

## **Demographics and Religious Tolerance Among Youth: Moderating Role of Education**

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In this religiously diverse world, for a secure and conflict-free society, religious tolerance is an important phenomenon to prevail. Since youth of a nation serves as a powerful weapon to build a prosperous and peaceful society. The present research work attempted to explore the role of demographic characteristics of youth of Pakistan in religious tolerance. A cross-sectional survey was conducted, and data was collected from ( $N = 1651$ ) young adults with range 18-35 years with the mean of 22.60 including boys ( $n = 667$ ) and girls ( $n = 984$ ) of four different cities of Pakistan. A multistage stratified sampling technique was used to collect data. Multiple hierarchical regression analysis indicated the significant and strong roles of attachment to sects and education in determining the religious tolerance of youth. The findings of the present study are helpful for the stakeholders to formulate policies to enhance the religious tolerance and minimize the negative impact of attachment to sect through education which may lead towards a tolerant environment. These findings can be very insightful for psychologists, sociologists, and religious scholars. The above-mentioned stakeholders can arrange seminars, and workshops to highlight the important factors that could lead to religious tolerance.

*Keywords.* Religious tolerance, attachment to sects, education, age, gender, youth

The principle of tolerance indicates that people with varying religious beliefs live on the same ground, in one territory, as a nation having noble ideas and intentions (Tadjibaeva & Oblomuradova, 2020). It is useful to every religiously diverse and segregated country for peaceful living. Ramadhani (2017) stated that religious tolerance is

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strongly related to the diversity of faiths, thus believing that if there was a single religion in the world, tolerance would lose its meaning. Pakistan predominantly a Muslim country has a population of varying religious faiths based on different sects and religious minorities especially in province of Punjab. It requires maintaining unity, love, and brotherhood in the country believing that all religions generally incorporate good religious' themes only. Despite the significant importance of this phenomenon little is known about which demographic factors contribute to the religious tolerance of the Pakistani population. Especially attachment to one's sect based on religion is an important variable in the context of the Pakistani Muslim population where Sunni and Shias are two major sects along with Ahl-e-Hadith and others. Level of attachment to sect has been found to involve a sense of individual pride and stubbornness. Whenever this sense becomes intense in people, they begin to consider themselves superior or unique to others. By persuading the rest of society with their ideas, they present themselves as part of a separate group (Suhaib & Aziz, 2023). However, attachment to one's sect is different from sectarianism which is excessive attachment to a particular group or sect especially based on religion. Sectarianism may be a cause of intolerance and conflicts in the groups or sects. Evidence indicate an increased sectarian intolerance in Pakistan (Khan & Osterman, 2023; Yasmeen & Umer, 2021). However, a limited published literature is available on the determinants of religious intolerance among different sects in Pakistan (Kalin & Siddiqui, 2014). Due to the increased need for tolerance in this religious fragmentation, considerable attention needs to be paid to conducting further studies. Therefore, the present study intended to address this issue. The research aimed to identify the role of demographic variables (i.e., attachment to sect, gender, age, education level, living area, and family system) in religious tolerance of university students and moderating role of education between attachment to sect and religious tolerance.

The commonly explored demographic factors concerning religious tolerance are attachment to sect, education, age, and gender. Empirical data confirms the significant role of these variables in the tolerance of opposing religious ideas and practices (Kossowska & Sekerdej, 2015; Nazar et al., 2017; Ragnarsdóttir et al., 2020). Attachment to sect can no longer be taken for granted due to increased sectarian traditions around the world. Shaukat and Pell (2020) highlighted sectarian affiliation as a key determinant of religious tolerance of Pakistani youth. Being attached to one's sect is rooted in the attachment theory of Bowlby (1982). Attachment theory explains

the development and the mechanisms of bonds and interpersonal relationships. The theory also helps to understand the central point of religion, which is individuals' connection or relationship with God. The researchers have identified the individual differences in respect of the two dimensions of the attachment system in adolescence and adulthood. The first dimension called attachment-related avoidance belongs to the attachment system deactivation. In this system person defensively refers to the feelings of distrust towards the intentions of others and attempts to achieve or maintain his/her emotional and behavioral independence. The second dimension known as attachment-related anxiety describes the person's worries and apprehensions that other people are not caring therefore he tries to seek their support and love anxiously. This dimension is related to attachment-system hyper activation. The author argued that high scores on both above mentioned dimensions (avoidance or anxiety) indicate mistrust about others' responsiveness. On the other hand, people who obtain relatively low scores on both dimensions are considered to have comfortable and secure relationships with others (Brennan et al., 1998; Cherniak et al., 2021; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Therefore, the nature of the attachment to one's sect and God can contribute to the level of acceptance for other sects and religions. Recent studies have turned their focus on exploring the factors in which attachment disruptions might increase the risk of adult religious psychopathology by drawing parallels between the possible symbolism lying behind religious violence and the concept of attachment (Counted, 2017). These studies argue that the attachment on the basis religion is very strong and powerful.

Old-age individuals have been reported more tolerant than those of the young age group (Twenge et al., 2015). In another research based findings show older adults to be less tolerant as compared to young adults (Ragnarsdóttir et al., 2020). While in Pakistani context age has found to be nonsignificant in determining level of religious tolerance (Khalid & Mahmood, 2013). Likewise, men have been reported to score high on the religious tolerance scale as compared to women (Walker, 2011; Winseman, 2003). At the same time opposing evidence suggests that women have a high level of religious tolerance than men (Elsinbawi & Wolosin, 2023; Nazar et al., 2017). Interestingly, a few studies indicate nonsignificant relationship between gender and religious tolerance among youth (Batool & Nazly, 2020; Muda, 2017; Wang & Froese, 2020). Thus it is still to be explored the determining role of age and gender in religious tolerance in further studies.

In addition to the level of attachment to sect, age and gender the family system supposed to play a vital role in the development of religious tolerance, because each family system incorporates religious education which is considered important for morality, ethics, interpersonal relationships, and answer to various questions not having an empirical basis. Family system serves as a yardstick for measuring the attitude and behavior of an individual to be fit for the entire world. Whether the family system is nuclear or joint, if intrapersonal and interpersonal dealing of the members of a family is based on brotherhood and humanity, irrespective of other's religion, sect, beliefs, or values then tolerance prevails or vice versa (Radjab et al., 2020). It may be the reason that Walker (2011) reported significant differences in the level of religious tolerance among different family settings such as living alone, with one parent, with both parents, and others. However, it was inconclusive which family system is more linked with any one category of tolerance.

Nevertheless, Srivatsav and Jaxa-Rozen (2015) reported a significant effect of the family system on religious beliefs among youth (Omer et al., 2016). Hodson (2011) indicated that more social contact with people of varying beliefs and values positively contributes to religious tolerance because it causes increased familiarity, decreases shame, threat, and helps to consider others as part of the same community. Residence in urban areas increases the possibility of such social interaction. Therefore, living areas (rural/urban) have been found to significant effect on religious tolerance (Srivatsav & Jaxa-Rozen, 2015). Huggins and Debies-Carl (2016) indicated that the urban environment promotes more tolerance because people in urban areas face several challenges in terms of reduced locality, different religions and worship places, and increased heterogeneity. This pluralism promotes a sense of mutual respect (Sumpena & Jamaludin, 2020), which in turn reduces prejudice against minorities and increases affection and warmth (Shaver et al., 2016).

On the other hand, education has been found to be a contributor in the reduction of prejudice and intolerance towards different religions (Al Sadia & Basit, 2013; Wang & Froese, 2020). This presumption is based on the role of modern education in encouraging the acceptance of opposing groups and that a person learns to become more tolerant through education. The empirical data also verify that schools, colleges, and universities positively contribute to a tolerant attitude (Mulder & Krahn, 2005). Furthermore, education helps to promote the positive ideas of Islam, such as no prejudice and biases toward others (Saeed, 2007). Therefore, higher education, especially

at the university level or higher has been found to significantly increase the level of religious tolerance (Twenge et al., 2015). It may occur because in universities individuals find more opportunities of having contact with diverse religious and cultural groups from across the country and even from outside the country (Yusuf et al., 2020). Similarly, Wang and Uecker (2017) examined the relationship between higher education and religious tolerance among youth. It was found that young adults educated in college have found to be more tolerant or hyper-tolerant than individuals from middle/high school education (Walker, 2011). Golebiowska (2004) found that tolerance towards other religions depends on age, gender, living area, and education. Older men living in urban areas, having high educational background scores high on religious tolerance than young women of rural areas with low educational status. Despite having evidence of positive role of education in religious tolerance, university students of Pakistan have been found to be intolerant towards different faiths and sects (Maqbool et al., 2021; Yasmin et al., 2020), because of increased attachment to religious sects, ethnic hatred and caste system in Pakistan (Yasmin et al., 2020). However, the role of education needs to be explored yet because recent studies in Pakistan have focused more on education system (i.e., Madrassa and Secular education) than level of education (Hanif et al., 2020; Nazar et al., 2017; Shaikat & Pell, 2020).

Pakistan is a multi-religion country, where Muslims make up almost 96% of the whole population with 4% belonging to other minorities (Wazir & Goujon, 2019). They are often targeted for religious intolerance and persecution of religious minorities (Curtis, 2016). Only a few studies have focused on religious tolerance. There is a dire need to highlight determinants of religious tolerance in Pakistan (Arshad, 2023; Hussain et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2023; Suhaib & Aziz, 2023). Manzoor et al. (2022) argue that fostering religious tolerance is crucial in addressing social tensions, religious conflicts and developing a peaceful society for social development. Religious tolerance is also important for university students as it contributes to happiness and positively affects the religious beliefs (Zuhdiyah et al., 2023). Keeping in view the importance and need of tolerance in the existence of peace and harmony in Pakistani society, the study was conducted to analyze the role of demographic factors in determining religious tolerance among university students. As it has been mentioned in earlier that a limited published researches are available on the role of demographics in Pakistan therefore while formulating the objectives and hypothesis of the study the literature from the other countries has been also considered.

## Objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the role of attachment to sect, education, gender, age, family system, and residential area in religious tolerance among university students.
2. To analyze the moderating role of educational level on the relationship between attachment to sect and religious tolerance among university students.

## Hypotheses

1. Attachment to sect negatively predicts the religious tolerance among university students.
2. Education act as moderator on the relationship between the attachment to sect and religious tolerance among university students.

## Method

### Sample

The population of the present study was the youth of the Punjab province of Pakistan. For this purpose, young adults from public universities of four big cities (Gujrat, Sargodha, Faisalabad & Rawalpindi) of Punjab, Pakistan were selected as the target population. A multistage stratified sampling technique was used to get a sample of the youth. First of all, list of the strength of four departments (two social sciences and two basic sciences) of each of the universities was acquired from concerned authorities of each department wherever it was possible. In other cases, information about the total strength of department was taken from heads of these departments. After gaining information about the strength of selective departments, a Yamani (1967) formula was applied on total strength of these departments for each university separately. Yamani's (1967) formula (given below) was used to obtain an adequate number of samples concerning the population.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where  $n$  indicates sample size,  $N$  refers to population, and  $e$  means margin error (confidence interval). Thus, by applying the above formula total sample of 1814 was calculated. It can be assumed that

the 1814 number of individuals from the total population of this study is the lower level of responses from the participants to maintain a 95% confidence interval. After data collection, the data were screened out, and missing data, including outlier cases in the sample, were excluded from the data. In this way, a final sample of 1651 university students were retained from Gujrat ( $n = 541$ ), Faisalabad ( $n = 485$ ), Rawalpindi ( $n = 313$ ) and Sargodha ( $n = 312$ ). The frequencies and percentages of demographic variables including age, gender, education, sect and living areas indicate sample comprised on majority of girls ( $n = 984$ , 59.6%) than boys ( $n = 667$ , 40.4%). The age range of the sample was 18-35 years, with a mean of 22.60. Almost half of the participants were from BS level ( $n = 850$ , 51%), and the rest were from Masters ( $n = 403$ , 22 %), Mphil ( $n = 351$ , 23 %), and Ph.D. ( $n = 48$ , 4%). Most of the sample belonged to the *Ahl-e-Sunnat* sect ( $n = 1164$ , 70%) whereas, the remaining to *Ahl-e-TaSheh* ( $n = 274$ , 17%), and *Ahl-e-Wahab* ( $n = 213$ , 13 %). More than half of the sample was from urban areas ( $n = 977$ , 59 %) and the nuclear family system ( $n = 674$ , 41%).

## Measures

Following measures were used to assess the study variables.

### *Religious Tolerance Scale*

Religious Tolerance Scale is a 23-item self-report scale developed by [Batool and Akram \(2019\)](#). It measures seven components of religious tolerance named as minimization of religious differences, inclusivity, exclusivity and self-centeredness, openness for change, faith and respect for other religions, religious conviction and recognizing the freedom of others. The Cronbach's alpha of the seven subscales of Religious Tolerance Scale were .75, .71, .73, .76, .63, .73 and .71 respectively with total scale of  $\alpha = .85$ . Each of the item on this scale is rated on a 5-point Likert type scale (1 = *completely disagree*, to 5 = *completely agree*). The scale also contains reversed score items (12, 16, 17, & 18). Scores on the total scale range from 23 - 115, and subscale scores range from 4 - 20 for subscale minimization of religious differences and exclusivity and self-centeredness - 25 for subscale of inclusivity, and 3 - 15 for other subscales. A high level of religious tolerance is indicated by high scores and vice versa. The scale has good convergent and discriminant validity with a Religious Tolerance Questionnaire ([Broer et al., 2014](#))  $r = .64$ , and a balanced dogmatism scale ([Ray, 1970](#))  $r = -.53$ , respectively.

### ***Demographic Form***

A demographic sheet was designed to use, along with a religious tolerance scale. It sought information regarding gender, age, level of education, attachment to sect, living area (rural/urban), and family system. Attachment to the religious sect of the participants was measured by a statement on a 5-point Likert scale from 5 = *very much attached* to 1 = *not attached at all*.

### **Procedure**

Ethical approval was obtained from Board of Studies of University of Gujrat before data were collected. All the sample of the study was personally contacted after formal permission from their institutional authorities. An informed consent was obtained from the participants. They were briefed about the nature and scope as well as their role in the study. Although there was no time bounding for completion of the scale, it took 5-10 minutes only for each participant to respond on the scale.

### **Results**

Hierarchical regression analysis was administered to check the role of demographics in the order that has been mentioned in the literature. However, the research on the role of demographic is scarce in general and particularly limited published studies are available in Pakistan. Therefore, the attempt was made to address this issue by confirming the results of regression analysis by applying Neural Network Analysis. Neural network analysis helps to discover more complex relationships in data and generate better performing predictive models. It provides accurate prediction by minimizing the chance of error. Neural networks can approximate a wide range of statistical models without requiring hypothesizing in advance certain relationships between the dependent and independent variable. If a linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables is appropriate the results of neural network should closely approximate those of linear predictive model. Therefore, to confirm the results of Analysis of variance model given in Table 1 and keeping in view the scarce published literature in Pakistan, Neural network was administered to analyze the roles of demographics with more accuracy.



**Table 1**  
*Hierarchical Regression Results for Religious Tolerance*

Variables	B	95% CI		SE B	B	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>
		LL	UL				
Step 1							
Constant	29.50	14.45	34.5	8.56		0.002	0.002
Family System	-1.69	-4.10	-0.76	-1.25	-0.03		
Residential area	1.87	1.12	2.56	1.24	0.37		
Step 2							
Constant	108.63**	97.61	119.65	5.62		0.14***	0.14***
Family system	-2.17	-0.41	-0.02	-1.16	-0.04		
Residential area	1.79	0.53	4.13	1.19	.036		
Gender	-5.04***	-8.01	-0.89	-0.19	-0.28***		
Age	0.61*	0.44	1.94	0.20	0.17*		
Education	6.86***	5.44	8.28	0.72	0.24***		
Step 3							
Constant	57.50***	46.17	68.84	5.77		0.48***	0.34***
Family system	-2.00	-4.07	0.07	1.05	-0.03		
Residential area	3.87	1.74	6.00	0.14	0.07		
Gender	-2.07**	-6.08	-1.01	-0.76	-0.22**		
Age	0.45*	0.83	0.07	0.19	0.05*		
Education	6.09***	4.80	7.39	0.10	0.28***		
Attachment to Sect	9.98***	8.94	11.02	0.53	0.40***		

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Hierarchical linear regression analysis was performed to evaluate the prediction of religious tolerance from attachment to sect, education, age, gender, family system, and residential area of the participants. For the first step, family System and residential area were entered. The result of the first block hierarchical linear regression analysis revealed a model to be statistically insignificant ( $p > .05$ ). Additionally, the  $R^2$  value indicates that both variables account for only 0.2% variant in religious tolerance which means that (99.8%) of the variation in religious tolerance cannot be explained by Family System and Residential Area. Moreover, Family system and residential area emerged as non-significant predictors of religious tolerance. Further education emerged as a strong positive predictor of religious tolerance.

In the second step, family system, residential area, gender, age and education were entered. The result of the second block

hierarchical linear regression analysis revealed a model to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). Additionally, the  $R^2$  value associated with this regression model suggests that this model account for (14%) of the variant in (religious tolerance) which means that (76%) of the variation in religious tolerance cannot be explained by the variables entered in second step. However, the addition of gender, age and education added almost 14% variant to the variance explained by the first model. The results indicated that boys showed more religious tolerance as compared to girls as gender was entered with categories Girls with 1 and Boys with 2. The findings also indicated that religious tolerance increases as the age of the participants is increased.

In the third step attachment to sect was entered while controlling the variables family system, residential area, age, gender, and education. The result of the fourth block hierarchical linear regression analysis revealed a model to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) Additionally the  $R^2$  value of (0.48) associated with this regression model suggest that with the addition of (Attachment to Sect) the model accounts for (48%) of the variant in (religious tolerance) which means that only Attachment to Sect added 34% of the variance to the religious tolerance which shows the importance of Attachment to Sect in religious tolerance among the youth of Pakistan.

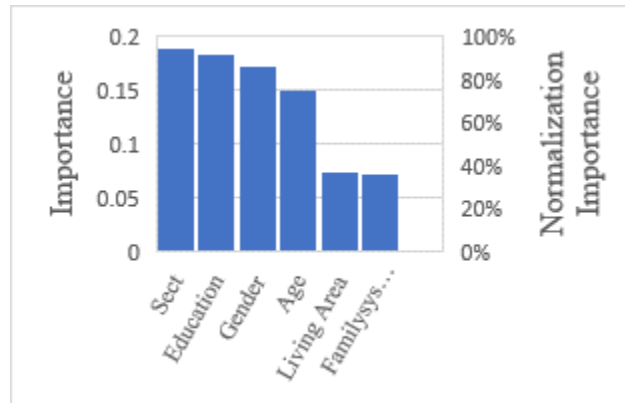
**Table 2**

*Predictive Importance of Independent Variables*

S#	Independent Variables	Importance	Normalized Importance
1	Gender	.173	90.8
2	Age	.151	79.5
3	Living Area	.075	39.7
4	Family System	.073	38.7
5	Attachment to Sect	.190	100.0
6	Education	.184	97.0

To check the importance of predictive factors neural network was run on the total data set. The results mentioned in Table 2 confirmed the results of hierarchical linear regression model given in Table 2 indicated sect as the most important predictor of religious tolerance .190 (100%). While gender .173(90.8%) and education .184(97%) were the second and third most important predictors respectively. Likewise living (residential) area .075(39.7%) and family system .073(38.7%) were least important after age .151(79.5%).

Figure 1  
*Predictive Importance of Demographics*



**Table 3**  
*Moderation of Education in Attachment to Sect and Religious Tolerance Among Youth (N = 1651)*

Predictors	B	Religious Tolerance	
		95% CI	
		LL	UL
(Constant)	68.75**	36.55	101.05
Attachment to Sect	-0.79**	-2.30	0.99
Education	0.90***	0.21	0.94
Attachment to Sect X Education	0.58***	0.18	2.17
$R^2$	0.56		
F	24.88***		
$\Delta R^2$	0.29		
$\Delta F$	16.88**		

The moderating role of education in attachment to the sect and religious tolerance was analyzed by the Hayes Process version 2.0 on SPSS IBM 21. As a result, a significant model appeared with the value of  $R$  indicated 56% variance is explained by the attachment to the sect in the religious tolerance of the youth. The model appeared to be 29% more fit as result of the interaction of attachment to sect and education which means that the interaction effect of both variables brings 29% additional variance in the religious tolerance of the participants. Further attachment to sect appeared as a negative

predictor of religious tolerance whereas education is a positive predictor of religious tolerance. The results stated that education significantly and positively moderated the relationship between attachment to the sect and religious tolerance among the young students which is evident from interaction effect.

### Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the predictability of demographic variables for religious tolerance among university students. Therefore, the scores on RTS were analyzed with gender, age, level of education, attachment to sects, living areas, and family systems. Moreover, moderating effect of education was analyzed for attachment to sect and religious tolerance.

The findings of this study indicated Attachment to sect is a negative predictor of religious tolerance while controlling education, age, gender, of the participants and residential. Thus, first hypothesis of the study has been supported. Results are consistent with the findings of the recent studies (Brennan et al., 1998; Cherniak et al., 2021; Khan & Osterman, 2023; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Suhaib & Aziz, 2023; Yasmeen & Umer, 2021). The results indicated that attachment to sect, education, gender, and age are significant determinants of religious tolerance. It was found that attachment to the sect is likely to be the most powerful variable that may determine religious tolerance among the youth. There are different sectarian groups in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. It is evident from the results of this study that the contribution of the attachment of the respective sects of these groups cannot be ignored. The plausible explanation of this result lies in the attachment style prevailing in our culture. The attachment styles may be learned from significant others, peers, and society (Cherniak et al., 2021). The insecure attachment style leads to low tolerance towards diversity and vice versa (Kenny & Fleming, 2009). These learned attachment styles not only influence interpersonal relationships in daily life but also explains the attachment experience of a believer with the religious figure. Thus, when the religious attachment figure is at risk of defamation, or the bond between the two is threatened, the religious believer likely to be defensive in the form of adaptive reactions, protest, or despair, to protect their attachment bond and deal with the risk that endanger their religious attachment identity (Counted, 2017). This finding is consistent with the results of the previous studies as survey conducted by Kalin and Siddiqui (2014) on a random sample of Punjab province of Pakistan, reported significant differences among four major sects (*Sunni* Muslims, *Shia* Muslims, Christians, and *Ahmadis*) in respect of

tolerance, however nonsignificant differences were seen between the two sects (*Sunni* and *Shia*) when it comes to acceptance and tolerance of the religious beliefs of Christine and *Ahmadis*. The nature of the school curriculum, different instructional methods between madrassa and English medium schools, media, and hate literature were reported factors of the varying levels of religious tolerance among the above-mentioned four sectarian groups (Khan et al., 2023). Adherence to a scriptural-conservative understanding of Islam fosters social intolerance of outgroups, while religious devotion may increase intolerance of non-scriptural believers (Altinoglu, 2017). Therefore, it is establishing that Islamic religiosity has both positive and negative effects on social tolerance in the Middle East and North Africa, with conservative-liberal believers more tolerant under normal circumstances, and mosque presence having a negative effect on tolerance. *Shia* and *Barelvi* students in Pakistani religious schools exhibit positive tolerance while *Deobandi* students exhibit conservative attitudes, and female students exhibit more negative tolerance (Shaukat & Pell, 2020). Similarly, high levels of religious tolerance lead to positive attitudes towards "groups" in Ukrainian society, where these attitudes are influenced by religious identity and group loyalty (Павленко, 2020). It is suggested that Religious instructors' competence in serving people towards tolerance in multicultural communities can foster balance and social cohesion (Umar & Saihu, 2022). It is also examined that the importance of training undergraduate students to promote tolerance through heritage studies, as race, gender and religious affiliation are key factors in the development of intolerance (Maqbool et al., 2020).

Moreover, it was found that boys score high on total scores of RTS as compared to girls. Shaukat and Pell (2020) similarly indicated girls of Pakistani Madrassas to be more conservative and lower in religious tolerance as compared to boys. The reason for these differences can be that boys get more cognitive benefits from engaging in religious practices as compared to girls. These cognitive benefits include optimism, happiness, and a tendency to tolerate opposing ideas. Boys are also likely to participate only in those religious activities which specifically give such benefits than girls (Zhang, 2010). Another reason for gender differences in religious tolerance can be that participation in religious activities itself has a strong relationship with religious commitment which in return causes tolerance towards other minorities. Men are more religiously committed due to varying congregations and therefore tolerant as well (Shaver et al., 2016). In addition to this Winseman's (2003) findings

also justify results, indicating men score high on the religious tolerance scale as compared to women.

The findings of the current study revealed age as a positive predictor of religious tolerance. The result is in accord with the findings of the recent study indicating that tolerance levels were low for the younger age groups but increased significantly for the older age group (Arif et al., 2021; Bobo & Licari, 1989; Shaukat & Pell, 2020; Twenge et al., 2015). Residential area (rural and urban categories) was not appeared as a significant predictor of religious tolerance. These findings were in line with Yusuf et al. (2020), which indicated residents of both rural and urban areas are equally tolerant. On the other hand, results also showed that family system (nuclear and joint) was not a significant predictor of religious tolerance. A study conducted by Walker (2011) confirmed these findings and indicated that these two-family systems have a non-significant influence on religious tolerance among young adults. An important reason can be that the children learn religious practices from their significant others in both systems of the family and there is a very rare chance to have family members who have different religions or religious sects in Pakistani culture.

The second hypothesis of the study about the moderating role of education in the religious tolerance of the participants has been accepted. Those with higher education such as participants with postgraduate levels were found more tolerant towards other religious beliefs than students of bachelors' level. The findings of previous researchers have found positive correlation between educational level and tolerance (Subramaniam, 2016; Shaver et al., 2016; Wang & Uecker, 2017). A possible mechanism of this finding is acquired 'cognitive sophistication' through education (Meeusen et al., 2013), increased understanding of religious diversity, and recognition of the importance of peace in society by highly educated individuals. Another reason can be a decrease in prejudice towards other minorities with increased education (Hello et al., 2002). O'Donnell, (1993) confirmed that education is the most significant predictor of mass tolerance of new religious movements, with social and demographic factors having limited predictive power. Higher education was noted to be positively associated with attitudes toward social tolerance, but this association may be due to phenomenological reports of social desirability rather than the actual effect of social tolerance (Heerwig & McCabe, 2009). Similarly, educational attainment is positively associated with political and social tolerance in the United States, but the effect is smaller in West Germany (Weil, 1982). Similarly, spiritual and religious education promotes tolerance,

respect for beliefs and effective interpersonal communication, thereby improving moral and ethical values among individuals (Rainy et al., 2023). It is found that a course on regional religions, integrating history, culture, and religion, positively benefits students' formation of religious tolerance and multicultural consciousness (Naumenko et al., 2016). Furthermore, Tolerance for homosexuals still decreases with increasing church attendance, but education increases tolerance, and conservative Protestants are the least intolerant religious group (Burdette et al., 2005).

Similarly, Religious education should promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity and promote unity among those of different faiths and religions (Sanaky, 2017). Religious tolerance in Remaja Parakan, Temanggung elementary school is well-implemented, leading to a more inclusive religious attitude among students and reducing conflict in the name of religion (Fadhli & Sirait, 2019). Religious education can help students develop more open minds, with religious and worldviews, but promoting effective tolerance requires knowledge of religions, a way of thinking, and with worldviews interact with representatives of religions (Schihalejev, 2013). They suggest that values of religious tolerance in early childhood education are taught through a combination of learning and practice rather than explicitly teaching tolerance among religious students (Pribadi, 2023). Religious education teachers play an important role in building students' religious tolerance by teaching positive behaviors and role models, facilitating religious activities, and implementing plural-based religious education (Mustamiah et al., 2022). Golebiowska (2014) also indicated that education is a significant predictor of religious tolerance. Individuals with college or above education level scored high on religious tolerance than those of the school level of education. Hence, it proves that people with higher education are more likely to be religiously tolerant and vice versa (Moore & Ovadia, 2006).

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

Although the results of this research indicate that demographic information is important in the prediction of religious tolerance however it may not be clear how these variables influence the level of religious tolerance and why? Further in-depth research work is needed to examine the role and effect of these variables. Especially the role of the attachment systems should be explored deeply in the development of attachment of sects which is determining the religious tolerance in Pakistani culture. Moreover, future studies should also focus on the role of education in the formation of attachment systems and religiously tolerant societies. The sample of the study was limited to

young adults of university only and should be extended to other age groups as well e.g., adolescents and old age adults from community.

### **Implications**

These findings suggest developing and implementing the targeted interventions to promote religious tolerance among those who are more likely to have a negative attitude towards religious diversity. Our religious scholars need to be careful in their speeches and refrain from promoting sectarianism.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the present study it is concluded that attachment to sect should be decreased while level of education must be increased to make our youth more tolerant towards opposing religions. Other variables such as gender and age are also important for religious tolerance.

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