

# Tolerance and n schoolc

~~Pakistan~~  
Dawn  
23.2.03

By Dr Tariq

**I**N my recent book *Language, Ideology and Power* (OUP, 2002) there is a survey of 1,426 schoolchildren of class 10 (or equivalent in madressahs) from almost all areas of Pakistan. This was carried out in 1999-2000. There are questions on language-teaching as well as questions about Kashmir (militancy) and tolerance (religious minorities, women, etc.).

This time, in December 2002 and January 2003 I conducted another smaller survey on 488 students (again of class-10) and 192 teachers of Urdu-medium, English-medium and religious schools (madressahs). This survey was financially supported by the Social Policy and Development Centre in Karachi and I thank Dr. Kaiser Bengali for this help. While my 1999-2000 survey was unfunded, thus forcing me to wait for invitations to conferences in different cities so as to visit schools to get questionnaires filled, this one took only two months because I decided where to go and when.

Anyway, since the results have a bearing on our lives as Pakistanis, I have collected some in this article. The full text will be published by the SPDC this year.

Urdu-medium students	230
English-medium students	116
Madressah students	142
Total	488

This time I missed out the Sindhi-medium schools because of lack of time and chose only the elitist English-medium schools (fees Rs 2,500 and above for O-level classes) to represent the English-medium category.

The questionnaire had two parts but the first, pertaining to questions about family income, is not being reproduced here. Suffice it to say that madressah children are from very poor and rural backgrounds; the Urdu-medium schools are for the working classes and the lower middle classes.

The middle classes send their

What should be Pakistan's priorities			
(a) Take Kashmir away from India by an open war? (in percentages)			
	Yes	No	Don't know
Urdu	39.56	53.04	7.39
English	25.86	64.65	9.48
Madressah	59.86	31.69	8.45
Analysis: Most students realize that an open war with India would be disastrous. However, the madressah students are the most militant and the English-medium ones are the least.			

What should be Pakistan's priorities			
(a) Take Kashmir away from India by supporting <i>jihadi</i> groups to fight with the Indian army?			
All figures below are percentages			
	Yes	No	Don't know
Urdu	32.61	45.22	21.74
English	22.41	60.34	17.24
Madressah	52.82	32.39	14.78
Analysis: Once again, most madressah students support this policy but even they are unsure because the percentage of don't know is high even for them. Urdu-medium students are in between and English-medium ones overwhelmingly reject this policy.			

What should be Pakistan's priorities			
(c) Support Kashmir cause through peaceful means only (i.e. no open war or sending <i>jihadi</i> groups across the line of control).			
All figures below are percentages			
	Yes	No	Don't know
Urdu	75.65	18.26	6.08
English	72.41	18.97	8.62
Madressah	33.80	54.93	11.27
Analysis: Most students, except madressah ones, aspire for a peaceful solution of the Kashmir issue although, as stated earlier, many of them had also ticked militant options given above.			

middle classes and upper classes Kashmir. Unfortunately, stu-

# militancy among children

*Society Trends*

ariq Rahman

**Table 5**

What should be Pakistan's priorities			
(d) Give equal rights to Ahmedis in all jobs etc?			
All figures below are percentages			
	Yes	No	Don't know
Urdu	46.95	36.95	15.65
English	65.52	9.48	25.00
Madressah	12.68	82.39	4.93
Analysis: The madressah students are highly intolerant of the Ahmedis. The English-medium students are most tolerant of them. The Urdu-medium ones one in between but they tend to be intolerant too.			

**Table 6**

What should be Pakistan's priorities			
(a) Give equal rights to Pakistani Hindus in all jobs etc?			
All figures below are percentages			
	Yes	No	Don't know
Urdu	47.39	42.17	10.00
English	78.45	13.79	7.76
Madressah	16.90	76.06	7.04
Analysis: Once again the English-medium students are the most the madressah ones the least tolerant ones. However, the overall level of tolerance, except among the Urdu-medium students, is higher than it is for Ahmedis.			

**Table 7**

What should be Pakistan's priorities			
(f) Give equal rights to Pakistani Christians in all jobs etc?			
All figures below are percentages			
	Yes	No	Don't know
Urdu	65.65	26.52	7.39
English	83.62	8.62	7.76
Madressah	18.31	73.24	8.45
Analysis: The tolerance for Christians is higher than for Ahmedis and Hindus. However, the madressah students are mostly intolerant of them.			

**Table 8**

What should be Pakista's priorities			
(g) Give equal rights to men and women as in Western countries?			
All figures below are percentages			
	Yes	No	Don't know
Urdu	75.22	17.39	7.39
English	90.52	6.03	3.45

for them. These are given in tables 6 and 7. Table 5 contains results based on a question referring to Ahmedis.

The last question was about granting men and women equal rights. When I has asked this question in 1999 many respondents had ticked 'yes' even when they wanted to restrict women's mobility, right to divorce, etc. on the grounds that by 'equal rights' they meant 'according to religion' or 'according to custom' or from some other interpretation of 'equality'. This time the question was more unambiguous. The results are contained in table 8.

It should be mentioned that 52 out of the 116 students of English schools were girls; 107 out of 230 in Urdu schools were also girls; but all the 142 students of madressahs were boys. In gender-wise analysis, which is not given here, girls supported equal rights for men and women more than boys but boys too supported them otherwise the percentage would not have been so high.

**Conclusion**

This survey, though non-random and only conducted in cities, tells us how polarized we are as a society. The madressah stream, which comes from very impoverished sections of society, thinks so differently from the Westernized elite that they live in different worlds. It is good to know that most young people do not want a war in Kashmir but the young Islamists do support it. Moreover, most of our young people are biased against minorities.

They do not want them to be treated as equal citizens. Those who do support equal rights for them, students of elite English-medium schools, are alienated from Pakistani culture and are full of contempt for their fellow citizen in the Urdu-medium schools and the madressahs.

Perhaps what is most disturbing is that madressah students should be so militant, so intolerant of minorities and from such poor families. Is it because we have let down the poor so badly that they have turned to the religious seminaries?

Is our indifferent, alienated English-speaking elite living blithely on borrowed time? Are we about to witness the revolt

The middle classes send their children to Urdu-medium schools, schools for beneficiaries (cadet colleges, Fauji Foundation schools, etc.) or non-elitist English-medium schools which charge tuition fees ranging from between Rs. 50 and Rs. 1500 per month. These have been represented in my 1999-2000 survey which you can read in my book but have not been included here. The upper mid-

dle classes and upper classes are the ones who send their children to the elitist English-medium schools.

The questions on tolerance and militancy and responses to them are given in tables 2, 3 and 4.

The third question was about peace and the idea was to find out how many students want Pakistan only to support peaceful policies regarding

Kashmir. Unfortunately, students ticked this as well as the first two options (or one of them) because of which the figures do not tell us exactly how many reject militancy altogether. They do, however, reflect the desire or aspiration for peace.

In my previous survey (1999-2000) I had lumped together Hindus and Christians. This time I asked separate questions

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English	90.52	6.03	3.45
Madrassa	16.90	77.46	5.63

Analysis: The support for women's equal rights from the Urdu and English-medium schools was tremendous. The majority of students opposed such equality and even some who ticked 'Yes' sometimes added words like 'as in Islam' in front of their

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Is our indifferent, alienated English-speaking elite living blithely on borrowed time? Are we about to witness the revolt of the dispossessed using the idea of religious superiority? Will this revolt turn Pakistan into an intolerant state on the warpath against everyone else? And if this happens — can Pakistan survive? ■