ROLE OF CIVIC VOLUNTEERISM IN PROMOTING PEACE IN PAKISTANI SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT: *Civic volunteerism motivates people to devote their time, energy and money for the welfare of others. A study was conducted to know the 'Role of civic volunteerism in promoting peace among Pakistani people. Proportionate sampling method was used to draw sample of 528 respondents from three major cities of Pakistan (Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad). Quantitative data was obtained through interview schedule by employing scales of social contribution and self-satisfaction and analyzed through SPSS. Results of study showed that civic volunteerism was significantly correlated with inner peace of people.*

***Key words**: civic volunteerism, peace, participation, community, conflict*

INTRODUCTION

Civic volunteerism creates devotion among people to act for welfare of others [1, 2]. Welfare comes from support of friends, workmates, and community members [3]. Social support encourages people to participate in community activities like; recreational and cultural events which are significant for group integration [4]. Community activities (e.g., weddings, funerals) promote feelings of social solidarity [5] and solidarity acts as a cure to anomic behaviour of people who remain in isolation [6]. Solidarity creates reciprocal relations within family, at workplace, and in the neighbourhood which leads to social cohesion [7]. Cohesion further enhances reciprocity among people in community [1] and mutual feelings promote common need of security [8, 9]. Therefore, people try to solve their conflicts through discussion and agreement [10].

Social cohesion also minimizes internal strife like; tensions due to income inequality and ethnic tensions and creates civic sense among people. Thus civic society becomes an institution of conflict management (e.g., good governance, independent judiciary, and unbiased media [11].

Furthermore civic volunteerism encourages the creation of cross-cutting ties among different hostile individuals which mediate conflict before it turns into violence [12]. On the other hand, weaker social cohesion increases the chance of social fragmentation which turns conflicts into violence [5]. Moreover, more division and low civic volunteerism generate mental problems among individuals and are hardly happy in their social arena [13]. Low satisfaction in people causes lower inner peace due to their social isolation [14].

Civic volunteerism

Generally civic volunteerism overlaps with civic participation (e.g., volunteering for a political rally). However volunteering is the behavior of people which is unpaid, and mostly does not have political goals rather inclined towards 'helping the needy' [15]. The experience of helping others motivates people to involve in volunteering for peace making [16] because their experience of "making do with less" facilitates their involvement in "non-competitive activities" [17].

However non-competitive behaviour generally concerns with the welfare of own family members and friends [15]. At the same time cross-individuals distrust and weak cohesion invites outside interventions (e.g., volunteer humanitarian organizations & NGOs) and this disrupts the local volunteering habits [5]. For example, civil society in Pakistan provides an opportunity to the youth to join for volunteer work in society. Volunteer work joins different groups and creates cohesion among people [18]. Thus, social cohesion diminishes latent conflict and sustains inner peace among people [19].

Inner peace

Inner peace identifies inner causes of individual sufferings, the struggle for freedom from sufferings, and inventing the means by which one can realize such freedom [20]. Inner peace is the transformation of a personality system 'towards or away from the negative state of violent conflict' [12]. However, conflict is not a problem if it is managed efficiently but poor management of conflict causes violence in society [3]. Societal mechanisms such as agreements and negotiations can be helpful in resolving conflicts [21]. Nonetheless, poor societal mechanisms may cause mistrust among people and their civic volunteerism decreases [22]. On the other hand, absence of violence (peace) is also embedded in social values and such values are networked in civic volunteerism [23]. Thus, inner peace is the ideal mental state that one may long for, and individuals with peace of mind will experience both internal peace and harmony as one cohesive state [24].

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

According to social capital theory, civic volunteerism reinforces civic virtue among people [25] and civic habits "foster patterns of civility in the actions of citizens" [26]. Civic minds grow in democratic societies which promote habits of "cooperation, reconciliation, and peaceful actions in conflict situations" [27]. Civic habits of people may seek harmony with the larger 'fields' (e.g., political system) of society [28]. Thus outer lifestyle and inner personality of every human being is influenced by the larger fields of society which are based on trustworthy civic networks of people [20].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Three major cities of Pakistan namely; Lahore, capital city of Punjab province; Islamabad i.e., the capital city of Pakistan and Rawalpindi the major city of Punjab province as well as twin-city of Islamabad constituted the population of the study. Stratified sampling method was employed to get

sample of 528 respondents. The sample was taken from each city by applying proportionate random sampling technique where every element in the population had an equal chance to be included in the study (Table 1). The research variables had two parts, i.e. civic volunteerism and inner peace. Civic volunteerism was fixed as predictor while inner peace was dependent variable. Civic volunteerism was measured through a modified form of social contribution scale [27] with five point Likert scale i.e. 'never' (1), 'rarely' (2), 'sometimes' (3), 'very often' (4) and 'always' (5) as response categories. The reliability of the scale of civic volunteerism was computed alpha =0.724.

Moreover scale of self satisfaction [29] was adapted to measure inner peace (alpha=.769) of the respondents. The item responses were measured by five point Likert scale i.e. 'strongly disagree' (1), 'disagree' (2), 'neutral' (3), 'agree; (4) and 'strongly agree' (5). However scales of Civic volunteerism and inner peace were contextualised according to the Pakistani society. The variables were analyzed by using statistical Mean, Percentage, Correlation and Cronbach's alpha to check reliability of the variables.

Table 1: Sampling technique used in the study

Study Area	Stratified Random Sampling		
	Frequency	% of N	Proportionate Allocation
Islamabad	83, 2000* (N1)	9%	47
Lahore	71, 32000* (N2)	71%	375
Rawalpindi	20, 26000* (N3)	20%	106
Total	99, 9 00, 00* (N)	100 %	528

[30]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis presents the results of the study in tabulated form. Tabulation gives the analysis and description of quantitative data, thus tables in this section explain the statistical findings of the study.

Table 2: Descriptive data on civic volunteerism

Civic volunteerism	Mean	Percent	Alpha
I am ready to help people in the community.	4.3	97.9	.684
I can spare time for unpaid work for community.	3.5	92.6	.660
I collect money for a social cause (e.g. flood affectees).	2.9	79	.660
I donate money for charity organizations.	3.3	87.7	.668
I am ready to donate blood to save life.	3.6	87.8	.712
Maximum value:5		*Minimum value:1*	

Table 2: Civic volunteerism

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics on civic volunteerism of the respondents. The 97.9% of the respondents (*Mean=4.3*) were ready to help the community people. With respect to the willingness for unpaid work for community, 92.6 % were able to spare time for any unpaid work for their community (*Mean=3.5*). Likewise, 79% of the respondents (*Mean*=2.9) had collected money in their life for any social cause, (for example for flood & earthquake affectees). Moreover, 87.7% of the respondents (*Mean=3.3*) had donated money for the charity organizations for such charitable works. Furthermore,

87.8% of the respondents (*Mean=3.6*) were ready to donate blood to save human life. The active participation of people in volunteer activities reduces the increasing number of emergencies. Therefore, the spirit of volunteerism for actual participation of volunteers in their respective areas is inevitable for society [11].

Thus people in majority have the volunteerism to contribute for life saving and protection of other human beings. This act promotes reciprocal behaviour among them and they become socially cohesive [15]. People give up their vested interests and act for benefit of others. Norms of volunteering create social environment of trust and care within them. Thus social values, for instance, pity, mercy, and compassion are results of civic volunteerism in society. These values become norms of society and its members have desire of peace in society [31].

Table 3: Descriptive data on inner peace

Inner peace	Mean	Percent	Alpha
Most of the time my mind remains free and at ease.	2.8	40.5	.754
I feel content and comfortable with myself in daily life	3.2	52.2	.819
I have peace and harmony in my mind.	3.4	54.2	.725
The way I live brings me feelings of peace and comfort.	3.4	54.9	.702
Maximum value:5		*Minimum value:1*	

Table 3: Inner peace

Table 4 shows descriptive data of the respondents regarding their inner peace. According to the data in table 4, 40.5% of the respondents (*Mean=2.8*) agreed that 'most of the time my mind remains free and at ease'. Furthermore, 52.2% of the respondents (*Mean=3.2*) agreed that 'I feel content and comfortable with myself in my daily life'. Moreover, 54.2% (*Mean=3.5*) agreed that 'I have peace and harmony in my mind', and, further, 54.9% of the respondents (*Mean= 3.2*) consented with the statement 'The way I live brings me feelings of peace and comfort. Inner peace is an occurrence of harmony in human minds. Peaceful and content mind has low violent attitude and conflicting behavior. Hence, freedom from fear of violence promotes more happiness among people [12].

Table 4: Correlations of civic volunteerism and inner peace

Variables	Statistical test	Inner Peace	Civic Volunteerism
Inner Peace	Pearson Correlation	1	0.375** (.000)
Civic Volunteerism	Pearson Correlation	0.375** (.000)	1

**p>.01 (2-tailed)

Table 4 presents correlations and level of significance between Inner Peace and Civic Volunteerism. The data in table under discussion indicates that Inner Peace of people significantly correlates with their civic volunteerism (*r=0.375*) at two tailed level of significance. The foundation of Pakistani nation was based on tenets of Muslim Brotherhood (*Ummah*) which are equality, freedom from want, and devotion to welfare of fellow beings [32]. Therefore, civic volunteerism promotes Inner Peace significantly in Pakistani society. The value of *r=0.375* and

significance level (*p*=.000) statistically confirm this relationship. This is the reason that generosity among Pakistani people makes them are happier than their counterparts in India [33].

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that civic volunteerism and inner peace are essential for social harmony and progress. The study was conducted to explore the role of civic volunteerism in promoting peace in Pakistan society. Results of the study showed that civic volunteerism and inner peace among Pakistani people have significant statistical relationship. The study suggested that norms of civic volunteerism, for instance, help, care, trust and cooperation may be strengthened through networks of volunteer organizations. At community level such networks may provide a forum to individuals to devote their time, energy, skills, knowledge and money to help others in time of need. Their social contribution would give them feelings of satisfaction and their inner contentment and harmony may give them peace. Further research may be conducted to suggest the ways of creation of civic networks at community level to promote civic volunteerism in the society.

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