

## **Perceptions of University Students about Causes of Terrorism**

Saghir Ahmad<sup>\*</sup>, Misbah Malik<sup>\*\*</sup> and Ayesha Batool<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

The key purpose of this study was to find out the causes of terrorism through the perceptions of university students enrolled in teacher training institutions. This study was quantitative in nature. A sample of two hundred and sixty seven students was selected from public sector teacher training institutions. A self-developed and validated instrument was used to identify students' perceptions about the causes of terrorism which consisted of thirty two statements. Responses were obtained on five point Likert type scale. Mean, Standard deviation, independent sample t-test, and One Way ANOVA were applied to analyze the data. The major findings of the study indicated that students perceived poverty, foreign interference, wrong interpretation of Islamic preaching, and social injustice as the main causes of terrorism. It is also found that most of the participants think that drone attacks on the border areas of neighboring country, from the air basis provided to foreign army, are the major causes of terrorists' activities. On the basis of these findings it is recommended that, as education is a key medium to create awareness about the causes of terrorism. There is an urgent need to educate the people and specially youngsters to play their role in establishing peace in the region.

**Keywords:** Students, Causes of Terrorism, Teacher Training Institution, Social Injustice

---

\* PhD Scholar, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore  
Email: saghir.edu786@gmail.com

\*\* Assistant Professor, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore

\*\*\* PhD Scholar, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore  
Email: ayeshabatoolrana@gmail.com

## Introduction

Terror originated from a Latin word which signifies "to panic". Terror is a demonstration of brutality against innocents. The terrorists do not accept the territory boundaries and government rules and laws of the country. In simple words, terror is peak consternation (Zalman, 2007). In general "Terrorism" is the phenomenon in which horrible circumstances are created by an individual or a group of individuals. Neither scholastic community nor global groups have legitimate consensus with respect to the meaning of the expression "terrorism".

Terrorism is the dangerous manifestations by some individual/s. various kinds of conflicts arose in the minds of people and they plan to take revenge through various brutal practices. These practices create vulnerability, dissatisfaction, socio-political instability and extremism. It is not like a war but is a sort of enormous attack that is hidden and is difficult to unravel (Chitkara, 2003; Paul & Brahma, 1988; Rana, 2003). According to Rana (2005) terrorism is a sort of brutality or a danger intended to make an environment of dread, and triggers a message to begin war or to create social or political instability.

The extremist activities have nearly covered the whole world, the cruel political clash/amusement is determined as the real cause of this violence. The world is in the state of cold war which is a result of various socio-political variables. The rationale behind this contention is that if these profoundly established clashes were settled, extremism would vanish (Ahmed, 2009).

The brutal political conduct motivates fear based domination. There are mainly two kinds of reasons. One is the likelihood to feel abused by the West. And the other is weak borders management and portability of people. The relationship is more intricate than one may imagine at first look (Hudson, 2002).

Abbas (2008) surveyed the historical backdrop of terrorism and found that since its inception of our country, different groups on the basis of patriotism, provincial power, religious authoritative opinion and political standards have consistently dared the strength of our country. This had been found immediate legislative issues, where military administer over and again interfered with government which brought about political absence, political segregation, prompting misery, and feeling of deprived, and eventually leaded to brutal acts. Corruption, inequality, fabrication, defilement, the feeling of deprivation, considerations of social injustice and segregation are the major reasons to destroy the balance of the nation. The financial inequality has destroyed the balance of nation. There is no standard of education to obtain the ideology and modern needs of the nation.

Many individuals are living under the poverty line. They cannot feed, fabric, protect, provide education to their children. These people are actually used by the extremists and are trained for assaults activities in the name of Jihad, so the outcome might be as suicide bombers. The extremist associations look for and enlist poor and jobless individuals particularly youngsters. They give them weapons, vehicles, cash and brave get up alongside authority to control the different areas which influences these needy individuals to do everything which is requested (Abbas, 2008).

Qaiser (2011) stated that rising poverty and increased financial disparity caused disturbing effects on the minds of the poor. The living standard of elite class is very high where as poor are spending life in extremely bad conditions that results in criminal and fierce dispositions in their minds. Illness, poverty and craving have harmed humankind constantly. The rich people do not care about the poor. All this results in brutality and use of weapons become the last option to get basic needs.

The foreign policy plays a significant role in progress of the country. One of the main reasons of terrorism is lack of good relations with other countries. We cannot take the decisions to set the policies independently. Super powers always try to interfere in the internal affairs of our country. Social discrimination and imbalance play the part of a stimulus in carrying out of the plans of terrorists. Denied individuals look for their push in the hostility towards everybody since they assume the entire society as the in-charge of their present condition and are prepared to deliver revenge (Hussain, 2007).

The wrong interpretations of religions and ideologies are also a factor of terrorism. The religion focuses on the teachings of peace keeping and for bids participating in violence. The current media transmission networks strengthen the practices of extremists over the world that may not exclusively considered on the basis of religion rather social circumstances may equally be responsible (Ahmad, 2005).

On the basis of above discussion it was concluded that no single factor may considered as the sole reason of terrorism. Some of the studies found socio-political reasons as the main cause of terrorism, whereas other considered geographical, financial, racial and religious factor as the origin of terrorism. It may also be concluded that reason of terrorism vary on the basis of context. To find out the reason of terrorism become of utmost importance for a country like Pakistan which has been victim of terrorism for the last three decades. So, this study was designed to identify which of the above mentioned factors are the main cause of terrorism in the opinion of university students.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out the causes of terrorism through the perceptions of the university students.
2. To identify the differences in students' perceptions based on their demographic variables (gender, universities, age, semester, and different levels of qualification) about causes of terrorism.

### **Significance of the Study**

Terrorism is an infectious virus in the world and it damages the reputation of the nations and promotes bloodshed in society. People face many problems due to extremism and their daily life is disturbed totally. This study may help to identify the causes of terrorism in society. The results of the study may develop awareness among students, teachers, parents, stakeholders, and policy makers about terrorism and its reasons. The study may help to think the possible remedies of terrorism that how a state can control the brutal activities. The results may affirm the role of teachers in order to promote tolerance, peace, harmony, and patience among students.

### **Research Methodology**

The quantitative approach was used for this study. The study was descriptive and survey type in nature. The survey method was used to collect the current information about the phenomena. The population of the study was students of institute of education and research Punjab University Lahore and university of education. The sample was selected by using convenient sampling technique. The total sample was consisted of 267 students, 167 students from IER and 100 students from UOE. The sample of students was consisted of different programs like BS, MA/MS, M.Phil, and PhD programs.

The questionnaire was used as instrument to collect data. The questionnaire was consisted of two parts; first part was about demographic variables and second part contained 32 statements about the causes of terrorism. Responses of the participants were obtained on five point Likert type scale. The questionnaire was pilot tested to check the reliability before conducting research. The value of Cronbach's Alpha was .861, which was statistical significant and acceptable.

The researchers visited the institutions personally to collect the data from respondents. After data collection, the data were entered in to SPSS. The data analyzed by applying different statistical techniques. The descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the data. The frequencies, mean, and standard deviation were obtained in descriptive and independent sample t-test, and one way ANOVA tests were used in inferential statistics. The detail of data analysis is given below.

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics Frequencies and Percentages of Students Regarding Different Programs*

Programs	Frequency	Percent
BS	107	40.1
M.A, MSc	91	34.1
M.Phil	45	16.9
Ph.D	24	9.0
Total	267	100.0

Table 1 indicates that 267 students of different programs participated in this study and gave their opinions related causes of terrorism. There were BS=107, M.A/MSC=91, M.Phil=45, and PhD=24 universities students.

**Table 2***Descriptive Statistics Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Opinions Regarding Causes of Terrorism*

Sr.	Causes of Terrorism	M	SD
1	Poverty	3.47	1.272
2	Unemployment	3.45	1.154
3	Religion extremism	3.33	1.215
4	Wrong concept of the Islamic philosophy	3.76	1.206
5	Lack of basic human rights	3.63	1.101
6	Foreign interference	3.73	1.091
7	Pak Afghan border management	3.44	1.120
8	Agencies play negative role	2.67	1.133
9	Hypocrisy role of United Nation	3.38	1.064
10	NGOs funding	2.92	1.019
11	Group culture	3.28	1.029
12	Government involvement for foreign aid	3.07	1.156
13	Taliban	3.51	1.258
14	Islamic states of Iraq and Sham are promoting terrorism	2.84	1.111
15	Curriculum of religious madrasas	2.76	1.162
16	Intolerance	3.25	1.174
17	Tribal area	3.12	1.107
18	Tribal customs	3.18	1.049
19	Drone attacks	3.75	1.060
20	Social discrimination	3.78	1.090
21	Foreign policy	3.12	1.243
22	Forces alliance	3.18	1.107
23	Religious centers	2.85	1.191

24	Promotion of Jihad Culture in the Marshal Law	2.91	1.152
25	Military operation in the tribal land	3.07	1.177
26	Al-Qaida	3.31	1.085
27	America is terrorist promoting country.	3.77	1.074
28	Lack of political vision	3.41	1.031
29	Funding from Islamic countries	2.99	1.241
30	Heaven desire	3.57	1.276
31	Lal masjid incidence	3.38	1.168
32	9/11 incidence.	3.48	1.158

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviations of the responses about the causes of terrorism. The students of teacher training institutions were agreed with the all above mentioned causes of the terrorism. The highest means ( $M=3.78$ ,  $M=3.77$ , and  $M=3.76$ ) of the statements that discrimination in society is the reason of terrorism, some enemy countries are promoting terrorist for our country and wrong concept of the Islamic thoughts also deals with terrorism. The lowest mean ( $M=2.67$ ) which shows that agencies are not involve in this violence. It seems that majority of the research participants agree with causes of terrorism. According to them there are many reasons of brutality. Poverty and social discrimination both are the factors of extremism. These infectious diseases force to poor individuals to participate in brutal activities. Drone attacks and foreign interference also promote terrorism.

**Table 3**

*Independent Sample t-test to Check Difference between Male and Female Students' Perceptions Regarding Causes of Terrorism*

Factors of Terrorism	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig.
Political	Male	57	6.28	1.770	-1.071	265	.285
	Female	210	6.54	1.562			
Social	Male	57	19.16	4.221	-1.239	78.744	.219
	Female	210	19.91	3.546			
Religious	Male	57	19.82	4.965	-.644	265	.520
	Female	210	20.23	4.037			
Economics	Male	57	9.56	3.041	-1.835	78.148	.070
	Female	210	10.37	2.523			
Academics	Male	57	2.56	1.254	-1.433	265	.153
	Female	210	2.81	1.133			
Foreign	Male	57	45.35	8.140	-.788	265	.431
	Female	210	46.20	6.996			

Table shows that independent sample t-test was applied to compare the mean scores of male and female students enrolled in different programs. There was no inconsistency in opinions of male ( $M = 6.28$ ,  $SD = 1.770$ ) and female students,  $M = 6.54$ ,  $SD = 1.562$ ;  $t(-1.071) = 265$ ,  $p = .285$ . Statistical values also show that mean scores of students in social work, religious, Economics, Academics and foreign affairs do not differ significantly on the basis of male and female students' perceptions.

**Table 4**

*Independent Sample t-test to Check Difference between IER and UOE Students' Perceptions Regarding Causes of Terrorism*

Factors of Terrorism	Faculty	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig.
Political	IER	167	6.31	1.582	-2.353	265	.019
	UOE	100	6.78	1.618			
Social	IER	167	19.75	3.890	-.024	265	.980
	UOE	100	19.76	3.394			
Religious	IER	167	20.01	4.349	-.696	265	.487
	UOE	100	20.38	4.077			
Economics	IER	167	9.87	2.773	-2.677	234.087	.008
	UOE	100	10.73	2.369			
Academics	IER	167	2.66	1.090	-1.675	265	.095
	UOE	100	2.91	1.264			
Foreign	IER	167	45.58	7.703	-1.288	265	.199
	UOE	100	46.76	6.384			

An independent sample t-test was applied to identify the differences in mean scores of students' perceptions regarding different factors of terrorism. Table values shows that there was significant difference in mean scores of faculty of IER ( $M = 6.31$ ,  $SD = 1.582$ ) and UOE students,  $M = 6.78$ ,  $SD = 1.618$ ;  $t(-2.353) = 265$ ,  $p = .019$  about political factor of terrorism. Similarly the faculty of UOE perceived economic factors are cause of terrorism in our country more than faculty of IER because there was significant difference in mean scores of IER ( $M = 9.87$ ,  $SD = 2.773$ ) and UOE,  $M = 10.73$ ,  $SD = 2.369$ ;  $t(-2.677) = 234.087$ ,  $p = .008$ .

Table values also shows that there was no significant difference in scores faculty scores on: social factor of IER ( $M = 19.75$ ,  $SD = 3.890$ ) and UOE,  $M = 19.76$ ,  $SD = 3.394$ ;  $t(-.024) = 265$ ,  $p = .980$ ; religious factor scores of IER ( $M = 20.01$ ,  $SD = 4.349$ ) and UOE,  $M = 20.38$ ,  $SD = 4.077$ ;  $t(-.696) = 265$ ,  $p = .487$ ; academics factor scores IER ( $M = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.090$ ) and UOE,  $M = 2.91$ ,  $SD = 1.264$ ;  $t(-1.675) = 265$ ,  $p = .095$ ; and the foreign factor scores of IER ( $M = 45.58$ ,  $SD = 7.703$ ) and UOE,  $M = 46.76$ ,  $SD = 6.384$ ;  $t(-1.288) = 265$ ,  $p = .199$ .

It is concluded that there is significant difference between IER and UOE students' perceptions regarding the political and economic factors of terrorism. And there is no significant difference between IER and UOE students' perceptions regarding different factors (social, religious, academics and foreign) of terrorism.

**Table 5**

*Comparisons of Students' Responses Regarding the Causes of Terrorism on the Basis of Age*

Factors of Terrorism		Sum of Squares	df.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Political	Between Groups	19.023	3	6.341	2.490	.061
	Within Groups	669.651	263	2.546		
	Total	688.674	266			
Social	Between Groups	19.159	3	6.386	.462	.709
	Within Groups	3632.527	263	13.812		
	Total	3651.685	266			
Religious	Between Groups	46.939	3	15.646	.867	.459
	Within Groups	4746.364	263	18.047		
	Total	4793.303	266			
Economics	Between Groups	34.046	3	11.349	1.619	.185
	Within Groups	1843.827	263	7.011		
	Total	1877.873	266			
Academics	Between Groups	29.989	3	9.996	7.987	.000
	Within Groups	329.187	263	1.252		
	Total	359.176	266			
Foreign	Between Groups	71.700	3	23.900	.452	.716
	Within Groups	13900.165	263	52.852		
	Total	13971.865	266			

Table shows the results of one way ANOVA to find difference in students' perceptions about causes of terrorism (political, social, religious, economics, academics and foreign) on the basis of age. Opinions were obtained upon different causes i.e. Politics;  $F(3, 263) = 2.490, p = .061$ ; Social:  $F(3, 263) = .462, p = .709$ ; Religious:  $F(3, 263) = .867, p = .459$ ; Economics:  $F(3, 263) = 1.619, p = .185$ ; Academics:  $F(3, 263) = 7.987, p = .000$ ; Foreign:  $F(3, 263) = .452, p = .716$ . It is evident there was statistically significant difference in perceptions of students on the basis of age for academics causes only, whereas difference in students perceptions was not significant for other causes i.e. political, social, religious, economics, and foreign.



**Table 6**

*Comparisons of Students' Perceptions Regarding the Causes of Terrorism on the Basis of Different Semesters*

Factors of Terrorism		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Political	Between Groups	2.657	2	1.328	.511	.600
	Within Groups	686.018	264	2.599		
	Total	688.674	266			
Social	Between Groups	29.871	2	14.935	1.089	.338
	Within Groups	3621.815	264	13.719		
	Total	3651.685	266			
Religious	Between Groups	21.691	2	10.846	.600	.550
	Within Groups	4771.612	264	18.074		
	Total	4793.303	266			
Economics	Between Groups	65.874	2	32.937	4.799	.009
	Within Groups	1811.999	264	6.864		
	Total	1877.873	266			
Academics	Between Groups	11.426	2	5.713	4.337	.014
	Within Groups	347.750	264	1.317		
	Total	359.176	266			
Foreign	Between Groups	554.057	2	277.029	5.451	.005
	Within Groups	13417.808	264	50.825		
	Total	13971.865	266			

Table shows the results of one way ANOVA applied to find mean difference on the basis of semesters for various causes (political, social, religious, economics, academics and foreign) of terrorism. Table values are evident that for the causes of terrorism i.e. Politics;  $F(2, 264) = .511, p = .600$ ; Social:  $F(2, 264) = 1.089, p = .338$ ; Religious:  $F(2, 264) = .600, p = .550$ ; Economics:  $F(2, 264) = 4.799, p = .009$ ; Academics:  $F(2, 264) = 4.337, p = .014$ ; Foreign:  $F(2, 264) = 5.451, p = .005$ , there was statistically significant difference in perceptions of students regarding the cause (economics, academics, and foreign) of terrorism, whereas there was no significant difference in students perceptions regarding political, social, and religious causes of terrorism.

**Table 7**

*Comparisons to Check Difference in Students' Perceptions about Causes of Terrorism on the Basis of Different Programs*

Factors of Terrorism		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Political	Between Groups	24.295	3	8.098	3.206	.024
	Within Groups	664.379	263	2.526		
	Total	688.674	266			
Social	Between Groups	119.607	3	39.869	2.969	.032
	Within Groups	3532.079	263	13.430		
	Total	3651.685	266			
Religious	Between Groups	153.455	3	51.152	2.899	.036
	Within Groups	4639.849	263	17.642		
	Total	4793.303	266			
Economics	Between Groups	63.092	3	21.031	3.048	.029
	Within Groups	1814.781	263	6.900		
	Total	1877.873	266			
Academics	Between Groups	18.148	3	6.049	4.665	.003
	Within Groups	341.028	263	1.297		
	Total	359.176	266			
Foreign	Between Groups	146.593	3	48.864	.930	.427
	Within Groups	13825.273	263	52.568		
	Total	13971.865	266			

Table presents the results of one way ANOVA that was applied to find the difference in mean scores of students enrolled in different programs (BS, M.A/MSc, M.PHIL, and PhD) for causes of terrorism (political, social, religious, economics, academics and foreign). Opinions were obtained from students upon different causes i.e. Politics;  $F(3, 263) = 3.206, p = .024$ ; Social:  $F(3, 263) = 2.969, p = .032$ ; Religious:  $F(3, 263) = 2.899, p = .036$ ; Economics:  $F(3, 263) = 3.048, p = .029$ ; Academics:  $F(3, 263) = 4.665, p = .003$ ; Foreign:  $F(3, 263) = .930, p = .427$ . It is evident that there was statistically significant difference in the opinions of BS, M.A/MSc, M.PHIL, and PhD students regarding political, social, religious, economics, and academics causes of terrorism. Whereas, there was no significant difference among students' perceptions regarding the foreign cause of terrorism.

## **Discussion**

This study was conducted to investigate the causes of terrorism. The current study lends substantial support to the studies of Abbas (2008) and Qaiser (2011) which uncovered that terrorism is contagious disease in the world and there are many causes (poverty, joblessness, racial and religious extremism, absence of human rights, foreign interference, and social discrimination) of this brutality. Poor people involve in extremist activities due to unemployment and social injustice. The study also supports the results of Hudson' study (2002), which exposed that poor borders management, is also a cause of terrorism. Those countries are more targeted of brutality which did not pay attention on borders management in the past. Similarly, Pakistan is also facing borders management problems with neighboring countries. One thing is clear that proper borders management is vital for peace. Peace is impossible without proper borders management.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

People all over the world are facing terrorism nationally and internationally. The individuals, who have brutal kind of mentality, are the enemies of the mankind and are greatest threat to the peace of the world. All these situations are causing of terrorism and many other problems one of which is educational institutions and academic life of students. The satisfactory and peaceful environment is important for better learning of students at any level. The results of current study showed that there are many reasons of terrorism according to university students. It is concluded that there is various reasons of terrorism in country, like absence of patience, misinterpretations of religious thoughts, desire to get Paradise, poverty and joblessness, flaws in foreign policy, foreign interference in internal matters of the country, financial insecurity, lack of education, lack of political vision, discrimination in society, media exploitation, feeble justice system, funding from other countries, and border management issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Thus, it is concluded that individuals take part in criminal activities when they are deprived from society in order to their basic human rights.

Brutal and impassive activities have psychological impact on people' mind. They cannot pay their attention on the tasks properly and their lives are also affected badly due to terrorism. There is need of educational reforms in society. The curriculum may be revised which promote the ideology of nation, endurance, and peace among individuals.

The requirement of this era for the whole nations is to eradicate the causes of terrorism for achieving the desired goals of the society, prosperity of humanity and get success. There is need to eliminate the poverty from society by proving jobs, because unemployment is destroying skillful minds and economic growth of the country. The real

teachings of religions should be taught to the students by the teachers and parents mandatory. To eliminate the roots of terrorism, it is necessary to educate the people and spread the peace in society and also in all over the world. Foreign interference should be stopped. There is need of a strong foreign policy to deal the external matters with other countries efficiently. It may be helpful to control the terrorism and also other criminal activities. Because when there will be friendly environment among countries, then every group of extremists will think hundred times before to do the brutal acts. There is need to concentrate on borders management. Government may take necessary and solid steps to tackle this issue because poor borders management is a main cause of terrorism. Finally, every country should give the respect to other nations to promote the equality and brotherhood, because it is important to get rid from the virus of terrorism.

### References

- Abbas, Z. (2008). *Pakistan's undeclared war*. Retrieved, 2008-10-19 from <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.
- Aggarwal, J. (2010). *Principles, methods and techniques of teaching* (2<sup>nd</sup>ed.). New Delhi: Vikas Publication House Pvt Ltd.
- Ahmad, & Irfan. (2005). *Between moderation and radicalization*. Global Networks, pp. 279-299.
- Ahmed, R. (2009). Interface of political opportunism and Islamic extremism in Bangladesh: *Rhetorical Identification in Government Response Communication Studies*, 60(1), 82–96. doi: 10.1080/10510970802623633
- Chitkara, M. G. (2003). *Combating terrorism*. New Delhi: APG Publishing Corporation.
- Hanushek, E. A. (2008). The economic benefits of improved teacher quality. In N. C. Soguel & P. Jaccard (Eds.), *Governance and Performance of Education Systems* (pp. 107–135).
- Hudson, A. (2002). *Who becomes a terrorist and why? The government report on profiling terrorists*. Federal Research Division, the Lyons Press: USA.
- Hussain, Z. (2007). *Frontline Pakistan: The struggle with militant Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Krueger, & Maleckova. (2001). *Palestinian centre for policy and survey research*. New York: Macmillan Publishing.

- Nye, B., Konstantopoulos, S., & Hedges, L. V. (2004). How large are teacher effects? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26, 237–257
- OECD. (2005). *Teachers matter, attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*. Paris: OECD.
- Paul, L., & Brahma, C. (1988). *Nuclear terrorism: Threat, perception, and response in South Asia studies in conflict and terrorism*, p: 447–470.
- Qaiser, A. (2011). *Effects of terrorism*. Retrieved from [www.slideshare.net/FEconomist/effects of terrorism-on-Pakistan-economy](http://www.slideshare.net/FEconomist/effects-of-terrorism-on-Pakistan-economy)
- Rana, M. A. (2003). *Gateway to terrorism*. London: New Millennium.
- Rana, M. A. (2005). *The seeds of terrorism*. London: New Millennium.
- Wossmann, L. (2002). *Schooling and the quality of human capital*. Berlin: Springer.
- Zalman, A. (2007). *A guide to different type of terrorism*. Terrorism issue. Retrieved July 23, 2010 from: [http://www.terrorism about.com/od/whatisterrorism.htm](http://www.terrorism.about.com/od/whatisterrorism.htm)