Journal of Religion and Health
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-025-02520-2

ORIGINAL PAPER

The Relationship between Religious Text, Religious Tolerance, and Mental Health in different Religious Groups of Pakistan: An Exploratory Mixed Methods Study

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Received: 17 June 2024 / Accepted: 29 November 2025
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Abstract

Pakistan is a religiously pluralistic society that has been plagued by inter-religious conflict. Given that religious tolerance is key to a progressive and harmonious society, it is essential to understand the impact of engagement with religious texts on the tolerance and mental health of people in the country. This mixed methods study aims to quantitatively identify (i) the relationship between engagement with religious text, religious tolerance, and mental health, and (ii) which religious groups show comparatively better religious tolerance. In the second phase, the study aims to collect qualitative data to understand whether religious texts influence religious groups in Pakistan in terms of inter-religious tolerance and what challenges they face in achieving interfaith harmony. We purposively collected data in Lahore, Pakistan, from graduate degree holders who regularly visit religious centers. Quantitative data revealed that higher engagement with religious texts among educated individuals who read them with a critical understanding is associated with improved religious tolerance and mental health. Qualitative analysis from 289 respondents revealed that religious text from all six groups—Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, Muslim Sunnis, Muslim Shias, and Sikhs—promotes tolerance, peace, humanitarianism, and service and trade with each other. Challenges to interfaith harmony include fear of misuse of religious misinterpretations and laws, illegitimate scholars, political agents, illiteracy, and unregulated social media. The study concludes with salient recommendations to promote interfaith harmony in the country and support the mental health of religious minorities.

Keywords Religious text · Religious tolerance · Mental health · Pakistan · Religious minorities

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Published online: 18 December 2025

Introduction

The significance of religion, the understanding of it, and the meanings and practices derived by people are an important area of research for Pakistan (Al Mustafa et al., 2023). Pakistan is a religiously pluralistic society, with most religious groups and sects following their beliefs devoutly and remaining committed to reading religious texts (Rais, 2007). The major religious groups in the country include Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, Muslim Sunnis, Muslim Shias, and Sikhs. The traditions and history of the different religions followed in the country are maintained through religious and holy texts (Woodhead et al., 2003). Apart from the Holy and revered books or scriptures (Holy Quran for Muslims and Holy Bible for Christians), religious texts for some religious groups include revealed texts and sayings of religious scholars or notables, including, but not limited to: Hadith for Muslims (Agha et al., 2023), faith-based texts for Christians (Lee, 2010), the Guru Granth Sahib and the Dasam Granth scriptures for Sikhs (Shackle & Mandair, 2013), and the Veda and other extensive collections of ancient religious writings for Hindus (Mittal & Thursby, 2004).

There are several ways that people engage with religious text, which include reading privately (Ovwigho et al., 2016); reading in another language and using translations (Hirschler, 2011); watching and listening to religious programs on TV, radio, and social media like YouTube, which discusses religious text (Pihlaja, 2018); reading and discussing religious text in congregations (Ward, 2018); and reading and discussing religious text at home with family and children or in larger family gatherings (Omer et al., 2015). In some cases, people also engage with religious texts in academic institutions or workplaces (Farhan & Rizvi Jafree, 2023). All of these elements have an impact on the level of engagement with religious rituals and practices, the extent of affiliation with religion, and levels of interpretation and integration with other religious groups. Some scholars argue that the positive qualities of each religion are more evident in the interpretation and retention of religious text (Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009; Pearce, 2014). Religious text is important for its role in either promoting unity and nationhood or conflict and intolerance (Friedland, 2001). Moreover, religious pluralism and interfaith harmony in a country can serve as an important catalyst for socio-economic development and foreign investment for a nation (Naveed et al., 2021; Senbeto, 2022).

Past research proves that religious text can play an important role in positive interventions for a nation (Maton & Pargament, 2014), for areas such as: (a) family unity, (b) child protection, (c) education and de-radicalization in the community, (d) provision of informal healthcare, (e) human rights awareness and gender equality, (f) community solidarity against extremism (Lichterman, 2015), (g) municipal council representation, and (h) public healthcare programs (Goodman, 2010). There is also evidence that retaining religious text that supports religious tolerance and diversity promotes positive mental health in people (Gallagher et al., 2002). Building tolerance through religious text is also known to help individuals deal better with stress, illness, and conflict (Behere et al., 2013).

In developing countries like Pakistan, state negligence in the management of religious groups (Karamat, 2019) and a lack of implementation of constitutional laws for the protection of religious minorities (Mehfooz, 2021) further contribute to weakening the nation. After years of conflict since independence, foreign interference, and economic hardships and poverty, the people of Pakistan have not had the time to concentrate on efforts for interfaith harmony, which in turn can contribute to nation-building (Uzondu, 2018). Yet, there is some political support for religious diversity, and this is evident in that no political group has come forward to demand the closure of shrines and other places of worship. In fact, in the past, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Ahmadi, and Sikh groups of South Asia have united to overturn extremism or foreign interference, and show solidarity for different religious traditions, and support during religious processions and rituals (Ul ain Arshad et al., 2025).

Theoretical Framework

The classical sociologists delved into examining the role of religion in maintaining social solidarity and collective consciousness. Durkheim, in particular, argued that religious beliefs and engagement with formal religious organizations influenced practices within communities, leading to collective morality and harmony (Durkheim, 1995). He also agreed that despite religious and sectarian differences, all religions inherently promote mutual tolerance and respect in communities. Like Durkheim, Simmel, another classical theorist, argued that religion can determine and influence some people's entire existence (Simmel, 1997). He also explained that a lack of religious engagement in people's lives can influence their integration in society and their observance of morals and social duties, which would negatively impact social order and harmony in the community. Simmel also noted that individuals from poor and illiterate backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to misinterpretation of religious teachings and the influence of illegitimate religious scholars.

Contemporary sociologists have also rejected the secularization theory and argued for the important role of religion in people's lives. Luckmann suggests that every human being is aware of the world and that they have a religious core, which is influenced by the socio-historical context in which they arise (Luckmann, 2003). Although individuals experience different forms of social organizations in society, they are strongly influenced in the modern world by religious institutions, for example, Church organizations and Islamic centers, and even if they do not visit religious institutions regularly, they engage with religion through privatized forms of worship within their homes. Another modern theorist (Levin, 2009) has proposed that religion and faith have an influence on mental stability and also mental healing in vulnerable populations. He proves that engagement with religious text promotes mental health stability and overall wellbeing in people and supports people to develop positive relations in society; and he also argues for the constructive use of religion in societies to promote tolerance and harmony. Drawing on insights from classical and contemporary theorists—Durkheim, Simmel, Luckmann, and Levin,

this study affirms that positive engagement with religious text, regardless of the religion followed, promotes social solidarity, religious tolerance, and mental health.

Aim and Significance of the Study

Many scholars agree that national solidarity and interfaith harmony are not possible without consideration of religious tolerance, which is built on the foundations of religious text (Rohwerder, 2014). For this study, reading of religious text has been defined as: (a) reading of Holy and revered books or scriptures, and (b) reading of sayings of prophets, religious scholars, or other religious notables. While global scholarship has largely focused on sectarian divisions and conflict, there remains a significant gap in examining the role and influence of religious text in people's daily lives and practices (Williams & Simpson, 2008). The role of religious text in conflict management and peace promotion has also been under-researched in Pakistan, even though religious intolerance is a major factor in preventing collective growth in the country (Rahman, 2013).

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is not much academic scholarship in Pakistan that specifically explores the relationship between engagement with religious texts and religious tolerance. Scholars agree that research related to religious tolerance is better understood through mixed methods research as it provides both quantitative evidence and qualitative voices from different religious groups, who may have diverse perspectives (Riis, 2012). This study aims to answer the following quantitative research questions: R1. What is the role of religious text in promoting religious tolerance and mental health, and R2. Is there a difference in religious tolerance with regard to the different religious groups of Pakistan? In addition, the study aims to explore the following qualitative research questions: R3. Which religious text has influenced people the most, with respect to interfaith harmony, and R4. The challenges Pakistani society faces with regard to interfaith harmony.

Methods

Research Design and Ethics

This research is a mixed methods cross sectional study. We collected quantitative data using a closed-ended survey, and then included open-ended qualitative questions that were voluntary for respondents to answer. The study was submitted to the FCCU Institutional Review Board for approval. Informed consent was taken from all participants. No confidential information or information that can reveal identities has been collected or disseminated. No sensitive questions have been asked, and standardized questionnaires have been used to secure safety and sensitivity. Respondents and participants were not given any incentive to join, and they were free to exit the survey if they chose to. Data have been stored safely with the first author.

Sample, Selection Criterion, and Data Collection

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reports religious groups in the following percentages: (a) Muslims–96.3%; (b) Christians–1.6%; (c) Hindus–1.6%; (d) Ahmadis–0.2%; and (e) Sikhs and other minorities–0.3% (PBS, 2024). The Muslim majority in the country is split between 80% Sunnis Muslims and 20% Shia Muslims (Ahmed, 2019). Given that Pakistan has a population of 236 million people, rising at the rate of 2%, each population group stands in significant numbers. The city of Lahore, where data collection took place, belongs to the Punjab province, which is the largest population in the country at 127.7 million (PBS, 2024) and has people from all religious minorities residing here, estimated as follows: (a) Sunni Muslims–99.2 million; (b) Shia Muslims–24.8 million; (c) Christians–2.9 million; (d) Hindus–0.17 million; (e) Ahmadis–0.32 million; and (f) Sikhs and other minorities–0.13 million.

The target sample was 400 people, derived from the Taro Yamane formulae (Yamane, 1967). An attempt was made to sample all the major religious minorities in the country and include at least 50 respondents from each minority religious group. However, the targets for Ahmadis, Hindus, and Sikhs were not met, as they did not feel comfortable answering questions about religion in a country that has incidents of religious extremism. A final 354 respondents from six different religious backgrounds answered the survey. Data were collected through the purposive sampling technique, based on (a) access of researchers to religious centers, and (b) willingness of participants to participate in the study. The PIs of the study had prior contacts, due to past research, and permission to collect data from religious centers. Data were collected from people with the selection criterion of (a) those who visit religious centers regularly or are affiliated with one, and (b) minimum secondary school (class 10) graduates and above, 18 years of age. For this study, a religious center is defined as 'a center or institute which gathers people of a certain religion or sect, not just for worship but for other social and economic activities such as skill building, vocational training, recreation, and extracurricular activities'.

The survey was translated into Urdu and Punjabi to support the ease and comfort of participants. The translations were done by the third author, and was checked through the forward and backward method by the second, third, and fourth authors—who are proficient in all three languages. Google survey forms were used to facilitate respondents in conveniently filling out the survey through their phones or through assisted methods with the data collector present, as this was a paper-free and cost-friendly option. Data were collected over a three-month period, between January 2024 and March 2024. The settings on the Google survey form were assigned such that no confidential information or identifying information was required or stored.

Instrument

The survey consists of four sections (Appendix A). Section A includes nine demographic questions.

Private Religious Practices Scale

Section B has been modified from the Private Religious Practices Scale and consists of 04 questions which measure engagement with religious text (Fetzer, 2003). Items measuring engagement with religious text were coded on a five-point Likert scale from 'Never' to 'Daily', with higher scores indicating higher engagement with religious text. The reliability results for this scale were good, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.787 (Table 1).

Religious Tolerance Questionnaire

Section C includes 22 questions from the standardized Religious Tolerance Questionnaire (Broer et al., 2014). Religious tolerance was coded on a five-point Likert scale from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree', with higher scores indicating higher religious tolerance. The reliability results for this scale were highly satisfactory, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.837.

General Health Questionnaire

Section E includes 12 questions from the General Health Questionnaire used to measure positive and negative mental health dimensions (Hu et al., 2007). Mental health was coded on a five-point Likert scale from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree', with higher scores indicating higher mental health challenges. Questions 5, 6, 9, 10, and 11 have had to be reverse-coded before analysis. The reliability results for this scale were good, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.766.

Qualitative questions

The last section of the survey included open-ended questions, which were optional for respondents to answer. The questions included: 1. Which religious text has influenced you the most, with regards to living in a religiously plural society, such as Pakistan? 2. What challenges do you think Pakistani society faces regarding inter-faith harmony and inter-religious unity? With regards to the first question: the following religious groups chose to answer: Ahmadis (n = 17), Christians (n = 50), Hindus (n = 3), Muslim Sunnis (n = 158), Muslim Shias (n = 58), and Sikhs (n = 3). In this way, out of the 354 respondents who answered quantitative questions, 289 were willing to also answer the qualitative questions, whereas 56 refused to participate.

Table 1 Reliability results of study variables

Study domains	Number of items	Cronbach alpha
Engagement with religious text	04	0.787
Religious tolerance	21	0.837
Mental health	12	0.766

This may be because people fear that qualitative data may be traced back to them, unwillingness to answer questions related to quoting specific religious texts or listing challenges about interfaith harmony, or limited time to answer qualitative questions (Leighley, 2001; Rizvi Jafree et al., 2023a).

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

The independent variables include engagement with religious text and mental health, and the dependent variable is religious tolerance. The hypothesis for the quantitative part of the study included: H1. The higher the engagement with religious text, the better the religious tolerance and mental health; and H2. Engagement with religious text is influenced by sociodemographic characteristics. Both SPSS 25.0 and AMOS have been used for quantitative data analysis. We reported reliability results and descriptive statistics and then performed ANOVA to compare mean scores for tolerance based on religious belonging. We then used AMOS to apply structural equation modeling to identify the relationship between study variables. P values of less than 0.05 were considered significant.

Qualitative Data Analysis

We manually analyzed data from two open-ended qualitative questions using the thematic analysis method (Terry et al., 2017). Two authors independently derived themes (SRJ and TF) and then had meetings to corroborate findings. We also shared findings back with two participants each from the Sunni Muslim, Shia Muslim, and Christian participants. Due to the inability to connect back with participants from the Ahmadi, Sikh, and Hindu communities, we shared findings with two senior researchers in religious minorities of Pakistan, who work closely with the Ahmadi, Sikh, and Hindu communities. All confirmed the themes.

Results

Sociodemographic Characteristics

Table 2 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the study respondents who participated in the quantitative part of the study (N = 354). The majority of the respondents are: (i) between 18 and 29 years (77.4%), (ii) female (54.0%), and (iii) Sunni Muslims (57.1%). Majority also earn between PKR 50,000–100,000 (USD 178.62–357.24) per month (56.2%) and have completed an Undergraduate degree (85.3%). More than half (60.5%) are employed in unskilled work or are working part-time and are currently married (80.5%).

Table 2 Sociodemographic characteristics of study respondents

	Quantitative survey (N = 354)f (%)	Qualitative questions (N = 289)f (%)
Age		
18–29 years	274 (77.4%)	217 (75.2%)
30–39 years	44 (12.4%)	36 (12.4%)
40–58 years	36 (10.2%)	36 (12.4%)
Gender		
Male	163 (46.0%)	122 (42.0%)
Female	191 (54.0%)	167 (58.0%)
Religion		
Sunni Muslim	202 (57.1%)	158 (54.7%)
Shia Muslim	70 (19.8%)	58 (20.1%)
Christian	54 (15.3%)	50 (17.3%)
Ahmadi	18 (05.1%)	17 (5.9%)
Hindu	04 (01.1%)	3 (1.0%)
Sikh	06 (01.7%)	3 (1.0%)
Monthly household income (PKR)		
50,000–100,000	199 (56.3%)	165 (57.2%)
100,001–200,000	94 (26.5%)	74 (25.3%)
More than 200,000	61 (17.2%)	50 (17.5%)
Last degree		
Undergraduate	302 (85.3%)	246 (84.8%)
Postgraduate	52 (14.7%)	43 (15.2%)
Occupation		
Employed in Unskilled or Part-time Work	214 (60.5%)	170 (58.7%)
Employed in Skilled and Full-time Work	85 (24.0%)	119 (41.3%)
Unemployed	55 (15.5%)	
Marital status		
Unmarried	69 (19.5%)	55 (19.2%)
Married	285 (80.5%)	234 (80.8%)

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation results between the study variables. Engagement with religious text is significantly correlated with: (i) age ($r = 0.134$, $p < 0.05$); (ii) monthly income ($r = -0.198$, $p < 0.005$); (iii) occupation ($r = 0.116$, $p < 0.05$); (iv) marital status ($r = -0.113$, $p < 0.05$); (v) religious tolerance ($r = 0.496$, $p < 0.005$); and (vi) mental health ($r = 0.209$, $p < 0.005$).

Table 3 Correlation analysis between variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.Age	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2.Gender	.059	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3.Monthly HH income	.113*	.058	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4.Current occupation	.537**	− .006	.174**	–	–	–	–	–	–
5.Last degree	.558**	.063	.120*	.472**	–	–	–	–	–
6.Marital status	− .621**	− .025	− .108*	− .432**	− .400**	–	–	–	–
7.Engagement with religious text	.134*	− .071	− .198**	.116*	.053	− .113*	–	–	–
8.Religious tolerance	.119*	− .048	− .112*	.113*	.067	− .132*	.496**	–	–
9.Mental health	.202**	− .138**	.045	.107*	.127*	− .094	.209**	.218**	1

*Significant at the 0.05 level; **Significant at the 0.01 level

Structural Equation Model

The chi-square test ($\chi 2 = 2.82$, $p < 0.01$) and goodness of fit index (GFI = 0.965) demonstrated a good model fit. The alternate fit indices confirmed the acceptable fit of the sample (CFI = 0.956, AGFI = 0.926, RMSEA = 0.030). Table 4 presents the path coefficient estimates for the observed variables for this study. The results show that 'engagement with religious text' is significantly influenced by: (i) age ($\beta = .175$, $p < 0.001$); (ii) gender ($\beta = -193$, $p < 0.001$); and (iii) monthly household income ($\beta = -108$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, 'engagement with religious text' significantly influences: (i) 'religious tolerance' ($\beta = .580$, $p < 0.05$), and (ii) 'mental health' ($\beta = .469$, $p < 0.05$) (Fig. 1).

Table 4 Path coefficients for study variables

Latent variable	Observed variable	Path coefficients (β)
Religious tolerance	Engagement with religious text	.580*
Mental health	Engagement with religious text	.469*
Engagement with religious text	Age	.175***
	Gender	− .193***
	Monthly household income	− .108***
	Current occupation	.049
	Last degree	054
	Marital status	.057

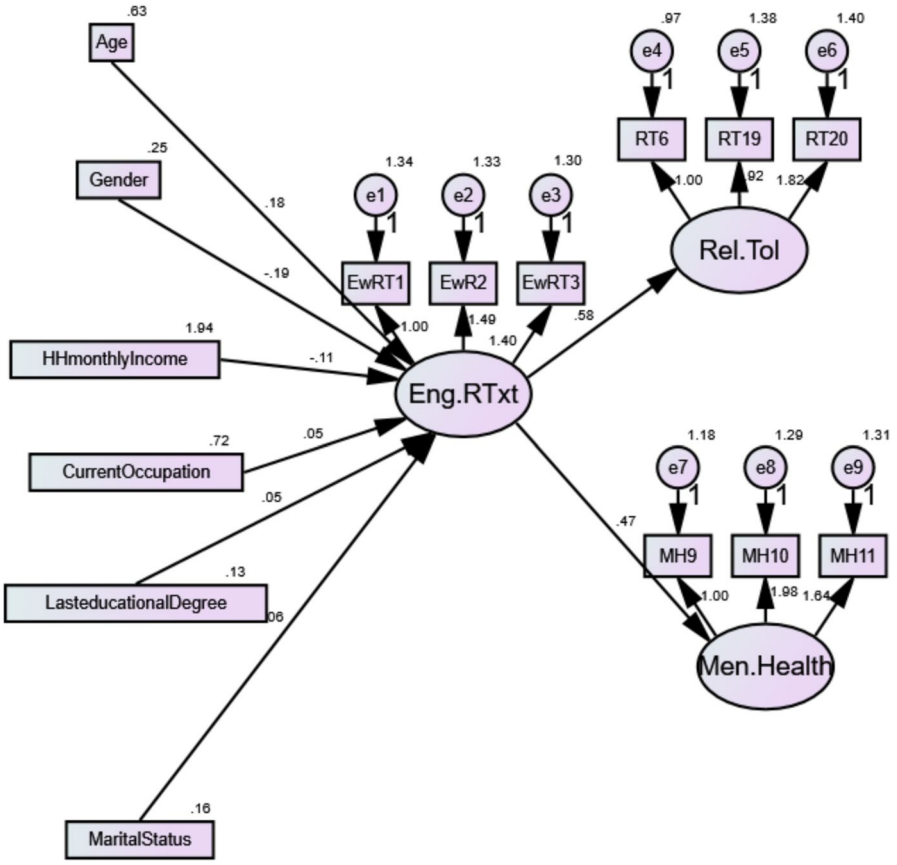


Fig. 1 Structural equation model showing unstandardized estimates of path analysis

Mean Comparisons for Religious Tolerance by Religious Text

Table 5 presents the one-way ANOVA results for religious tolerance based on religious sects, classified under 6 groups: Ahmadis (n = 18), Christians (n = 54), Hindus (n = 4), Muslim Sunnis (n = 202), Muslim Shias (n = 70), and Sikhs (n = 6). The relationship was found to be statistically significant with Fw (5,348) = 7.202, $p = 0.000$. A post hoc Scheffé multiple comparison test was used to explore the difference in means between the groups. We found that the difference in means of religious tolerance for Shia Muslims was statistically different and higher compared to: (i) Sunni Muslims, and (ii) Ahmadis. We also found that the difference in means of religious tolerance for Christians was statistically different and higher compared to: (i) Sunni Muslims, and (ii) Ahmadis.

Table 5 One-way ANOVA and post hoc multiple comparison tests (Scheffe) of religious tolerance by religious sect

	Sum of square	df	Mean square	*F* ratio	Sig	Mean	Post hoc analysis (Scheffe)					
							1	2	3	4	5	6
Between groups	2899.088	5	579.818	7.202	.000	1. 89.414	–	***	–	**	–	–
Within groups	28,017.175	348	80.509	–	–	2. 83.505	***	–	**	–	–	–
Total	30,916.263	353	–	–	–	3. 88.777	–	**	–	**	–	–
	–	–	–	–	–	4. 80.611	**	–	**	–	–	–
	–	–	–	–	–	5. 83.750	–	–	–	–	–	–
	–	–	–	–	–	6. 84.333	–	–	–	–	–	–

*Significance level < 0.05; 1.Shia Muslim; 2. Sunni Muslim; 3.Christian; 4.Ahmadi; 5. Hindu; 6. Sikhs

Qualitative Results for Attitudes to Religious Tolerance and Use of Religious Text

Under the first area (1), what religious text teaches about dealing with people of other faiths, we found five themes of: i. Religious text promotes love, respect, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence; ii. Religious text teaches equality and no differences between religious groups; iii. Religious text teaches forgiveness and passivity in the face of animosity; iv. Religious text teaches service and support to people from other religious groups; and v. Trade and partnership with other religious groups.

Under the second area (2) Challenges to interfaith harmony in Pakistan, we found six themes of: i. Labeling of people as infidels or non-believers by religious notables and significant others; ii. Religion used as a political tool for power; iii. Misinterpretation of religious text; iv. Fear that religious misinterpretations and laws will be misused; v. Illiteracy and the pernicious role of illegitimate religious scholars; and vi. The role of unregulated social media and online access to religious information (Fig. 2).

What religious text teaches about dealing with people of other faiths

I. Religious text promotes love, respect, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence

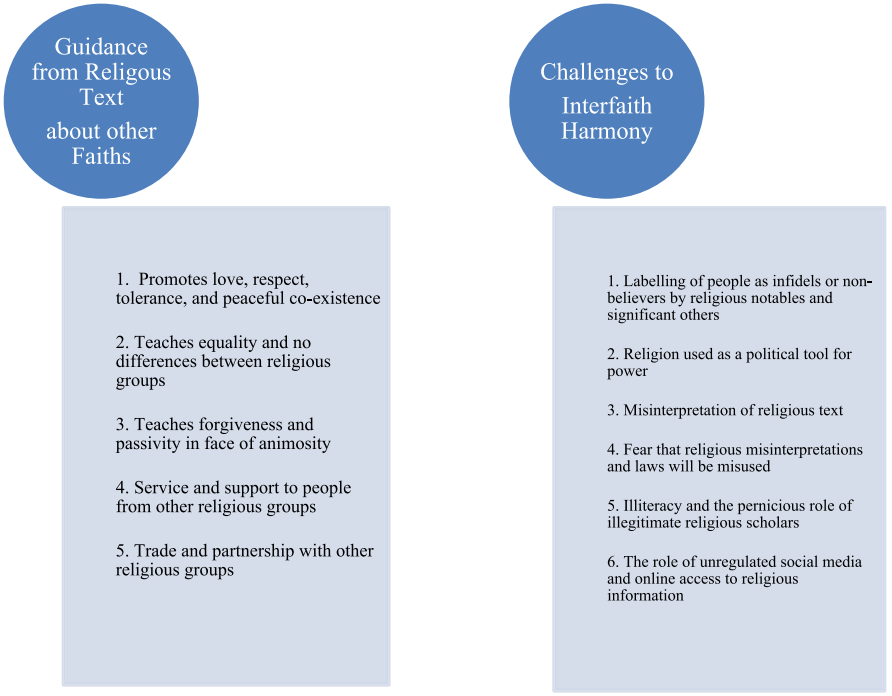


Fig. 2 Summary of qualitative themes identified in study

Participants from all religious groups shared that their religious text teaches harmony and co-existence. An Ahmadi participant described:

"My religious text teaches me tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful co-existence" [Ahmadi Participant]

Another Ahmadi participant shared:

"My religious text teaches me to be kind to everyone regardless of what caste, sex, race, or ethnicity they belong to." [Ahmadi Participant]

Similarly, Christian participants confirmed with direct quotes from the Holy Bible:

"Religious text guides me on tolerance: 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (John 13:34-35)." [Christian Participant]

Another Christian participant quoted:

"My religion teaches me to respect everyone and that we have to spread love to our neighbors, even if they are Christian or not. At the heart of the Law is the well-known commandment: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Leviticus19:18). It is part of a unit of two verses (Leviticus 19:17-18) that instructs the Israelites not to hate one another, not to take revenge or bear a grudge against one another, but to love one another." [Christian Participant]

A Hindu participant shared key phrases that are repeated in their religious text to promote humanitarianism:

"Our religious text teaches us two main principles to promote harmony with people regardless of their faith: KIRAT KARO (Share your meals with others) and VAND CHAKHO (contribute to society)." [Hindu Participant]

A Sikh participant also shared three key practices for maintaining peaceful co-existence promoted by the founder of Sikhism:

"My religious text influences me in dealing with people from other religions with respect and love. Guru Nanak Dev Ji shared that: 1) Earn a good living; 2) Meditate; and 3) Share with others, for example, wealth and knowledge." [Sikh Participant]

Another Sikh participant described how Sikhism contributed to promoting interfaith harmony among different religious groups throughout the history of South Asia:

"I and my family are mostly influenced by Dhan Guru Granth Sahib G Mahraj's lessons and Sikh historical books. As you know, Bhai Mardana was a Muslim who was influenced by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Similarly, people from different faiths have been influenced by Sikh Guru Sahibans, who

always promote interfaith understanding, mutual respect, and harmony." [Sikh Participant]

A Shia Muslim participant shared the names of the Holy Quran and Nahjul Balagha (sayings of Hazrat Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon them) in promoting interfaith love:

"The Quran and Nahjul Balagha teach us love for people belonging to other religions." [Shia Muslim Participant]

Another Shia Muslim listed other religious texts that influenced practices of interfaith harmony:

"All the Shia religious texts that we read, including Quran, Tareeq ul Muntazireen, Nahjul Balagha (sayings of Imam Ali a.s.), Bihar ul Anwar, Gunahane Kabirah by Ayat ullah Dastghaib, Tauziul Masaail by Ayat ullah Sistaani, Mafiti ul Janan, Sahifa Sajadiya (by Imam Sajjad a.s.) teach us the same thing- Muslims are our brothers in faith, no matter what the sect, and all people of the world, regardless of their religion, are our brothers in humanity." [Shia Muslim Participant]

A Sunni Muslim participant clarified that despite differences, they were not taught through religious text to disrespect people from other faiths:

"Our religious text warns us to be aware of the disbelievers, so that we do not forget our religious laws and beliefs. However, it does not guide us to misbehave or believe that we are superior in any way." [Sunni Muslim Participant]

ii. Religious text teaches equality and no differences between religious groups

An Ahmadi participant shared that their religious text teaches them that all humanity is equal, regardless of their religious beliefs:

"The message of 'love for all, hatred for none' is what my religious text teaches me. We are all the same." [Ahmadi Participant]

A Christian participant shared a parable from a religious text that guides the Christian community to be good to all, despite their beliefs:

"Our religious text teaches us to treat our neighbors with love. The parable of the good Samaritan from Luke inspires me to be a good neighbor to everyone, despite their beliefs." [Christian Participant]

Similarly, a Hindu participant quoted which Hindu religious texts that promoted the equality of all humans:

"Hindu religion is one of the oldest religions in the world. Its text, including Bhagwat Geeta, Raman, and Maah Bharat, all teach and reinforce

the brotherhood of humans and the acceptance of social, cultural, and religious diversity." [Hindu Participant]

A Sikh participant explained that his religious text argued that every human was created from one divine power:

"No one is evil. We are all children of the same divine power…and so we are equal." [Sikh Participant]

A Shia Muslim participant shared Holy verses from the Quran, which left judgment of all humans to God:

"Our elders always reminded us of this Quranic text from Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13): 'O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.' This text assures us that differences are created by Allah, and we have to deal with each other with understanding, respect, and righteousness, regardless of their backgrounds and beliefs." [Shia Muslim Participant]

Another Shia Muslim participant quoted a narration from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), asserting that no human was superior to another:

"In the last sermon of the Holy Prophet (SAW), before his death, he stated, or rather warned us, that no one is above the other, whether in caste, color or religion." [Shia Muslim Participant]

A Sunni Muslim participant also quoted from the Holy Quran, explaining that differences are created by God:

"Our religious text always teaches tolerance to other people, no matter whatever background they are from: 'To every People have We appointed rites and ceremonies which they must follow, let them not then dispute with you on the matter, but do invite (them) to your Lord: for you are assuredly on the Right Way. If they do wrangle with you, say, 'God knows best what it is you are doing. "God will judge between you on the Day of Judgment concerning the matters in which you differ' (Quran, Al-Hajj: 69-76). Animosity, conflict, and hatred are forbidden." [Sunni Muslim Participant]

Another Sunni Muslim participant explained that religious texts taught them equality and cooperation with people from all beliefs:

"My religious text teaches me respect and understanding for people of different faiths. It guides me to embrace diversity and fosters a spirit of equality and cooperation when interacting with individuals from various religious backgrounds in Pakistan." [Sunni Muslim Participant]

iii. Religious text teaches forgiveness and passivity in the face of animosity

A Christian participant explained how their religious text helped them to cope with conflict and oppression in Pakistan by adopting forgiveness:

> "In Pakistan, where religious conflict is a problem, I keep this text close to my heart: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you' (Ephesians 4:32)." [Christian Participant]

Another Christian participant quoted the Holy Bible and shared how the verses taught them to deal with enemies with patience and forgiveness:

> "Religious text helps my community to remain tolerant and accepting of all, and to love everyone… even your enemies: 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres' (Corinthians 13: 4-7)" [Christian Participant]

Yet another Christian participant confirmed that they learned to pray for their oppressors through the Holy Bible:

> "The Bible teaches me to love one another even when others might have different opinions and even my enemies, and pray for those who persecute me." [Christian Participant]

A Hindu participant shared that their religious text taught them to ignore conflict with other religious groups and focus on their own belief system:

> "Our religious text is very clear about differences and conflict between religious groups. It teaches us not to criticize other groups, ignore, animosity, and just focus on our own religions." [Hindu Participant]

iv. Religious text teaches service and support to people from other religious groups

A Christian participant described how their religious text taught them to serve and support people, regardless of their beliefs:

> "Our religious text teaches us kindness and sponsorship to all, regardless of their beliefs. A quote that guides us about treating other communities is: 'If one from another nation living among you gets wealth, and your countryman, at his side, becomes poor and gives himself for money to the man from another nation or to one of his family' (Leviticus 25:47)." A quote that guides us about treating other communities is: 'If one from another nation living among you

gets wealth, and your countryman, at his side, becomes poor and gives himself for money to the man from another nation or to one of his family' (Leviticus 25:47)." [Christian Participant]

A Sunni Muslim participant confirmed that Quranic text motivated Muslims to serve mankind and give charity to all people of the country, regardless of their faith:

"The Quran teaches us that people who will gain God's favor based on Haqooqul Abad (service to mankind). You can see that service and charity are given by people across the world, regardless of their beliefs. In Pakistan, Muslim charities support all religious groups- the biggest example is Edhi Foundation." [Sunni Muslim Participant]

v. Trade and partnership with other religious groups

A Shia Muslim participant explained that their religious text encouraged the signing of peace and trade treaties with people of different religious groups:

"More than religious text, I focus on reading the most reliable traditions of the Prophet and Ahlebait a.s./ the 12 Imams a.s. Their history is testimony to how our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his family always made efforts to sign treaties with the tribes of different religions to promote trade, partnerships, and peace." [Shia Muslim Participant]

Another Shia Muslim participant confirmed that the Holy Quran encouraged trade and commerce of people from different faiths, which would contribute to peaceful co-existence:

"There are many Surahs in the Quran that argue for peaceful co-existence. One example is Surah Al-Kafirun (109:6), which states: 'For you is your religion, and for me is my religion'. Additionally, the Quran emphasizes the importance of dialog, signing of peace contracts, and development of trade with people of diverse beliefs and regions." [Shia Muslim Participant]

Challenges to interfaith harmony in Pakistan

I. Labeling of people as infidels by religious leaders and significant others

An Ahmadi participant explained that it was common for Muslims to label people as infidels, and this was taught to them in their early childhood years by their primary and significant socializing agents, justifying persecution:

"Declaring 'Kaffir' (infidel) to someone whose religious beliefs are different than yours is the worst thing…it is done by both religious leaders and by family elders. People (Muslim majority) start to learn this from youth and think it is okay to label religious minorities like this. This is just a word for some people, but it can lead to hatred and violence." [Ahmadi Participant]

Another Ahmadi participant shared that dealing with Apostates was also misinterpreted in Islam, and the possibility that they might turn back to religious faith alone should be enough not to persecute them:

> "Some people misunderstand Islam and insist that their religion is asking them to kill Murtads (Apostates). Allah has not given us permission to do this. All such matters are in the hands of Allah alone. You can warn them and hope they will return to their beliefs and spirituality. What use is it to kill them?" [Ahmadi Participant]

A Christian participant shared that Islam was misinterpreted by some as a religion that allows forceful conversions, which made religious minorities targets for extremism:

> "In my opinion, asking someone to accept Islam or die is the most dangerous religious activity, although it is not the religious teachings of Islam, but some people follow it. Similarly, the practice in Pakistan of some Muslims labeling others as 'Kaffir' (infidel) also affects unity and harmony in the country." [Christian Participant]

A Shia Muslim participant explained that hate speeches and labeling of people as infidels is a misinterpretation that prevents solidarity and progress in the country:

> "Hate speeches, calling people of other sects Kaffirs (infidels), and misinterpretation of Quran and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad a.s.) to label people as evil and inferior, are the major issues for us. They prevent unity and also social and economic development of the country." [Shia Muslim Participant]

ii. Religion used as a political tool for power

An Ahmadi participant described how religion in the country was used as a political tool to control the population and create instability:

> "In Pakistan, religion is used as a political weapon to manipulate masses and create domestic disturbance…this is worse than the atomic bomb." [Ahmadi Participant]

Another Ahmadi participant confirmed that people and religious leaders use religion in the country to create divisions and gain power:

> "Any person or religious leader who incites war and stops people from being understanding of people from other beliefs is dangerous. Unfortunately, Pakistan has many such people, with no accountability against them." [Ahmadi Participant]

A Shia Muslim participant shared that no religion teaches divisions, but that there are certain 'agents' working in the country who create conflict between people from different religious groups:

> "In my opinion, no religion teaches to harm other religious communities; there are a few agents working in our country creating issues between people

of different beliefs, contributing to instability and disunity." [Shia Muslim Participant]

A Shia Muslim participant argued that illegitimate religious scholars promoted interfaith conflict in the country:

"Politically motivated and false religious clerics have selfish motivations, and they interpret and disseminate religious texts to incite hatred and conflict." [Shia Muslim Participant]

iii. Misinterpretation of religious text

A Christian participant clearly stated that religious misinterpretation creates problems:

"I believe it is not the text, it is the interpretation that fuels disunity and conflict." [Christian Participant]

Another Christian participant described how discussions of the misinterpretation of religious texts were managed without care and skill in the country:

"Discussions about misinterpretation of religious texts are not managed with sensitivity and respect in the country. Rather than singling out a specific religious text as "harmful," it is more productive to focus on how interpretations and applications of religious teachings can sometimes lead to misunderstandings, conflict, or division. In the context of Pakistan, we need a council to be established to address misinterpretations or extremist ideologies that may contribute to discord." [Christian Participant]

A Sikh participant shared that the misinterpretation of religious text is most harmful when it promotes discrimination against marginalized communities in the country:

"Whenever a religious leader or a community notable misinterprets religious text to promote discrimination on any basis, such as against women, caste, or ethnicity is when problems arise." [Sikh Participant]

Another Sikh participant argued that personality weaknesses and illiteracy can contribute to the misinterpretation of religious texts:

"There is no religious text which negatively influences tolerance and unity between people. It is a person's own thoughts that create misunderstandings and conflict. In addition, wrong translations and interpretations can especially affect uneducated people." [Sikh Participant]

A Shia Muslim participant also confirmed that poverty-ridden and illiterate populations were most vulnerable to misusing misinterpreted religious texts.

"Severe misinterpretation of certain Ayats in the Quran and Muslims' misunderstanding of the text is a cause of concern, especially for the majority of poor and uneducated populations in Pakistan. They believe that there should be no goodwill with believers of different religions, and they

comprehend the texts in a literal way, believing Islamic texts want Muslims to be rid of people of other faiths. The only way out of this is to ban illegitimate scholars and texts and ensure everyone is literate in the country so they can make sense of Quranic verses." [Shia Muslim Participant]

A Sunni Muslim participant described that Islam was not a rigid and inflexible religion, but misinterpretation made some of the followers discriminatory to minorities:

"In Pakistan, it's challenging to pinpoint a single religious text as the most harmful. Misinterpretations or misuse of various texts from different religions can potentially influence disunity and disharmony. Promoting understanding and tolerance is crucial for fostering unity in Pakistan. Islam is often assumed to be a hardcore rulebook when it is not. This assumption often leads to extremism and polarity in our society. The text regarding women has also often been misused to oppress them." [Sunni Muslim Participant]

Another Sunni Muslim participant described that untrustworthy religious texts from questionable sources contributed to misinterpretations and exploitation against minorities:

"The weaker Hadith and the improper understanding of the text by self-proclaimed Islamic spokespersons are our biggest challenges. They hurt both the Muslim populations and the religious minorities in the country." [Sunni Muslim Participant]

iv. Fear that religious misinterpretations and laws will be misused

A Christian participant communicated that the misuse of blasphemy laws by extremists contributes to religious conflict and creates great fear in minorities:

"The misuse of Blasphemy laws is a cause of concern in the country, creating fear and uncertainty in minorities…and also preventing interfaith harmony. It is rare that a person of one faith disrespects another, mostly extremists misuse the laws when they want to victimize someone." [Christian Participant]

A Shia Muslim participant agreed that blasphemy laws were misused, creating insecurity and apprehension in minorities:

"Misinterpretation by illegitimate religious scholars has caused endless problems in Pakistan, the biggest example is the blasphemy laws. Once laws are passed and implemented to discriminate against religious minorities, it makes things worse. Many religious minorities live in fear because of this." [Shia Muslim Participant]

V. Illiteracy and the pernicious role of illegitimate religious scholars

A Hindu participant shared that the pernicious influence of illegitimate religious scholars created conflict between religious scholars, especially amongst the majority illiterate and semi-literate populations:

"Less educated religious scholars are the main reason for conflict between religious groups." [Hindu Participant]

A Sunni Muslim participant argued that impoverished, disadvantaged, and illiterate people were more easily exploited by illegitimate religious scholars, who fueled interfaith conflict to gain power:

"I don't agree that any religion preaches anything harmful or hurtful to mankind. However, evil religious scholars take teachings out of context and portray the religion to be non-inclusive. They do this to gain power over weak, poor, and illiterate populations." [Sunni Muslim Participant]

Another Sunni Muslim participant confirmed that illegitimate religious scholars circulated writings that promoted interfaith conflict:

"Sectarian books written by authors or Mullahs or 'street Maulanas' (illegitimate religious scholars), promote strong beliefs in their own sects and declare others Kaffirs (infidels) are the most dangerous. We need to ban these." [Sunni Muslim Participant]

vi. The role of unregulated social media and online access to religious information

A Shia Muslim participant shed light on the role of unregulated social media and online content, which promoted religious extremism and interfaith conflict:

"Online content like religious podcasts and free religious PDFs circulating on the internet can be very extremist and negatively influence unity. We need strict surveillance and online regulation of such content in the country." [Shia Muslim Participant]

A Sunni Muslim participant described both the advantages and disadvantages of online sources sharing religious texts and videos:

"In many ways, it is beneficial to access religious content, such as learning videos from scholars and the translation of the Quran through online Apps. However, there is a lot of religious content and text circulating online that promotes extremism, too. There needs to be strict regulation of this." [Sunni Muslim Participant]

Discussion

This study aimed to collect mixed data to quantitatively identify the relationship between engagement with religious text, religious tolerance, and mental health, and to qualitatively explore the role of religious text in promoting religious tolerance. We believe this study has immense relevance for Pakistan, which is a state troubled by religious conflict (Ahmed & Brasted, 2021) and interfaith clashes (Imran & Ur

Rehman, 2023). Religious minorities are also known to be excluded from accessing mental health services (Iqbal et al., 2013) and gaining support for overall monitoring of health and wellbeing in the country (McLaren et al., 2021); and this study hopes to contribute to evidence for the mobilization of health support.

From the quantitative data, we were able to confirm both study hypotheses. Firstly, the higher the engagement with religious text, the better the religious tolerance and mental health, and secondly, older people, women, and people with lower income show greater engagement with religious text. Other research confirms that educated people who read religious texts and the history of their religions and religious leaders have greater religious tolerance (Wang & Uecker, 2017), and also improved mental health (Finley, 2023). Scholarship also corroborates our findings in that people engage with religious text as they grow older for comfort and solace (Bengtson et al., 2015), and when their income is middle to low, to gain relief and faith (Berkessel et al., 2021). Women from Muslim and conservative states are known to engage with religious texts more than men, as it helps them in coping with life and social barriers (Rizvi Jafree, 2022; Trzebiatowska & Bruce, 2012).

Comparative means between the religious groups revealed that Christians and Shia Muslims showed more tolerance compared to other groups in the study. This may be because both the Christians (Pio & Syed, 2016) and Shia Muslims (Jafree et al., 2023b) have suffered from historic persecution in the country, which may have contributed to comparatively higher tolerance, acceptance (Johnson & Koyama, 2019), and adoption of passivity (Lester & Roberts, 2006). The qualitative data elaborated that all six religious groups in the country confirm that their religious text teaches them tolerance, support, love, forgiveness, and beliefs about equality across human populations regardless of their faith. In addition, our findings suggest that no religious text from all six religions prevents community service, agreements, or trade partnerships. Other research confirms that all religious domains promote cooperation and solidarity (Naz et al., 2018) and the pursuit of trade and economic partnerships (Karaçuka, 2018).

The main challenges that religious groups faced in Pakistan included wrongful labeling by extremist Muslims of certain groups as infidels, misuse of religion and religious text by political agents and illegitimate religious leaders, and the acceptance of manipulation by illiterate masses. Furthermore, some groups highlighted that religious minorities suffered from great fear and uncertainty that misinterpretations, misuse of laws, and unregulated social media would put them in danger and lead to religious conflict. Other research confirms religious misinterpretation in Islam (Yusuf, 2014) and the role of illegitimate religious scholars (Khan & Shah, 2020) and political agents in manipulating religious groups and extremists (Brass, 2024), which have created instability and religious conflict in Pakistan (Ahmed & Brasted, 2021).

Limitations

We were unable to sample other cities or include a larger sample due to limits in time and funding. Some religious groups were under-represented, like the Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis, as they are reluctant to participate in studies related to interfaith relations.

Conclusion

There are regions in the world that have become centers for great sectarian harmony due to better management of how religious texts are being communicated (Gause III, 2014). In this study, we have been able to conclude that better management of religious text in a plural country like Pakistan can translate into religious power in promoting community support and solidarity, building interfaith partnership for economic and social development, and improving health and wellbeing. If policymakers and stakeholders can work together to improve literacy and constructive engagement with religious texts across their religious groups, there is a greater possibility for religious tolerance and interfaith harmony in the country. Pakistan is in dire need of recommendations to solve the problems of religious conflict and interfaith disunity, and this is possible if policymakers and stakeholders work together to improve literacy and constructive engagement with religious texts across religious groups.

Recommendations

Interventions are needed in the religious curriculum content taught both in schools and at religious centers, alongside the regulation and standardization of teaching materials and instructors to ensure consistency and accuracy. This will require the joint efforts of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, provincial educational ministries, and different religious councils and boards within the country. Licensing of religious scholars who teach religious texts must be introduced to promote accountability and quality in interpretation, which can be overseen by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. Furthermore, there is a need for reform in constitutional laws to strengthen interfaith harmony, while regulation of religious content on social media is also necessary to curb harmful narratives. On a broader scale, state investment in education and economic stability will enable communities to engage with religious content more constructively and with legitimate interpretations. Finally, it is important to provide targeted support for the mental health and wellbeing of religious minorities through the community health workforce at the primary level.

Appendix

Appendix A: CLOSE-ENDED SURVEY

Religious Center- مذہبی مرکز _____
Data Collector Code- ڈیٹا کلکٹر کوڈ _____

No.	Question		Response	Coding
Section A: Demographic Questions				
1	Age	عمر		
2	Gender	جنس		
3	Religion/ Sect	مذہب / فرقہ		
4	HH monthly Income	ماہانہ آمدنی		
5	Last educational Degree	آخری تعلیمی ڈگری		
6	Current Occupation	موجودہ پیشہ		
7	Province	صوبہ		
8	City	شہر		
9	Marital Status	ازدواجی حیثیت		
10	Do you read religious text in a language you cannot understand?	کیا آپ ایسی زبان میں مذہبی متن پڑھتے ہیں جسے آپ نہیں سمجھ سکتے؟(مذہبی متن نوں اوس بولی وچ پڑھیا اے جیہڑی تہانوں سمجھ نئیں آندی اے؟)		
11	Do you read religious text with interpretation?	کیا آپ مذہبی متن کو تفسیر کے ساتھ پڑھتے ہیں؟ (کیہ تسی تشریح دے نال مذہبی متن پڑھدے او؟)		
12	Are you enrolled in a religious center where you discuss or read religious text as an employee or student?	کیا آپ کسی ایسے مذہبی مرکز میں داخل ہیں جہاں آپ ایک ملازم یا طالب علم کی حیثیت سے مذہبی متن پر تبادلہ خیال کرتے ہیں یا پڑھتے ہیں؟ (کیہ تسی اک مذہبی (مرکز دا حصہ ہو جتھے تسی ملازم یا طالب علم دے طور تے مذہبی متن تے بحث کردے او یا پڑھدے او؟)		

Section B: ***Engagement with religious text- Modified from Private Religious Practices Scale***

			Daily روزانہ	Few times a week ہفتے میں چند بار (ہفتے وچ کجھ وار)	Few times a month مہینے میں چند بار (مہینے وچ کجھ وار)	Few times a year سال میں چند بار (سال وچ کجھ وار)	Never کبھی نہیں (کدے نئی)	Coding
Describe religious text to include Holy and revered books or scriptures, and sayings of prophets, religious scholars or notables.								
1	How often do you read religious text privately (alone) ?	آپ کتنی بار ذاتی طور پر مذہبی متن پڑھتے ہیں (خود) ؟ (تسی کِنی وار مذہبی متن نجی طور تے پڑھدے او (اکلے) ؟)						
2	How often do you watch or listen to religious programs (on TV, radio, social media like Youtube..) which discuss religious text?	آپ کتنی بار ایسے مذہبی پروگرام دیکھتے یا سنتے ہیں، جو مذہبی متن پر تبادلہ خیال کرتے ہیں؟ (جیسے ٹی وی، ریڈیو، سوشل میڈیا یوٹیوب..) (تسی کِنی کِنی واری ویکھدے یا سندے مذہبی پروگرام (ٹی وی، ریڈیو، یوٹیوب ورگے سوشل میڈیا..) جیہڑے مذہبی متن تے گل بات کردے نیں؟)						
3	How often do you read / discuss religious text in a congregation?	آپ کسی جماعت میں مذہبی متن کو کتنی بار پڑھتے /اس پر تبادلہ خیال کرتے ہیں؟ (اک جماعت وچ مذہبی متن وچ کِنی واری پڑھدے / بحث کردے او؟)						

4	How often do you read / discuss religious text at home with family/ children or in family gatherings?	آپ گھر پر یا خاندانی اجتماعات میں کتنی بار مذہبی متن پڑھتے / اس پر تبادلہ خیال کرتے ہیں؟ (گھر و چ خاندان / بچیاں دے نال یا خاندانی اجتماعات و چ مذہبی متن نوں کنی وار پڑھدے / بحث کردے او؟)						
Section C: ***Religious Tolerance Questionnaire (Broer et al., 2014)***								
1	My religious beliefs define everything in a series of rules and dogmas	میرے مذہبی عقیدے ہر چیز کو قواعد و ضوابط کے ایک سلسلے میں بیان کرتے ہیں۔ (میرے مذہبی عقائد نے ہر شے نوں قواعد و ضابطے دے اک سلسلے وچ بیان کیتا اے۔)						
2	I live strictly according to the rules of my religion	میں سختی سے اپنے مذہب کے اصولوں کے مطابق زندگی بسر کرتا ہوں۔ (میں اپنے مذہب دے قواعد دے مطابق سختی نال وسدا رہندا۔)						
3	When having to take an important decision, I am strongly aware of my religion	جب مجھے کوئی اہم فیصلہ کرنا ہوتا ہے تو میں اپنے مذہب سے بخوبی واقف ہوتا ہوں۔ (جدوں کوئی اہم فیصلہ لین دی لوڑ اے تے میں اپنے مذہب توں سختی نال واقف آں۔)						
4	In my encounters with other people I always adhere to my own norms and values	دوسرے لوگوں کے ساتھ بات چیت میں میں ہمیشہ اپنے اصولوں اور اقدار پر عمل کرتا ہوں۔ (دوجے لوکاں نال اپنے گل وات وچ میں ہمیشہ اپنے معیاراں تے قدراں دی پابندی کردا ہاں۔)						
5	Values and norms which stem from a religion other than my own cannot give direction to my life	وہ اقدار اور اصول جو میرے مذہب کے علاوہ کسی اور مذہب سے جنم لیتے ہیں وہ میری زندگی کو سمت نہیں دے سکتے۔ (اوہ قدر تے معیار جو میرے اپنے توں وکھ اک مذہب توں پیدا ہوندے نیں، میری زندگی نوں سمت دے سکدے نیں۔)						
6	The values which are important to me, all stem from my religion	جو اقدار میرے لئے اہم ہیں، وہ سب میرے مذہب سے پیدا ہوتی ہیں۔ (اوہ قدراں جیہڑیاں میرے لئی اہم نیں، سارے میرے مذہب توں پیدا ہوندے نیں)						
7	I am able to explain to others those values that I regard as important	میں دوسروں کو ان اقدار کی وضاحت کرنے کے قابل ہوں جنہیں میں اہم سمجھتا ہوں۔ (میں دوجیاں نوں اوہناں قدراں نوں سمجھان دے قابل آں جیہڑیاں میں اہم سمجھدا آں۔)						

8	I have a deep trust in my own beliefs	مجھے اپنے عقائد پر گہرا اعتماد ہے۔ (مینوں اپنے عقائد تے گہرا اعتبار اے۔)						
9	I am convinced that people should adhere to principles of their religion	مجھے یقین ہے کہ لوگوں کو اپنے مذہب کے اصولوں پر عمل کرنا چاہئے۔ (مینوں یقین اے کہ لوکاں نوں اپنے مذہب دے اصولاں دی پابندی کرنی چاہیدی اے۔)						
10	I think that I am contributing to the wellbeing of my fellow human beings when I tolerate their ideas and beliefs	جب میں اوروں کے خیالات اور عقائد کو برداشت کرتا ہوں تو مجھے لگتا ہے کہ میں اپنے ساتھی انسانوں کی فلاح و بہبود میں اپنا حصہ ڈال رہا ہوں۔ (میرا خیال اے کہ جدوں میں اوہناں دے خیالاں تے عقیدے نوں برداشت کردا ہاں تے میں اپنے ساتھی انساناں دی بھلائی وچ حصہ پا رہیا واں۔)	-					
11	I am of the view that other people should have the right to their own beliefs, even if I do consider them to be wrong	میرا خیال ہے کہ دوسرے لوگوں کو اپنے عقائد پر حق ہونا چاہئے، بھلے ہی میں انہیں غلط سمجھتا ہوں۔ (میرا ایہہ خیال اے کہ دوجے لوکاں نوں اپنے عقیدے دا حق ہونا چاہیدا اے، بھاویں میں اوہناں نوں غلط سمجھدا ہاں۔)						
12	I am convinced that my own religion can be enriched through dialogue with other religions	مجھے یقین ہے کہ دوسرے مذاہب کے ساتھ مکالمے کے ذریعے میرے اپنے مذہب کو مالا مال کیا جا سکتا ہے۔ (میرا یقین اے کہ دوجے مذہباں نال گل بات دے ذریعے میرا اپنا مذہب بھرپور کیتا جا سکدا اے۔)						
13	I am convinced that my own religion can be enriched through dialogue with other religions	مجھے یقین ہے کہ دوسرے مذاہب کے ساتھ مکالمے کے ذریعے میرے اپنے مذہب کو مالا مال کیا جا سکتا ہے۔						
14	I am of the view that people should have so much trust in one another that peaceful coexistence between them can be possible	میرا خیال ہے کہ لوگوں کو ایک دوسرے پر اتنا بھروسہ ہونا چاہیے کہ ان کے درمیان پرامن بقائے باہمی ممکن ہو سکے۔ (میرا خیال اے کہ لوکاں نوں اک دوجے تے اینا اعتبار ہونا چاہیدا اے کہ اوہناں وچکار پرامن بقائے باہمی ممکن ہو سکدے نیں۔)						

15	I am convinced that people should seek ways to overcome the differences that exist among people in society	مجھے یقین ہے کہ لوگوں کو معاشرے میں موجود اختلافات پر قابو پانے کے طریقے تلاش کرنے چاہئیں۔ (مینوں یقین اے کہ لوکاں نوں معاشرے دے لوکاں وچ موجود اختلافات نوں دور کرن دے طریقے لبھنے چاہیدے نیں۔)						
16	I am of the opinion that people should respect the differences that exist among different people in society	میری رائے ہے کہ لوگوں کو معاشرے میں مختلف لوگوں کے درمیان موجود اختلافات کا احترام کرنا چاہئے۔ (میری رائے اے کہ لوکاں نوں معاشرے وچ مختلف لوکاں وچ موجود اختلافات دا احترام کرنا چاہیدا اے۔)						
17	I respect and do not condemn people whose beliefs are different from mine	میں ان لوگوں کا احترام کرتا ہوں اور ان کی مذمت نہیں کرتا جن کے عقائد مجھ سے مختلف ہیں۔ (میں اوہناں لوکاں دی عزت کردا آں تے مذمت نہیں کردا جنہاں دے عقیدے میرے توں وکھرے نیں۔)						
18	I feel free to respectfully socialize with people who hold beliefs quite different from mine	میں ان لوگوں کے ساتھ احترام کے ساتھ میل جول کرنے کے لئے آزاد ہوں جو میرے عقائد سے بالکل مختلف ہیں۔ (میں اوہناں لوکاں نال احترام نال سماجی ہون لئی آزاد محسوس کردا ہاں جیہڑے عقیدے نوں میرے توں بالکل وکھرے رکھدے نیں۔)						
19	I believe in a society where all people share one and the same set of beliefs	میں ایک ایسے معاشرے پر یقین رکھتا ہوں جہاں تمام لوگ ایک ہی عقیدے کا اشتراک کرتے ہیں۔ (میں اک معاشرے وچ یقین رکھدا آں جتھے سارے لوک اک ای عقیدا رکھدے نیں۔						
20	I believe that my own religion is the only correct one	میرا ماننا ہے کہ میرا اپنا مذہب ہی صحیح ہے۔ (میرا یقین اے کہ میرا اپنا مذہب ہی صحیح اے۔)						
21	I think that people can arrive at the truth only via my religion	مجھے لگتا ہے کہ لوگ صرف میرے مذہب کے ذریعے ہی سچائی تک پہنچ سکتے ہیں۔ (میرا خیال اے کہ لوک صرف میرے مذہب دے ذریعے سچ تے اپڑ سکدے نیں۔)						

22	Based on my own religion, I feel unhappy with some of the measures taken by the Government	اپنے مذہب کی بنیاد پر، میں حکومت کے ذریعہ اٹھائے گئے کچھ اقدامات سے ناخوش ہوں۔ (اپنے مذہب دی بنیاد تے میں حکومت دے کجھ اقدامات توں ناخوش محسوس کردا ہاں۔)						

Section D: ***Open-ended Questions***			
1	Share some of the recent religious text you have read, and what you remember of it?	آپ نے جو حالیہ مذہبی متن پڑھا ہے اس میں سے کچھ کا اشتراک کریں، آپ کو اس کے بارے میں کیا یاد ہے؟ (کجھ حالیہ مذہبی متن نوں شیئر کرو جیہڑا تسی پڑھیا اے، تے تہانوں ایس بارے کیہ یاد اے؟)	
2	List the top 3 religions texts which influence and guide your life and your practices the most?	سرفہرست 3 مذہبی تحریروں کی فہرست بنائیں جو آپ کی زندگی اور آپ کے اعمال کو سب سے زیادہ متاثر اور ان کی رہنمائی کرتی ہیں؟ (تّاپ 3 مذہب دے متن درج کرو جیہڑے تہاڈی حیاتی تے تہاڈے طریقیاں نوں سب توں ودھ متاثر کردے نیں تے رہنمائی کردے نیں؟)	
3	Which religious text has influenced you the most with regards to living with your fellow countrymen?	اپنے ہم وطنوں کے ساتھ رہنے کے سلسلے میں کس مذہبی متن نے آپ کو سب سے زیادہ متاثر کیا ہے؟ (اپنے ساتھی دے دیش واسیاں دے نال رہن دے حوالے نال تہانوں کیہڑے مذہبی متن نے سب توں ودھ متاثر کیتا اے؟)	
4	In what ways does your religious text influence your life and practices, while dealing with people from other religions living in Pakistan?	پاکستان میں رہنے والے دوسرے مذاہب کے لوگوں کے ساتھ برتاؤ کرتے ہوئے آپ کا مذہبی متن آپ کی زندگی اور طرز عمل پر کس طرح اثر انداز ہوتا ہے؟ (پاکستان وچ رہن والے دوجے مذہباں دے لوکاں نال نبڑن ویلے تہاڈا مذہبی متن تہانوں کس طرحاں رہنمائی کردا اے؟)	
5	In your opinion what is the most harmful religious text found in yours or other religions, which negatively influences unity and harmony in Pakistan?	آپ کی رائے میں آپ کے یا دیگر مذاہب میں سب سے زیادہ نقصان دہ مذہبی متن کون سا ہے جو پاکستان میں اتحاد اور ہم آہنگی پر منفی اثرات مرتب کرتا ہے؟ (تہاڈے خیال وچ تہاڈے یا دوجے مذہباں وچ سب توں زیادہ نقصان دہ مذہبی متن کیہہ ملیا اے، جیہدے نال پاکستان وچ اتحاد تے ہم آہنگی دا منفی اثر پیندا اے؟)	

Section E: General Health Questionnaire used to measure positive and negative mental health dimensions						
		Strongly Agree مکمل اتفاق	Agree اتفاق	Neutral غیرجانبدار	Disagree اختلاف	Strongly Disagree مکمل اختلاف
1.Have you recently been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?	کیا آپ حال ہی میں جو کچھ بھی کر رہے ہیں اس پر توجہ مرکوز کرنے کے قابل ہیں؟ (کیہ تسی حال ہی وچ جو کجھ وی کر رہے او تے دھیان دین وچ کامیاب ہو گئے او؟)					
2. Have you recently lost much sleep over worry?	کیا آپ نے حال ہی میں فکر کی وجہ سے نیند کھو دی ہے؟ (کیہ تسی حال ہی وچ فکر توں ہو نیند گوا دتی اے؟)					
3. Have you recently felt that you were playing a useful part in things?	کیا آپ نے حال ہی میں محسوس کیا ہے کہ آپ زندگی میں ایک مفید کردار ادا کر رہے ہیں؟ (کیہہ تہانوں حال ہی وچ لگیا اے کہ تسی چیزاں وچ کوئی مفید حصہ ادا کر رہے او؟)					
4. Have you recently felt capable of making decisions about things?	کیا آپ نے حال ہی میں خود کوچیزوں کے بارے میں فیصلے کرنے کے قابل محسوس کیا ہے؟ (کیہ تسی حال ہی وچ چیزاں دے بارے وچ فیصلے کرن دی صلاحیت محسوس کیتی اے؟)					

5. Have you recently felt constantly under strain?	کیا آپ نے حال ہی میں مسلسل تناؤ محسوس کیا ہے؟ (کیہ تسی حال ہی وچ مسلسل تناؤ محسوس کیتا اے؟)					
6. Have you recently felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?	کیا آپ نے حال ہی میں محسوس کیا ہے کہ آپ اپنی مشکلات پر قابو نہیں پا سکے؟ (کیہ تسی حال ہی وچ محسوس کیتا اے کہ تسی اپنی مشکلات تے قابو نہیں پا سکدے؟)					
7. Have you recently been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?	کیا آپ حال ہی میں اپنی معمول کی روزمرہ کی سرگرمیوں سے لطف اندوز ہونے کے قابل ہوئے ہیں؟ (کیہ تسی حال ہی وچ اپنی عام روزمرہ دیاں سرگرمیاں توں لطف اندوز ہون دے قابل ہو گئے او؟)					
8. Have you recently been able to face up to problems?	کیا آپ حال ہی میں مسائل کا سامنا کرنے کے قابل ہوئے ہیں؟ (کیہ حال ہی وچ تسی مسائل دا سامنا کرن دے قابل ہو گئے او؟)					
9. Have you recently been feeling unhappy or depressed?	کیا آپ حال ہی میں ناخوش یا افسردہ محسوس کر رہے ہیں؟ (کیہ حال ہی وچ تسی ناخوش یا افسردہ محسوس کر رہے او؟)					
10. Have you recently been losing confidence in yourself?	کیا آپ حال ہی میں اپنے آپ پر اعتماد کھو رہے ہیں؟ (کیہ حال ہی وچ تسی اپنے آپ تے اعتماد گوا رہے او؟)					
11. Have you recently been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?	کیا آپ حال ہی میں اپنے آپ کو ایک بیکار شخص کے طور پر سوچ رہے ہیں؟ (کیہ تسی حال ہی وچ اپنے آپ نوں اک بے قدر بندے دے طور تے سوچ رہے او؟)					
12. Have you recently been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?	تمام چیزوں کےباوجود، کیا آپ حال ہی میں معقول طور پر خوش محسوس کر رہے ہیں؟ (کیہ ساریاں گلاں دے نال تسی حال ہی وچ معقول طور تے خوش محسوس کیتا اے ؟					

Appendix B:

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE
Religion-
Type of Religious scholar -
Place of Interview-
Years of service-

1.Please share the most prominent (at least 5) religious text from your Holy book or religious scriptures which promotes interfaith harmony/ sectarian harmony/ peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic nation like Pakistan.

برائے مہربانی اپنی مقدس کتاب یا مذہبی صحیفوں میں سے سب سے نمایاں (کم از کم 5) مذہبی متن کا اشتراک کریں جو پاکستان جیسے تکثیری ملک میں بین المذاہب ہم آہنگی / فرقہ وارانہ ہم آہنگی / پرامن بقائے باہمی کو فروغ دیتا ہے۔

(براہ کرم اپنی مقدس کتاب یا مذہبی صفحے ں توں سب توں نمایاں (کم از کم 5) مذہبی متن دا اشتراک کرو جو پاکستان ورگے بہو گنتی قوم وچ بین المذاہب ہم آہنگی / فرقہ وارانہ ہم آہنگی / پرامن بقائے باہمی نوں فروغ دیندا اے۔)

2. Please share the most prominent (at least 5) religious text from sayings of prophets, religious scholars or notables which promote interfaith harmony/ sectarian harmony/ peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic nation like Pakistan.

برائے مہربانی انبیاء، مذہبی اسکالرز یا قابل ذکر شخصیات کے اقوال میں سے سب سے نمایاں (کم از کم 5) مذہبی متن کا اشتراک کریں جو پاکستان جیسے تکثیری ملک میں بین المذاہب ہم آہنگی / فرقہ وارانہ ہم آہنگی / پرامن بقائے باہمی کو فروغ دیتے ہیں۔

(مہربانی کرکے پاکستان ورگی کثرت پسند قوم وچ بین المذاہب ہم آہنگی / فرقہ وارانہ ہم آہنگی / پرامن بقائے باہمی نوں فروغ دینے والے انبیا، مذہبی اسکالراں یا قابل ذکر افراد دے اقوال توں سب توں نمایاں (کم از کم 5) دینی متن دا اشتراک کرنا۔)

3. How often and in what ways are you able to communicate and discuss this with your congregation/ followers/ or when invited to a forum to speak with people from different religious/ sectarian backgrounds?

آپ کتنی بار اور کن طریقوں سے اپنے اجتماع / پیروکاروں کے ساتھ بات چیت اور تبادلہ خیال کرنے کے قابل ہیں / آپ کومختلف مذہبی / فرقہ وارانہ پس منظر سے تعلق رکھنے والے لوگوں سے بات کرنے کے لئے کسی فورم پر مدعو کیا جاتا ہے؟

ذ (کی وار تے تسی اپنی جماعت / پیروکاراں یا جدوں اک فورم وچ مدعو طور تے مختلف مذہبی / فرقہ وارانہ پس منظر توں لوکاں نال گل بات کرن لئی مدعو کیتا جاندا اے ایس بارے گل بات کرن دے قابل ہوندے او ؟)

4. What barriers do you believe we face collectively in Pakistan in promoting religious text which supports interfaith harmony?

آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ بین المذاہب ہم آہنگی کی حمایت کرنے والے مذہبی متن کو فروغ دینے میں پاکستان میں اجتماعی طور پر کن رکاوٹوں کا سامنا ہے؟

(تہاڈے خیال وچ ساڈے پاکستان وچ مذہبی متن جیہڑے وچ بین المذاہب ہم آہنگی دی حمایت کیتی جاندی اے نوں فروغ دین وچ اجتماعی طور تے ہ ے ک رکاوٹاں دا سامنا کرنا پیندا اے ؟)

5. In your opinion how can these barriers be overcome?

آپ کی رائے میں ان رکاوٹوں پر کیسے قابو پایا جا سکتا ہے؟
(تہاڈے خیال وچ ایہناں رکاوٹاں تے کیویں قابو پا یا جا سکدا اے؟)

Acknowledgements We acknowledge all the people who participated in the study. We are also grateful to the student research assistants for this project who gave their time voluntarily and traveled to collect data even though they had numerous academic pressures and deadlines to manage simultaneously: Muhammad Shah Zaib Gul; Shagoofa Younis; Syed Mujahid Abbas Rizvi; Reeha Batool; Maheen Abid; Muhammad Farhan; Rida Zahra; Hassnain Khan; Syed Jaun; Amna Maryam; Fareeha Habeeb; Syed Jaffer Gardezi; Syeda Saamin Burhan; Tahniat Ali; Sajida Yaqoob; and Shanzeh Ahmad.

Author Contributions SRJ conceptualized the project, oversaw the completion of the entire study, analyzed the data, and prepared the manuscript. GC gave feedback on the study and supported data collection. SKB supervised the data collection. TF supported the data collection and reviewed the qualitative themes. All authors agreed on the final version of the manuscript submitted.

Funding None to declare.

Data Availability The data are available with the principal investigator (SRJ) based on request.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest None to declare.

Ethics Approval The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Forman Christian College University, Lahore, Pakistan.

Informed Consent Informed consent has been taken from all respondents of the study.

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