

Discrimination with Minorities in Public Schools: A Pakistani Perspective

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Abstract

Minority rights had been a burning issue in history of Pakistan. This issue is emerged side by side with the evolution of the concept of global village. To diagnose this issue in educational scenario a study was designed to know the educational problems of religious minority students at school level in Pakistan. Main objective of the study were i) what are the problems faced by religious minorities students in their access to education? ii) what is the level of discrimination for religious minorities students. To address the above objectives 320 working teachers from the selected schools were taken as sample for this study. Teachers were selected and the purposive sampling technique was used for sample selection. Rating scale was developed ranging from two to five categories according to the requirement of each statement. Data was collected through postal process and personal visits in the selected schools. Data analysis was done by using SPSS software by using appropriate analysis techniques. The data analysis showed that majority of teachers narrated that minority students are denied from admission due poor academic condition and teachers also select students from a religious minority group as class representative. Teachers were also of the view that minority students create problems in the class. On the other side, teachers were of the view that school provides welcome greetings to newly admitted students. On the bases of results the researcher recommended that comprehensive teacher-training programs should be launched to minimize the discriminating attitude of teachers about minorities and curricula should also be revised to omit all the texts containing discrimination sense.

Keywords: Minority students, teachers, discrimination, educational problems.

Introduction

Pakistan is a country where peoples of different religions are living i.e. Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Parsis. Christians and Hindus are considered major minorities in Pakistan. The main problem in the society with minorities is discrimination from other groups. It is a worldwide problem that religious minority is not accepted completely and therefore, they face hindrances while performing their rituals and obligations. The minority people further face the problem of social injustice

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and less employment and economic opportunities at the level as availed by main stream of the society (Rehman, 2010).

There are many daily routines in which religious minority people feel discrimination but the discrimination in educational setup is the most horrible form. Furthermore if this discrimination triumph in schools where young children are studying that would be alarming for the self-esteem of those minority children. On the other side, this discrimination may increase drop out, increase enmity among students belonging to different sects of religion. These are the problems which are created by the attitude of teachers and students with one another. The second major aspect for this discrimination may be due to content of text books. The text book developers do not consider all the groups of society particularly religious groups. We see many implemented textbooks and curricula are cultural and religious oriented and give a sense of prejudice about different minority groups of Pakistan (Hussain, Saleem, & Naveed, 2011). Asian Human Rights Commission (2011) highlighted that in Pakistan human rights are not followed properly, due to this reason security and peace is affected a lot at national as well as international level. Lack of implementation of law and order in Pakistan has made it an instable and politically conflicting country. The major areas where law and order situation is not up to the mark are discrimination with minorities in social and educational setup, violence against women particularly in villages, misuse of policemen authorities against citizens. The reason is only implementation flaws because Pakistan constitution has rules about the equality of human fundamental rights for all the minority groups. But even then there are many examples of discrimination about religious minorities as mentioned above and one incident was also present in the history of Pakistan i.e. when Babri masque incident happened the attitude of Muslims with Hindus became negative and at some places Hindus migrated towards India due to this reason (Czarnecki, 2011).

Basically there are two aspects of such type things i.e. theoretical and practical. International forums of discussion and socioeconomic effects of minority groups is the theoretical aspect of minority discrimination. Textbooks may also include in the theoretical aspect of discrimination. On the other side, difference of literacy rate of minorities in many countries is different from majority groups. In the same way behavior with minorities in the society or institution are considered the practical aspects of discrimination with minorities (Curtis, 2009).

Unfortunately, Pakistan is suffering from both types of discriminating aspects about minorities. According to Iqbal, (2015) textbooks as implemented according to the curricula 2006 are not free from all types of discriminations about minorities and literacy rates of minorities' are much less than majority population. In spite of this literacy rate difference, Indo-Pak relations/tensions, America-Pakistan relations or interference affect the discrimination level in Pakistan. Here the researchers would like to share their views that this discrimination and the reasons for this discrimination are

found all over the world. Like Pakistan, in America if any Pakistani behaves negatively the American people will consider all the Pakistani bad people.

According to Hussain, Saleem, and Naveed (2011) the effect of discrimination or hatred towards minority groups may affect attitude of minority students towards the development and peace of Pakistan. They further suggested that content highlighting the importance of minorities towards the development of Pakistan should also be included in the textbooks so that students may feel honor to be Pakistani rather than against it. The basic problem in schools is the attitude of teachers about minorities and minority teachers about majority. The attitude of minority teachers towards majority is not effective because minority teachers are very small in number, while on the other side, teachers' attitude towards minorities is not positive. While selecting class monitor (class head) normally teachers avoid making the minority students as head of class. Hussain (2008) was also of the view that minority like Hindu face problems when an unwanted incident take place in India by Hindus and Christians become target when American do any unwanted activity anywhere in the world against Muslims. He suggested that from history books hatred against Christians, Hindus or any other minority should be finished to give them equal rights of Pakistanis.

According to Idris (2018) when we see this discrimination in detail we see there are three patterns of discrimination with minorities in Pakistan i.e. behavioral, procedural and linguistic. Human rights organizations and many other NGOs have been criticizing the role of Pakistani government to minimize or finish the discrimination process in Pakistan. But the working routines of Pakistani government are not changing according to the international requirements. The role of Government of Punjab is better than other provincial governments in this regard for example free education up to matriculation class is an initiative in this regard but still needs more attention towards education system so that there may be awareness of human rights among future educated children.

These and other reasons may be the cause of discrimination and impact of discrimination is going to be worst day by day in this global village world. The above discussion guided the researchers to diagnose the real situation prevailing in Pakistan about minority.

Literature Review

There are many definitions and views about minority word. According to Human Rights Commission of US (as quoted by Deschenes) the definition of minority is given below:

A group of citizens of a state, consisting of a numerical minority and in a non-dominant position in that state, endowed with ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the majority of the population, having a sense of solidarity with one another, motivated, if not implicitly, by a collective will to

survive and whose aim is to achieve equality with the majority in fact and in law (Deschenes, 1985).

In short we can say that religious minority is a group of people who belong from one religion which is basically different from other big groups' religion. In every country, there are groups of people loosely or closely associated for some specific reason or purpose, which may be racial linguistic cultural religious political economic etc. or a combination of these. In the quest for describing minority; United Nation Sub-commission on the prevention of discrimination of minorities –suggested that the term should include only those non-dominant groups in population, which possess and wish to preserve firm, ethnic, religious, linguistic traditions, characteristics, markedly different from those of the rest of the population (Hasan, 1987).

The Issue of minorities is everywhere in the world since ancient times Before World War I, the minority problem was especially sensitive in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, autonomy or independence was promised by Turkey and Russia during the war to minorities in enemy states, and revolts (e.g., of Arabs and Czechs) were encouraged (Davis, 1978).

In modern era advance countries of the world also have the problems related to minorities (World Directory of Minorities, 2007). Moreover they have to face problems in educational institutions.

In Israel, The Arab which are a minority are facing severe problems. The Arabs minorities in Israel often look protesting. In 2005 ministry of education introduced a new educational programme according to which all Israeli high school students should learn 100 terms in Zionism some alternative text were formulated by Arab minorities which were not accepted (Ghnem, 2005). A commission headed by Theodrein Israel confessed that riots by Arab minorities are due to educational, economic backwardness. It is an international issue. In India above 160 million populations of Muslims which is supreme religious minority facing all types of problems as non-Muslim minorities are facing in Pakistan.

Muslims are the majorities among the minorities which means Muslims constitute a large part of the minority community in India .Going through various researches and surveys it is significantly seen that education is one of the most lacking aspect in the Muslim community. Muslims in India are behind other religious communities in literacy and education. India was declared a secular state where equality to all was provided irrespective of caste creed and religion. These rights clearly become the part of the constitution which is mentioned in Article 29 and 30. Article 29 states, "any section of the citizen residing in the territory of India or any part thereof, having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same" Article 30 acknowledges "the right of minorities based on religion or language to establish and administer educational institution of their choice" (Hasan, 1987).

So far as religious in the Indian sub-continent are the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhist, Jains and very small minority of Persians. Among all the above minorities Muslims are the largest single minority community in India. There are number of problems and grievances of minorities in general and Muslims in particular, some insubstantial and some intricate, some real and some noticeable The Muslims are educationally and economically backward in the country (Ansari, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

Therefore, the researchers conducted a study to view the role of school education department in discriminating minorities: a Pakistani perspective. For this purpose the study was delimited to Punjab and Sindh provinces of Pakistan.

Methodology

Three hundred and twenty teachers were selected as sample of this study from 16 districts (8 from Punjab and 8 from Sindh province). Only male teachers were selected because the researchers decided that male teachers would have more exposure about the daily life problems with minorities as compared to female teachers. Teachers were selected purposive sampling technique because only those schools were selected where the students of religious minority were studying. The response rate 93.125%, in this way respondents were 298. The collected data was analyzed and the results are discussed below:

Table 1

Teacher views about students of religious minorities are often denied admission because of

| Reasons Denied Admission | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|------|
| Faith | 34 | 11.4 | 4 |
| Non Availability of Seat | 8 | 2.7 | 5 |
| Poor Academic Condition | 70 | 23.5 | 2 |
| Any other Reason | 63 | 21.1 | 3 |
| Not Denied from Admission | 123 | 41.3 | 1 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 5 |

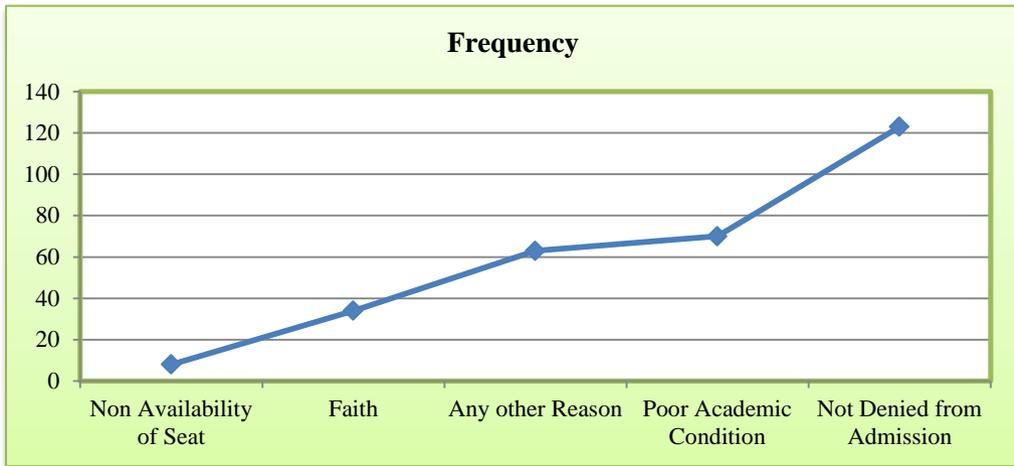


Figure 1. Reasons why students of religious minorities are denied admission in schools

The above table shows that teacher views about the reasons of denied admissions of minority students like faith of religion, non-availability of seat, poor academic conditions, any other reason and not denied from admission. Total 298 teachers gave their views about this particular issue. The data tells in percentage that teachers considered issues about students of religious minorities are often denied admission because of faith 11.4%, non-availability of seat 2.7%, poor academic condition 23.5, any other reason 21.1% while on the other side, 41.3% teachers were of the view that minority students are not denied from admission. Overall, on the bases of 58.7% denial of admission on different grounds put minority students behind the in the race of development. Due to this reason minorities children remain illiterate and NCJP's 2001 report showed that only 34% Christians in Punjab are literate as compared to 46.56% national literacy rate.

Table 2

Teacher views about while nominating class representative

| Nominating Class Representative | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|------|
| Student's Faith | 8 | 2.7 | 4 |
| Student's Physical Condition | 9 | 3.0 | 3 |
| Academic Performance | 234 | 78.5 | 1 |
| Student's Confidence | 44 | 14.8 | 2 |
| Missing | 3 | 1.0 | 5 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 5 |

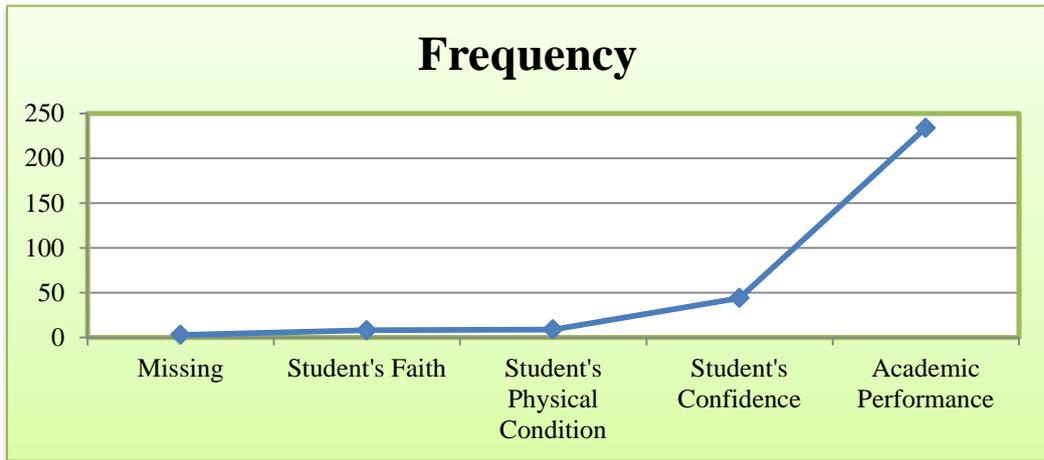


Figure 2. Teacher views about while nominating class representative

The above table shows that teacher views about which basis of nomination of class representative like student's faith, student's physical conditions, academic performance, student's confidence total frequency of respondents. The teacher's responses about the basis of classroom representative nomination were student's faith 2.7%, student's physical condition 3.7%, academic performance 78.5% and student's confidence 14.8%. The three respondents were missing out of total 298. The majority of the teachers views that they select the class representative on the basis of academic performance so there discrimination level were very low, the percentage of student's confidence also little bit prominent in above table but this point of view was not included at discrimination factor.

Table 3

Teacher views about nomination of a student of religious minority group as class representative

| Nomination of representative | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------|------|
| Yes | 216 | 72.5 | 1 |
| No | 75 | 25.2 | 2 |
| Others | 1 | .3 | 3 |
| Missing | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 4 |

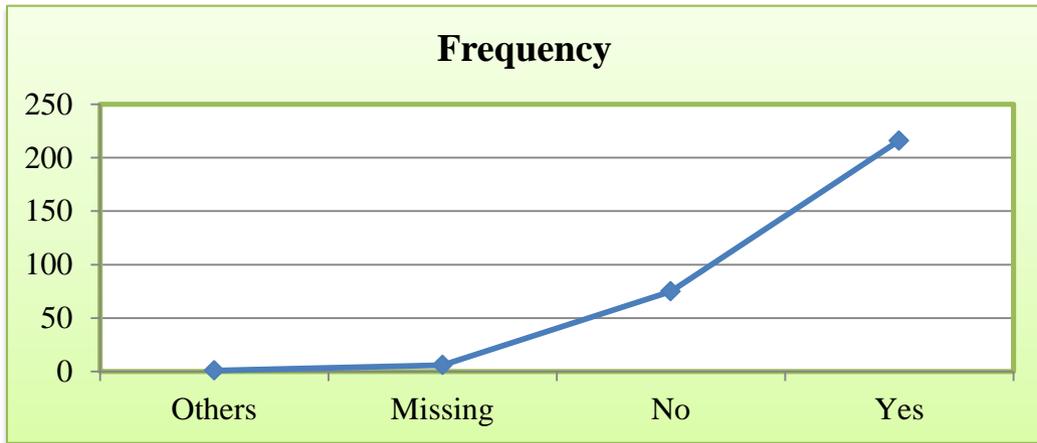


Figure 3. Nomination of a student of religious minority group as class representative

The above table shows that teacher views about nomination of a student of religious minority group as class representative and there were only two options the first one was Yes and the second one was No. Teacher views about nomination of a student of religious minority group as class representative were 72.5% at yes and 25.2% were NO. The missing frequency was 7 out of 298 so the majority of the teachers were not follow the faith about religious minority towards the nomination of class representative, no doubt there was some percentage of the teacher shows that they show discrimination towards nomination of class representative 2 but most of the teachers have not believe on this factor. Minority students should be nominated many times without any discrimination of minority students because this activity may develop moral level Corrigan & Sayer 1985).

Table 4

Representative during Teacher views about Number of times of nomination a student of religious minority group as class the course of service

| Nomination of a Student of Religious Minority Group as Class Representative | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|---|-----------|---------|------|
| One Time | 78 | 26.2 | 1 |
| Two Times | 67 | 22.5 | 3 |
| Three Times | 45 | 15.1 | 4 |
| Many Times | 38 | 12.8 | 5 |
| Never | 70 | 23.5 | 2 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 5 |

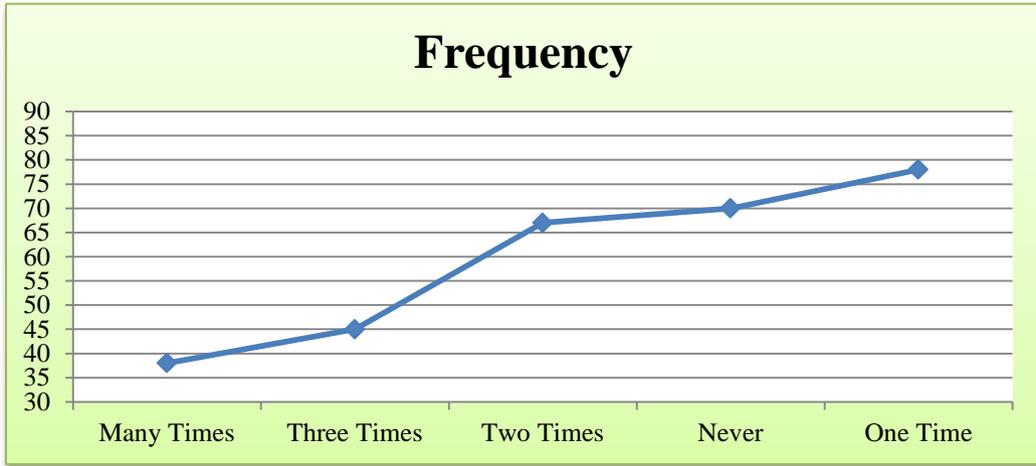


Figure 4. How many times student of religious minority selected as class representative

The above table shows that teacher views about number of times of nomination a student of religious minority group as class representative during the course of service, the parameters for respondents were one time, two time, three time, many time and the last one was Never. The total frequency was 298 and there was no missing frequency. The teachers gave views that one time 26.2%, two time 22.5%, three time 15.1%, many time 12.8% and the 23.5% said that they never nominated the students of minority as class representative. The most of the teachers gave views that they selected the minority students as a classroom representative some said one time some of them told that they do two times some said three times some said many time so majority of the teachers have the consideration to nominate minority students as a class representative. The discrimination was existed on this issues but majority of the teachers did not follow this faith.

Table 5

Teacher views about that there is religious biased contents in our text books

| Teacher Views about Religious Biased Contents | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|---|-----------|---------|------|
| No | 16 | 5.4 | 2 |
| Yes | 274 | 91.9 | 1 |
| Missing | 8 | 2.7 | 3 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 3 |

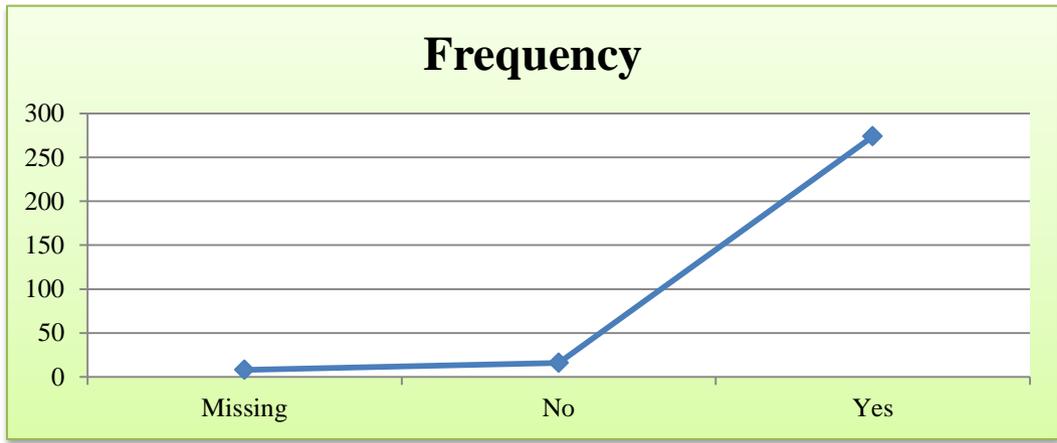


Figure 5. Teacher's views about religious biased contents in our text books

The above table shows that teacher views about that there is religious biased contents in the text books and the teachers could responded on the two options like Yes or No. The percentage of response Yes was 91.9% and No response percentage was 5.4% 2.7% was missing value. The total frequencies were 298. The most of the teachers views that there biased content were exited in the contents of the text books. The minority students are forced to take the education of majority religion which they did not wanted to take it. The government is not try its best to implement unbiased curricula because the role of Pakistan Government is just instrumentalist in policy-making and only limited to considerations of law. The active role is only found in party politics (Zaman 1998, Malik 1996, Nasr 2002).

Table 6

Teacher views about the type of problems minority students creates in the class

| Type of Problems Minority Students Creates | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|--|-----------|---------|------|
| No Difficulty or Problem | 95 | 31.9 | 1 |
| Disciplinary | 40 | 13.4 | 4 |
| Slow Learning | 75 | 25.2 | 2 |
| Biased Attitude | 55 | 18.5 | 3 |
| Any Other | 33 | 11.1 | 5 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 5 |

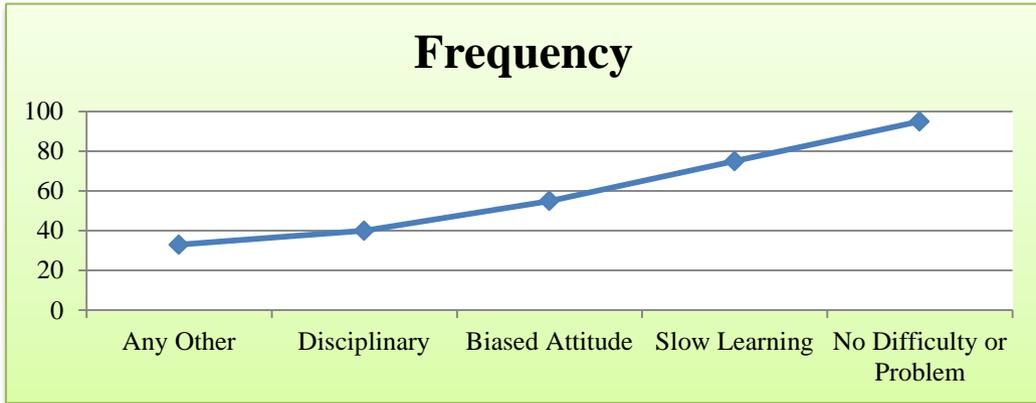


Figure 6. Type of problems minority students creates in the class

The above table shows that teacher views about that the type of problems minority students created in the class and the responses were no difficulty or problem, disciplinary, slow learning, biased attitude and any other. The teachers responses were 31.9% no difficulty or problem, 13.4% disciplinary, 25.5% slow learning, 18.5% biased attitude and 11.4% any other. The total frequency was 298 and there was no missing frequency. The most of the teachers views that they had no issue or problem which is created by the minority students but the alarming percentage was about slow learner and this was second highest ratio mention in above table.

Table 7

Teacher views about Minority students often sit in the classroom Settings

| Minority Students Often Sit in The Classroom Settings | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|---|-----------|---------|------|
| Mix or Any Where in Class | 66 | 22.1 | 2 |
| Front Rows | 28 | 9.4 | 5 |
| Middle Rows | 60 | 20.1 | 3 |
| Back Rows | 33 | 11.1 | 4 |
| Separate | 111 | 37.2 | 1 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 5 |

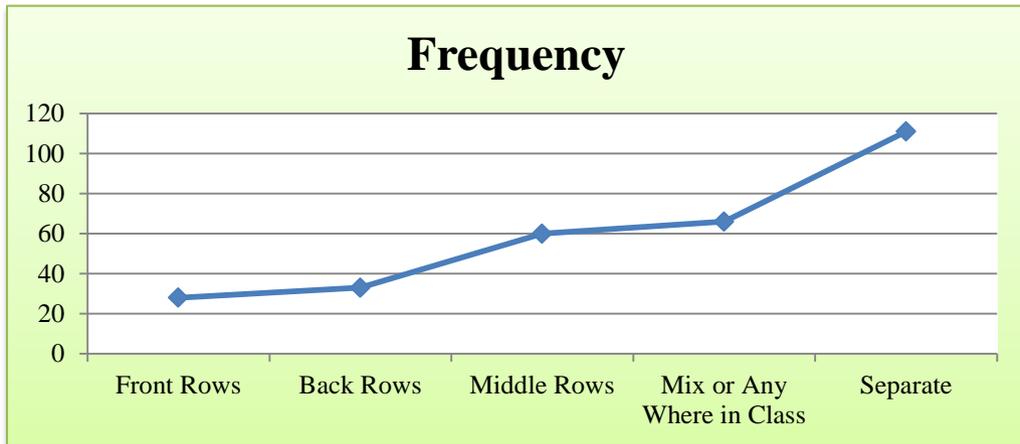


Figure 7. Teacher views about Minority students often sit in the classroom Settings

The above table shows that teacher views about minority students often sit in the classroom settings and the responses were mix or anywhere in class, front rows, middle rows, back rows, separate. The teacher’s responses were in percentage like mix or anywhere in class 22.1%, front rows 9.4%, middle rows 20.1%, back rows 11.1% and separate 37.2%. The total frequency was 298 and there was no missing frequency. Teachers views about that the minority students often sit separately in the classroom settings, show the discrimination level which is facing by the student of minority. Teacher’s views about that the minority students often sit back rows in the classroom settings also indicate that the discrimination towards minority students.

Table 8

Teacher views about the students of religious minority used separate pot for drinking water

| Minority Used Separate Pot for Drinking Water | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|---|-----------|---------|------|
| Yes | 238 | 79.9 | 1 |
| No | 51 | 17.1 | 2 |
| Missing | 9 | 3.0 | 3 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 3 |

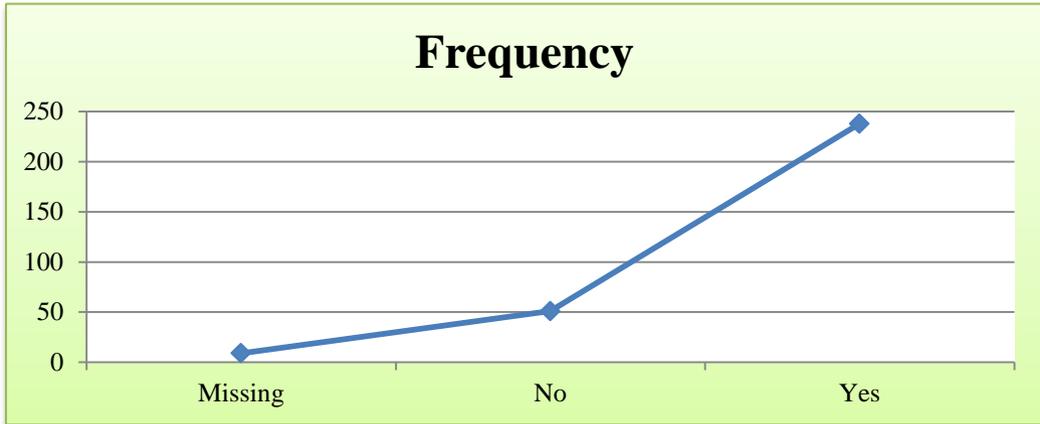


Figure 8. Teacher views about the students of religious minority used separate pot for drinking water

The above table shows that teacher views about the students of religious minority used separate pot for drinking water and the responses were Yes or NO. The teacher’s responses were in percentage like Yes 79.9%, No 17.1%. The total frequency was 298 and there missing frequency was 9. Teachers views about that the students of religious minority used separate pot for drinking water in yes response at high percentage. It is also show the discrimination level which is facing by the student of minority. Teacher’s views about that the minority students often used separate pot for drinking water also indicates that the discrimination towards minority students at alarming point.

Table 9

Teacher views about the minority students actively participate in co-curricular activities

| Minority Students Actively Participate in Co-Curricular Activities | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|--|-----------|---------|------|
| No | 33 | 11.1 | 2 |
| Yes | 265 | 88.9 | 1 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 2 |

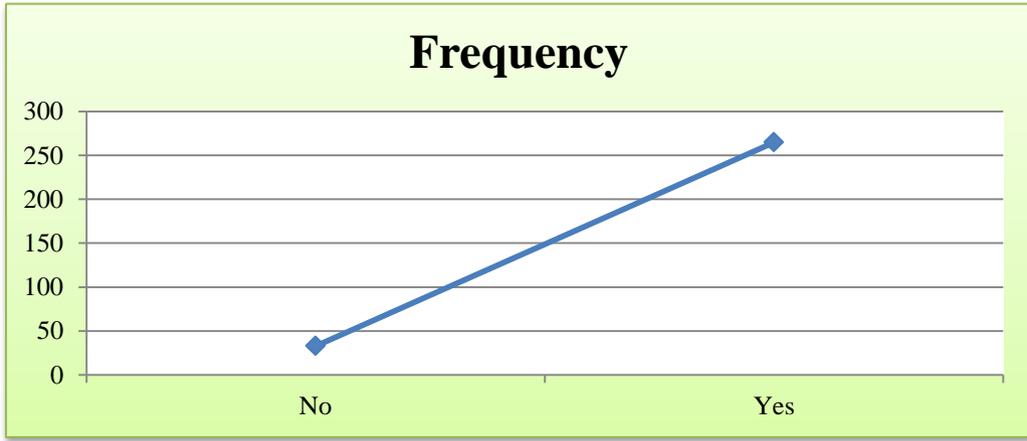


Figure 9. Teacher views about the minority students actively participate in co-curricular activities

The above table shows that teacher views about the minority students actively participate in co-curricular activities and the responses were Yes or NO. The teacher’s responses were in percentage like Yes 88.9%, No 11.1%. The total frequency was 298 and there missing frequency was none. Teacher’s views about the minority students actively participate in co-curricular activities at positive value “Yes” and it is also show the discrimination level which facing by the student of minority is very low at this point. Teacher’s views about the minority students actively participate in co-curricular activities also indicate that there discrimination was minimum towards minority students.

Table 10

Teacher views about reluctance in expounding the religious biased contents in the text books

| Reluctances in Expounding the Religious Biased Contents in the Text Books | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| No | 51 | 17.1 |
| Yes | 229 | 76.8 |
| Missing | 18 | 6.0 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 |

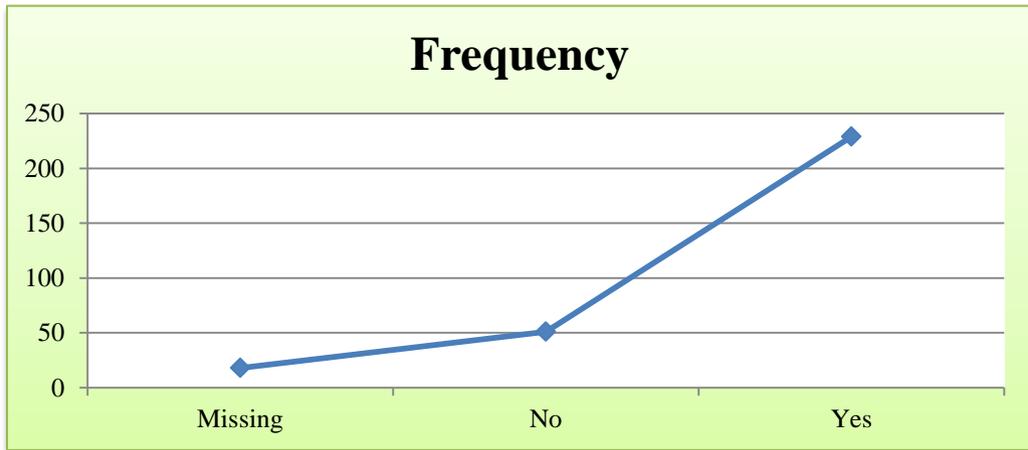


Figure 10. Teacher views about reluctance in expounding the religious biased contents in the text books

The above table shows that teacher views about reluctances in expounding the religious biased contents in the text books and the responses were Yes or No. The teacher’s responses were in percentage like Yes 88.9%, No 11.1%. The total frequency was 298 and there missing frequency was none. Teacher’s views about the minority students actively participate in co-curricular activities at positive value “Yes” and it is also show the discrimination level which facing by the student of minority is very low at this point. Teacher’s views about the minority students actively participate in co-curricular activities also indicate that there discrimination was limited towards minority students.

Table 11

Teacher views about complaints of the discrimination with the students of religious minority groups

| Responses | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|-----------|-----------|---------|------|
| No | 241 | 80.9 | 1 |
| Yes | 57 | 19.1 | 2 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 2 |

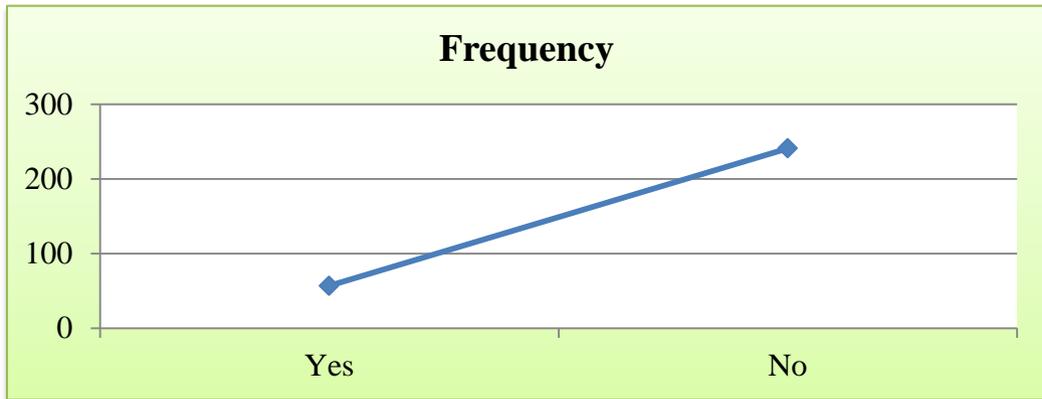


Figure 11. Teacher views about complained of the discriminatory treatment with the students of religious minority groups

The above table shows that teachers’ views about complained of the discriminatory treatment with the students of religious minority groups and the responses were Yes or NO. The teacher’s responses were in percentage like Yes 19.1%, No 80.9%. The total frequency was 298 and there missing frequency was none. Teachers’ views about complained of the discriminatory treatment with the students of religious minority groups, showing that they have no issues about these concerns and there discrimination was limited towards minority students.

Table 12

Teacher views about minority students mixed up with other students or often make their own peer groups

| Responses | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|-----------|-----------|---------|------|
| Yes | 99 | 33.2 | 2 |
| No | 191 | 64.1 | 1 |
| Missing | 8 | 2.7 | 3 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 3 |

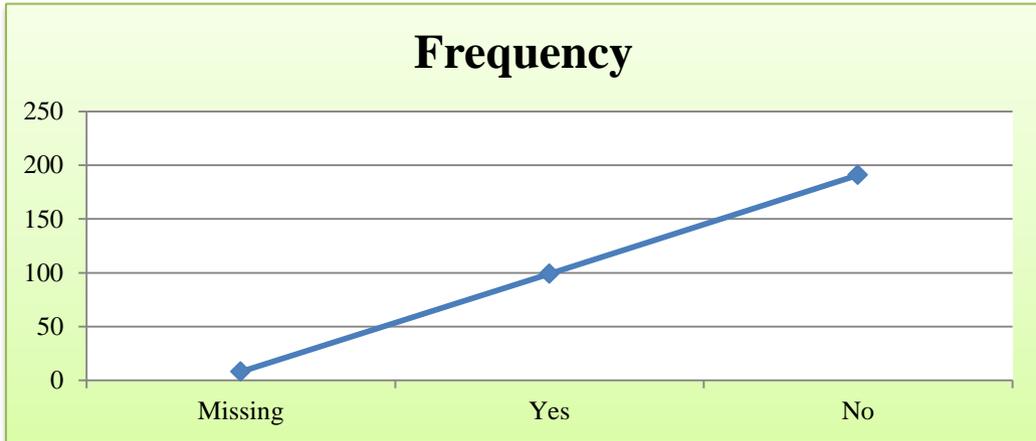


Figure 12. Teacher views about minority students mixed up with other students or often make their own peer groups

The above table shows that teacher views about minority students mixed up with other students or often make their own peer groups and the responses were Yes or NO. The teacher’s responses were in percentage like Yes 33.2%, No 64.1%. The total frequency was 298 and there missing frequency was 8. Teacher’s views about minority students mixed up with other students or often make their own peer groups and it is also show the high level of discrimination.

Table 13

Teacher views about newly enrolled minority students are welcomed & greeted in an exceptional manner

| Responses | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|-----------|-----------|---------|------|
| Yes | 204 | 68.5 | 1 |
| No | 82 | 27.5 | 2 |
| Missing | 12 | 4.0 | 3 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 3 |

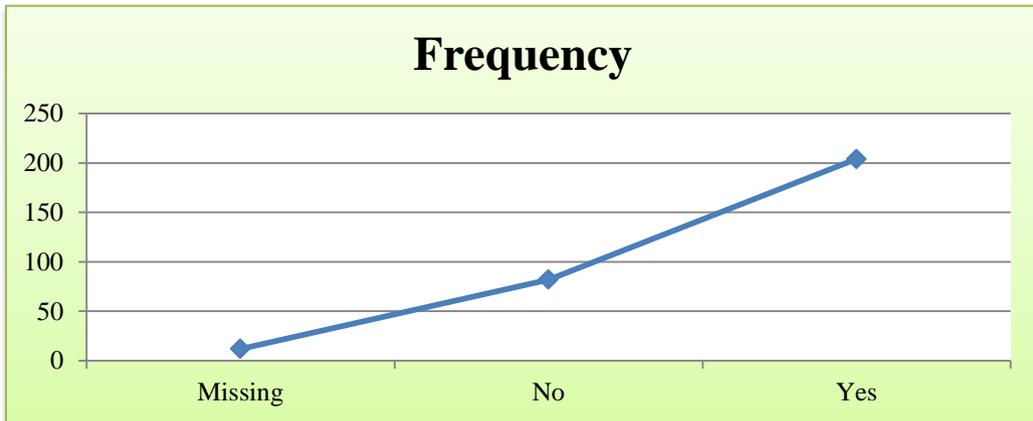


Figure 13. Teacher views about welcome of newly enrolled minority students

The above table shows that teacher views about newly enrolled minority students are welcomed & greeted in an exceptional manner and the responses were Yes or NO. The teacher’s responses were in percentage like Yes 68.5%, No 27.5%. The total frequency was 298 and there missing frequency was 12. Teacher’s views about newly enrolled minority students are welcomed & greeted in an exceptional manner at certain level and it also show the discrimination level which facing by the student of minority is very low at this dimension. Teacher’s views also indicate that there was limited discrimination towards minority students.

Table 14

Teachers’ views about the students of religious minority took positions in the class

| Responses | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|-----------|-----------|---------|------|
| Yes | 74 | 24.8 | 2 |
| No | 224 | 75.2 | 1 |
| Total | 298 | 100.0 | 2 |

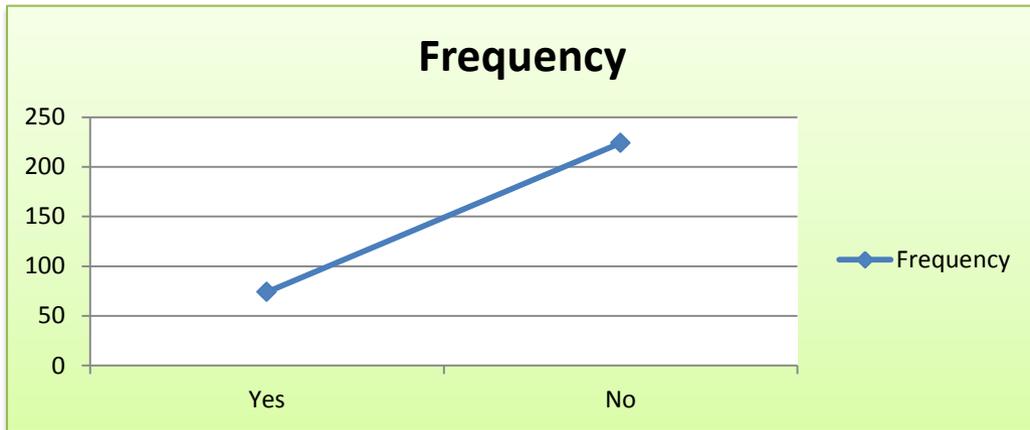


Figure 14. Teachers views about the students of religious minority took positions in the class

The above table shows that teacher views about the students of religious minority took positions in the class and the responses were Yes or NO. The teacher's responses were in percentage like Yes 24.8%, No 75.2%. The total frequency was 298 and there missing frequency was none. Teacher's views about students of religious minority took positions in the class at certain level and it is also show the discrimination level which facing by the student of minority is very highly at this fact. Teacher's views also indicate that there some discrimination were exited towards minority students.

Findings of the Study

On the bases of above data analysis results it is occluded that 58.7% minority students are denied from admission on different grounds. On the bases of good academic performance minority students are selected as class representative. This shows no discrimination. Teachers narrated that curriculum is biased; it should have balanced content for all students. Majority of respondents mentioned that minority students sit separate from rest of students in the class. Teacher's views also indicate that there some discrimination were exited towards minority students.

Recommendations

On the bases of above results researchers recommended: (1) government of Pakistan should follow up the proper implementation of rules about minorities, (2) government of Pakistan should also create a proper system of reporting in case of discrimination and (3) curricula should be revised to omit all the texts containing discrimination sense.

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