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ETHNIC CONSTRAINTS IN THE URBAN SOCIETY OF KARACHI INVESTIGATION OF SOME BASIC BACKGROUND FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

Problems associated with ethnic constraints are wide ranging and have affected societies throughout the ages. In a country like Pakistan which appeared on the face of the earth on common ideological grounds, the recent escalation of ethnic constraints is surprising but has to be accepted as a factual phenomenon. The problem has recently achieved a higher magnitude, particularly in the city of Karachi, where people of various ethnic groups reside. It needs careful social investigation and study. This paper deals with the first part of the study i.e. the basic background factors are presented in this article.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic constraints are a universal phenomena that have repeatedly appeared in human societies all over the world and affected the peace, tranquillity and welfare of various races to different degrees on common ideological grounds. The recent escalation of ethnic in countries like Pakistan, that have common ideological grounds but this has to be accepted as a factual phenomenon. In a city like Karachi, which has attained an international character due to the cultural influences of innumerable ethnic groups, the factors other than our common socio-religious bonds appear to be equally strong and need be investigated.

Ethnic bias is a way of thinking when an individual or a group of individuals consider one's own culture, way of life, language, race or abilities better than that of others. Though we regard ethnic biases as irrational, and to reflect some sort of racist considerations, yet it is found to a lesser or greater extent in most nations of the world. Amongst the different attributes of ethnic constraints, emotional attitudes have always formed the driving force, and sometimes patriotism is considered to be an imperative part of ethnic biases.

Ethnic constraints also involve a double standard i.e. a belief in two codes or way of life, one for themselves and one for others. These constraints express themselves in various ways and to differing intensities. The attitude of racial superiority is deep rooted in some societies and is centuries old. At different times of history, nationals such as Greeks. Italians, Germans and others have been claiming their ethnic superiority. Even today every nation is exercises one or other type of ethnic constraint.

It is now universally agreed that ethnic superiority is a myth and it is too extravagant and irrational to be heeded. Ethnic constraints are widely regarded as a menace to modern society. The notion is considered to be the root cause of group hatreds and moral injustices. Placing one's own wisdom, achievements and worldly progress as based on racial or ethnic superiority and relegating other ethnic groups, tribal or other societies to an inferior status due to their so called ethnic backwardness are now unacceptable ideas. It is tantamount to over looking the virtues of others and denying basic human equality. The problem has recently achieved undue magnitude in Pakistan, particularly in Karachi, and needs careful social investigation. It is planned to study it in its various details. The first part of the study i.e. the basic background factors, are presented in this article.

METHODOLOGY

The study was based on a questionnaire, each question spread into a number of sub-questions. The questions covered a variety of aspects focusing attention on different basic ingredients of ethnic constraints. The universe of the study was students studying at Karachi University, randomly drawn from students from each department. Details are as follows:

Chemistry	-	20
Economics	-	20
Mass Communication	-	20
Mathematics	-	20
Sociology	-	20
Zoology	20	
Total :-		120

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The work presented here is mainly concerned with the basic background factors that have generated ethnic constraints in the urban society of Karachi. The respondents being students of Karachi University were regarded as an enlightened segment of our population and were supposed to be able to respond intelligently with precise opinion. They were of all age groups, both sexes and from a number of ethnic backgrounds. A brief comment below is based on the data given here in Table-1.

Table-1

Some fundamental characteristics of sex, age ethnic origin and urban/rural background of respondents

Character frequency		No.	Percentage
I.	**Sex**		53.33
	Male	64	46.67
	Female	56	
II.	**Age Groups**		
	Below 20 Years	15	12.52
	21 - 22 "	42	35.00
	23 - 24 "	34	28.33
	25 - 26 "	20	16.66
	26 - above "	9	7.56
III.	**Ethnic Origin**		
	Punjabi	38	31.66
	Pushto	2	1.67
	Urdu	72	60.00
	Sindhi	3	2.50
	Balochi	1	0.84
	All others	4	3.33
IV.	**Urban/Rural Background**		
	Urban	104	86.00
	Rural	16	13.40

Considering our sampling unit as the universe for the purposes of the present study, we come to understand from the Table-1 above that the population was diverse with regard to sex, distribution of respondents into age groups, ethnic groups and rural/urban backgrounds. The same should be expected with minor variations, the characteristics of the population of the whole city of Karachi. The males were 53.33% and the females 46.67%. It would be possible to assume that females being relatively less exposed to external influences have the temptation to retain family customs for a much longer time. They also receive relatively more information about family background from the parents, as compared to males whose household training gets diluted by external influences of the society in which they normally spend more time. The large number of respondents (35%) were of the 21 - 22 years age group and the second largest number was of 23 - 24 years age group (28.33%). Though teenagers are more emotional and more susceptible to petty parochial temptations, but ages of 21-22 or 23-24 years are not much far away from that stage. However the students at this age start forming definite opinions and try to argue within themselves about the legitimacy of their views. The respondents above the age of 23 years more than 50% and so it is true that their opinions should on the whole be considered as legitimate views and should not be dismissed summarily as emotional.

The distribution by ethnic and linguistic origin is obviously and clearly a picture of the city of Karachi in miniature. Though the number of respondents from other ethnic groups i.e. Pushto speaking (1.67%), Sindhi speaking (2.50%) and Balochi speaking (0.84%) so little as to be negligible. Another visible factor is that the Urdu speaking and Punjabi speaking groups possess considerable similarity in their physical appearance, language speaking habits, dress and eating habits. Due to intermarriages, the two ethnic groups are merging and developing mutually acknowledged cultural traditions. So it can be deduced that 60% + 31.66% = 991.66% of the two groups is a highly dominating factor atleast superficially if other differences are not considered. The people of Pushto, Sindhi and Balochi speaking areas represent tribal cultures and their differences of traditions, dress, language and physical appearance easily put them apart from all other ethnic groups. The respondents were 86.6% of urban and 13.4% of rural backgrounds and belonged predominantly to families exposed to a modern way of life and its limitations.

The educational level of the respondents, their parents and the income group and category of occupation of their parents has been given in Table-2.

Table - 2

Educational levels of respondents, their parents and Parents professions and incomes

	Characteristic	Number	%
I	**Educational level of respondents**		
	Honours	49	40.83
	Masters	71	59.17
II	**Parents Educational level**		
	Father		
	Below SSE	21	17.54
	Upto HSSE	24	20.00
	Graduate	50	41.66
	Post Graduate	22	18.30
	Any other	3	2.50
III	**Professions of Parents**		
	Govt./Semi Govt. Service	58	48.33
	Private Service	15	12.50
	Business	45	37.50
	Retired	02	01.66
IV	**Parent's Income/Month**		
	Below Rs. 5000	40	33.33
	5001-8000	28	23.33
	8001-12000	29	24.17
	12001-above	23	19.17

The Table-2 above shows that a clear majority of respondents (59.17%) belonged to Master's level of classes and were expected to be conscious of ethnic constraints around them. Their parents, particularly fathers were educated, as 41.66% of them were graduates. More than 50% were either graduates or more highly educated. One can easily understand that the females of our society had lagged behind in education in earlier times. The same is reflected in this table as 65% of mothers of University students were below SSE level in their formal education. Nearly 50% 9 Actual 48.33%) of the parents were in Government or Semi-government Services. The income level of the parents of the University students is quite satisfactory. About 66.66% of them earned more than Rs. 5000 per month, of which 23.33% earned Rs. 5001-8000 per month, 24.17% between Rs. 8001-12000 and 19.17% more than Rs. 12001 per month. University education needs huge expenses on dress, books, stationary, fees, transport etc. In these circumstances very few people below an income of Rs. 5001 per month would be inclined to have his wards educated in University. The interaction of so many factors develops such an inequality in opportunities that if numerically or financially dominant groups make any undue advances and show an uncompromising attitude with less important groups, ethic constraints are liable to arise.

Table - 3

	Aspects	No.of opinions	%
I	Job available according to qualification.		
	Yes	34	28.33
	No	86	71.67
II	Means for finding jobs as per qualifications	33	26.40
	Parents influence	31	24.80
	Quota System	38	30.40
	Prejudice	23	19.40
	Any other		
III	Favour to Quota System in jobs.		
	Yes	26	21.66
	No	94	78.34
IV	Reasons for not favouring Quota System.	54	36.00
	Talent suffers	66	44.00
	Unqualified get encouraged	19	12.67
	Gives rise to tension and intergroup conflict.	11	7.34
	Other reasons		
V	Reasons for favouring Quota System.		

	Opens ways for development of backward area. Open job opportunities for downtrodden.	15 21	41.67 58.33
VI	Reasons for unemployment Shortage of resources. Quota System Excessive population. Poor Government policies. Influx from Rural areas. Other reasons.	 15 40 10 07 43 05	 12.50 33.33 08.33 05.83 35.83 04.16
VII	View that outsiders should return to their original provinces after education. Yes No	 106 14	 88.34 11.66
VIII	View about who is responsible for ethnocentrism Parents, Mass Media. Political leaders, Religious Leaders.	 23 77	 19.16 80.84

A simple perusal of the data presented in the above table would disclose the clue to inter group ethnic conflict in Karachi. As shown in item-1 above, 71.67% of the students expressed the view that they are unable to acquire jobs matching their qualifications. It is not difficult to conclude that in such circumstance, the value of higher education declines and students stop showing serious interest in their studies. They start protesting against this unfavorable response of the social system and resort to indiscipline against society, the administration and finally revolt against all elders. As a result of such as anomalous state of affairs, it is quite clear as expressed in item No.11.in the table above, that they can acquire a reasonable job if they utilize their ethnic prejudices (30.4%), influence of their parents if they are in high offices (26.8%) or if they can be accommodated through the quota system (24.8%) even if they are not properly qualified. Believing in natural justice, students were overwhelmingly of the view that there should not be any quota system (78.34%) in jobs, where only talent should be preferred. Only 21.66% students favoured the quota system. Those students who strongly expressed their opposition for quota system reasoned that the system was detrimental for talented persons (36%), which is unfair, and less qualified persons get unjustifiably encouraged (44%). Nearly 12.67% of the students expressed that the quota system was responsible for generating intergroup tensions.

On the other hand, the supporters of the quota system in jobs, held the view that this opened the ways for the development of backward areas (41.67%) and made it possible for those to get jobs who hold no influence in offices (58.33%). They consider that continued implementation of the quota system for persons from less developed areas would resolve the difference in possessing talent and so bring all

parts of the country at par with each other. The lack of availability of suitable jobs in the urban society of Karachi was attributed to a number of causes precisely. These views tabulated above were 12.5% due to shortage of national resources, 33.33% due to quota system which distributed the jobs inequitably and without regard to competitive talent, 08.33% to excessive population, which is increasing disproportionately with the development of resources, 5.83% to poor policies of the Government, 35.83% to influx of unemployed young persons from outside Karachi to seek some jobs in this industrialized city and 04.16% attributed the dearth of job opportunities to miscellaneous causes. On the basis of all these factors, it is no surprise that 88.34% of the respondents expressed the opinion that those students who have come from outside Karachi to get educated here should return to their respective areas and not stay in Karachi and compete with locals for jobs. This would remove the basic cause of inter-group ethnic tension.

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