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Socio- Economic Status of Minorities of Punjab: A Critical Analysis of Christians

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ABSTRACT

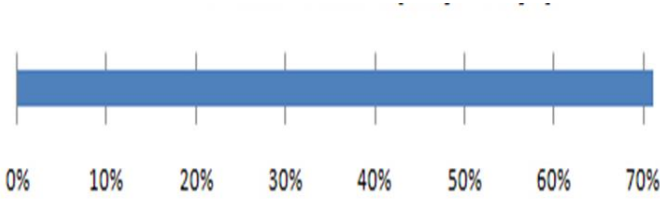
This paper essentially deals with the socio-economic status minorities in Punjab with special reference to the Christians of this region. The Christians comprise the largest minority of Pakistan in general and Punjab in particular. Their basic beliefs have many similarities with the other followers of Holy Books. In this way there is unity in diversity in Pakistan when the analysts go through these aspects. This study has a peculiar practical utility especially in a global environment where a hot debate is going on in reference with the honor of the Prophets, in the name of the liberty, which is highly condemnable.

Keywords: *Socio-economic status, Minorities, Punjab, Christians*

Introduction

The study of Socio-economic status of the Christians of Punjab is significant for the reason that it is divided in diversity. In the first part they are playing very active role in the health and education fields but despite their very effective role their life standard is pathetic and most of the population is taken as the second rate citizens. although the constitution guarantees all of their rights but practically speaking the majority of the society does not take them at par with them. In Punjab they comprise 2% of the population which is a very small number but their social and professional is very attractive and invites many researchers to work on it to dig out the causes to suggest remedies. It is quite interesting to talk about the strength of labor force in Christian community of Lahore which is 71%. The employment rate structure and nature of jobs to analyze the potential and utilization situation is given below (Christians in Pakistan, 2013).

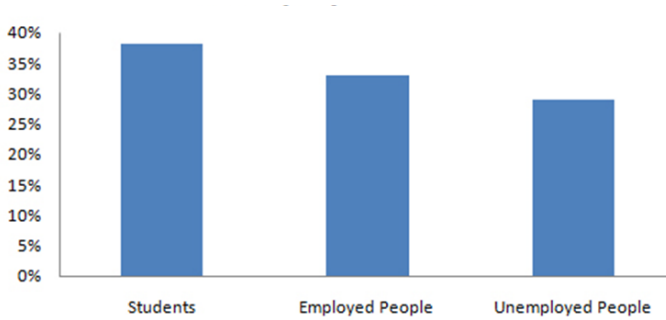
Figure 1 Labor force (16yr-60yr)



Source: Christians in Pakistan.com

In this study unemployment rate are also determined for Christians in Lahore. For the sample is divided into three categories students having from 1 to 20. Employed people and unemployed people. According to data analysis there are 38% students, percentage of employed people residing in Lahore Pakistan is 33% but still the 29% are unemployed and implies less job opportunities for the Christians due to this high unemployment rate. Result indicates that no doubt Christian population has higher value of labor force but has very less job opportunities as employment rate is just 37% (Christians in Pakistan,2013)

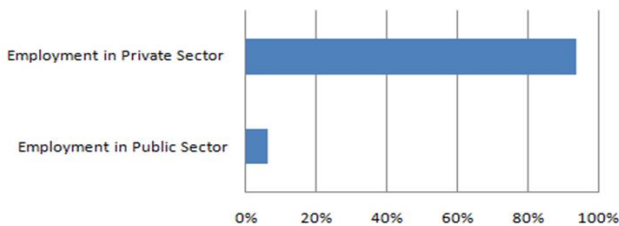
Figure 2: Unemployment rate



Source: Christians in Pakistan.Com

In depth survey also makes comparison of working labor of Christians in public and private sectors. Employment in private and public sectors is 6 percent while out of total employed workers are 94 percent.

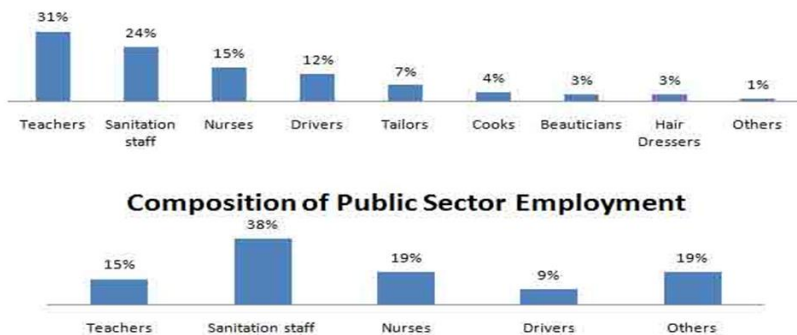
Figure 3 Employment in private and public sectors



Source: Christians in Pakistan.Com

Further exploration addresses the nature of the jobs on which Christians of Lahore are working in both private and public sector. Structural composition of private and public sector employment speaks out that in private sector majority of the Christians are employed in teaching and sanitation departments having 31% and 24% respectively. While in public sector 38% of the Christians works under sanitation field having higher percentage as compare to other jobs (Christians in Pakistan, 2013).

Figure 4 Composition of private and public sector employment



Source: Christians in Pakistan.Com

There has not been done much for the fieldwork and data collection about the socio economic status of Christians although they comprise the largest religious minority in Punjab This analysis may evolve and revolve around the assumption that the social status of any person or community is largely based upon their economic conditions but this assumption may be blended here with the element of religion. The researcher desired to get the first-hand knowledge and from the primary sources of survey. The researcher conducted a survey of 403 families of Lahore and nearby areas to find their direct data. Here in the process around 1723 people were questioned. It is quite interesting to note that if the basis standard of class 5th as the bottom table, the result is that they have 70% literacy rate which is quite high and encouraging but it the bottom table is enhanced to the Matric or the 10th class it immediately goes down to the figure of 29%. The results go further down when the table rises further and it passes through the Intermediate, graduation, master and even PhD. It remains between 0.39%,3% and like 9%. The concern of the researcher is that at the school level the Christian Schools enjoy the highest reputation and that they have mostly the Christian staff members but at the higher level the situation is quite adverse and this diversity is absolutely alarming (Christians in pakistan,2013)

Figure 5 Family size of Christians



Source: Christians in Pakistan.Com

Talking about the population structure of Christians in given sample male and female has 52 and 48 percent share respectively, furthermore 25% of the Christian population in Lahore has age limit from 15 and below 38% of the Christians has age from 16-30 years, Christian people having age limit from 31-45 years are 24% in numbers, while just 13% of the population is above 45 years. Labor is considered as having the age limit of 16-60 and our survey regards the Christian community in Lahore has about 71% population as a labor force. These statistics reflect that the Christian Youth deserves more attention of their own Christian community, the public sector and the Christian world should also play its role for their development of the Christians in general and the youth in particular.

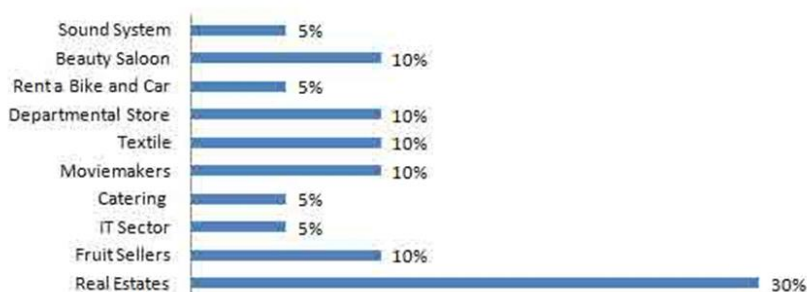
The utilization of human resource and skill enhances the economic status and thus the social status. It is worth mentioning that the Christians of Lahore are frustrated in the field of employment of Christians in Lahore is 33% which 29% of the Christians of Lahore are unemployed. It reflects their pathetic and diverse situation. It also pushes them in the dark ditches of frustration and of course the bottom line of society. This joblessness or unemployment causes the average monthly income of a family average five individuals is 12,333 rupees (\$38). Per- capita daily income in a family is \$0.92. it is no doubt below the poverty line of any standard of living. Out of this monthly income 67% of the individuals chief –expenditures are on food items and just 9% of them spend on this status reflect a very poor position of their life and social status. The participation of Christian community in business sector is also very small with the figure of 1.15% only, it provides the food for thought for those who think about the integration of society. It is suggested that the banking sector may give some latitude to the Christian community for business (Christians in Pakistan, 2013)

COMMERCIAL INTERACTION AND ACTIVITIES

The analysis of commercial interaction and business activities of Christian community of Lahore, deals where their percentage share involvement in business, nature of businesses and willingness to start a business will be explored. Firstly, involvement of Christians in business is examined, where result of this query is very shocking as just 1.15% of the Christians families are involved running their own business while rest of the Christians families 98.85%do not have any business. Nations dominate others on the basis of their business and economic influence while

here in this research it has been found that very few numbers of Christians are involved in business affairs so have less influence on the economic decisions of the region and country and have less policy involvement. It is also interesting that the nature of the businesses is determined where out of the 1.15% of the Christian families mostly doing their business in real estate having 30%. While some other businesses i.e. Beauty salon, departmental stores, textile, fruit and vegetables and etc. have mixed trend.

Graph 6 Nature of business done by Christians



Source: Christians in Pakistan.Com

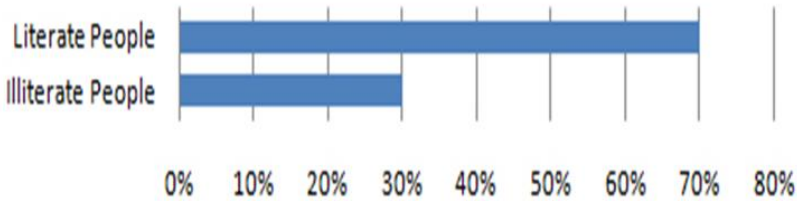
It is worth noting that it has been determined that whether Christian people wanted to do business in future. Results indicate that 60% of the Christian families are willing to do a business but due to lack of financial resources, human capital and social discriminations they are unable to do so. While 40% Christians don't want to start their own. This section fortifies that in business sector of Lahore just 1.15% of the Christian people are involved in business and majority of them doing jobs, but they are willing to start business but due to lack of resources are not capable to do so. Financial, social and skilled constraints are appearing as hurdles in them in this segment income provision of Christians will be explored. Survey explains that the average monthly income of a family *“(average five individuals) is 12,333 rupees (\$138) while Per-capita daily income in a family is \$0.92 (82 rupees) that is well below the poverty line defined by World Bank which is \$1.25.”* Distribution of the monthly income is also explored which highlights that 21% individuals spend greater amount of their monthly income on utility bills and rents, while just 9% of the individuals have greater expenditures for education purposes and 3% of the individuals spend high proportion of budget on other factors (medical, transport etc.). These results reflect low level of income earned by the Christians in Lahore and are not sufficient for their needs. Most of the income is used for food purposes while very less is utilized on education and which is major concern for Christian community (Christians in Pakistan, 2013).

Analysis of socio-economic factors

- 6 per cent of Pakistani Christians have primary education ·
- 4 per cent of Pakistani Christians have high school education ·
- 1 per cent of Pakistani Christians have college education ·
- 0.5 per cent of Pakistani Christians have professional education

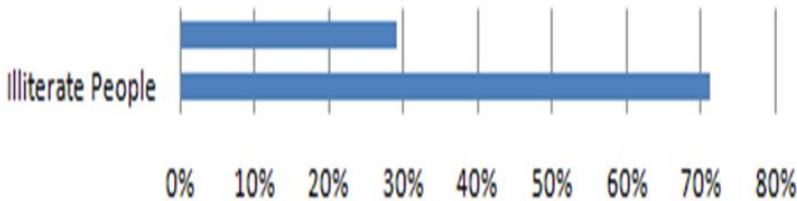
A report from the United Nations Development Program 2014 stated that Pakistan remained one of the countries with a low human development and showing little sign of improvement. It is our conclusion that overall the situation of education in Pakistan is alarming. The government needs to take the necessary steps to achieve the goals they signed up for in 2000 with the Dakar Framework for Action. Subsequently, there are several reasons why it is more difficult for minorities to receive adequate education. The general criteria for literate and literacy is a person who can just read and write and the bottom line does not rest on any degree or qualification certificate. But here in this research the basic qualification is taken as 5th standard (Christians in Pakistan,2013).

Figure 7 Literacy rate 5th standard



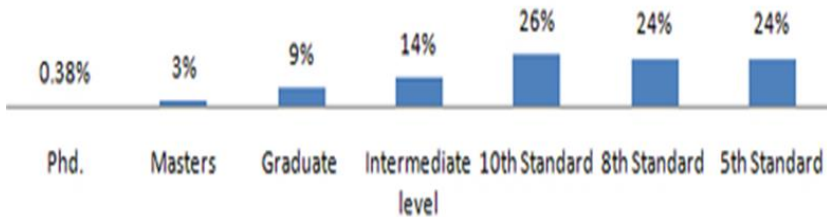
Source: Christians in Pakistan.Com

Figure 8 Literacy rate 10th standard



Source: Christians in Pakistan.Com

Figure 9 Educational composition



Source: Christians in Pakistan.Com

The Christians at Lahore

According to official statistic of 2017 the total Christian population of Pakistan is 2.8 million with respect to the total population and 1.6 percent of nation populace. The majority of the Christians were residing in Punjab and western Punjab region had a total population of 53,846,000. The urban population of Christians is 268,775 and rural population is 99,314. This data shows that the Christian population represents only a very small portion of the total population and numerically speaking their claim of representation in national or even the provincial representative bodies remains very small. However, it is the system of local bodies where they can be properly represented. There can be another solution and it is the nomination of Christian community on the general seats by the political parties. In this situation the leaders will have to keep in mind the sentiments of the voters at large. (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

The Allocation of Developmental Fund for Christians

Punjab government has allocated a grant of 30 million Rupees for Christian community. Mr. Ejaz Alam Augustine, Punjab's Minister for Human Rights and Minorities Affairs revealed that government will give advance salaries to Christian employees. Provincial Minister told that the government is dedicated to provide equal opportunities to the religious minorities. He said that government is working on plans for Minority Empowerment package. Talking to the participants during a convention, Provincial Minister said that the government is keen on chalking out a policy for construction of worship places of minorities Mr. Ejaz further told the participants that all must put in their efforts to develop the spirit of co-existence by maintaining religious harmony and peace. At the same time, Provincial Rights Minister said that parents should focus on their children's education so that they grow up as useful members of the society. In connection to the International Human Rights Day 2018, Ejaz Alam told The Nation that government had decided to introduce human rights as a subject at the schools and the Punjab University. Additionally, the provincial minister said that a task force is working to safeguard citizen's rights. The Minorities Empowerment Package will help marginalized religious communities of Punjab. The package included, implementation of minorities' quota for jobs and education, system for remission of sentences, skill development training. *"We are also focusing on skills development and have kept aside Rs25 million for scholarships. We are also working on development and housing schemes specifically for the minority community,"* he added. *"Utilisation of the development budget 2018-19 has started through a Minority Development Fund worth Rs450m and, under the Punjab Local Government Act 2013, the department is also ensuring implementation of the by-laws for registration of marriages among the minorities".* (Dawn 11th December 2018)

Lahore-based educational NGO Starfish Pakistan recently revealed the plight of such institutions in a survey of 604 schools for the poorest Christians in 23 districts of Punjab, Islamabad and Karachi. About 34 percent of these schools are associated to Catholic or Protestant churches. The "For a Better World" survey offers an insight into the state of education for 85,000 Pakistani Christian children studying in low-cost schools like Mission School. According to the findings:

61 percent of teachers have only studied to intermediate level (grade 12) or below, while 3,374 teachers have no professional qualifications Some teachers are working

for less than 2,000 rupees (US\$15) a month. Student absenteeism is a very serious issue. 24 percent of children have no textbooks. Only 14 percent of schools have any electricity backup. 78 schools (13 percent) have no toilets. 54 schools (9 percent) have no blackboards. 133 schools (22 percent) have no access to usable drinking water. Only 218 schools (36 percent) are receiving subsidy funding from the government, churches or NGOs (Ucanews 25th October 2018).

Christians in Pithy

Even though there are Christians belonging to the middle and upper class, Christians are highly represented in unskilled jobs, such as sweeping, collecting garbage or picking fruit or crops. Christians form around 1.5 percent of the Pakistani population and are the largest non-Muslim minority in central Punjab and Christian's representation is 80 percent in sanitation work. Yet, there are efforts made to give non-Muslims better opportunities on the job market. In 2009, the Christian Member of Parliament Shahbaz Bhatti initiated the job quota of 5 per cent for all religious minorities in the public sector. On May 26, 2009, the Federal Government issued a notification ordering such a quota and for provincial governments to implement these orders at their level. But there have not been many changes when it comes to the number of jobs offered to Christians. In 2013, the Chairman of All Pakistan Minorities Democratic Movement mentioned the lack of will on the part of decision makers and the systematic discrimination of minorities as reasons behind non-implementation. As an example, the chairman refers to the struggle of Christians in finding a job at the University of Sargodha, which is located in a small city in the province of Punjab. Though located in a region where most of the Christians in Pakistan live, even after the notification of the quota it continued to finding bureaucratic ways to avoid hiring non-Muslim employees. A complaint was filed with the Ombudsman in 2012, that confirmed the violation of the quota requirement. However, one year later, the university had not changed its conduct. Another example is the Punjab government, who issued a similar notification on March 27, 2010 and also held a five per cent quota for religious minorities. It does make exceptions, however, for an appointment made by promotion or transfer, temporary jobs no longer than six months, occasional vacancies and vacancies reserved for minorities for which qualified candidates are not available. Also, it is said that people do not seem to be aware of the required quota. Last year, it was revealed that even the Lahore High Court sets a wrong example by failing to implement the quota. Its advertisement does not mention the quota for the religious minorities, but it does for disabled people. A subsequent example would be an advertisement from the Punjab Institute of Cardiology Lahore. It states that the candidate for the position of sanitary worker can only apply to a non-Muslim. Since there is only one major religious minority in Lahore Christians the job is clearly meant for a Christian. Due to rising tension and religious violence, the Supreme Court issued a decision in a landmark case in 2014 on the situation of minorities in Pakistan. It issued directives to the government to take concrete steps to improve the positions of minorities. According to the Peace Education and Development Foundation, the decision was not met with enthusiasm and governments seemed unwilling to review the judgment. In its report from 2016, however, it does state that Baluchistan has good ratio of minority representation in government jobs and that, in Punjab, the job quota is advertised and that compliance succeeded due to community pressure. The federal

government has a score of 3 out of 5 when it comes to the implementation of the job quota (The Friday Times, 23rd October, 2015).

Political Orientation and Participation

Pakistan's parliament takes not even an hour to pass the amendment to clear the ground for a convicted person to become the head of a political party. Nearly 100 meetings of the Electoral Reform Committee were held before its members could finalize the Election Bill 2017. Yet the committee has not bothered to improve the representation of minorities since 2002. While reserved seats for women in legislative bodies continue to rise, the representation of minorities has declined drastically. Even as concentration of political power continues to deepen in a few dynasties, the political and social space for minorities is shrinking. This would seem almost deliberate. History and data uncover the truth. In 1985, ten seats (or 2.4%) were reserved for minorities in the National Assembly of 237. It dropped to 2.9% in 2002 when the military government of General Musharraf increased National Assembly seats to 342. While he should be appreciated for replacing the separate electorate with the joint electorate system, the method of their election turned into a selection and reportedly it turned minority MPs into toadies and it further strengthened the stranglehold of party leaders. Sadly, the representation of minorities also declined in all provincial assemblies too. For instance, in the Sindh Assembly until 1997 elections, there were nine out of 109 seats, which remain nine even today while the total number of seats had jumped to 168 in 2002. Resultantly, minorities' quota was almost halved from 8.2% to 5.3%. In the Punjab Assembly, too, minorities' quota declined from 3.2% to 2.1%. Almost all parliamentary parties have been in power somewhere in the country. They overhauled the Constitution twice but didn't improve an iota of representation for minorities. In fact, the injustice continues. Punjab has witnessed slaughter in the physical and political sense too. Many areas where minorities were in substantial majority were divided across union councils in order to suppress the electoral majority of a minority. For instance, Warispura neighborhood in Faisalabad city with 16,000 Christians was divided across three union councils. Similar delimitation exercises were held in some districts of Sindh. In order to suppress the majority of Hindus in these districts, constituencies were carved across two or three districts. For instance, NA-235 spreads over Sanghar-Mirpurkhas and Umerkot. As the new delimitation is going to take place soon, it is imperative to end this shameless gerrymandering. Let's keep an eye on that Consider the vote bank of minorities in various National Assembly constituencies. According to 2012 electoral rolls, in eight constituencies registered minority voters were between 25,000 and 100,000 (or 25% — 49.3%). In another eight and 12 constituencies, minorities had votes between 50,000 and 99,999; and between 25,000 and 49,999, respectively. Moreover, in 75 constituencies, they had between 24,999 and 10,000 votes. Out of 13, in eight of the Lahore constituencies their vote bank was more than 5% and the total number reached 230,000, which is equal to one provincial assembly constituency. In NA-125 alone, Christians had nearly 48,000 votes. NA-128 and NA-127 had 34,096 and 31,000 minority votes, respectively. Also, in NA-83 Christians had 31,000 votes. In most democracies, minorities don't have reserved seats in parliament, yet people find a meaningful percentage of political representation of them in parliament and local councils. For instance, the Lord Mayor of London is a Muslim of Pakistan origin. And there are 14 Muslim MPs in the House of Commons. In the Netherlands' parliament, 15% of

the MPs belong to various minority groups. What happens there? Political parties issue tickets to minority party members who actively work with parties or have influence over their communities. This has gradually increased the representation of minorities in Western countries. The quota system and the way quotas are being implemented have in fact caused more harm than good to the well-being of minorities in Pakistan, because most minority MPs are reluctant to speak out. For instance, the results of the sixth population census have been released but the government has failed to announce the populations of minorities despite having Kamran Michael a Christian as the federal minister for statistics. Also, people found silence on the part of the minority MPs during the 30 long months when the Electoral Reform Committee had overhauled our electoral laws. Shamelessly, no party nominated a minority MP as its member, neither minority MPs made this an issue. All political leaders look alike, as they have now shown that minorities have no stake in Pakistan's legislative and governance structures and by keeping quota leads to MPs maintaining silence during the whole process. Therefore, it seems sensible to demand abolition of the quota. It should be replaced by a direct and democratic method of election parties should issue tickets to minority candidates on general seats in constituencies where minorities have significant presence. Precedence has already been established. Section 206 of the Elections Act 2017 says political parties, "through a transparent and democratic procedure and while making the selection of candidates on general seats shall ensure at least five per cent representation of women candidates. This has paved the way to ask for an amendment to the Elections Act for the direct representation of minorities too. As the fact that dynasties which have been made 'electable' and allowed to monopolize the constituencies, would oppose any reform that affects their control. Therefore, in order to neutralize their opposition, the constituencies where minorities have substantial/significant presence should be declared multi-member constituencies, having two directly elected members one of them must belong to a minority community. As stated above, there are about 28 such constituencies. The same formula could be applied for provincial assemblies. The concept of multi-member constituency is being practiced in many Western democracies and in our country too. Under the Local Government Act of 2001 and the K-P Local Government Act of 2013, the tier of union council has been kept as multi-member constituency. Each voter has six ballot papers one each for various categories of councilors, including the minority. This proposal the same for National and provincial assemblies. Each voter should have two ballot papers white for minority and green for majority. This will build a healthy competition between the two MNAs and two MPAs as the constituents will have access to both. Moreover, the multi-member constituency method will also deepen inter-faith harmony and end extremism a major objective of the National Action Plan. No wonder for centuries human beings have been trying to be humane. Yet, it seems an unfinished agenda. Sadly, often the protagonists of religions happen to be in the forefront of violations of the teachings of the founders of the religions they follow. Let's remind them what the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had said in his last sermon "An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white" (Bos,2016).

CONCLUSIONS

The study reaches at a point where there are a lot of points of agreement between the followers of different religions especially the followers of the Holy Books. It may also be remarked with reservations that they comprise one family of the faithful and the followers of Oneness of Almighty Allah. They believe in the dignity of humanity. The honor of Women is also very significant in the followers of these religions Both the Muslims and the Christians are living together in this land without any major issue of conflict and tension. It is really a point of honor for the believers of humanity that both the Muslims and the Christians are the stronger champions of Global peace and harmony.

Christians have played a significant role in the national development of Pakistan especially in the areas of health and education. Their contribution is commendable. Not only in Punjab rather all over Pakistan the Christian schooling is trustworthy and highly honored. The people of all the classes and religions like to see their young ones as the students of these institutions. It is also worth mentioning that almost all the highly dignified educational institutions have been established in the pre partition era and by the Christians and the British government. There is no harm in its recognition.

In the field of defense, the Christians occupy a very brilliant a high place, who can forget their services in military in the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971. They poured their blood quite bravely. They stood shoulder to shoulder with Muslims in the defense of this mother land Pakistan. The history of Judiciary cannot be completed without the names of the Judges belonging to the followers of other religions including Christians. The study may be summed up with the sentence that Pakistan is the house of the followers of all the religions.

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