

Until When Silent Cries of Pakistani Marginalized Youth Would Remain Unaddressed – A Thematic Short Review through the Lens of Subjective Well-Being

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Abstract

The overarching aim of this thematic short review is to highlight the paucity of mental health research available for marginalized youth living in Pakistan. To establish a research gap, seven most relevant documents available on current plight of Pakistani youth has been selected randomly that comprised of project reports, journal articles and narrative essays. The span of documents ranged from 2004 to 2014. For review, an unsorted literature matrix has been furnished with keeping in view some systematic steps in order. Findings of all documents further categorized into two main themes (Adversity & Demographic Bonus) and four subthemes (marginalization; street violence; radicalization; & psychological issues). On the one hand, it is anticipated from findings that Pakistani youth experiencing variety of adversities that may lead towards loss of subjective well-being. On the other hand, this youth entered in the arena of demographic bonus that can be fruitful for positive nation building, if current youth is channelized well. The scarcity of research particularly on ‘Pakistani marginalized youth’ is a big question mark for local and international research communities that direly demand to be addressed.

Keywords: *Marginalized Youth; Thematic Short Review; Subjective Well-Being; Pakistan*

1. Introduction

In the modern era, swift social transformation has an impact on human life especially to youth. This rapid change has some positive as well as negative influences on the life of young people. Youth is more vulnerable to be affected by internal (Psychological) and external factors

(Social) because they are in critical transitory phase of human development (Santrock, 2004). Adolescence is a profound and complex stage of life that influences future health outcomes, attitudes, and behaviours (Sawyer et al., 2012).

According to Lloyd (2002) adolescents or youth surely be viewed within the context of the environment, so, development is a function of the interaction between the person and the environment. It is obvious that if ratio of negative behaviours among youth is increasing it depicts problem lies not only in individual aspects of human behaviour (Psychological) but also in social or contextual domains (Social). It is already proven by Nature vs. Nurture debate that both factors have equal contribution in the development of human growth. As Esposito et al. (2011) and Bronfenbrenner (1993) state that there is a consensus internal factor and environment (external factors) influence human development interactively.

In a closer look, precarious environment in terms of marginalization (marginalised environment) by itself is a non-contributory factor that hinders the subjective well-being of youth. Jonathan (2013) concluded in her research that marginalization in its own nature is a non-contributory phenomenon. Similarly, Watanabe et al., (2012) reported in their research marginalized youth is remarkably higher at risk in terms of health compromising outcomes than non-marginalized youth. Lin (2014) describes in research findings that marginalized individuals characterised by a high degree of betrayal that is important factor in understanding homeless people. Several other researcher endorse this idea like Saatcioglu and Corus (2014) in their study, inequalities with reference to marginalized communities often contribute to disadvantages e.g. lack of employment, inadequate health care, lack of affordable housing, and political disempowerment in the lives of impoverished youth.

Pakistan (The Islamic Republic of Pakistan) is a developing country that came into existence in 1947 from British Colonial Raj; currently it contains 194 million population in total and from which 58.5 million categorised as youth (15-24 years) that is 32% of the overall population (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). Due to lack of research in Pakistan, little research is done on youth in general and marginalized youth in specific (Yasin et al., 2011; Malik, 2010). The ratio of mental health problems of young people in Pakistan is alarmingly high; every eighth person is carrying some problem (Patel et al., 2007). Similarly, according to Helliwell, Layard & Sachs (2013), Pakistan is among least happy nations of the world (placed at 81th number.). Conclusively, scarcity of research on Pakistani youth in general and marginalised youth in specific is turned a question mark for the local and international research community.

2. Materials and Method

Considering the scarcity of work published on marginalized youth in Pakistan only seven (07) documents are included for this thematic short review that exhibit the current issues prevailing in Pakistani youth. The review process is brief that starts from June, 2015 to August, 2015. For this short review recommendations by Hunter and Schmidt (2004) had been trailed. Different combinations of keywords were used such as “marginalized youth in Pakistan”, “disadvantaged young people in Pakistan”, “impoverished youth in Pakistan,” “Subjective Well-being of Pakistani youth”. This keyword search had been furnished with ScienceDirect, Scopus, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar. The range of the documents included is ranged from 2004 to 2014. Further, based on the findings of unsorted literature matrix themes and sub-themes were made to elaborate the analysis and discussion.

3. Analyses and Discussion

Table 1: Unsorted Literature Matrix

Sr. No.	Source	Classification of Study	Findings
1	Yusuf (2014)	National Human Development Report 2015	1. Pakistani youth is vulnerable towards radicalization; economic, educational, religion, and political ideology are enablers of it.
2	Sabir & Zaman (2013)	Narrative Essay	1) Historical and existent socio-political conditions flourish street violence in youth 2) Collective or group violence is common due to political, ethnic, religious and sectarian marginalization.
3	Fennell & Malik (2012)	Qualitative, Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions	1) Poor youths/households less benefit from low-fee private schools as compared to better off youths. 2) The poorer youth/household face economic, social and political marginalization that work against equal access.
4	Shah, Hasan, Malik & Sreeramareddy (2010)	A cross-sectional, questionnaire-based survey	1) A higher level of perceived stress was reported by the Pakistani students. 2) The main stressors were related to academic and psychosocial domains.
5	Yousafzai et al. (2009)	A cross-sectional questionnaire-based survey	1) Heavy workload negatively impact the well-being of Pakistani medical students. 2) Substance abuse is good coping for stress.
6	Arif & Chaudhry (2008)	The Pakistan Development Review Report	1. Pakistan has entered the demographic bonus phase; child dependency is declining and youth share in the total population is rising 2. Unemployment leads to marginalization for poor youths.

7	Babbar & Qazilbash (2004)	Working Paper – based on 366 youth suicide attempt cases	1) 52% suicidal attempt cases were youths and reasons were economic and social injustice, and 32% reported the reason as marginalization.
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3.1 Theme 1: Adversity Faced by Pakistani Youth

3.1.1 Subtheme 1: *Marginalization*

Marginalization among the Pakistani youth is a causal factor in upheaving the lives of many a talented young minds in the country. Marginalization of any sort, be it political, psychological, social, educational, regional, or otherwise in an impediment in the smooth functioning of an individual. With the impressionable age of youth, these factors are even more important to be addressed with due diligence, the lack of which hinder the youth’s progress.

Due to decreased access to vital amenities of life specially education, the marginalized youth is at a disadvantage of getting proper education. According to Fennell and Malik (2012) the evidence shows that the better-off youths/households are benefiting more than the poorer youths from the higher quality education provided by low-fee private schools. In Pakistan, the low quality of public schooling has contributed to falling returns to education and a growing dissatisfaction with public schooling provision among poor households (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2002; & Aslam, 2007). It has also contributed to the growth of low-cost private schools (Naseer, Patnam & Raza, 2010). Today, elite private schools admit children from the richest strata of society, whilst low-fee private schools provide an alternative to government schools for the poorer sections of society.

Moreover, even after schooling the matter of employment remains. There is a proven link between youth unemployment and social exclusion. In both rural and urban areas, young people who complete education and are from socioeconomically advantaged backgrounds are likely to make the transition to work more smoothly, while the economically disadvantaged and socially excluded may face greater difficulties (Arif & Chaudhry, 2008).

Coming back to Pakistan especially in rural Sindh, where large areas have been deprived of their basic rights of access to the fundamental needs to ensure a quality life. Districts like Sanghar, which have one of highest literacy ratios in Sindh, are amongst those areas with the highest deprivation index and not surprisingly so of the reported suicides, in the rural sectors, discussed in this study, Sanghar tops the list with 18.5 per cent. Badin, Mirpurkhas, Thatta, Tharparkar, Jacobabad and Ghoti also have the highest deprivation value and together with Sanghar constitute 39 per cent of the reported suicides in the rural sector of Sindh. Therefore, it is apparent that in marginalization, any amount of reaction is plausible given the extreme state of marginalization.

3.1.2 Subtheme 2: *Psychological Issues*

Marginalization also effects the psychological wellbeing of the youth. This may lead the youth towards many self-harming behaviors including but not limited to substance abuse and suicide. Significant numbers of medical students think that substance misuse is a coping strategy for stress (Yousafzai et al., 2009). A detailed study reveals that the vast majority of those who attempted suicide were young 52% claimed that economic and social injustices played the main role in this act of suicide. 32% claimed that social exclusion and pressures had driven them to suicide. Other reasons of suicide elucidate 11% failure in love , 3% mental disorder , 1% police

torture and 1% unreported (Babbar & Qazilbash, 2004).

Furthermore, almost 40% of youth reported a history of depression, while more than 50% were aware of depression among their fellow students. Similar findings have been reported in other research from Pakistan; for example, one study reported suicidal ideation in a third of Pakistani medical students (Kokar & Khan, 2005).

Also, high levels of distress have been reported by medical students in Pakistan, and a significant proportion reported that their well-being has been affected by stress. The vast majority of medical students reported that they know of colleagues who use alcohol and smoking to cope with stress. Moreover, workload was cited by the majority of students as the source of stress. Depression among medical students is high, as reported by the students in this survey. There is general agreement amongst medical students that the teaching of substance abuse in medical schools is over all poor.

Young people face different psychosocial problems that might hinder their subjective well-being, such as lack of freedom and hope (Idrees & Manzoor, 2012), less social support, societal and parental pressure (Aziz, Akhtar & Hassan, 2011), truancy (Idrees & Manzoor, 2012), communicable and non-communicable diseases (Gilani & Leon, 2013), smoking and other substance abuse problems that reflects lack of resilience (Aslam, Zaheer, Rao & Shafique, 2014), low socio economic status and most significantly marginalization (Iqbal, Ahmad & Ayub, 2012). Particularly, youth living in marginalized location is more vulnerable and at risk than living in non-marginalized locations and that social deprivation is alarmingly harmful for the subjective well-being of youth.

3.1.3 Subtheme 3: *Radicalization*

Pakistani youth is vulnerable towards radicalization; economic, educational, religion, and political ideology are enablers of it (Yusuf, 2014). GeoT.V. (electronic media) reports indicate that the male suicide bombers in Pakistan age between 16–24 years. They are trained by the extremist elements and indiscriminately used against the security forces. Alienation is increasing among the classes in different parts of the country and conflicting attitudes towards violence can be found among youths. The youth is critical about the existence of the violence. On the other hand, the youth is also a perpetrator of the violence. They justify their actions by saying that they have no alternative way of maintaining a living. They have to live according to the ‘law of the jungle’. Many historical aspects also add to the list of factors that breed violence. The independence of the country itself is based on violent incidents (Tambiah, 1990).

What followed was the mushrooming of *Madrasshas* (religious schools) was encouraged to provide a nursery for these so-called freedom fighters along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Those whom is used the youth for political purposes could never realized that they were preparing a ‘volcano of violence’ which would erupt some years later.

Apart from that people also feel a religious duty to protect their religion and its ideology. This belief is playing an important role in mobilizing the youth who wish to protect their sect and religion in Pakistan (Blom, 2008). They get motivation from their elders and the local clergy to protect their own version of the religion. Without a second opinion, or comparative education in religions or ideologies, they are fed one single view of religion. The youth feel that it is their utmost responsibility to protect their sect. In this way, the youth become violent in the name of religion, which is actually contradictory to the original message of the religion that they believe they are protecting.

3.1.4 Subtheme 4: *Street Violence*

According to Sabir and Zaman (2013) historical and existent socio-political conditions flourish street have generated an environment where youth street violence has emerged as a unique phenomenon in Pakistan. In Peshawar, 62% of violent acts are committed by male youths between the ages 20–39 years (Marri et al. 2006). Some reports indicate a higher level of violence of 74% among males between 20-40 years of age in Karachi, according to the incidents which were reported in selected hospitals of Karachi (Chotani, Razzak, & Luby, 2002). A study (Farooq et al., 2010) portrays the situation as being even worse, where the victims were between ages 16–45 years (in 77% incidents) that were reported in Rawalpindi hospitals. The male youths involved in these violent acts were aged between 16–20 years (41%). These findings underscore the need to understand that why youth is being targeted for such nefarious designs and what factors help them be recruited.

3.2 Theme 2: Demographic Bonus

Pakistan has entered the demographic bonus phase; child dependency is declining and youth share in the total population is rising (Arif & Chaudhry, 2008). Changes in age distribution can have important economic effects. These effects reflect the influence of changes in the number of working-age individuals per capita and of shifts in behaviour - for example, increased savings and greater investment in schooling per child as both desired and completed fertility fall (Bloom, Canning & Malaney, 2000).

There is convincing evidence that Pakistan has entered into the demographic bonus phase. Fertility decline in Pakistan which began in the late 1980s or early 1990s proceeded rapidly during the last two decades (Sathar & Casterline, 1998; Feeney & Alam, 2003). Consequently, the share of the working-age population, particularly the youth is rising. Because of the likely declining trends in child dependency during the next two to three decades, there will be relatively low burden on the working-age population. However, after approximately three decades, the expected rapid increase in the elderly population may enhance the old age dependency. While during the phase of declining child dependency, the share of youth in the total labour force also rises it is imperative to utilise the youth labour force productively to benefit from the 'demographic gift'. A successful transition to work for today's many young people can accelerate economic growth (Furlong, & Cartmel, 2006). Conclusively, containing all adversities if demographic bonus of Pakistani youth has been channelized in a positive way, there is no reason Pakistan did not flourish to its very dregs.

4. Conclusion

Overall Pakistani youth inevitably facing many adversities such as marginalization, street violence, radicalization, and psychological problems, except advantage of demographic bonus, but still there is no hope for improvement until local and international agencies along with research community would not set priority to address these issues. Particularly, mental health issues (subjective well-being) of youth living at marginalized locations are totally ignored or underaddressed. There is a dire need to give voice to silent cries of Pakistani marginalized youth.

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