralization of education in Pakistan has had detrimental effects on national unity, exacerbating divisions and fueling extremism. To address these challenges, education must be re-centralized under federal control, and efforts must be made to promote a single national curriculum that reflects the values and aspirations of the entire nation. Only then can Pakistan overcome its identity crisis and work towards a future of peace, prosperity, and unity.

Recommendations and suggestions:

- Implement a single national curriculum in Pakistan's education sector, ensuring equitable access to education for all citizens irrespective of any discriminatory factors.
- Reverse the policy of decentralization of education and centralize control over education across the country to promote national unity through standardized educational practices.
- Review the 18th Amendment to address clauses that may hinder national unity and cooperation, thereby fostering a more cohesive society.
- Initiate madrassa reforms through peaceful means by engaging moderate clerics to build consensus and implement necessary changes without resorting to violence.
- Address the grievances of all provinces and uphold human rights without discrimination, fostering a sense of inclusivity and equality.
- Organize seminars and educational programs to raise awareness among the

populace, particularly students, about the importance of national unity and cooperation.

- Develop an education curriculum that instills values of unity and patriotism, employing effective teaching strategies to transform Pakistan's diverse populace into a cohesive nation.
- Combat ethnic and religious extremism through concerted efforts, prioritizing the promotion of rationalism and critical thinking to counter dogmatic ideologies.
- Celebrate and highlight the contributions of intellectuals in society to inspire the younger generation to engage in constructive discourse and contribute positively to national development.

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