

## **Social Discrimination, Need to Belong, and Psychological Wellbeing Among Religious Minorities in Pakistan**

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The basic objective of this study was to find out the relationship of social discrimination with psychological wellbeing in presence of the moderating role of need to belong among religious minorities in Pakistan. The sample consisted of 162 adult religious minorities participants. Online questionnaires which included demographics, Daily Life Discrimination Scale (Williams et al., 1997), Need to Belong Scale (Leary et al., 2013), and Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Kallay & Rus, 2014) comprising six subscales autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relations with others, personal growth and self-acceptance were used to collect the data. It was found that social discrimination has a negative relationship with the need to belong as well as psychological wellbeing. The need to belong played a moderating role in four sub variables of psychological wellbeing as autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance and positive relations with others. Results also indicated that women face more social discrimination as compared to men and the Hindu and Sikh minorities face more social discrimination as compared to the Christian minority. This research may provide a stimulus for the policy makers and future researchers to learn more about the social discrimination, need to belong and psychological wellbeing of the religious minorities in Pakistan, and further, to alleviate their sufferings.

*Keywords.* Social discrimination, need to belong, psychological wellbeing, religious minorities

All human beings are born with equal fundamental human rights and dignity but despite much technological, social and educational advancements of the modern age, are still being discriminated against

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at various levels due to different causes. Social discrimination is defined as the inequality faced by the individuals based on religion, illness, disability, sexual orientation or any other measure of diversity/change (Bhugra, 2016). Social discrimination can be measured in different domains i.e., from personal to political ones (Brown et al., 2000). Finke and Fox (2017) indicated that religious minorities face a lot of discrimination while they do not follow the state supported religion. Wybraniec and Finke (2001) pointed out that the discrimination comes from the state because the people in the state represent unnecessary competition for state supported religion. Discrimination faced by social groups is a result of social norms or organizational rules. The causes of discrimination may be cultural norms, beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes, ethnocentrism etc. Social discrimination on a larger scale involves exclusion, marginalization, social injustice, abuse, labelling and humiliation (Vang et al., 2019).

According to the 7<sup>th</sup> census of Pakistan, Bureau of Statistics (2017), Muslims constitute 96.2% of the total population. Remaining population consists of 1.6% Hindus, 1.59% Christians, 0.25% scheduled castes, 0.22% Qadiyanis [Ahmadis], and 0.07% other castes). Even though religious minorities barely occupy 4 percent of the country's total population, they are usually portrayed as anything but peaceful; whereas some religious minority groups and individuals are affluent in resources while most of them suffer the lack of access to education, sanitation, transportation and health providing services. Occupation discrimination is common which may include experiences of violence ranging from abductions, forced conversion, blasphemy accusations, target killings and attacks on the holy places of worship of minorities by some perverted, extremists and non-state actors as occasionally reported in mass media. This makes life miserable for them and they constantly live in a fear of unseen that may be waiting for them next (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2020). The rate of killings in the name of religious blasphemy is very high among the groups of religious minorities. Since 1990, more than 62 people have been killed in the name of blasphemy and in 2013, 39 cases of blasphemy were registered against 359 people, out of which 40 people have been on the death row for blasphemy (Mirza, 2020).

Religious minorities are largely a victim of vigilante violence. In the previous eras, various policies have been implemented in the country which has proved to be harmful for religious minorities. A discriminatory educational curriculum was introduced which adopted an "us vs them" narrative. The minority communities are highly threatened by the negative social identity, insecurity and a lack of protection towards the human rights which in turn is reflected in the

form of marginalization and disenfranchisement in their daily lives (Musnhey & Zahid, 2017).

According to the Article 20 of the prevailing Constitution of Pakistan (1973), there is guaranteed freedom of religion, and no discrimination based on faith, religion or belief. Additionally, there is equality and protection of the law, and no discrimination because of gender (Article 25). Pakistan is also a signatory of the UN Human Rights. But, despite many governments' efforts to mitigate or eliminate social discrimination against minorities, genders, and consequently, promotion of their psychological wellbeing, there is still a lot of room for improvement.

The desire of human beings to develop social relationships and then maintaining those ties is an inborn tendency which is adaptive and very important for the survival too (Ainsworth, 1989; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). All the complex creatures have a sense of belongingness in one way or another but only human beings are able to understand this concept and take control of the emotions in belonging. For the achievement of this sense, human beings need to have a constant, frequent, and pleasurable interaction with other group of people (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Maslow (as cited in Ryan & Deci, 2004) positioned it at the third rank among the hierarchy of basic needs. Before the belongingness, it is essential to achieve psychological and safety needs. Lee and Robin (1995) theorized how an individual seeks to confirm the independent sense of belongingness and avoids his feelings of loneliness and alienation. They divided the concept of belongingness into three major categories; that is, affiliation, companionship and connectedness (Vincent, 2016). Priming belongingness increases meaningfulness, even compared with participants primed with social support and social value (Lambert et al., 2013). So, the feeling of belongingness provides an individual a sense of stability, helps an individual create a social identity and allows an individual to pursue his/her goals (Haslam et al., 2009). The need of belonging is referred as an emotional bond which is very significant and is important for an overall development of an individual (Skinner et al., 2008). Maslow (as cited in Ryan & Deci, 2004) gave extreme importance to the sense of belongingness and social acceptance throughout the life of an individual. The sense of belonging is a safe unit and a psychological sense of connectedness with another individual. Human beings find it their basic need to live in a group where they can have a sense of belongingness and this group shall provide rooting and be a source of generation of social identity and social reference of the individual. The biggest reason to

form communities, groups and societies is the need/sense of belongingness (Bhugra, 2016).

The concept of wellbeing has been widely studied in scientific and lay literature (Beddington et al. 2008). Psychological wellbeing has its roots in eudemonic assumptions, according to which the wellbeing is related to the fact that whether an individual has lived their lives according to their nature or spirit, which was reflected in the Abraham Maslow's theory as self-actualization. There are two famous models of psychological wellbeing. One is Ryff's model (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) from which the scales of psychological wellbeing were derived. This model asserted that there are six dimensions which are the key to a good life and wellbeing. The six areas are anatomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery and positive relationships with others. Among these, self-acceptance is the most important construct (Abbott et al., 2006; Burns & Machin 2009). The second model is the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2001) which focuses on three basic psychological and social needs which are autonomy, competence and relatedness. This framework mostly emphasizes on internal and external drivers of individual motivation. It basically states that individuals are proactive agents in their lives who hold the power to master their own drives and emotions. Individuals are oriented towards growth inherently and they require a nurturing social environment for the striving of optimal development. The capacity to satisfy needs may vary with age, change in social status (retirement), relationships (widowed), physical health (dementia) and proximity to death. So, the satisfaction of these needs is important in the development of an individual (Abbott et al., 2006; Burns & Machin, 2009).

### **Rationale**

Minorities constitute only 3.73% of Pakistan's population but forced conversions, cases related to charges of blasphemy and prejudice, low tolerance towards religious minorities and over sensitivities of Muslim religious fanatics are on a rise in Pakistan for the last few years (The Diplomat, 2020) which may aggravate their perceptual social discrimination, and thwart their need to belong and psychological wellbeing. This research on the prevailing social problem would provoke a thematic discourse on how social discrimination influences the need to belong and psychological wellbeing of religious minorities in Pakistan.

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were phrased:

- H1. Social discrimination has negative relationship with need to belong and psychological wellbeing.
- H2. The need to belong moderates the relationship between social discrimination and psychological wellbeing.
- H3. Women face more social discrimination and have lower psychological wellbeing and a need to belong as compared to men.
- H4. Christians face less social discrimination as compared to other religious minorities in Pakistan.

## Method

### Sample

Cross sectional research design was used in this research. The data was collected through different regions of Pakistan in which 87 men and 75 women, a total of 162 individuals participated in the research out including 103 Christians, 41 Hindus and 18 Sikhs. Respondents included 131 unmarried and 31 married with 78 participants who belonged to nuclear family system and 84 participants living in joint family system. In addition, 107 participants belonged to urban family background and 55 belonged to rural family background. During Covid-19 Pandemic, it was difficult to approach people personally so, the internet Google Forms were used to conduct the research. Further, internet facility is not yet availed by everyone; while the forms were in English language which restricted sample to the literate persons only. Inclusion criteria was based on approaching respondents who were non-Muslims, English literate, married as well as unmarried men and women having internet connection and electronic gadgets (phone/laptop/tablet) with age range 18 to 60 years were included in the research. On the other hand, exclusion criteria were that the participants with any severe physical or mental health difficulties, acute and chronic disease/s were excluded.

### Measures

#### *Daily Life Discrimination Scale*

Daily Life Discrimination Scale (Williams et al., 1997) consists of nine items which captures the respondents' experiences with unfair

treatment in their day to day lives. It was measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1= *often* to 4 = *never*. Sample items consist of items included for example, You are treated with less respect than other people; People act as if they are afraid of you. The scores ranged from 9-36 with 9 representing the lowest score and showing less daily life discrimination while 36 represents the highest score with high social discrimination. The scale represents good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha .75) and test retest reliability of .63-.84 (Williams et al., 1997); while Cronbach alpha of .86 was achieved in the present study.

### ***Need to Belong Scale***

Need to Belong Scale (Leary et al., 2013) consists of 10 items used and rated on 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. It consists of items for instance, I want other people to accept me; I have a strong need to belong. The Cronbach's alpha reliability ranges from .78 to .87 with a median alpha of .81. The scores ranged from 10-50 with 10 representing the lower score and less need to belong and 50 being the highest score with the highest need to belong. Further, the test-retest reliability conducted by the authors after a 10 week evaluation came out to .87 (Leary et al., 2013). An alpha coefficient of .71 was acquired for this scale for this study.

### ***Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale***

Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Kallay & Rus, 2014) has different versions but 42 items version was used in this research. The scale basically measures six different domains such as Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life and Self-Acceptance. The responses were measured on a 6-point Likert scale with choices of responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*. It consists of items like: In general I am in charge of the situations in my life; Most people see me as loving and affectionate. The potential score of each subscale ranges from 7-42. The reliability coefficient of this scale was found out as .70 (Kallay & Rus, 2014); whereas, Cronbach alpha of .86 showed good reliability in this research.

### **Procedure**

After fulfilling all procedural, ethical and institutional formalities, the questionnaires were forwarded virtually as Google Forms to the

known religious communities' heads as well as individuals. The communities' heads were requested to forward the questionnaires to their known virtual groups and individuals. Their willingness to participate and confidentiality was assured. A moderate data was obtained from the Christian, Hindu and Sikh minorities though Pandemic and English language were of bit obstacles on the way for large data collection.

### **Results**

In order to test the proposed hypotheses, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was done to determine the relationships among study variables. In addition, moderation analysis was tabulated and group differences were computed across gender and type of minorities.

Results presented in Table 1 indicate that women face more social discrimination as compared to men. Social discrimination shares a negative relationship with need to belong. Also, individuals from other religions (Hinduism and Sikhism) have more autonomy than Christians. Need to belong have a negative relationship with autonomy and environmental mastery. Positive relations with others and self-acceptance have a negative relationship with need to belong. Positive relations with others also share a negative relationship with social discrimination. All the components of psychological well-being are positively correlated.

Table 1

*Inter Correlation Among Demographic Characteristics, Social Discrimination, Need to Belong and Psychological Well-being in Religious Minorities of Pakistan (N = 162)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender <sup>a</sup>	-												
2. Family Background <sup>b</sup>	-.16*	-											
3. Religion	-.14	.13	-										
4. CF from Own Religion	-.13	.05	-.07	-									
5. CF from Other Religions	-.14	.01	.01	.50**	-								
6. Social Discrimination	-.19*	.16*	.06	.23**	.20**	-							
7. Need to Belong	-.07	.05	-.04	.15	.08	-.18*	-						
8. Autonomy	.07	-.05	.16*	-.13	-.01	-.15	-.21*	-					
9. Environmental Mastery	.02	-.05	-.03	.03	.07	-.20**	-.24**	.36**	-				
10. Personal Growth	.07	-.08	-.13	-.05	.08	-.05	-.05	.46**	.36**	-			
11. Positive Relations	.11	-.09	.04	-.02	.08	-.32**	-.16*	.45**	.53**	.54**	-		
12. Self-Acceptance	.06	-.06	.00	.03	.12	.09	-.22**	.55**	.53**	.57**	.65**	-	
13. Purpose in Life	.12	.15	-.11	-.02	.07	-.11	.01	.37**	.39**	.69**	.52**	.57**	-

Note. CF = Close Friends; <sup>a</sup> 0 = Men, 1 = Women. <sup>b</sup> 0 = Urban, 1 = Rural. <sup>c</sup> 0 = Christians, 1 = Others (Hindus and Sikhs).

\*  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .



Table 2

*Moderating Role of Need to Belong in Predicting Psychological Wellbeing from Social Discrimination*

Variables	Psychological Well-Being															
	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3				Model 4			
	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	B	SE	$\beta$	SE	B	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
	<b>Autonomy</b>								<b>Environmental Mastery</b>							
<b>Block 1</b>																
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.08	.76	.07	.75	.05	.75	.05	.74	.02	.77	-.01	.75	-.02	.74	-.02	.72
Family Background <sup>b</sup>	.16*	.79	.16*	.78	.16*	.77	.17*	.77	-.03	.80	-.04	.78	-.03	.77	-.02	.75
Religion	-.54	.77	-.05	.76	-.03	.78	-.02	.76	-.04	.79	-.03	.77	-.01	.76	.01	.75
CF within own religion	-.15	.00	-.12	.00	-.11	.00	-.05	.00	-.01	.00	.02	.00	.05	.00	.13	.00
CF from other religions	.08	.00	.08	.05	.09	.00	.07	.00	.07	.00	.07	.00	.09	.00	.07	.00
<b>Block 2</b>																
Need to Belong			-.19*	.05	-.17*	.05	.23	.13			-.25***	.05	-.22**	.05	.31***	.13
<b>Block 3</b>																
Social Discrimination					.11	.06	.64	.28					-.19*	.06	-.77*	.27
<b>Block 4</b>																
Need to Belong x Social Discrimination							.95*	.00							-.122***	.00
R	.35												.38			
R <sup>2</sup>	.12												.16			
F	2.70*												3.23***			
$\Delta R^2$	.03												.04			

Continued...

Variables	Psychological Well-Being															
	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3				Model 4			
	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
	<b>Self-Acceptance</b>								<b>Positive Relationship with Others</b>							
<b>Block 1</b>																
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.08	1.01	.07	.99	.06	.00	.05	.99	.11	.86	.11	.84	.07	.82	.06	.80
Family Background <sup>b</sup>	.02	1.06	.01	.03	.01	.04	.02	.03	.06	.89	.05	.79	.06	.85	.07	.84
Religion <sup>c</sup>	-.05	1.04	-.04	1.01	-.03	.03	-.01	.02	-.09	.88	-.08	.53	-.04	.84	.03	.83
CF within own religion	-.03	.00	-.00	.00	.00	.00	.05	.00	-.06	.00	-.04	.00	.00	.00	.07	.00
CF from other religions	.16	.00	.16	.00	.17	.00	.15	.00	.13	.00	.13	.00	.16	.00	.14	.00
<b>Block 2</b>																
Need to Belong			-.23**	.07	.22***	.07	.07	.18			-.15*	.05	-1.10	.06	.32	.14
<b>Block 3</b>																
Social Discrimination					-.07	.08	.45	.37					-.32**	.07	.47	.30
<b>Block 4</b>																
Need to Belong x Social Discrimination							-.66	.01							-.99*	.01
<i>R</i>	.31												.42			
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.09												.17			
	<i>F</i> = 2.02**				$\Delta R^2$				.01				<i>F</i> = 4.04***			
													$\Delta R^2$			
													.03			

Note. <sup>a</sup>0 = Men, 1 = Women. <sup>b</sup>0 = Urban, 1 = Rural. <sup>c</sup>0 = Christians, 1 = Others (Hindus and Sikhs); CF = Close Friends

\*  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

Results presented in Table 2 from the moderation analysis indicate that the urban family background predicts autonomy across all models. The need to belong negatively predicts autonomy in model 2 and 3 but after the effect of social discrimination in model 3, it does not predict autonomy. The interaction between need to belong and social discrimination significantly predicts autonomy. Need to belong predict environmental mastery across all models. The interaction between need to belong and social discrimination predict environmental mastery across all models. Need to belong also negatively predict positive relations with others in model 2 but it becomes insignificant in the model 3 and 4 because of social discrimination. Social discrimination then, negatively predicts positive relations with others in model 3 but it becomes insignificant in model 4 due to the interaction between need to belong and social discrimination. Need to belong negatively predicts self-acceptance in model 2 and 3 but becomes insignificant in model 4 due to the effect of social discrimination. The interaction between need to belong and social discrimination negatively predict purpose in life in model 4. No variable or the interaction between variables positively or negatively predicts the personal growth among individuals.

*Figure 1.* Simple Slope Analysis for Interaction Effect of Autonomy and Social Discrimination among Religious Minorities in Pakistan.

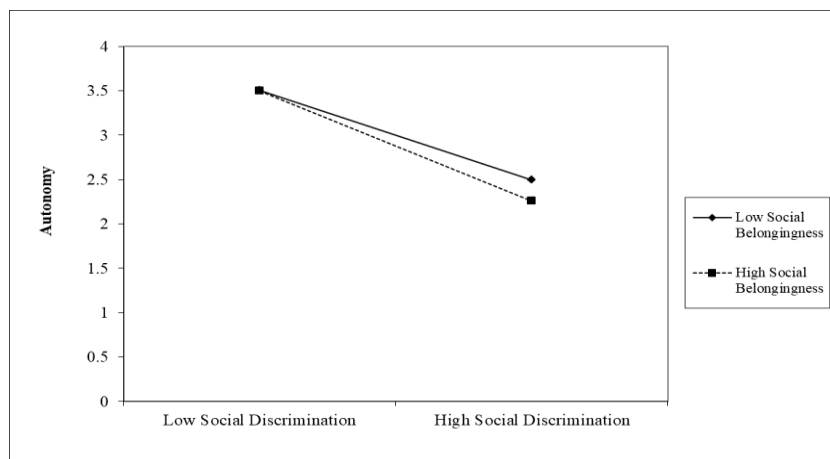


Figure 1 indicates that negative impact of social discrimination on autonomy is greater for people with higher need to belong than the lower need to belong.

*Figure 2. Simple Slope Analysis for Interaction Effect of Environmental Mastery and Social Discrimination among Religious Minorities in Pakistan.*

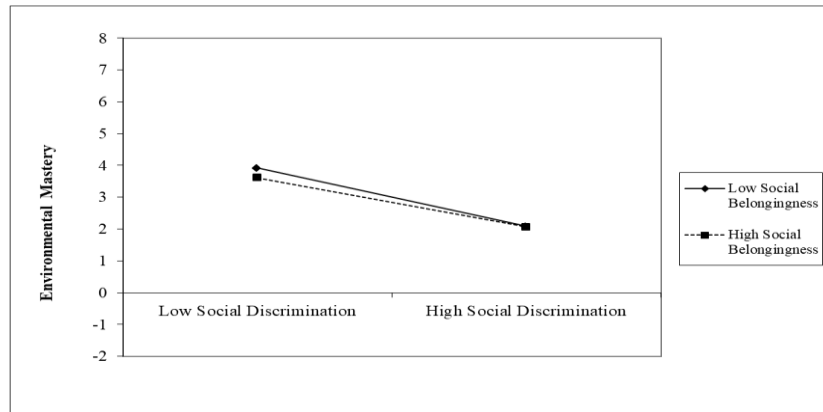


Figure 2 indicates that negative impact of social discrimination on environmental mastery is higher among individuals with a lower need to belong as compared to those who have high need to belong.

**Figure 3**

*Simple Slope Analysis for Interaction Effect of Positive Relations with Others and Social Discrimination Among Religious Minorities in Pakistan*

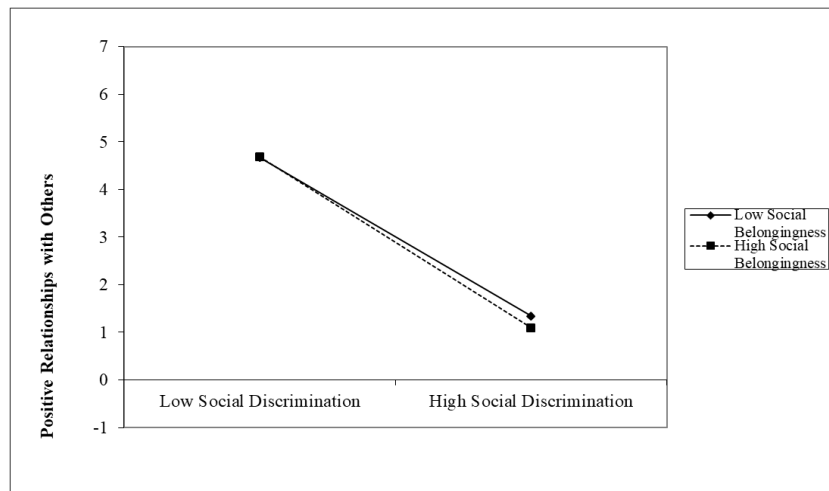


Figure 3 indicates that negative impact of social discrimination on religious minorities having positive relationship with others is higher among individuals with a lower need to belong as compared to those who have high need to belong.

Figure 4. Simple Slope Analysis for Interaction Effect of Self-Acceptance and Social Discrimination among Religious Minorities in Pakistan

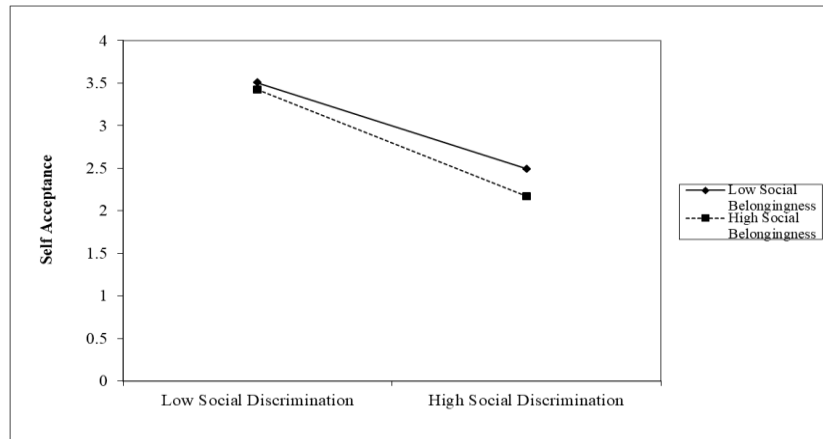


Figure 4 indicates that negative impact of social discrimination on self-acceptance of religious minorities is higher among individuals with a lower need to belong as compared to those who have high need to belong.

Results of independent sample *t* test indicated that the women belonging to religious minorities face more social discrimination as compared to men in Pakistan ( $t = 2.52, df = 160, p = .01$ ). Conversely, nonsignificant gender differences are found in relation to variables of need to belong and various components of psychological wellbeing. Results of independent sample *t* test also indicated that the individuals belonging to other religions (Sikhism and Hinduism) face more social discrimination as compared to the Christians in Pakistan ( $t = 2.10, df = 160, p = .02$ ). However, nonsignificant differences are found on the constructs of need to belong and all components of psychological wellbeing.

## Discussion

The results of the correlation analysis indicated that women, individuals from urban family background and individuals having close friends from own or other religions face more social discrimination. Also, social discrimination was found to have a negative relationship with the need to belong among religious minorities in Pakistan. This finding is similar to the findings of researches conducted earlier and is strongly supported by the previous literature available. A research conducted on the impact of perception of discrimination and the sense of belonging on the loneliness of

children of Chinese migrant workers indicated that the perception of discrimination was negatively correlated with the sense of belonging and positively correlated with the sense of loneliness (Liu et al., 2014). This means that the more an individual faces social discrimination, less will he/she feel belonged towards society, and more of the feelings of loneliness.

The results of correlation analysis also indicated that the individuals from other religions (Hinduism and Sikhism) have more autonomy than Christians. This may be because of the reason that they face more social discrimination as compared to Christians. One of the main reasons why Hindus and Sikhs face more social discrimination is because of their deep roots in the history of the subcontinent and the social and political relationship of these communities with Pakistan. Although Hindus are present in a large number (1.6%), their rights are still neglected (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2020). Also, to focus on the fact that the minority religion identity runs the risk of over emphasizing the need to belong and other various forms of identification too. Further, an internal mark/impression of homogeneity among minority communities is generated while many fault lines exist among these highly and perfect fractured minority groups (Beddington et al., 2008).

Results of the correlation analysis of this study also highlighted the fact that need to belong shares a negative relationship with autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others and self-acceptance. All these domains are the subscales of the scale of psychological wellbeing. The previous researches indicate that belongingness and social support are strong predictors of psychological wellbeing (e.g., Erfani et al., 2011). The difference in the result maybe because of the reason that this research does not focus on the belongingness but on the need to belong and the need creates continuous anxiety in an individual which ultimately affects the psychological wellbeing. Similarly, for the religious minorities present in Pakistan, the continuous need present in them to belong in the society causes anxiety which in turn affects their psychological wellbeing. The basis of this fact can be found in the previous literature available (Iqbal et al., 2012; Mirza, 2020; Musnhey & Zahid, 2017) conducted to find out the relationship between anxiety and psychological wellbeing indicated that both of these variables share a strong negative correlation with each other. Positive relations with other individuals is a domain of psychological wellbeing according to the scale used, and demonstrated a negative relationship with social discrimination. The strong basis of this finding can be found in the earlier studies (Raphael & Kelly, 2014; Vang et al., 2019; Wybraniec & Roger, 2001) as majority of the previously conducted research

claim that social discrimination is negatively/inversely related to the psychological wellbeing. According to research conducted on the association between discrimination and psychological and social wellbeing on the population-based study of Russian, Somali and Kurdish Migrants in Finland, the results indicated that social discrimination is a great threat to social and psychological wellbeing of individuals (Castaneda, 2015).

Different findings came out through moderation analysis. It indicated that individuals with low need to belong and high social discrimination have higher level of autonomy as compared to those having high social discrimination and high need to belong. Autonomy is defined as an individual's ability to be self-determined and independent. The finding may be explained that the individuals who face more social discrimination, feel themselves less belonged towards society and because of this they are more self-determined, independent and are able to resist social pressures and act in certain ways to exist in the society. They also make judgments according to their own personal statements (Huppert et al., 2009).

The results of moderation analysis also indicated that the individuals with low need to belong and high social discrimination have high environmental mastery as compared to those who have high need to belong and low social discrimination. This finding indicates that the individuals who face more social discrimination and less belongingness towards society are more prone towards developing a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment. They control complex arrays of external activities and make use of surrounding opportunities. Also, such individuals are more able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values (Haslam et al., 2009). The individuals might do this to survive well in the society and for this they use the best of their abilities because they are being discriminated on the basis of their religion which in turn affects their psychological well-being. The results of a previous research pointed out that there is a negative effect of religious discrimination on the life satisfaction of individuals and this affect generally remains consistent (Vang et al., 2019).

It was also found out through moderation analysis that the individuals with low need to belong and high social discrimination have high positive relations with others as compared to those who have high need to belong and low social discrimination. This means that the individuals who face high social discrimination based on their religion feel less belonged towards society. As a result of which they tend to develop more positive relationship with others as a compensatory behavior. They do this to gain acceptance in the society

by being more concerned about the welfare of others, they express high empathy towards others and are ready to give and take in human relationships (Lambert et al., 2013).

It was also found out that the individuals with low need to belong and high social discrimination have high self-acceptance as compared to those who have high need to belong and high social discrimination. This finding is different from previously conducted researches. According to this, individuals who face high social discrimination due to their religious beliefs feel less belonged towards society and have a more positive attitude towards their own self. They acknowledge and accept multiple aspects towards self -including both their good and bad qualities and also they feel positive about the past life (Liu et al., 2014). According to the previous literature individuals facing more social discrimination have lesser self-acceptance but the findings of this research show a different side. This maybe because of the fact that individuals who face social discrimination already feel them isolated from the society. So, to strive in this society and for their own survival, they need to have a positive sense of the self so that they can face the challenges the life throws upon them fearlessly and run in the race of the life.

Two major findings came forward after the independent sample t-test was conducted. One was that the women face more social discrimination as compared to the men in the society. Pakistan is a male dominant society where females are deprived of their basic rights in some areas. So the social discrimination might be the one thing they face as a consequence of being born women in a patriarchal society. Another finding was that the individuals belonging to other religions (Sikhism and Hinduism) face more social discrimination as compared to the Christians. This may be due to different reasons. First, Pakistan is an Islamic state where majority population is Muslims. Although, all minorities face a lot of problems despite of the laws being passed in their favor, Christians face less discrimination due to one big reason that they are seen as the group who are believed to be the followers of a Holy book- Bible. As far as Hindus and Sikhs, the rivalry is deep rooted to the times of subcontinent when two nations theory was presented, and it was believed the Muslims cannot live with Hindus and Sikhs because of their religions and cultural practices. In 1947, during the time of partition, with the bloodshed along with the looting and killing that happened against Muslims and about a million Muslims were killed by fanatic Hindus and Sikhs. The hatred that was created then has been lingering on (Iqbal et al., 2012). Further, a disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir is still a bone of contention and an unfinished agenda between Pakistan and India. While India is a



Hindu majority state and Pakistan a Muslim majority state and the two countries have been sovereign states since 1947 but the minorities in both the countries face the consequences of rivalry and hatred. Despite the federal laws being enforced in Pakistan for the protection of minorities and the steps been taken to alleviate social discrimination, the cases of blasphemy, forced conversions, prejudice and low tolerance towards religious minorities is still on a rise in Pakistan from the last few years although more heinous incidents against minorities happen in India as well (Mirza, 2020).

Despite the major steps taken by the Government of Pakistan in favor of minorities, Pakistan is still lagging behind in catering the minorities' socio-economic needs properly. Government should take more steps to eliminate the social and religious discriminations. Every citizen of Pakistan should be given equal rights and an equal opportunity along with the security to live fearlessly and peacefully in the country as envisaged in the Constitution of Pakistan (1973). Pakistan was created in the name of Islam, giving people freedom and peace, no matter which religion and gender they belong to. So, as being the responsible citizens of Pakistan and followers of Islam, it is everyone's duty to take every possible step to eradicate the religion and gender based hatred, and provide comfort and ease to the minorities' populations of Pakistan to make this country a safe homeland for every individual despite the religion one belongs to and no matter what gender the individual enjoys.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

The research only comprised individuals who could read and write English whereas mostly, minorities are working at lower positions and are uneducated in this society. Due to the situation of COVID-19, it was difficult to approach the minorities. The people were also hesitant on disclosing their identities as non-Muslims. People were a bit afraid to participate in the research. Qualitative/hybrid research may be conducted in future for better findings as people are more interested in giving interviews. Translated versions may be used so that vast population may be involved in future.

### **Implications**

This research has spread light on the relationship between social discrimination, need to belong and psychological wellbeing among

religious minorities in Pakistan. It also added to the existing literature on religious minorities of Pakistan and provided a gateway for the future researchers to learn more about the social discrimination, need to belong and their state of psychological wellbeing.

### Conclusion

The overall findings of the research conclude that social discrimination has negative relationship with need to belong and their psychological wellbeing among religious minorities (Christians, Hindus, Sikhs) in Pakistan. Hindu and Sikh minorities face more social discrimination as compared to the Christians. Women, individuals from urban family background and individuals having close friends from own or other religions perceive more social discrimination as compared to their counterparts. Hindu and Sikh minorities face more social discrimination and have more autonomy than Christians. Need to belong was found to have a negative relationship with autonomy and environmental mastery. Moreover, the individuals with low need to belong and high social discrimination have higher levels of autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others and self-acceptance as compared to those having low social discrimination and high need to belong.

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