

Identification of Challenges in Creating an Inclusive Educational Environment for Minority (Religious, Cultural) Students

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education has become a global priority to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their backgrounds. The study highlights gaps in existing programs and stresses the need for diverse perspectives and strategies to promote inclusivity in Pakistan. This study uses a quantitative descriptive survey approach to examine the challenges that minority students encounter in achieving inclusivity in education. A survey is administered to minority students (religious & cultural) to gather data on their perceptions on five factors discrimination in the classroom, inadequate teacher training/ lack of cultural and religious sensitivity in teaching, lack of representation, lack of inclusive curriculum and language barriers. Descriptive statistics will analyze data to identify challenges for minority students in creating an inclusive educational environment. The study will recommend ways to promote inclusivity in education for minority students in Pakistan. The study highlights the significance of teacher training, curriculum development, and addressing challenges for improvement in creating inclusive learning environment.

KEYWORDS

Inclusive Learning Environment, Challenges, Minorities, Religious, Cultural

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, inclusive education has gained considerable global interest in recent times, as nations endeavour to furnish equitable educational prospects to all pupils, irrespective of their racial, gender, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, comparable to several other nations, confronts a plethora of obstacles in establishing a more comprehensive educational milieu for minority pupils, who frequently encounter bias and exclusion in academic institutions (Malik & Khuda, 2014). The present issue necessitates an increasing investment in teacher training and curriculum development, as these factors can significantly contribute to the establishment of a more hospitable and comprehensive educational milieu that accommodates the needs of all students. The present study posits that teacher training programs that prioritize multicultural education, diversity, and inclusive teaching practices can facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for teachers to efficaciously engage with heterogeneous student populations. Incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences into curriculum development has been shown to have a positive impact on students' self-perception and their attitudes towards others, ultimately fostering a greater sense of inclusivity and appreciation for diversity (Banks, 2001).

The hallmark of an inclusive educational environment is a classroom culture that demonstrates reverence and appreciation for diversity, advocates for fairness and impartiality, and cultivates a feeling of connectedness among all students. The concept of inclusive classrooms has gained significant attention in recent years, as it aims to cater to the diverse learning needs, cultural backgrounds, and abilities of students. Educators undergo training to implement techniques that foster involvement and contribution among all pupils, in accordance with the directives furnished by the governing bodies. (UNESCO, 2017).

The establishment of inclusive educational environments is imperative in guaranteeing equitable access to quality education and the realization of students' maximum potential. The attainment of an all-encompassing educational milieu necessitates a comprehensive methodology that entails the cooperation of policymakers, educators, and communities to surmount obstacles to inclusivity and foster impartiality and societal fairness in the realm of education (Yao Ydo, 2020).

There are many challenges exits like discrimination, lack of representation, lack of culturally and religious sensitive in teaching due to inadequate teaching training, lack of resources and language barriers. It is nothing short of a tragedy that the history textbooks created in the years since included biased and racist information. The prejudice in these textbooks towards Pakistani minorities harmed the goal of nation building, and minorities were sadly exposed to this impartiality, with little acknowledgment of minorities' efforts to the independence fight (Burdi, Urooj, & Khan, 2018).

According to Idris (2018) identified three patterns of discrimination against minorities in Pakistan: behavioral, procedural, and linguistic. Urdu is used as the medium of teaching in most schools in Pakistan, creating a linguistic barrier for pupils of minority languages. This might make it hard for pupils whose first language is a local dialect to follow along in class and interact with their professors and classmates (Nazakat, 2016).

Religious minorities face daily persecution, but educational discrimination is the worst. If this bigotry wins in schools where minority kids are learning, it might hurt their self-esteem. However, this discrimination may increase dropout and animosity among students of different religions. Teacher-student relations cause these issues. Textbook material may also contribute to this prejudice. Textbook authors ignore religious organizations. Many textbooks and curriculum are cultural and religious and discriminatory towards Pakistan's minority populations (Hussain, Saleem, & Naveed, 2011).

According to Burdi, Urooj and Khan (2018), Minorities have been neglected in the curriculum. Islam is the sole religious subject taught to all students in Pakistan's educational system. Minority religion students are often given the option to study either Islam or an alternative subject in science or humanities. A course on their religion is not available. This creates alienation among religious minorities and divides society. Many scholars believe that it is important to promote inclusion among minorities through various measures. The curriculum in Pakistan can contribute significantly to fostering a more cohesive society by providing religious minority members with the opportunity to study their own religion or a comparative religion course.

The concept of inclusive education is a recent development in Pakistan, and there exists a pressing need to design a comprehensive teacher training program that caters to the distinctive requirements of minority religious and cultural pupils. The implementation of this program ought to encompass methodologies that cater to the nuances of cultural and religious diversity, foster all-encompassing practices, and tackle concerns pertaining to fairness and societal impartiality (Sultan, 2020).

According to Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), "the most important factor in creating an inclusive classroom is the teacher's commitment to valuing diversity, recognizing individual differences, and promoting equity and social justice for all students".

Similar to the pedagogical practices in the United States, educators are urged to employ culturally responsive teaching methodologies to foster a sense of inclusivity within their learning environments. The present study concerns the integration of students' cultural backgrounds and experiences into the curriculum, as well as the establishment of a hospitable and comprehensive classroom atmosphere (Friend, 2007).

The present study aims to investigate the need for revising teacher training programs in Pakistan with a view to incorporating a wider range of perspectives and strategies that promote inclusivity. The present research is driven by the acknowledgement that the existing teacher education programs in Pakistan may not be sufficiently equipping educators to cater to the heterogeneous requirements of their pupils. By the exhaustive review of the relevant literature, the study identifies the gaps in the existing teacher training programs and highlights the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and strategies for promoting inclusivity. The study suggests that there is a need of immediate action for revising the teacher training programs in Pakistan to ensure that they are more responsive for fulfil the needs of a diversity of student in population. The present study will reveal that educators exhibited a dearth of knowledge and comprehension pertaining to cultural and religious diversity, thereby rendering them insufficiently equipped to cater to the distinctive requirements of students hailing from minority cultural and religious backgrounds.

Background of the Problem

Pakistan is a nation that exhibits a heterogeneous populace, encompassing minority religious and cultural (Pushtoons, Balochi & GB etc) factions, such as according to annual report of USCIRF (2022), Christians (1.6 percent), Hindus (1.6 percent), and Sikhs (<1.0 percent). Despite constitutional guarantees of equal rights and protection, minority students in Pakistan face numerous challenges in accessing quality education, including discrimination, language barrier, and lack of resources (Gill, 2006). One key factor that contributes to these challenges is the lack of teacher training programs that promote inclusivity in classrooms. Many teachers in Pakistan are not equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to accommodate the diverse needs of their students, including those from minority religious and cultural backgrounds. As a result, many students feel marginalized and disengaged from the learning process, which negatively impacts their academic performance and overall well-being (Mehmood et al., 2014).

Statement of the Problem

The cultural and religious diversity within classroom presents a challenge in creating an inclusive environment for minority students. Despite efforts to promote inclusive education, barriers still continuously exist. This study aims to identify the challenges in creating an inclusive learning environment for minorities student.

Objective of the Study

To identify the challenges (discrimination in the classroom, inadequate teacher training/lack of cultural and religious sensitivity in teaching, lack of representation, lack of inclusive curriculum and language barriers) in creating an inclusive educational environment for minority students on the bases of culture and religion.

Research Questions

1. What are the barriers to creating an inclusive learning environment for cultural and religious minority students in Pakistani classrooms?
2. Is teacher training programme adequately providing training for creating an inclusive educational environment for minority students at university level?
3. Is lack of representation in curriculum and classrooms can be a challenge for creating an inclusive educational environment for minority students at university level?
4. Is language barrier proving as a hurdle in creating an inclusive educational environment for minority students at university level?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the study of Nayyar and Salim's (2003), seminal research posits that the Constitution of 1973, while partially codifying the rights of religious minorities, fails to provide adequate protection by the state. The study further suggests that the promotion of Islam as a dominant force often results in encroachment upon the lives of religious minorities (Salim & Nayyar, 2003).

Inclusive education promotes respect for diversity. It believes in providing an equitable environment to all individuals. Inclusive education addresses the diversity of students by facilitating the involvement of individual learners in the context of learning, and culture by reducing and curbing the discriminatory treatment with students with diverse needs in educational sector (Murdaca et al., 2018).

According to Hussain, Saleem, and Naveed (2011), animosity or discrimination against minority groups may influence minority students' attitudes toward the development of peace in Pakistan. In addition, they recommended that content emphasizing the significance of minorities to Pakistan's development should be included in the curricula so that students feel proud to be Pakistani rather than ashamed. The fundamental issue in institution is the disposition of educators toward minorities and minority educators toward the majority. The behaviour of minority educators towards the majority is ineffective due to the small number of minority teachers, while teachers' attitude towards minorities is negative.

According to Dayan, Khan and Ali (2017), Minority Christian students in Pakistan confront several academic obstacles, including prejudiced professors and peers and non-inclusive curricula at all levels. Religious diversity is seldom represented in textbooks.

Pakistan, just like many other growing nations with "racial and ethnic tensions" and communal violence, organizes and manages higher education institutions in ways that harm certain communities. Peoples Students unions, Islami Jamiat-e-Tulaba, and Pakhtun Students Federation are examples of student-run political and religious groups at Pakistani institutions. Organization-affiliated students may join. Institutions seldom have religious minority student groups (Dayan, Khan, & Ali, 2017).

According to Goddard and Evans (2018) and Costello and Boyle (2013), the majority of teachers (primary level) had positive attitudes about inclusion, which grew during the relevant training years. Believers, Non-Believers, and True Believers are three groups that have developed unique perspectives on inclusion, According to Monje (2017), Both the Believers and True Believers favoured inclusiveness for all.

Dayan, Khan, and Ali (2017) found that religious minority students encounter issues during their education at institutions. The challenges comprised of difficulties in adapting to teachers and peers, academic stress from school and college peers, and studying mandatory subjects that conflicted with their religious convictions. This is due to insufficient familiarity with contemporary, diverse life concepts. Islamic Studies teachers require training to effectively instruct students from various religious backgrounds. Dayan et al. (2017) suggest that preservice teacher training is necessary to establish a more inclusive educational environment for minority students in Pakistan.

According to study (Parveen, Batool & Arif, 2022) suggests offering pre-service teachers' educational workshops and training to increase their understanding of the notion of inclusion in order to better prepare them for inclusive education.

A review of the literature indicates that despite extensive research on educational issues in Pakistan, the government has remained largely silent on matters related to minority groups. It is imperative to initiate a series of effective research studies that can shed light on the actual problems faced by these minorities, and lead to their resolution. Minority groups have been experiencing educational challenges since the inception of Pakistan, and while social organizations have taken an interest in improving their conditions, they have largely focused on issues of human rights and politics. Unfortunately, their efforts have not been fully aligned with the constitutional guarantees, political opportunities, and legal frameworks that are available for the education of minorities (Gill, 2006). Therefore, there is a pressing need to explore the role of preservice teacher training in creating a more inclusive educational environment for minority students, and how this training can be strengthened at the national level to ensure equal educational opportunities for all (Khuda, 2014).

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Research Approach

This study employs a quantitative descriptive survey research approach to investigate the difficulties in establishing an inclusive educational setting for minority students (religious, cultural). In contrast to other types of surveys, a descriptive survey aims to gather information about the viewpoints or personal encounters of participants regarding a particular topic in a pre-planned and organized manner. This study measures the level of inclusivity in the educational setting specially in classrooms using indicators such as students' perceptions of discrimination, sense of belonging, and academic performance. The five factors comprise discrimination within classroom, cultural and religious insensitivity in teaching, underrepresentation, language obstacles, and an inclusive curriculum. This study will use surveys to gather data from a diverse group of minority students. Descriptive statistical methods will be used to analyze data and identify challenges faced by minority students in achieving inclusivity in education. Researchers aims to provide recommendations for promoting inclusivity in education for minority students by analyzing the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Sample of the Study

This sample focuses on minority students from religious (Hindu, Sikh & Christian) and cultural (Balochi, Pashtuns & Gilgiti) backgrounds at the university level, including undergraduate, graduate, and master's students. To achieve sample diversity (n = 100), participants will be from multiple departments and programs across Punjab's universities (University of Education, University of Punjab, UMT etc) and regions of Pakistan (Baluchistan, KPK, Sindh & Kashmir etc).

The researchers used in this survey research the sampling technique employs diverse methods to access minority students in universities. Non- probability snowball sampling is a method used to recruit participants from cultural minorities (Pashtun's, Balti & Balochi) and religious minorities (Christian, Hindu & Sikh). It involves approaching an initial participant from the minority group and requesting them to refer other individuals from their community to participate in the study (Babbie, 2012). This approach utilizes cultural and religious minority group networks and relationships to expand participant diversity. Moreover, researchers utilize various methods to reach out to individuals who have already established contact with them almost 15 students from university of education and friends, including 5 students affiliated with minority student organizations or cultural clubs. This approach fosters trust and rapport with prospective participants. Collaboration with non-governmental organization (NGO) specialized in minority student advocacy can aid in data collection. Collaborating with an NGO offers access to their networks and, expanding the outreach to minority students from different cities of Punjab and cultural minorities from different provinces including Gilgit Baltistan, Fata, Azad Kashmir, Sindh, KPK and Baluchistan. Diverse sampling techniques can improve sample diversity and representation, leading to a better understanding of the challenges faced by minority students in creating an inclusive educational environment at universities.

TOOL DEVELOPMENT / INSTRUMENTATION

The employment of instrumentation is a crucial aspect in ensuring the precision and reliability of any given study. According to Mathers, Fox & Hunn (2009), a questionnaire is a cost-effective and efficient tool for data collection, as it requires minimal time and resources while allowing for the collection of data from a larger sample. A questionnaire containing close ended questions is generated for the survey as tool by the researcher. The self- developed questionnaire was developed by the researchers by reviewing the literature, (Murdaca et al., 2018; Dayan, Khan & Ali, 2017; Khuda, 2014) and discussion with minority students about their challenges, with activists having work experience with minority communities. The ideas collected from all mentioned were discussed with research supervisor. After this discussion five challenges related classroom discrimination, insufficient teacher training/cultural and religious insensitivity in teaching, underrepresentation in curriculum and classroom, and language barriers are shortlisted to develop questionnaire.

The questionnaire divided into two parts, first part related to demographic information and second part consist of statements related factors to evaluate participants' perceptions and experiences regarding: classroom discrimination, insufficient teacher training/cultural and religious insensitivity in teaching, underrepresentation in curriculum and classroom, and language obstacles. The five-point Likert scale i.e., strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree is used to measure participants' opinion with statements related to each factor. The researchers have incorporated the expertise of a minority student's perspective to ensure the questionnaire captures the different aspects of the topic.

The face validity of the questionnaire was determined by taking expert opinions. Researchers approached three experts from the field and suggestion made by expert to improve the statements were incorporated in final version of questionnaire. The questionnaire's content validity was enhanced by the diverse range of expert opinions. Experts recommended dividing questionnaire items into different factors to capture distinct dimensions of inclusivity. An expert suggested modifying certain words to avoid conveying a harsh message and to establish a more neutral and sensitive tone in the questionnaire. The inputs and modifications improved the questionnaire's validity by ensuring accurate measurement of intended constructs and addressing potential biases or shortcomings.

Reliability is a crucial component of research instruments as it gauges the stability and consistency of results. Cronbach's alpha assesses the reliability of questionnaire items using SPSS. We computed Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire's factors. The value of Cronbach's alpha is .951.

<i>Reliability Statistics</i>	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.951	24

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The researcher collected by online survey administered through a Google Forms for data collection. Potential respondents will receive email invitations that explain the study's purpose and request informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured to promote participation and establish a secure environment for sharing experiences. Reminders will be sent to non-respondents to increase response rates. The researcher faced difficulties in gathering data, specifically regarding the involvement of minority students. Non-response may occur among minority students despite researcher's efforts. The researcher has collaborated with NGOs to enable participation of minority students with low literacy rates in the survey. The researcher also recognizes the lack of female students in the data.

Data Analysis

This study's data will be analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). SPSS is a popular statistical software that offers researchers a range of tools for managing, analyzing, and visualizing data. The survey data will be processed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) will summarize participants' responses on challenges in creating an inclusive educational environment for minority students.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1. Compare the challenges in creating inclusive learning environment factors gender-wise.

Scale	Gender	M	SD	Df	T
DC	Male	3.45	.963	98	1.294
	Female	3.21	.808		
LR	Male	3.86	1.10	98	2.431
	Female	3.35	.936		
ITT	Male	3.89	.908	98	1.218
	Female	3.65	.992		
LIC	Male	3.85	.941	98	1.597
	Female	3.54	.972		
LB	Male	3.74	.969	98	1.720
	Female	3.41	.922		

NOTE: DC=Discrimination within classroom, LR= Lack of representation, ITT=Inadequate teaching training, LIC=Lack of inclusive curriculum, LB=Language barrier

Independent sample t-test was used to measure the difference between mean scores of male and female students on discrimination within classroom (DC). Table 1 show the result that there is no significant difference in mean score between male and female students. Table shows the mean score of male students is (M = 3.45. SD = .963) and the mean score of female students in DC is (M = 3.21 SD = .808) which is not significant as the $t(98) = 1.294$ $p = 0.98$. In case of lack of representation (LR). Table 1 shows the result that there is no significant difference in mean score between male and female students. Table shows the mean score of male students is (M = 3.68. SD = 1.10) and the mean score of female students in LR is (M = 3.35. SD = .936) which is not significant as the $t(98) = 2.431$ $p = .156$. In case of inadequate teacher training (ITT). Table 1 shows the result that there is no significant difference in mean score between male and female students. Table shows the mean score of male students is (M = 3.89. SD = .908) and the mean score of female students in ITT is (M = 3.65. SD = .992) Which is not significant as the $t(98) = 1.218$ $p = .229$. In case of lack of inclusive Curriculum (LIC). Table 1 shows the result that there is no significant difference in mean score between male and female students. Table shows the mean score of male students is (M = 3.85. SD = .941) and the mean score of female students in LC is (M = 3.54. SD = .972) which is not significant as the $t(98) = 1.597$ $p = .938$. In case of language barrier (LB). Table 1 shows the result that there is no significant difference in mean score between male and female students. Table shows the mean score of male students is (M = 3.74 SD = .969) and the mean score of female students in LB is (M = 3.41. SD = .922) which is not significant as the $t(98) = 1.72$ $p = .582$.

Table 2 represent the one-way analysis of university level minorities students age wise for challenges in inclusive learning environment factors. Results of analysis of variance shows for factor DC (discrimination within classroom) $F(0.025, 81.95) = .015$, $P = .985$ which indicates that $p > 0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between discrimination and age. Table 2 shows for factor LR (lack of representation) $F(1.38, 111.06) = .604$, $P = .549$ which indicates that $p > 0.05$. It is

concluded that there is no significant effect between LR and age. Table 2 shows for factor ITT (inadequate teaching training) $F(.939, 87.40) .521, P=.596$ which indicates $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between ITT and age. Table 2 shows for factor LIC (lack of inclusive curriculum) $F(.707, 90.65) .378, P=.686$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between discrimination and age. Table 2 shows for factor LB (language barrier) $F(.938, 90.49) .503, P=.607$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant between discrimination and age.

Table 2. Comparison of Challenges in creating inclusive learning environment factors Age-Wise

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the Mean Difference in challenges in creating learning environment factors by age.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DC	Between Groups	.025	2	.013	.015	.985
	Within Groups	81.95	97	.845		
	Total	81.97	99			
LR	Between Groups	1.38	2	.691	.604	.549
	Within Groups	111.06	97	1.145		
	Total	112.44	99			
ITT	Between Groups	.939	2	.469	.521	.596
	Within Groups	87.40	97	.901		
	Total	88.34	99			
LIC	Between Groups	.707	2	.353	.378	.686
	Within Groups	90.65	97	.935		
	Total	91.36	99			
LB	Between Groups	.938	2	.469	.503	.607
	Within Groups	90.49	97	.933		
	Total	91.42	99			

NOTE: DC=Discrimination within classroom, LR= Lack of representation, ITT=Inadequate teaching training, LIC=Lack of inclusive curriculum, LB=Language barrier

Table 3. Comparison of Challenges in creating inclusive learning environment factors educational level-Wise

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the Mean Difference in challenges in creating learning environment factors by educational level.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DC	Between Groups	.403	2	.201	.239	.787
	Within Groups	81.574	97	.841		
	Total	81.976	99			
LR	Between Groups	3.229	2	1.615	1.434	.243
	Within Groups	109.215	97	1.126		
	Total	112.444	99			
ITT	Between Groups	.493	2	.247	.272	.762
	Within Groups	87.847	97	.906		
	Total	88.340	99			
LIC	Between Groups	2.035	2	1.017	1.105	.335
	Within Groups	89.330	97	.921		
	Total	91.364	99			
LB	Between Groups	2.513	2	1.256	1.371	.259
	Within Groups	88.915	97	.917		
	Total	91.428	99			

NOTE: DC=Discrimination within classroom, LR= Lack of representation, ITT=Inadequate teaching training, LIC=Lack of inclusive curriculum, LB=Language barrier

Table 3 represent the one-way analysis of university level minorities students Educational Level wise for challenges in inclusive learning environment factors. Results of analysis of variance shows for factor DC (discrimination within classroom) $F(.403, 81.57) .239, P=.787$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between discrimination and level of education. Table 3 shows for factor LR (lack of representation) $F(3.229, 109.21) 1.434, P=.243$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between LR and university level. Table 3 shows for factor ITT (inadequate teaching training) $F(.493, 87.84) .272, P=.762$ which indicates that wise $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between ITT and educational level. Table 3 shows for factor LIC (lack of inclusive curriculum) $F(2.035, 89.33) 1.105, P=.335$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between LIC and educational level. Table 3 shows for factor LB (language barrier) $F(2.513, 88.915) 1.371, P=.259$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between LB and educational level.

(2.03,89.33) 1.105, $P=.335$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between LIC and educational level. Table 3 shows for factor LB (language barrier) $F(2.51,88.91) 1.25$, $P=.259$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between language barrier and educational level.

Table 4. Comparison of Challenges in creating inclusive learning environment factors Religion-Wise

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the Mean Difference in challenges in creating learning environment factors by religion.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DC	Between Groups	3.285	4	.821	.992	.416
	Within Groups	78.691	95	.828		
	Total	81.976	99			
LR	Between Groups	9.605	4	2.401	2.218	.073
	Within Groups	102.840	95	1.083		
	Total	112.444	99			
ITT	Between Groups	3.625	4	.906	1.016	.403
	Within Groups	84.715	95	.892		
	Total	88.340	99			
LIC	Between Groups	5.749	4	1.437	1.595	.182
	Within Groups	85.615	95	.901		
	Total	91.364	99			
LB	Between Groups	3.417	4	.854	.922	.454
	Within Groups	88.010	95	.926		
	Total	91.428	99			

NOTE: DC=Discrimination within classroom, LR= Lack of representation, ITT=Inadequate teaching training, LC=Lack of inclusive curriculum, LB=Language barrier

Table 4 represent the one-way analysis of university level minorities students on religious base for challenges in inclusive learning environment factors. Results of analysis of variance shows for factor DC (discrimination within classroom) $F(3.28, 78.69) .992$, $P=.416$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between discrimination and religion. Table 4 shows for factor LR (lack of representation) $F(9.60, 102.84) 2.21$, $P=.073$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between LR and religion. Table 4 shows for factor ITT (inadequate teaching training) $F(3.62, 84.71) 1.01$, $P=.403$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between ITT and religion. Table 4 shows for factor LIC (lack of inclusive curriculum) $F(5.74, 85.61) 1.59$, $P=.182$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between LIC and religion. Table 4 shows for factor LB (language barrier) $F(3.41, 88.01) .922$, $P=.454$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between LB and religion.

Table 5. Comparison of Challenges in creating inclusive learning environment factors Ethnicity-Wise

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the Mean Difference in challenges in creating learning environment factors by ethnicity.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DC	Between Groups	4.623	6	.771	1.034	.414
	Within Groups	39.503	53	.745		
	Total	44.126	59			
LR	Between Groups	8.395	6	1.399	1.286	.280
	Within Groups	57.671	53	1.088		
	Total	66.067	59			
ITT	Between Groups	8.691	6	1.448	1.764	.124
	Within Groups	43.518	53	.821		
	Total	52.209	59			
LIC	Between Groups	8.240	6	1.373	1.568	.175
	Within Groups	46.408	53	.876		
	Total	54.647	59			
LB	Between Groups	4.736	6	.789	.702	.649
	Within Groups	59.560	53	1.124		
	Total	64.296	59			

NOTE: DC=Discrimination within classroom, LR= Lack of representation, ITT=Inadequate teaching training, LIC=Lack of inclusive curriculum, LB=Language barrier

Table 5 represent the one-way analysis of university level minorities students on ethnicity base for challenges in inclusive learning environment factors. Results of analysis of variance shows for factor DC (discrimination within classroom) $F(4.62, 39.50) 1.03, P=.414$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between DC and ethnicity. Table 5 shows for factor LR (lack of representation) $F(8.39, 57.67) 1.28, P=.280$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between LR and ethnicity. Table 5 shows for factor ITT (inadequate teaching training) $F(8.69, 46.40) 1.76, P=.124$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between ITT and ethnicity. Table 5 shows for factor LIC (lack of inclusive curriculum) $F(8.24, 46.40) 1.56, P=.175$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between LIC and ethnicity. Table 5 shows for factor LB (language barrier) $F(4.73, 59.56) .702, P=.649$ which indicates that $p>0.05$. It is concluded that there is no significant effect between LB and ethnicity.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study revealed interesting insights. Religious and cultural minority students perceive inadequate teacher training and lack of religious sensitivity as significant challenges in the educational environment. Religious minorities face this challenge more than cultural minorities, according to mean values. Targeted teacher training programs are necessary to address religious sensitivity and promote inclusivity. Discrimination remains a prevalent challenge for both minority students despite consistent mean values. Religious minority students reported a lack of representation in the curriculum. The study highlights the significance of incorporating varied perspectives and cultural aspects into the curriculum to recognize and honour the educational encounters of religious minority students. Language barriers were more common among cultural minority students.

According to Iqbal, Ahmad, & Ayub (2013), Non-Muslims in Pakistan are socially, economically, religiously, and culturally underprivileged. Minorities face discrimination in various areas such as education, values, languages, customs, traditions, and religious beliefs. Moreover, the study identified factors that contribute to the challenges faced by certain students, such as lower literacy rates among religious females and limited representation of cultural groups like Balochi females in the data. According to Malik (2002), The rate is significantly low among minority women. Christians, both male and female, typically work as street sweepers and experience discrimination. Rural Hindus are often impoverished and disorganized, making them susceptible to oppression by feudal lords and law enforcement. Minorities were found to lag behind on other socio-economic indicators. A significant hurdle faced during the study was the limited literacy proficiency observed among minority students. The researchers face difficulty during data collection that minority students may encounter challenges in comprehending and reacting to the questionnaire statements. Improving literacy rates in minority communities, especially among females, is crucial for their active involvement in educational research and academic advancement.

The study highlights the problem of minority students' low confidence and performance, which results in their reluctance to participate in classroom activities. According to Thomas (2021), Inclusive curriculum promotes engagement and belonging among students by recognizing and addressing diversity in organization, content, learning/teaching, and assessment, resulting in better student outcomes and a more satisfactory student experience. The behaviour can be explained by multiple factors, including a perceived sense of inferiority resulting from external factors such as teacher conduct and internal factors such as personal experiences and self-image. As in literature Dayan, Khan, and Ali (2017) also mentioned in their statements. Targeted interventions, such as confidence-building workshops and support programs, are necessary for educators and policymakers to address issues and create a more inclusive and empowering learning environment.

Language barriers were found to be a contributing factor to the challenges experienced by cultural minority students. Cultural diversity among students can lead to language comprehension challenges in the classroom, hindering academic performance. According to Kennette & Lin (2021), Faculty should be aware of biases that minority students face, offer support for underprivileged students, use inclusive language, and promote collaboration among students to demonstrate appreciation for diverse backgrounds. Applying these methods fosters a secure and diverse learning atmosphere (CAST, 2018), enhancing drive, academic achievement, and persistence, resulting in better vocational outcomes during the shift from tertiary education to careers. Educational institutions can address this issue by implementing language support programs, bilingual teaching approaches, or providing resources in multiple languages to facilitate better comprehension and engagement among cultural minority students.

This study emphasizes the challenges minority students face in achieving inclusivity in education. The study highlights the necessity of specific interventions to tackle low literacy levels, boost confidence and performance, and overcome language obstacles. Educational stakeholders can promote inclusivity, support minority students' unique needs, and ensure equal opportunities for academic success by addressing these challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prioritizing inclusive education policies for religious and cultural minority students is crucial for policy makers. Policies must ensure diversity, equal opportunities, and inclusivity in education.

- Incorporate religious sensitivity training in teacher education programs through inclusion of training on cultural competence and religious sensitivity. This will enable educators to create an inclusive and respectful learning environment for all students.
- Policy makers must enhance the representation of religious and cultural minority perspectives in the curriculum. Incorporating diverse narratives, historical accounts, and cultural practices is important for ensuring student inclusivity.
- Enact anti-discrimination policies in educational institutions. Establish clear protocols for reporting and addressing discrimination. Monitoring and evaluation are necessary to ensure policy effectiveness.
- Support minority language programs to address language barriers for cultural minority students. This involves resource provision, teacher training, and availability of bilingual teaching approaches to enhance comprehension and engagement.
- Promote collaboration among schools, community groups, and minority organizations. Establishing partnerships can address community needs, create support networks, and promote cultural understanding.
- Allocate resources for interventions to improve literacy rates, boost confidence and performance, and support the unique needs of religious and cultural minority students. To promote the participation of religious minority women in academic research and progress. Targeted literacy programs and initiatives can achieve this. Funding may cover literacy programs, confidence-building workshops, mentorship, and scholarships.
- Research and evaluation should be prioritized by policy makers to monitor the effectiveness of policies and interventions for religious and cultural minority students. Systematic data collection and analysis inform evidence-based decision-making and identify areas for improvement.

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Rahimah Hashmi: Data curation, Writing- Original draft preparation, Methodology, Visualization, Investigation. **Samra Bashir:** Supervision, Conceptualization, Reviewing and Editing, Validation. **Hussain Hashmi:** Software, Visualization, Investigation, tool development. **Jahanzab Awan:** Data collection, Visualization

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is declared that all authors don't have any conflict of interest. It is also declared that this article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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