



SOCIOECONOMIC CAUSES OF YOUTH VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Youth violence and aggression are complicated and have diversified attributes in various countries. Youth violence and aggression in developing countries have increased generally, but it is noticed more rapidly in Pakistan. The recent increase in youth violence and aggression in Pakistan has awakened a widespread concern about personal safety and property insecurity. Statistically, Pakistan saw 853 fatalities (up from 600 last year) and 1,690 injuries directly due to violent incidents in 2021, a 42% increase over the previous year. In Pakistani society, youth has been primarily involved in brutal criminal acts with the change in social aspects, such as economic conditions, illiteracy, prevalent violence, family environment, customs, and traditions, which indicates an alarming situation in the country. The deprivations, desires, burdens, and lack of the respective needs turn youth into a criminal in the expression to release an outburst.

Keywords: Corruption, Family Environment, Illiteracy, Poverty, Social Change, Unemployment

Introduction



In both emerging and wealthy nations, youth violence and aggression have become significant socioeconomic issues (Brown, 2022; Flannery, 2022; Pankowiak et al., 2022; Ullman et al., 2022). Crime and violence are attributed to socioeconomic causes in every community (Berg, 2022; O'Connor et al., 2020; Penn, 2022). In Pakistan, the rising trend of young engagement in violence has materialized into a sobering reality that endangers human lives and socioeconomic realms (Afzal, 2018; Nadim, 2020; Noor, 2021; Weiss, 2022; Zulfiqar & Mubashar, 2021). In Pakistani society, institutions, including the family, academia, the workplace, and religion, have all been observed to be on a significant downward trend (Ahmed, 2021; Hayes, 2022; Rumi, 2018).

As youth seek more fair and progressive opportunities and solutions in their society (Aloia, 2022; Dreal, 2022; Levell, 2022; Weiss, 2022), the need to address the myriad concerns that young people confront (including gender equality, employment, health, and access to education) has become more critical than ever (Case, 2021; Godfrey et al., 2022; Lim, 2022; Maharaj et al., 2022). When given the knowledge and chances, they need to flourish, youth may be a strong force for development (United Nations, 2022; Wales Violence Prevention Unit, 2022). Youth, in particular, need access to a labor force that can employ them and the knowledge and training required to participate in a functioning economy (Milroy et al., 2022). Conversely, in the lack of promising opportunities, youth may impede progress in the modern world (Brown, 2022; Flannery, 2022; World Health Organization, 2022).

According to the Centre for Research and Security Studies, Pakistan saw 853 fatalities (up from 600 last year) and 1,690 injuries directly due to violent incidents in 2021, a 42% increase over the previous year. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, comprising the former provinces of FATA and Balochistan, had about 75% of all fatalities associated with violent crime. Punjab was responsible for 8% of all deaths, followed by Sindh. Except for Islamabad and Gilgit-Baltistan, all areas had exponential increases in violent crime, with Balochistan seeing a net 80% rise compared to the fatalities in 2020 (Dawn, 2022).

Research Justification

Pakistan is regarded as the world's fifth-largest youthful country. Youth aged 15 to 33 account for around 63% of the country's population (Kamray, 2021). Recently, the Pakistani government has taken a keen interest in curbing youth violence and aggression. However, nothing has been done due to a lack of reliable data and research funds. As a result, there has been an upsurge in youth violence and aggression in the last few years. This issue has gotten complex and has become a severe issue for society. It is now capturing the attention of social scientists since it has to be abolished or, at the very least, minimized because its prevalence is destructive to society. However, researchers present various reasons for the involvement of youth in violence. The current study explored the role of corruption, family environment, illiteracy, poverty, social



change, and unemployment. These are the significant factors that motivate youth to commit violent activities in Pakistan.

Research Question

What are the socioeconomic causes of youth violence and aggression in Pakistan?

Research Objectives

1. To discuss the relationship between corruption and youth violence and aggression in Pakistan.
2. To discuss the relationship between family environment and youth violence and aggression in Pakistan.
3. To discuss the relationship between illiteracy and youth violence and aggression in Pakistan.
4. To discuss the relationship between poverty and youth violence and aggression in Pakistan.
5. To discuss the relationship between social change and youth violence and aggression in Pakistan.
6. To discuss the relationship between unemployment and youth violence and aggression in Pakistan.

Research Methodology

Numerous issues arise due to a large amount of scholarly literature ([Cardano, 2020](#); [Ravitch & Carl, 2020](#); Wadsworth, 2020). One is how to fully document and evaluate the status of knowledge on a specific aspect (Acharyya & Bhattacharya, 2019; [Devlin, 2020](#)). A systematic review method is an effective tool (Flick, 2020; Machado & Davim, 2020; Mukherjee, 2019). The continual increase of research and the need to synthesize available content resulted in the formal establishment of the systematic review method in the late twentieth century (Higgins et al., 2011; Meerpohl et al., 2012).

The systematic review method comb through assesses and compiles all pertinent empirical information to comprehensively interpret study findings (Hammond & Wellington, 2020; Kumar, 2019). Although the systematic review method is most often employed in the social sciences (Dawson, 2019; [Giri & Biswas, 2020](#)), it is also used in management sciences, law studies, life sciences, earth sciences, and physical sciences (Gilbody, 2005; Machado & Davim, 2020; O'Hagan, 2006; Pullin & Stewart, 2006).

The systematic review approach has many advantages (Kettunen & Makela, 2019; Moriarty, 2020). They provide a concise and comprehensive summary of the available data on a particular subject (Dawson, 2019; [Hennink et al., 2020](#)). Additionally, it assists in identifying research gaps in a field's existing understanding (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Furthermore, they can draw attention to methodological issues in research projects, enhancing future work in the field ([Chilisa, 2019](#)). Finally, they are used to identify clear answers based on current data and do not



require more study (Hammond & Wellington, 2020). Conducting systematic reviews, particularly for new writers, is a valuable endeavor (Giri & Biswas, 2020). Authors get a deeper understanding of their topic area of interest, generate fresh research ideas, and build critical abilities for synthesizing current material (Cardano, 2020; Machado & Davim, 2020).

A systematic review approach was used to conduct this research. This technique establishes the research objectives and comprehensively examines the subject's literature (Komba & Lwoga, 2020). First, the study results are categorized per the subject's topic (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Second, the study ranks classified data into categories (Pawson et al., 2005). Third, the study's flow is determined by evaluating classified material and titles (Rahi, 2017). Finally, the integrity guarantee is maintained by comparing the research subjects and their contents (Victor, 2008).

Consequently, this technique was selected, and the associated processes were observed. Reviewing the relevant literature resulted in accumulating data and information coded according to the study goals. The coded data were grouped by subject. After classifying and merging the issues, they were ordered by degree of connection.

Socioeconomic Causes of Youth Violence and Aggression in Pakistan

1. Corruption

One of the leading causes of Pakistan's economic instability is corruption (Ahmed, 2021; Ashraf, 2017; Hayes, 2021). It has also been closely related to other issues in Pakistan, including unemployment, poverty, insecurity, and illiteracy (Nadim, 2020; O'Doherty, 2021). Because of how pervasive corruption is in government agencies, it is often believed that honest individuals are prevented from working (Weiss, 2020). Because there is a lack of responsibility, influential individuals and the rich work to avoid being held accountable for their actions (Zulfiqar & Mubashar, 2021), so they continue to steal from national treasures while looking for methods to legitimate black money (Noor, 2021).

According to Transparency International, Pakistan dropped 16 places in the Corruption Perceptions Index for 2021 compared to the previous year, ranking 140 out of 180 countries (Tahir et al., 2022). The CPI, which measures how corrupt a country's public sector is perceived by its experts and business people, uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt, and 100 is very clean (Dawn, 2022). The 2021 edition of the CPI ranked 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, drawing on 13 expert assessments and surveys of business executives (Ahmed, 2022; Janjua, 2022). In 2020, Pakistan's CPI was 31 and ranked 124 out of 180 countries. The country's corruption score has now deteriorated to 28 while it is ranked 140 out of the entire countries on the index (The Friday Times, 2022).

2. Family Environment



3.

Family environment has long been considered necessary while researching youth violence and aggressiveness due to its relevance (Brown, 2022; Dreal et al., 2022). Since it is the leading institution for developing a child's potential—including their social, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical growth (Levell, 2022), typically, other factors are absent from a child's early, highly formative years (Flannery, 2022). Family establishes the conditions, including time and location, within which these needs can be met in conformity with societal standards (Case, 2021).

Children start to imitate their family members and close friends. It may be argued that the family is the primary setting for aggressive attitudes and behaviors (Dreal et al., 2022). Parents' opinions on violence may significantly impact how kids feel about it (Lim, 2022). Even some parents encourage their children to seek retribution (Case, 2022; Levell, 2022). Cultural and social conventions greatly influence this way (Penn & davenport, 2022). Children raised in an antisocial environment are more likely to commit crimes, abuse drugs or alcohol, and exhibit many other undesirable habits (Flannery, 2022).

A young person is protected by his family from numerous societal ills (Brown, 2022; Levell, 2022). The most important factor at this level is family considerations since they either emphasize or increase the effect of the community (Case, 2021; Penn & davenport, 2022). Harsh discipline, bad administration, and a lack of parental attachment all indicate violent behavior. Additionally, this feeling is associated with low-income families, parental conflict, and criminality (Lim, 2022).

4. Illiteracy

The World Literacy Foundation (2018) estimates that 20% of people worldwide are entirely illiterate. Elementary reading and writing skills are challenging for almost 3 billion people. It is estimated that illiteracy and low literacy rates damage the global economy by \$907 billion annually (Low & Miranda, 2022).

Lower income, much poorer employment outcomes and substantially inferior job chances are all related to low literacy rates. As a result, they commonly rely on social services, have low self-esteem, and commit more crimes (Teach the World Foundation, 2022). In addition, the inability of persons with low literacy skills to complete applications and forms, understand governmental rules, and even read food or medication labels makes it difficult for them to make meaningful, educated decisions in everyday life (Paakkari & Okan, 2020).

Parents who are functionally illiterate also tend to prioritize work above education, have lower expectations for their kids' education and are more likely than educated parents to drop out of elementary school. As a result, poverty cycles through generations (Teach the World



Foundation, 2022). On the other hand, parents with strong reading skills will be better able to assist and encourage their kids in their academics and have fruitful interactions with their teachers, which will be to their children's advantage (Miranda, 2021).

According to the Economic Survey 2020-21, the country's literacy rate is still at 60%, and education-related spending fell by 29.6% in the fiscal year 2019-20 (Siddiqi, 2021). Urban regions had a greater literacy rate (74%) than rural ones (52%). With a literacy rate of 64%, Punjab leads all other provinces, followed by Sindh (58%), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (53%), and Balochistan (46%) (Abbasi, 2021).

5. Poverty

Poverty is the absence of the means to meet basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter. The expanding costs of the legal, healthcare, and other systems that assist people in need adversely affects the economy (Government of New Brunswick, Canada). The concept of poverty is rooted in all civilizations' ideologies and corresponds to each country's logic, claims World Without Poverty (2022). When creating strategies to fight poverty, many international organizations and nations base their anti-poverty laws on an individual's income or purchasing power.

The worldwide poverty line is \$1.90 per day. According to the World Bank, 711 million people, or nearly 10% of the global population, lived in extreme poverty in 2021, defined as having an average daily income of less than \$1.90 (Chen, 2022). Psychological severe problems are typically seen in poor children as they grow up. Children in poverty frequently face more stress at home and miss more school days due to illness and domestic problems. In addition, homeless children typically lack access to healthcare and education, which can result in ongoing social and health issues (Peter G. Peterson Foundation, 2022). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes the elimination of extreme poverty for all people globally by that date as another key goal (United Nations, 2022).

Only Pakistan and Sri Lanka are the South Asian nations where the crisis severely affects poverty levels (Ahmed, 2022). Due to Pakistan's extreme poverty, a nutritious meal costs roughly four times as much as what is accessible. The problem has gotten increasingly concerning because the most recent data is for 2020 when 83.5% of the population could not afford a nutritious diet following a pandemic and floods (Attarwala, 2022).

6. Social change

Youth in Pakistan is significantly impacted by adultery, dissolution of the joint family system, drug abuse, easy access to weapons, exposure to crime, fornication, immorality, irreligiosity, late marriages, materialism, rapid urbanization, socioeconomic pressures, and the



widespread distribution of pornographic literature. When all these elements come into play, youngsters typically find the stresses too much, especially those with naturally unstable dispositions (Ahmed, 2021; Noor, 2021). It turns people away from leading law-abiding lives and toward criminal ones (Weiss, 2020; Zulfiqar & Mubashar, 2021).

Socialization and education heavily rely on politics (Afzal, 2018; O' Doherty, 2021). The way we now practice politics is nothing more than a system that pushes individuals to push the boundaries of decency, civility, and humanity (Nadim, 2020). Speeches that are overtly hateful and laden with prejudice are evangelizing for the behavior of society as a whole. Moreover, it sums up the reason for the rise in intolerance. Our penchant for politics is pushing culture, especially the young, towards a stage when passion will always override rationality and intolerance will always prevail over cohabitation. Respect for elders, love for the younger, caring, social relationships, and societal ideals are eroding (Arshad, 2022).

In Pakistan, maintaining one's superiority, mainly over rivals, is a crucial aspect of daily life. Authority can occasionally be attained by force. People continue to act aggressively so they may demonstrate their dominance over others. Thinking permeates the social strata in this way. Teenagers adopt and follow this pattern of behavior. They act aggressively to rule over others. The youth in Pakistani society are encouraged to act aggressively. Given Pakistan's poor literacy rate, such behavior is seen as a significant societal factor contributing to youth violence and aggression.

7. Unemployment

The number of persons who are available and seeking work but cannot do so is referred to as "unemployment" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022). It affects not only people but also communities, regions, and the economy as a whole. It is a significant societal issue brought on by the weak economic structure (CFI Education Inc., 2022). Unemployment has adverse effects on people's finances and emotional health. Economic uncertainty or poverty brought on by prolonged unemployment may also result in issues with one's mental and physical well-being (Hayes, 2022).

When unemployment exceeds 5% or 6%, the effects might be detrimental to the economy. When that many people are jobless, one of the economy's main growth drivers—consumer spending—is lost. Employees have less money to spend while looking for work. Lower consumer spending lowers corporate income, forcing businesses to make further workforce cuts to decrease expenses. It may help fuel a downward economic spiral (Amadeo, 2022).

In Pakistan, youth comprise a significant section of the population, and many young people with the skills and desire to work remain unemployed (Ashraf, 2017; Nadim, 2020). According to official resources, the unemployment rate is 4.4% for 2021 (The World Bank, 2021),



while other private assessments indicate that the number is considerably higher (Noor, 2021). It is a significant factor in Pakistan's social turmoil, growing crime rate, mental health problems, and even terrorist activity (Ahmed, 2021; O'Doherty, 2021; Weiss, 2020; Zulfiqar & Mubashar, 2021).

According to Pakistan Economic Survey 2021–22, the nation's unemployment rate is 6.3%. University graduates have a higher-than-average unemployment rate than the general population, which is predicted to increase over the next few years. The structure of the sector and the small number of positions that businesses may offer graduates are the primary causes of this high unemployment rate (Iqbal & Rashid, 2022).

Conclusion

In all parts of the world, aggression has been identified as the most frequent component in youth violence and criminal behavior. People are connected by robust social networks in cultures like Pakistan, but these networks are disrupted by rapid urbanization. These social networks help young people adopt healthy habits and deter unhealthy ones. Nevertheless, when social networks are disrupted, societal norms and ideals are frequently challenged, and violence becomes prevalent.

Risk factors for rising violence in Pakistan include corruption, inequality, poverty, illiteracy, institutional and political instability, unemployment, and easy access to drugs and weapons. To deter youth engagement in violence and aggressiveness, it is a critical need for micro and macro-level effective preventive initiatives. Due to the complexity of violence and aggression, effective prevention calls for multi-level, multi-sector interventions that involve several stakeholders and are consistent over an extended period.

However, one can only partially rely on the educational system to improve young people. Other elements, such as parental counseling, the media's involvement, and envisioned leadership, are also required to tackle the present difficulties. The central institution for constructing a person's foundation is their house, and the family environment has a more significant impact on developing the personalities of future citizens. Typically, parents blame schools for their children's upbringing and skill development, although they have a vital duty. In comparison, educational institutions place more emphasis on transmitting academic information than developing students' critical thinking skills or mindsets.

Media outlets, including print, social, and electronic, have also grown in power. Sadly, the constant drive for ratings turned them into a money-making contest rather than a tool for instructing and educating young people. Instead of concentrating on the growth and training of the youth for a better future, Pakistan's leadership serves their interests more. This lost, confused, and damaged youngster must be our responsibility. Before the country is destroyed, we must



understand that it is never too late to do things right. Youth might be used as a weapon against us or as puppets in the hands of anti-state groups if we do not cherish them. Before it is too late, every citizen should acknowledge this error and try to fix it.

Recommendations

It is believed that kids who undergo maltreatment, neglect, or sexual abuse are more likely to commit crimes. Therefore, there is an urgent need to build social networks among individuals, which will aid in lowering and preventing crime in society. Family rituals, such as how the members of the family address issues and listen to each other's viewpoints, are crucial. Youth who grow up in families with strong values are less prone to engage in violent conduct. However, youth from low-income homes are more prone to engage in violent behavior than other youth. Therefore, launching programs informing parents about healthy family practices strategies is imperative.

Deprivation in childhood and poor socioeconomic position at birth are risk factors for violence and criminality later in life. Therefore, there is a critical need to provide adolescents with economic prospects through informal and formal channels such as expanding employment, career development, and other support systems. Youth engagement in gainful labor decreases the likelihood that they will engage in criminal activity.

The federal and provincial governments should launch programs to assist parents who lack natural parenting and family management abilities. However, community-based initiatives may be more successful in dispensing the necessary training. In addition, parents can benefit significantly from increased awareness that is spread by the media, religious authorities, and NGOs.



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