



JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES DEVELOPMENT

www.jssd.org.pk



THE ROLE OF MOSQUES AND RELIGIOUS CENTERS IN COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES FROM TWO CITIES OF PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

Dr. Hassam Ahmad Hashmi¹

¹Research Associate, Punjab Center of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism, Home Department, Punjab
 Email: hassamhashmi666@gmail.com ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5274-8051>

KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
mosques; shrines; religious centres; countering violent extremism; thematic analysis; Punjab	Religious institutions are frequently called into preventative work on the basis that they are trusted, but little is known about how the individuals who attend them, operate them, or teach in them perceive that position. In Lahore and Multan, we interviewed 32 respondents, including eight young persons, eight community members, eight religious scholars and eight shrine caretakers or Augaf workers. Interviews were recorded, translated and analyzed using basic inductive topic analysis based on the six stages outlined by Braun and Clarke. Four themes emerged: institutions as a trusted sanctuary that cannot function alone; credibility acquired through behavior; education and hospitality as daily prevention; limits that reside mostly outside the pulpit. The respondents did not discount the preventative significance of the mosques and shrines. They asked whether sermons, leader-dependent on donors, and the administratively strained shrines could tackle the issues that young people truly face. In Punjab, the ability to prevent seemed less about religious preaching and more about leadership integrity, youth relevance, inter-sect collaboration, and institutional autonomy.
ARTICLE HISTORY	
Date of Submission: 18-09-2026 Date of Acceptance: 10-10-2026 Date of Publication: 13-10-2026	
	
	2026 Journal of Social Sciences Development
Corresponding Author	Dr. Hassam Ahmad Hashmi
Email:	hassamhashmi666@gmail.com
DOI	https://doi.org/10.59075/jssd.v5i8.370
Volume/Issue	5(8), 2026, 262-276

Introduction

The policy interest in religious actors is generally grounded on a little intuition: individuals trusted locally may be heard when authorities are not. Mandaville and Nozell (2017) established this argument for combating violent extremism (CVE) than a decade ago, claiming that religious leaders have moral stature and neighbourhood access that state agencies find difficult to

reproduce. The concept took off. Preventing and combating violent extremism (P/CVE) is already an established policy area in many states, but as Shanaah and Heath-Kelly (2022) remind us, it has overtaken the evidence base for it.

The evidence from other situations is mixed. In Nigeria faith-based organizations participated with Boko Haram's ideological discourse but the impact was muted by insufficient coordination and low capability (Ishaku et al., 2021). Beaujouan and Rasheed (2022) asked the same question to religious organizations in Nineveh, Iraq.

Pakistan has its own version of the question. Madrasas have long attracted public and intellectual interest. Shah (2026) analyzes the process by which the madrassah issue became securitized into something like a security regime. Mosques, shrines and those who operate them have received less sustained attention (Mehmood et al., 2020; Akbar & Akbar, 2026). Studies of religious actors frequently depend on clerics, politicians or institutional players as informants (Rao, 2026; Ammad-ul-Haque, 2021).

Two silences there are. While a single neighborhood in Lahore or Multan could have mosques and shrines, and even sectarian traditions, the two are never read side by side. And the recipients, young men and women and their parents, tend to seem like objects of prevention rather than commentators on it.

The study that follows is based on four groups: young people; ordinary community members; religious academics; and shrine caretakers including officials of the province Augaf Department. Accounts were collected in Lahore and Multan and analyzed using a purposefully basic, inductive approach of theme analysis. The focus is on what respondents thought these institutions did and did not do, not whether any teaching was theologically sound. The work was directed by two questions.

RQ1. What is the perception of the role of mosques, shrines and religious centers in fighting violent extremism among young people, community members, religious scholars and shrine caretakers in Punjab?

RQ2. What do they see as enhancing or diminishing that function in terms of practices and conditions?

The aim of this study is to probe the differential perceptions of persons within Punjab's religious landscape of mosques, shrines, and religious centers regarding their preventive function. It is often assumed in policy debates that these organizations can resist extremism because they are trusted and connected to communities, a supposition seldom balanced against what community members actually say. The approach therefore questions if institutions are seen as trustworthy, whether young people feel addressed by them, and what influences – from sectarian rivalry to administrative control – undermine their preventative reach. That type of evidence should aid

preventive initiatives to invest in outlets that their target audience really hears. The following part contextualizes these questions in prior work before moving on to the interviews.

Literature Review

Religious actors as prevention partners

Research on faith-based prevention keeps coming back to two observations: Religious leaders do possess credibility and local access that state institutions struggle to match (Mandaville & Nozell, 2017; Sabic-El-Rayess et al., 2026), and tactics founded on that advantage tend to flounder if coordination and capacity are poor (Effendy et al., 2025; Ishaku et al., 2021).

Some attention is owed where credibility is owed. In a distinct historical environment in West Java, Nurjaman et al. (2025) argue that religious authority is socially created, constructed from knowledge, moral behavior and networks, rather than bestowed by position alone. The point here is that it shifts the focus from who is in the pulpit to how the people in the pews see that person.

Mosques, Shrines and Sufi Traditions of Pakistan

Pakistani research supports the existence of protective potential, but it is not uniform. In Dir Valley, religious leaders were found to mobilize communities against violent extremism, especially when working together (Ahmed et al., 2021). Akbar et al. (2023) found that mosques, imams, religious experts, and Sufi traditions may be sources of community resilience, depending on coordination and institutional capability. Sufism is seen as a counterpoint to violent extremist narratives in comparison (Habib, 2025).

But the Sufi tale is not that straightforward. Suleman (2018) stated that the institutionalization of Sufi Islam after 9/11 corresponded with the growth of Barelvi radicalism, hence a Sufi designation guarantees nothing about tolerance. Likewise, research on religious educational institutions in Faisalabad questions whether such venues foster tolerance or extremism, instead of assuming either (Ali et al., 2026).

Drivers to whom no sermon gets

Religious message also cuts through a cluttered array of risk factors. No single theological or psychological characteristic has been shown to be associated with cognitive and behavioral radicalization. A comprehensive evaluation identified a spectrum of risk and protective variables (Wolfowicz et al., 2021). Studies in Pakistan add poverty, regional inequality, inadequate governance and polarizing narratives to the list of reasons (Makki & Akash, 2023; Javed et al., 2025). If these requirements matter, then a mosque may be a significant, but not a sufficient, environment for prevention.

One approach to keep these threads together is community resilience. Resilience is described by Norris et al. (2008) as the mobilization of interrelated capacities: economic development, social capital, information and communication, and community competency. We use the notion solely for background vocabulary. The analysis itself was still inductive.

What remains is a narrow picture from inside one religious landscape demonstrating how youth, parents, academics and custodians, all of them differently positioned, estimate what mosques and shrines can actually achieve. The next section details how these judgments were obtained.

Youth Online Content and Institutional Autonomy

Youth are an uneasy in-between in this literature. Alava et al. (2017) mapped studies on youth and violent extremism on social media, a reminder that the mosque is no longer the only place where young people encounter religious discourse. Psychosocial stresses are important in religiously framed radicalization among adolescents in the Middle East and North Africa, according to Andrade et al. (2026). Mayer et al. (2024) discuss the origins and repercussions of violent extremism in the contexts of youth, families, schools and communities. If these interpretations stand, preventative messaging only reaches the young when it deals with the stresses they really live with, something a traditional sermon may not achieve.

Two such aspects are work on South Punjab and on the Pakistani state. Hussain and Shafique (2025) examine Qur'anic pedagogy and Sufi values as measures to counter extremism and advocate harmony in the region. Zaidi et al. (2025) consider the growth of violent extremism in Pakistan in the light of securitization theory, which is concerned with how the state categorizes threats and who is called upon to respond to them. These researchers, however, are not interested in how religious organizations perceive such enrollment from inside.

One issue is almost completely missing from the research covered here: to what extent does institutional autonomy determine preventative capacity? Studies tend to see mosques and shrines as unitary actors, even if a mosque operated by a local committee and a shrine managed by a government agency function under different limitations. The interviews were meant to enable those disparities to be examined and to hear how persons positioned across them judged each environment.

Methodology

Design

A qualitative design was appropriate for the issue, since it involves meaning rather than measurement. The preventative function of a mosque or shrine is not set. Worshipers, pilgrims, parents and teachers negotiate it everyday, and the negotiation evolves with sect, generation and proximity to violence. Thematic analysis was used as a transparent means to detect and organize repeating themes among such narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We worked inductively and

semantically rather than testing a pre-existing framework in an effort to keep true to the respondents' own words. The technique is closer to the descriptive end of theme analysis than the reflective variant subsequently explored by Braun and Clarke (2021).

Sampling

Purposive sampling was utilized since Bryman (2016) argues that lived meaning has to be selected by relevance and not by statistical chance. Gatekeepers in the mosque administrations, madrasa personnel, and shrine caretaking in Lahore and Multan helped identify responders from different sectarian and Sufi traditions. Then first contacts snowballed to parents and young people.

There were 32 responses in all, in 4 groups of 8. Their ages were from 21 to 63 years (mean 42.5). Twelve had a bachelor's degree, eight a master's, six had intermediate education and six matriculations. Of the sects, 12 were Barelvi, 8 Deobandi, 6 Ahl-e-Hadith and 6 Shia. Occupations included students, private and government workers and retailers as well as imams, madrasa professors and shrine caretakers. Respondents are listed under pseudonyms, and verbal informed permission was acquired prior to recording.

Table 1. Profile of respondents by group

Group	n	Age range (mean)	Education	Sect
Young people	8	21–29 (24.8)	Intermediate 2, Bachelor's 4, Master's 2	Barelvi 2, Deobandi 2, Ahl-e-Hadith 2, Shia 2
Community members	8	39–58 (48.1)	Matric 3, Intermediate 2, Bachelor's 3	Barelvi 2, Deobandi 2, Ahl-e-Hadith 2, Shia 2
Religious scholars	8	36–60 (47.1)	Bachelor's 2, Master's 6	Barelvi 2, Deobandi 3, Ahl-e-Hadith 2, Shia 1
Shrine custodians and Augaf staff	8	39–63 (50.0)	Matric 3, Intermediate 2, Bachelor's 3	Barelvi 6, Deobandi 1, Shia 1
All respondents	32	21–63 (42.5)	Matric 6, Intermediate 6, Bachelor's 12, Master's 8	Barelvi 12, Deobandi 8, Ahl-e-Hadith 6, Shia 6

Data collection

The semi-structured interviews provided a consistent thematic emphasis but enabled the respondents to highlight issues that we had not expected. The guide was prepared, reviewed and improved by two senior CVE practitioners and piloted in two interviews, one of which was outside the final sample. The final instrument consisted of 16 questions in four domains. These included regular interaction with a mosque, shrine or religious center, and instances of alleged extremist

recruiting efforts. They also inquired about the role of religious instructors and academics in resilience, and about discussions on religion and violence at the family level. With permission, interviews were audio-recorded in Urdu, Saraiki or Punjabi and transcribed verbatim and translated into English for reporting. Each took between 25 and 40 minutes.

Analysis

The work was organized around the six stages indicated by Braun and Clarke (2006), although in fact we went back and forth between them. We read transcripts over and again until the narratives seemed familiar. The codes were stored in Atlas.ti 9.1 and cross-compared across the four groups and grouped into possible themes. These candidates were then tested against the coded extracts and against the whole collection of transcripts, and each theme was identified and characterized. Coding was not theoretical. Later, community resilience terminology emerged to assist make sense of what the themes were suggesting.

Credibility and the position of the researcher

The checks were led by criteria set forth by Guba and Lincoln (1994) and is a technique also suggested for theme analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Transferability was helped by specifying the group, district and sectarian background of each responder. Member checking increased credibility by returning transcripts and early interpretations to a subsample for confirmation. Coding judgments were documented in analytic memos, which functioned as a kind of reliability. To ensure confirmability, two independent coders analyzed a random sample of transcripts independently, with an 84 percent agreement rate, and the methodology was audited by a third-party auditor from a partner institution who was not engaged in data collection.

The study team was knowledgeable about the social and religious context, which assisted in access and subtlety but also risked taking interpretations for granted. Therefore, choices on coding and themes were debated within the team.

Findings

Four themes were developed from the interviews. The first two speak mainly to RQ1, on how institutions are perceived, and the second two to RQ2, on the practices and conditions that shape their contribution. Table 2 lists the themes with their main codes, and Figure 1 shows how they relate. Extracts carry the respondent's pseudonym, group and interview question.

Table 2. Themes and main codes

Theme	Main codes	Voices most represented
1. A trusted refuge, not a standalone remedy	Charity; funerals and disasters; collective action; shared responsibility; no unconditional trust; misplaced responsibility	Community members, parents, youth

2. Credibility is earned through conduct	Respect without trust; leader credibility; eroding public trust; messenger-based trust; limited sermon reach; online content; youth relevance gap; need for explanation	Youth, community members
3. Teaching, counselling and hospitality in daily practice	Respectful disagreement; one-to-one counselling; correcting extremist interpretations; practice over preaching; shrine hospitality; food aid; tolerance; social equality	Religious scholars, shrine custodians
4. Constraints that sit beyond the pulpit	Sectarian rivalry; donor and political influence; bureaucracy and revenue; limited autonomy; poverty; low social standing; need for institutional collaboration	All groups

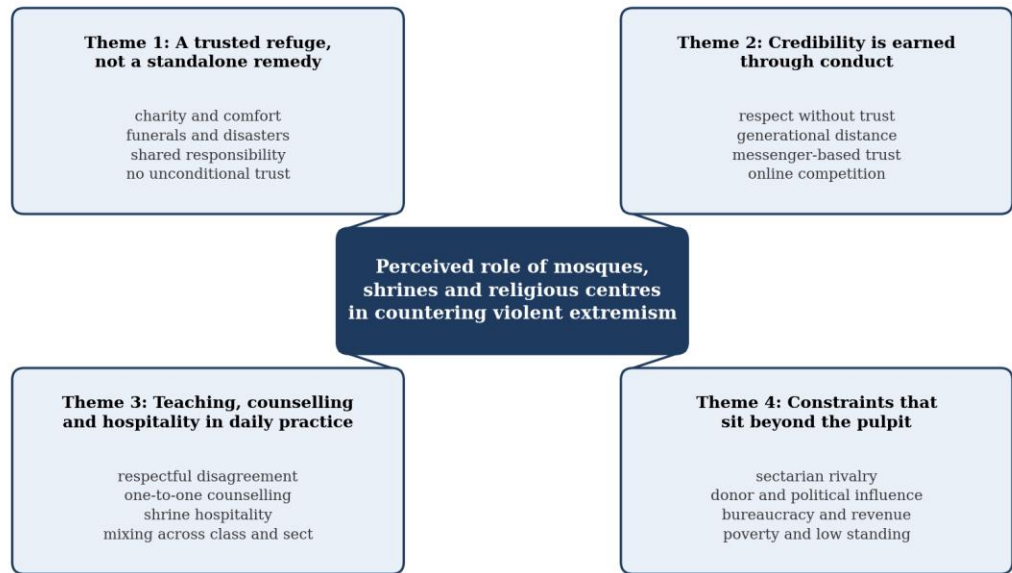


Figure 1. Thematic map of the four themes

Theme 1: A trusted refuge, not a standalone remedy

Mosques and shrines were the top venues mentioned across the four categories for people to resort to in times of need. Parents and community members said charity, funerals, Ramadan and situations of tragedy, when a neighborhood tends to assemble to the mosque without being asked. Several also said these locations encouraged the same tolerance and good behavior parents tried to instill at home. But there was a limit to that warmth.

A few phrases captured the ambivalence of Imran, the social activist. I think religious organizations should be a center of generosity and spiritual consolation. But they are active on rare occasions like prayer of Juma, Ramadan and some other prayer peaks. "I believe that these institutions can keep the bloodshed away if they work correctly but everything has gone wrong and they have become a platform for sectarian agendas. [Imran, Community member, Q2]

It's the conditional grammar that is extraordinary. If institutions worked well, they could keep violence at bay, and Imran doubted that they were working effectively now. It was not that there were no resources, because there was charity, comfort and a regular congregation, that was his grievance. The problem was that they were devoured by sectarian agendas. Importantly, his cure was collective: responsibility shared by the whole community, not the preacher.

Others were more forthright about the limit. Respondents said that religious organizations cannot replace advice in the home and cannot single-handedly cure poverty, unemployment or political grievance. Trust was consequently given grudgingly, and appeared less dependent on the structure than on whether the individuals administering it were perceived to live by what they stated. That strand came through most strongly in the stories of the children.

Theme 1, simply put, is benevolence with strings attached. Mosques and shrines were spaces of solace, generosity and community, but respondents refused to see them as a cure in themselves. They said responsibility had to be shared with families, schools and the broader society and that trust was something institutions have to constantly winning.

Theme 2: Credibility is earned through conduct

Young respondents established a demarcation that adult narratives frequently blurred. Respect for an institution is not the same as trust, and neither guarantees attendance. Most ranked mosques higher than shrines in personal significance. They claimed a leader earns credibility by adequately explaining problems and responding to youth concerns which the young recognized as real, not by evoking a title. Religious organizations may assist prevent extremism, but only to an extent, since they are fighting a torrent of internet material and sometimes miss the questions young people truly have.

"I am from the edge of that divide," said Danish, a private sector employee. Brother, I understand about the limited role of religious organizations in combating extremism owing to the power of so-called Mullahs and lack of understanding about the fundamental cause of extremism being an Ahl-e-Hadis sect. "We cannot depend on the Friday sermons because these sermons are full of stories and do not discuss the actual causes of violence." [Q5, Youth, Danish]

Danish made a distinction between official authority and authority as felt. His concern was not to sermons in general, but to sermons that are based on tales and leave the drivers of violence unchecked. Interestingly, he portrayed the deficiency as one of awareness on the side of adults in the pulpit, flipping the normal script where kids are those who are lacking in knowledge. This view resonates with Mandaville and Nozell's (2017) argument that religious actors are important when credible and deeply connected to their communities.

University student Hamza said part of the difficulty was who oversees the mosque. The retired folks in our society are those who conduct religious work. If the elderly have no occupation in their own life, they take over the mosque and are always criticizing the young people... The major mistake is in the use of these organizations for political ends, rather than for sound religious teaching." Youth, Hamza, Q9]

Generational gap operated as a trust deficit. A mosque run by retirees who tell the young what to do leaves little place for belonging, in Hamza's view. An Imam who is accused of speaking the donors' mind loses his freedom in the same breath. His suspicion is a perception, not a reality, but impressions of this type carry weight since religious legitimacy tends to depend on trustworthiness and moral behavior rather than office (Nurjaman et al., 2025).

Javed, a mosque committee member, went further on the behavior of the academics themselves. There are contradictions in society between what people say and what they do. And how society can believe their teachings then? For true change, we need to teach the message of simplicity, honesty, peace and unity to the religious academics, then only we can strive to prevent bloodshed." [Javed, Q8 Community member]

The message and the messenger were one and the same. It held little weight, a lecture on peace from one whose behavior was its antithesis. Javed's cure was revealing. It was to academics that he would have the sermon presented. Credibility looked to be a kind of moral account that leaders had to maintain in credit. Then we consider the academics' perception of their own situation.

Credibility was the hinge of the second topic. Respect was widespread for a mosque or shrine, but trust and attendance came only when leaders explained, listened and lived their message. Generational distance, donor distrust and online competitiveness each damaged that status, whereas actions visible to the community appeared to restore it.

Theme 3: Teaching, counselling and hospitality in daily practice

Religious experts, imams and lecturers explained their input in practical ways. They cited examples from Islamic history when academics differed amicably, one-on-one counseling for personal issues that may otherwise fuel radicalization, and a willingness to address uncomfortable

or extremist-leaning questions directly rather than divert them. A few said trustworthiness was a matter of behavior, not title. Practice was more important than preaching.

An Imam in the Augaf service, Khalid, gave a straightforward version. In Jumma, Eid and all other prayers we convey the message of peace and we abhor violence. But other worshipers have opinions that are different from ours. It is believed that sermons alone cannot create change until the moral principles and ethics of Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) are incorporated into the everyday life of the people, otherwise no significant influence can be noticed." [Religious scholar Khalid, Q13]

Khalid had put himself in this mess. He preached the gospel of peace every week and yet he recognized that certain worshipers had perspectives his lectures did not touch on. His narrative goes via lived ethics and he emphasized that government should attend to education and social circumstances instead of focusing on sermons. Change Such moderate self-criticism was commonly shared by scholars. They said social media, sectarian conflict and unemployment were pressures that dulled the edge of their job, and encouraged schools, families and government to share the burden.

Shrine custodians were singing in another key. Their shrines, they argued, were informal meeting sites where people of all classes and sects sat side by side, particularly during the Urs, via ritual, hospitality, food and charity led by Sufi ideas of humility and service. Sajjad, a custodian for two decades, linked that persona with history. I think Islam was disseminated mostly in South Asia by Sufi saints. They've conveyed the message of peace and they've always been calm places to pray in. "People come here and talk about the lives of the Sufis, their struggles and how they preached peace." [Sajjad, Custodian of the shrine, Q6]

Such tales show the shrine as a storehouse of common symbols, hospitality and remembrance. The tone was kind but not naïve, and caretakers were keen to refer to the shrine as a supporting place and not a major solution. The feeling also fits awkwardly with Suleman's (2018) caution that Sufi identification offers no guaranty of tolerance. Respondents themselves highlighted to factors that make the picture more complicated. The last theme ties these demands together.

The third element demonstrates prevention as something done by tiny, repetitive deeds rather than great statements: counseling, honest responses, polite disagreement and open-handed hospitality. These methods were prized by scholars and caretakers, and spoken about with constraint as part of a larger endeavor, never as a full solution.

Theme 4: Constraints that sit beyond the pulpit

Several hurdles emerged in all groups and none could be overcome by a better sermon: sectarian rivalry, already evident in Imran's comments, donor and political influence, mentioned by Hamza, bureaucratic control, unemployment and the low status of religious instructors.

Shah, who had spent four decades working in the Augaf government, spoke with the authority of lengthy service. But the income is collected, the bureaucracy is created, the administrative concerns are being handled and the main goal is not being addressed. These institutions are charged with disseminating the teachings of peace in the form of sermons, peace activities and conferences. But their objectives vary, and they are not doing a good job of combatting violent extremism." [Shah, Shrine caretaker group (retired Augaf administrator), Q5]

But for Shah the mandate was sound, even if the machinery was misdirected. "An institution set up to promote peace can drift toward revenue and paperwork, with peace activities as an afterthought. "All the shrines under Augaf Department are being used for revenue purposes," he said, adding that the paid workers lose sight of the objective of the shrine. Sajjad spoke of a similar drift from the shrine floor. They talked of limited administrative power, of little resources and of an audience limited to persons who had already made the decision to attend. There appeared to be a restriction in the institutional autonomy more than a lack of will.

An Imam and Quran instructor saw beyond administration to the ordinary material problems. But really, poverty is the major problem. "When a person can't meet his basic needs, he won't be able to hear lectures about peace and understand what is being said... if we have some respect and importance in society, people will listen to us and our words will have more effect." [Q11, Religious scholar, Qari]

Two limitations were joined into one. Poverty shrinks a person's ability to listen, and low standing the speaker's ability to be heard. His comment that politicians sought for votes everywhere but at the madrasa door, even as it reached far into public life, betrayed a sense of being neglected. Such material and status concerns resonate with broader findings that settings in which extremism takes root are shaped by poverty, inequality and bad governance (Makki & Akash, 2023; Javed et al., 2025); factors that are not simply amendable via sermons.

The fourth topic ties together what kept such practices behind. It seems that the constraints of religious organizations were as much structural as spiritual, with factors such as sectarian rivalry, donor and political power, administrative control, poverty and poor status all defined as sitting outside any particular speech.

Discussion

What emerged from the interviews was neither endorsement or skepticism but something more conditional. Mosques and shrines were appreciated as sites of shelter, charity and collective ritual, but no one group considered them a panacea for extremism. Their potential was always conditional: on a leader whose behavior matched his words, on a pulpit ready to address young people's questions, on collaboration between sects, on enough autonomy to act on stated aims.

These situations resonate with warnings in the broader literature. Faith-based tactics fail in the absence of coordination and ability (Effendy et al., 2025; Ishaku et al., 2021), and religious authority is acquired socially, not via office (Nurjaman et al., 2025). The Punjab perspectives offer some of the complexity that is rarely captured: professors underlined practice and counseling, while youth people stressed relevance and listened to. The two groups were discussing the identical institutions, but at different distances.

Community resilience thinking provides a handy approach of articulating what was at risk (Norris et al., 2008). In respondents' descriptions, trusted connections, trustworthy information, coordinated action and material security all emerged, and each seemed to be dependent on the others. The presence of a trusted leader in the neighborhood facilitates communication but the influence of donors or sectarian competition undermines trust and the capacity to organize. The terminology was used after the themes were created and had no influence on them.

Mosques and shrines, too, seemed to offer various things. Young respondents generally talked about the mosque, while caretakers emphasized inclusivity and friendliness at the shrine. Both settings were linked by Aqaf management. Then a practical reading comes. Partnership with religious organizations may not be very fruitful if the pulpit is seen as the sole outlet. Sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, respondents requested for youth-facing communications, leaders whose behavior wins respect, shrine management that enables peace work and schools, families and livelihoods that sermons cannot replace.

Limits should be recognized. The results are presented as transferable insights rather than generalizations, as thirty-two respondents from two locations cannot speak for Punjab. While scholars and custodians may have portrayed their institutions in a positive light, their willingness to discuss faults, including criticism of the Aqaf, indicates that defensiveness was not widespread. Interviews were carried out in three languages and cited in translation. Inevitably this smooths some meaning. Further investigation should include other supervisory players such as practitioners and police, and investigate if the same circumstances exist outside of Lahore and Multan.

Conclusion

Mosques, shrines, and other religious sites were seen as important yet qualified participants in the preventative process, according to the findings of these interviews. The charity, guidance, moral

example, and the common ground of shrines that transcended class and sect were the sources of strength that the respondents felt they could draw from. They were aware of their shortcomings, which included sectarian competition, donor and political influence, administrative control, poverty, and a communication strategy that often failed to reach the younger generation.

When it comes to Punjab, the policy and practice outcome is that religious groups would not take any action if the sermon was the last item performed. It appears that the message itself was not as significant as the credibility of the leadership, the engagement of young people, the cooperation between different religious groups, the maintenance of institutional autonomy, and the care paid to livelihoods. It would seem that the most essential question about religious institutions is not whether or whether they are able to combat radicalism, but rather when they would believe them in their own communities.

References

- Ahmed, S., Sajid, I. A., & Ashraf, S. I. (2021). Role of religious leaders in mobilizing communities to counter violent extremism: A case study of Dir Valley of Pakistan. *Review of Human Rights*, 7(1), 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.35994/rhr.v7i1.174>
- Akbar, A., & Akbar, M. (2026). Extremism in Pakistani society: A comparative study of universities and Madrasas. *Social Sciences Spectrum*, 5(1), 309–323. <https://doi.org/10.71085/ss.05.01.491>
- Akbar, M., Khalid, I., & Khan, W. A. (2023). Religious extremism and community resilience: Case study of Pakistan. *Journal of Politics and International Studies*, 9(1), 159–174.
- Alava, S., Frau-Meigs, D., & Hassan, G. (2017). Youth and violent extremism on social media: Mapping the research. UNESCO Publishing.
- Ali, B., Chaudhry, M. S., Amjad, F., Riasat, Z., Younas, M. S., Asif, M., ... Sher, F. (2026). A qualitative investigation of the role of religious educational institutes in promoting tolerance versus extremism in Faisalabad Pakistan. *Journal of Religion and Society*, 5(01), 149–155.
- Ammad-ul-Haque, M. (2021). The role of mosque to avoid violent extremism: A comparative study of eastern and western countries. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 9(3), 187–196. <https://doi.org/10.33687/jsas.009.03.3847>
- Andrade, G., Benlahcene, A., & Bedewy, D. (2026). Youth mental health and religiously framed radicalization in the Middle East and North Africa region: A review of evidence and gaps. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 17, 1782072. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2026.1782072>
- Beaujouan, J., & Rasheed, A. (2022). Investigating the role of religious institutions in the prevention of violent extremism in Nineveh province, Iraq. *Journal for Deradicalization*, (32), 76–109.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches.

- Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 21(1), 37–47.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12360>
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Effendy, K. F., Prayitno, H., Ni'mah, S. Z., Kowal, R. R., Khamim, M., & Ulya, Z. (2025). Countering religious radicalism: A systematic review of faith-based institutional strategies and challenges. *Journal for Deradicalization*, (45), 67–130.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). Sage.
- Habib, M. (2025). Sufism, counter-extremism and social resilience: Comparative evidence from Pakistan, Iran and the Caucasus. *Insights of Mystical, Spiritual and Theological Studies*, 4(4), 19–34.
- Hussain, S., & Shafique, H. M. M. (2025). The role of Qur'anic pedagogy and Sufi values in countering extremism and promoting harmony in South Punjab. *Journal of Contemporary Social Issues*, 1(2), 48–61.
- Ishaku, B., Aksit, S., & Maza, K. D. (2021). The role of faith-based organizations in counter-radicalization in Nigeria: The case of Boko Haram. *Religions*, 12(11), 1003.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12111003>
- Javed, A., Elahi, N., & Nawab, B. (2025). Exploring the dynamics of radicalization in Pakistan: A comprehensive analysis. *SAGE Open*, 15(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251326872>
- Makki, M., & Akash, S. A. (2023). Poverty, regional inequality, and the role of governance: Tracing geographies of violent extremism in Pakistan. *GeoJournal*, 88(3), 2635–2650.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-022-10766-6>
- Mandaville, P., & Nozell, M. (2017). *Engaging religion and religious actors in countering violent extremism*. United States Institute of Peace.
- Mayer, M. J., Horgan, J., Herrenkohl, T. I., & Osher, D. (2024). Violent extremism in the US: Causes and consequences for youth, families, schools, and communities. *Journal of School Psychology*, 106, 101345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2024.101345>
- Mehmood, S., Ghaffar, A., & Murad, M. (2020). A case study on Pakistani religious institutions and their policies regarding social cohesion. *Global Educational Studies Review*, 5(3), 191–198. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2020\(V-III\).19](https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2020(V-III).19)
- Norris, F. H., Stevens, S. P., Pfefferbaum, B., Wyche, K. F., & Pfefferbaum, R. L. (2008). Community resilience as a metaphor, theory, set of capacities, and strategy for disaster readiness. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41, 127–150.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-007-9156-6>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Nurjaman, A., Witro, D., Alamin, N., Alghani, R., & Yusuf, M. (2025). Muslim cadre education and its role in shaping religious authority in 19th-century West Java. *Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity*, 4(2), 237–264.
<https://doi.org/10.18326/ijores.v4i2.237-264>

- Rao, M. A. Z. (2026). Forging resilience: Institutional and societal roles in Pakistan's fight against extremism. In *Counter-narratives to terrorism in Pakistan: Breaking the cycle* (pp. 173–195). Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Sabic-El-Rayess, A., Joshi, V., & Li, S. (2026). Faith leaders as violence prevention partners: An empirical study of professional development for building campus resilience to hate. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 122, 103559. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2026.103559>
- Shah, A. R. (2026). From speech act to security regime: Critiquing the securitization of madrassah question in Pakistan. *Critical Policy Studies*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2026.2696799>
- Shanaah, S., & Heath-Kelly, C. (2022). What drives counter-extremism? The extent of P/CVE policies in the West and their structural correlates. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 35(8), 1724–1752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2022.2080063>
- Suleman, M. (2018). Institutionalisation of Sufi Islam after 9/11 and the rise of Barelvi extremism in Pakistan. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 10(2), 6–10.
- Wolfowicz, M., Litmanovitz, Y., Weisburd, D., & Hasisi, B. (2021). Cognitive and behavioral radicalization: A systematic review of the putative risk and protective factors. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 17(3), e1174. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1174>
- Zaidi, S. M. S., Abbasi, S. N., & Hayat, M. U. (2025). Understanding the rise in violent extremism in Pakistan through the lens of securitization theory. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 33(2), 173–197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185377.2024.2417994>