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**Gender-Based
Perspectives on Key Issues
Facing Poor Ahmadi
Women in Pakistan**

M.K.

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About CREID

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Gender-Based Perspectives on Key Issues Facing Poor Ahmadi Women in Pakistan

M.K.

Abstract

Different researchers have separately investigated the effects of faith-based persecution and poverty on women. However, it seems that the research on intersecting inequalities in the context of poverty and the religious marginalisation of women is lacking due attention. This study is an effort to highlight the experiences and issues faced by poor women from the religiously marginalised Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC) in Pakistan. It attempts to examine how the issues are perceived by poor Ahmadi Muslims (AMs) in Pakistan.

Participative ranking methodology (PRM) was principally employed for the data collection. Findings are based upon the semi-structured interviews of three focus groups: poor women aged more than 35 years; poor women aged less than 35 years and above 18 years; and Ahmadi men related to poor AM women. Initially, a questionnaire was devised by conducting a pilot study to prepare a list of as many issues as possible that are faced by poor AM women together with different supplementary questions for clarification from the focus groups. Later, 25 of the identified issues were ranked by the focus group participants. Findings show that the issues that directly related to state-sanctioned persecution were of top concern for both genders, and were the root cause of all the other issues. Only one issue (i.e. difficulty in finding a marriage partner) was generated within the AMC.

Overall comparison between the priorities indicated that generally the men ranked the issues higher than the women. It was also found that poor AM women try to hide their religious identity as far as possible and remain silent to any kind of oppression, mainly due to their defenceless position to the anti-Ahmadiyya laws. Their other reactions to the persecution were either to migrate to Rabwah (a city in Pakistan with 98 per cent AM population) or to seek asylum in other countries. However, many of them cannot leave Pakistan due to their weak financial position and so continue living in a very hostile environment.

This study finds that poverty and faith-based persecution generate synergic effects on the lives of Ahmadi women in Pakistan. Poverty increases their vulnerability to persecution due to the very limited options of keeping themselves away from the dense population of the

majority religion. In general, they are marginalised, targeted, and discriminated against in all aspects of their lives, including religious, cultural, social, economic, legal, constitutional, and judicial contexts. Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study is to highlight the fact that intersectional studies can find the details that are often missed in investigations on general faith-based persecution.

Future research may focus on comparing results of the current study through feedback from focus groups comprising rich AM women and women from other religious minorities in Pakistan. This kind of comparative study could generate new insights to understand the sensitivity of different aspects of faith-based persecution.

Dr M.K is a leader from the Ahmadiyya community who currently works at an international organisation. His name has been anonymised for security reasons.

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Abbreviations

AM	Ahmadi Muslim
AMC	Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
CNIC	computerised national identity card
FIR	First Investigation Report
IHC	Islamabad High Court
NCM	National Commission for Minorities
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
PRM	Participative ranking methodology

1. Introduction to the AMC

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC, or Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at) believe themselves to be Muslims. The AMC was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in 1889 as a revival movement within Islam. Unlike all other sects of Islam, they believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908) of Qadian (a small town in Gurdaspur district of Punjab, India) is the same promised Messiah who was prophesied by the prophet Muhammad. Other sects believe that the promised Messiah is yet to come and, therefore, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is a false prophet and his followers are non-Muslims. Another major criticism of the AMC by other sects is that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad abandoned jihad in Islam. However, Mirza Ghulam Ahma categorically declared that Islam did not encourage 'jihad by the sword'. Instead, he emphasised that Muslims should adhere to the Qur'an and the prophet Muhammad's model to defend Islam with a non-violent, intellectual 'jihad of the pen' (Qadiyani 1900).

Five Khalifas have succeeded Mirza Ghulam Ahmad since his demise under the khilafat (the spiritual institution of successorship to prophethood) system, which is also believed by majority sects as a God's promise to safeguard Islam. A *Khalifa* is the community's spiritual and administrative head. Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the current *Khalifa*, is originally from Pakistan and resides in the UK.

According to the [AMC official website](#), membership exceeds tens of millions, with followers in more than 200 countries. The *Khalifa* appoints an *Ameer* (administrative leader of the community) for each country. The *Ameer* heads the national executive body of his country, which consists of different national secretaries. The AMC has built over 16,000 mosques, 600 schools, and 30 hospitals. It has translated the Holy Qur'an into over 70 languages. In

addition to regular printed publications, the community owns a 24-hour satellite television channel (MTA International). The AMC also runs the non-profit charity, Humanity First, which mainly works for disaster relief worldwide.

Rabwah, a small city in the Punjab province of Pakistan, was the headquarters of the AMC from 1948 to 1984 when it relocated from [Qadian, India](#) after Pakistan came into existence in 1947. The community holds great sacredness for Rabwah due to its history related to its second *Khalifa* Mirza Bashir Uddin Ahmad. He had a holy dream in which he saw the community settling in a land of mountains and agriculture (Qasmi 2015). He preached the content of his dream to his followers in Qadian and directed them to Pakistan. The *Khalifa* saw a land about 170km away from Lahore which looked similar to the land in his dream. He ordered his people to settle there. The AMC purchased 2,500 acres from the government of Pakistan to establish their community and named it Rabwah.

Rabwah remains the only city of Pakistan where the majority population (i.e. 98 per cent) is Ahmadi (Rashid 2018). The *Khalifa* used to lead the AMC all over the world from Rabwah until the establishment of anti-Ahmadiyya laws in 1984. The fourth *Khalifa*, Mirza Tahir Ahmed, migrated to the UK and the AMC's headquarters was moved first to London and then in 2019 to Islamabad in Tilford, Surrey. Rabwah is now officially known as Chenab Nagar after its name was changed in 1998 through a resolution passed by the Punjab Assembly which was moved by clerics.

2. Background to the persecution of the AMC in Pakistan

Since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, the AMC has faced severe persecution. Around 200 Ahmadi Muslims (AMs) were killed in the famous anti-Ahmadiyya Lahore riots of 1953, which ended by martial law being imposed in Punjab (Imtiaz *et al.* 2015). 'Engineering' of the riots started in 1949 by different religious parties with the support of some political leaders who opposed the Pakistan movement and felt disgraced and powerless after Pakistan came into existence (Khan 2018). They manoeuvred the religious sentiments of the general public by targeting a sect of Muslims whose beliefs had been criticised in the past by other

sects of Islam. Their first demand from the Government of Pakistan was to declare Ahmadis as 'non-Muslim'. The said riots were a trend setter for future violence against the AMC.

In 1974, anti-Ahmadiyya groups successfully pushed the government, under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslim. In 1984, President Zia ul Haq issued the Ordinance XX, which provides for imprisonment extending to three years and unlimited fines to any AM who, in any way, behaves like a Muslim or refers to him/herself as a Muslim. The law further says that any act of an AM which seems relevant to Islam will be considered as blasphemy. In 1986, through another constitutional amendment, it was announced that the punishment for blasphemy is either the death penalty or life imprisonment. However, in 1990, the Federal Shariat Court of Pakistan declared that the only punishment for blasphemy could be death. In 1993, in response to a series of appeals by the AMC, who argued among other things that the constitutional provisions violated the religious freedom guaranteed in Article 20 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Supreme Court upheld all anti-Ahmadi provisions.

In 2018, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) directed the state and its institutions to formulate a faith affidavit to be signed by any Pakistani citizen who joins the judiciary, the armed forces, or the civil service. Furthermore, the same affidavit was declared mandatory for all citizens who apply for a computerised national identity card (CNIC), a passport, a birth certificate, or to enter their name on the voters' list. The key purpose of introducing such an affidavit was to uncover the religious identity of those AMs who were living in disguise (Shehzad 2018). The decision of the IHC also stated that Ahmadis were not rightful of being recognised as Ahmadis because 'Ahmad' was also a name of the prophet Muhammad. The decision further directed Ahmadis to add 'Mirzai' or 'Ghulam-i-Mirza' (derogatory religious slurs used to refer to AMs) to their names to differentiate them from orthodox Muslims and to stop using names like those of orthodox Muslims, such as Mohamed and Hussein.

The state-sanctioned and state-sponsored persecution has resulted in relentless societal persecution of the AMC. Therefore, the AMC in Pakistan is also a prime victim of serious violations of human and fundamental political rights. Statistics from 1984 to 2019 reported by the AMC in its annual report (TPA 2019) confirm an upward trend of AM persecution during the current Government of Pakistan. The report indicates that 265 Ahmadis were killed, 393 were assaulted for their faith, there were 70 instances of Ahmadis denied burial in a common cemetery, 39 Ahmadi bodies were exhumed, and there were 44 incidents of removing *Kalima* (the formal content of declaration of the Islamic faith) from Ahmadi homes and shops and on 103 occasions *Kalima* were removed from Ahmadi mosques. Statistics of police cases registered against Ahmadis on religious grounds show that 765 Ahmadis were

booked for displaying *Kalima*, 38 Ahmadis were arrested for making the Islamic call to prayer (*azan*), 453 Ahmadis were arrested for 'posing' as Muslims, 161 Ahmadis were booked for using Islamic epithets, 93 Ahmadis were charged for saying *namaz* (a mandatory prayer which Muslims offer five times a day), 825 Ahmadis were booked for preaching, 49 Ahmadis were booked for allegedly defiling the Holy Qur'an, 1,222 Ahmadis were charged in other religious cases, and 315 Ahmadis were charged under the 'blasphemy law', i.e. [PPC 295-C](#).

The AMC is discriminated against and persecuted in all Muslim-majority countries (Connley 2016). However, oppressive behaviour against AMs from the Muslim majority populations in South Asia such as those of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia and Africa seems at the highest end. Cases of AM harassment by orthodox Muslims have also been reported in western countries such as the UK, Canada, and Germany.

Orthodox Muslims in Pakistan use the word *Qadianism* to refer to the AMC. They also use different religious slurs such as *Qadiani* and *Mirzai* to refer to AM. The term *Qadiani* originates from Qadian, the birthplace of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and the term *Mirzai* comes from the surname of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the AMC.

3. Methodology

Participative ranking methodology (PRM) is a recommended approach to address the issues of human rights and humanitarian emergencies (Mayoux 2001). It can uncover the reasons behind complex issues through identifying what is most important to focus on, who is affected by the issue, what the key reasons are for the development of the issue, and how different policies can be formulated to resolve the issue. It can also be effectively used for micro-level situations (Rao 2019). For these reasons, PRM has been frequently used by various international organisations, including Minority Rights Group International and UNHCR and researchers focusing on social issues such as community development through dialogue (Vallely *et al.* 2007; Flanagan 2015), vulnerabilities for social ecological systems (Sebesvari *et al.* 2015), reintegration for girls formerly associated with armed groups (Stark *et al.* 2009), assessing refugee perceptions of health services (Nelson *et al.* 2010), building knowledge of refugee mental health (Weine *et al.* 2014), and humanitarian emergencies (Ager *et al.* 2011).

The respondents in PRM report on common patterns in their community (Ager *et al.* 2011). Therefore, PRM is appropriate to reflect on the issues faced by poor AM women in Pakistan by analysing the data collected from three focus groups comprising AM women and men.

PRM is an 'open' method in the sense that a focus group expresses their understanding of the issues faced by their community. This kind of method promotes an interactive process of drawing upon 'soft' data and perceptions. It is a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Data triangulation increases the knowledge credibility by refining internal consistency and generalisability in the same study (Hussein 2009). In the current study, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured open-ended interviews in which some questions were predetermined through a pilot study and using secondary data. However, many questions were formulated during the interviews. Quantitative data can be obtained from different ranking techniques such as ranking by voting, preference ranking, and scoring and matrix ranking. This study prioritised the issues based on average ranking as explained in Section 4.1.

3.1 Respondents in the study

It is a criminal offence in Pakistan for an AM to express their views and to talk about their religious beliefs in public. Therefore, studies that focus on faith-based and state-sponsored persecution have the potential to have serious implications for respondents. For similar reasons, previous studies have reported that AMs were not freely willing to participate in any study that focuses on religion-based persecution (Haron 2018). Thus, safety and willingness of the respondents to freely and openly express themselves were two important factors for gaining real data.

Although all respondents in this study are originally members of the AMC in Pakistan, they have fled their homes in Pakistan due to faith-based persecution. They are currently waiting for their resettlement in third countries. There are several reasons for selecting the members of focus groups from UNHCR-registered refugees in Thailand: the researcher is from Thailand; resources (i.e. finance and time) were limited; the safety of respondents could be better ensured in Thailand than in Pakistan; the willingness of respondents to participate in the study; and recognised refugees can be considered as highly affected people and, therefore, are a source of rich real data. Hence, the sampling was appropriate for PRM

because of access to all sensitive issues through the availability of the most vulnerable (Mayoux 2001).

3.2 Pilot study

A pilot study was carried out to prepare for the main study. The main purpose of conducting the pilot study was to identify any potential risks or early warning signs to indicate the main research could fail, where research protocols might not be followed, or whether anticipated methodology or instruments were unfitting or excessively complex (Van Teijlingen and Hundley 2001).

The AMC is well established in more than 200 countries. The leader of the worldwide AMC (known as Khalifa-tul-Masih) appoints an '*Ameer*' for each country. The *Ameer* acts as an administrative leader of the AMC in his country and heads the national executive body, which consists of the national secretaries of various departments. Five members – three men and two women – from the national executive body of AMC Thailand participated in the pilot study. Due to their focal positions in the AMC, these five individuals interact regularly with members of the AMC in Thailand and therefore can be expected to be well informed of the different issues faced by their community.

Principally, the pilot study was intended to identify the maximum number of issues which face poor AM women. The participants in the pilot study were asked the following questions:

- a. What are the issues being faced by poor AM women in Pakistan?
- b. What are the biggest risks and dangers to poor AM women?
- c. How are poor AM women coping with these issues?

The pilot study resulted in a list of issues without any ranking. It was further used to prepare a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire for the main study. Some questions were difficult to phrase for the focus groups. Therefore, they were explained by providing supplementary questions. Supplementary questions were clarifying statements which were used for framing different questions in the main study.

3.3 Main study and the focus groups

There is no single definition of 'poverty'. It can be defined in multiple dimensions of measurement, differences in societies, the nature of basic needs, etc. (Kotler and Lee 2009). The World Bank considers a poor person as someone whose income is inadequate to achieve the minimum level of their basic needs. However, in the context of the current study, which is focused on the intersection of poverty and faith-based persecution, the definition of 'poverty' by the United Nations seems a better fit and, hence, was used for selecting the focus group members. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states:

a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights (UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 2001).

The selected participants of the three focus groups were all unable to live a seamless life in Pakistan to their level of satisfaction. Generally, Ahmadi women are jobless in Pakistan and they are financially dependent on the males in their families. So, it was also confirmed that the male heads of families in the focus groups fitted well in the aforementioned definition of 'poverty'. It was supposed that converted AMs could have different kinds of experiences. Therefore, those included in the focus groups were all Ahmadis by birth. Furthermore, participants of the pilot study were excluded from the focus groups. Not more than one member of a family was selected for data collection. The respondents were selected from all cross-sections of society – such as farmers, shopkeepers, students, daily wage workers, and housewives – and from different cities in Pakistan, ranging from urban to semi-urban areas. It helped to get the AMC point of view from geographic, demographic, social, and political perspectives. Although all information in this study is real, participants' names have been changed in this paper for security reasons.

Thirty members of the AMC were interviewed in three focus groups. The composition of each focus group is briefly given below.

- **Focus group 1** – AM women, aged more than 35 years (ten participants): This group had the advantage that all respondents had closely observed the implications of the anti-Ahmadiyya laws of 1974 and 1984.
- **Focus group 2** – AM women, aged less than 35 years and more than 18 years (ten participants): The participants in this group were expected to provide important

perspectives on the issues that are experienced by the younger generation at important places, such as educational institutes and public areas, and at different kinds of social gatherings.

- **Focus group 3** – AM men (ten participants): Men are the head of the family in Pakistan. They are supposed to act as a shield between their families and problems encountered by them. Therefore, they were expected to provide a unique opinion on the issues that are faced by the women in their community, such as their spouses, mothers, daughters, and other female relatives. While they brought a unique perspective, men do not have the lived experience of being an Ahmadi woman to draw on and this should be borne in mind, especially where there were differences between the male and female participants in the ranking of the different issues faced by Ahmadi women.

3.4 Data collection

All focus groups were asked to reply to the following questions:

- What are the issues being faced by poor AM women in Pakistan?
- What are the biggest risks and dangers to poor AM women?
- How are poor AM women coping with these issues?

All participants in the focus groups were asked to answer the above questions in the context of the following scenarios:

- How their issues are different from those faced by other AM women in Pakistan;
- How their issues are different from those faced by poor women of mainstream Muslims and from women of other religious minorities in Pakistan; and
- How their issues are different from those faced by the Ahmadi men in Pakistan.

3.5 PRM exercises

Data was collected during face-to-face interviews and focus groups. Repeating the exercise with different groups produced rich data and ensured a diversity of responses within the community (Ager *et al.* 2011). Interviews were mainly open-ended focus group discussions. However, the starting point of the discussion was a semi-structured questionnaire based on the list of issues and the supplementary questions which had been developed in the pilot

study. Each respondent was handed the questionnaire. Two PRM exercises on different days were performed with each focus group. The duration of each exercise was not more than five hours. The first exercise was primarily to identify the issues facing poor AM women. The second exercise, which took place on another day, was mainly focused on identifying responses to the issues. There were two reasons for doing two PRM exercises with each focus group: one was to avoid overly time-consuming discussions, and the second was related to safety measures for the respondents. Thailand is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and, therefore, does not host asylum-seekers, even to those who are recognised as refugees by UNHCR. Therefore, Thai authorities consider asylum-seekers as illegal migrants and often arrest them. Due to the risk of police raids, each PRM exercise was carried out at different locations and the time of each exercise was kept relatively short.

3.6 Confirming the willingness of the participants to respond

The AMC is well organised. Its members obey the decisions taken by their top representatives. Therefore, before conducting the pilot study and focus group discussions, the national *Ameer* of AMC Thailand was informed about the study purpose and his permission to conduct interviews was successfully sought. The lead researcher of this study acted as a facilitator and was well supported by a female assistant. A female assistant was preferred to communicate easily with the women respondents. The focus groups were informed about the permission granted by their national *Ameer*. The facilitator then explained the background, purpose, and scope of the study. It was explicitly clarified to all participants that their safety and security were of primary concern, that data will be used purely for research purposes, and that their responses will not be labelled with their real names. Enquiries from all participants were replied to their level of satisfaction so that they could feel free from any kind of fear during the focus group discussions. Before the questionnaire was distributed, key expectations of the participants were explained, i.e. editing the list of issues, providing real examples, and the ranking of issues.

3.7. Positionality

The lead researcher/facilitator who undertook the data collection is a follower of the Ahmadiyya faith who occupies a leadership position within the Ahmadiyya religious community. He had to leave Pakistan on account of the day-to-day encroachments

experienced there. He also sought the assistance of Ahmadiyya women in outreach and in undertaking the focus groups.

4. Qualitative data

One issue at a time was discussed with the respondents in a focus group. Each question in the semi-structured questionnaire was read aloud by the facilitator in Urdu (the national language of Pakistan) and Punjabi (a provincial language which most respondents understood) to elicit responses from the participants. All participants responded in either Urdu or Punjabi. To improve the quality of responses, each respondent was also requested to justify their response to questions. Based on tendencies of the focus group and sensitivity of the question, the facilitator prompted participants to elicit responses on specific issues. Notes were taken by the facilitator and his assistant. Instead of relying on the notes to capture key points in the discussions, the participants were asked if they wanted to reply to the questions in writing. All participants of focus group 2 and focus group 3 provided their responses in writing, mainly in Urdu. One member of focus group 2 and two members of focus group 3 replied to the questionnaire in English. No participants from focus group 1 opted to respond in writing. Therefore, only notes of the responses from focus group 1 were taken by the facilitator and his assistant. It is worth noting that responses may have differed in their depth, content, and/or detail between those who submitted answers in writing and those whose answers were only captured in facilitator notes, as these are separate data collection methods.

4.1 Ranking and process of data analysis

Each participant was given ten toothpicks for each issue. Every participant individually quantified the importance of each issue by assigning it a specific number of toothpicks. To get a realistic ordering, the facilitator and his assistant worked closely with each participant and prompted participants to justify the number of toothpicks they assigned to an issue. It provided a rich insight into real circumstances and challenges. Once all group members were satisfied with their response and quantification, all toothpicks assigned to an issue were accumulated to rank the issue. The rank of each issue was then divided by ten (the size of the focus group) to get the average rank of each issue. Issues were ordered based on the average rank. The ranks, average ranks, and ordering were discussed with the group.

Adjustments in the ranking continued until a final ordering was agreed among the focus groups. Details of the ranking process are available in Annexe 1.

The data was translated into English and organised from the individual responses and notes taken by the facilitator and his assistant. Later, the organised responses were shared with the participants to ensure that all key information was captured.

5. Findings

Twenty-five key issues were identified and prioritised, as shown in Table 1. A closer look at the issues reveals that the lives of poor AM women were greatly affected by several factors, including their economic power, political inclusion, state policies, societal treatment, and their faith's challenge to the authority of the clerics of the majority religion. Opinions from both genders on the issues indicate that sensitivity and severity of an issue were different for men and women. Each issue is explained in more detail in subsections A to Y following this presentation of the overall findings.

Table 1: Key issues faced by poor AM women in Pakistan

Serial No.	Issues faced by poor AM women in Pakistan	Priority by	
		Women	Men
A	They can be trapped and put behind bars due to Ordinance XX of the Pakistan constitution.	1	1
B	They have no access to their mosques and cannot carry out peaceful religious activities, such as prayer and worship, in comparison to other poor women of the majority religion.	1	1
C	They are unable to freely mark important occasions within their religious calendar compared to those of the majority religion.	1	1
D	Decision makers say bad words against them and use the 'Ahmadiyya card' for political gain.	2	1
E	They are fearful of being killed due to fake accusations.	3	2

Serial No.	Issues faced by poor AM women in Pakistan	Priority by	
		Women	Men
F	They are forced to hide public manifestations of their faith to be accepted by society.	4	3
G	Poor AM women experience more violence and harassment than other poor women.	4	4
H	They have many difficulties with admission acceptance to educational institutes. They are ignored by the instructors and isolated at the institutes in comparison to other poor women.	5	7
I	No jobs are offered.	6	6
J	They are openly asked to abandon their faith, or convert to another sect, for them to feel safe.	7	5
K	It is almost impossible for them to approach local/national authorities in comparison to other poor women.	8	4
L	Violence against them is never highlighted by the Pakistani media.	9	10
M	They are unable to wear a hijab without being harassed more than other women.	10	11
N	They face social boycott.	11	11
O	It is very difficult for them to acquire national documents, such as a national identity card and passport.	12	9
P	It is not possible for them to shop in local areas.	13	18
Q	They are misrepresented by the instructors in educational institutes.	14	13
R	They and their families experience threats to their property and land.	15	12
S	They cannot enjoy leisure activities in comparison to other poor women.	16	16
T	It is very hard for them to find a home to rent.	17	8

Serial No.	Issues faced by poor AM women in Pakistan	Priority by	
		Women	Men
U	Sometimes they observe religious customs that are not a part of their religion.	18	19
V	They cannot vote in elections.	19	17
W	It is hard to find a marriage partner.	20	14
X	They experience barriers to accessing adequate health-care services.	21	15
Y	They face mobility/transportation issues in comparison to other poor women.	22	20

Although the two women’s focus groups and the men’s focus group were found to have similar perspectives about the issues (as discussed in the following section), they prioritised them differently. A comparison of how the different issues were assigned by the participating men and women indicates that in general the men’s perceived severity of the issues is more than that perceived by the women (Figure 1).

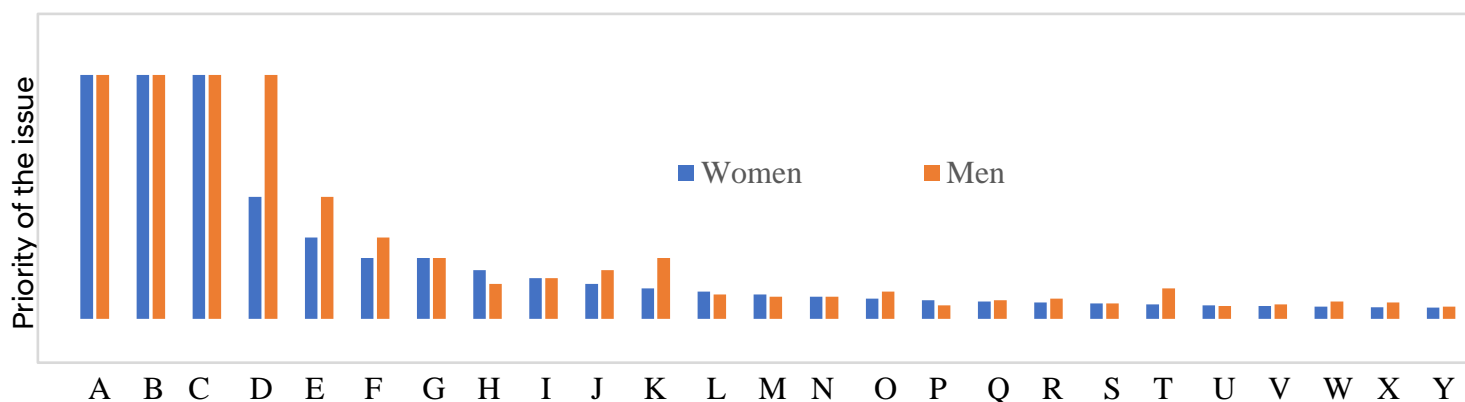


Figure 1: Comparison between gender-based ranking of the issues (Serial number of the issues as shown in Table 1)

Three issues – restrictions imposed by Ordinance XX, not having access to their mosques, being forbidden peaceful religious activities, and the prohibition of freely marking important occasions within their religious calendar – were all ranked by both the men and the women as the highest priorities (see Table 1). Such issues are directly related to the state policies

that cause their marginalisation. A critical analysis of the issues shows that the ripple effects of the above-mentioned three issues were the root cause of all the other issues listed in Table 1. It is aligned with the findings of Wolf (2019) that state-sponsored persecution is the most dangerous form of marginalisation of religious minorities. Four other issues – experiencing more violence and harassment than other poor women (priority 4), no jobs (priority 6), social boycott (priority 11), and it not being possible to enjoy leisure activities (priority 16) – each got the same priority by both genders.

Interestingly, 52 per cent of the issues (13 out of the 25) were ranked higher by the men than the women. For instance, the issue of difficulty in approaching authorities was ranked fourth by the men, while the same issue was ranked eighth by the women. The key reason for difference in perceptions related to the ranking is, perhaps, the men's sense of helplessness towards their women when in need. It is also evident from the invariable responses given by all the interviewees to the supplementary question about men's responses to violence against poor AM women. Everyone affirmed the failure of poor AM men to defend against any unfair treatment towards their women due to state-sponsored persecution. The men's only reaction to oppression against their women was either to seek asylum abroad or to migrate to Rabwah with their families.

Five issues – discrimination in educational institutes, the media overlooking their problems, harassment due to wearing a hijab (a form of veil that covers the face, head, and body in full with the exception of the hands), not being able to shop in local areas, observing religious customs that are not a part of their religion – were given higher priority by the women than by the men. It makes sense: discrimination due to their faith and fear of persecution force most poor AM men to find jobs far away from their homes where their religious identity is not exposed; while back at home, their women, especially married women, take care of their households, children, and property; and young women go to educational institutes (it is important to note that only 40.5 per cent of Pakistani women have formal education (Gallup 2014)) that are near to their homes. Therefore, because people are familiar with their family background, they directly and very frequently face discrimination due to their known religious faith during grocery shopping and attending educational institutes in their vicinities. The women from Ahmadi families, who can hide their religious identities, unwillingly participate in some religious customs being observed in their neighbourhoods so that others will believe them to be of that faith.

The Pakistani media may raise its voice for human rights and women's rights; however, mention of poor AM women is virtually non-existent in the print and broadcast media. According to a Gallup (2014) survey, 78.4 per cent of women in Pakistan take a keen interest

in media coverage of religious issues. The same survey also found that at least 60 per cent of Pakistanis follow the media due to their interest in three topics that are directly related to their daily lives: health and health care (64.6 per cent), education (60.7 per cent), and human rights (59.8 per cent). Unfortunately, the AMC is explicitly excluded from all kinds of debates. On the other hand, Ahmadiyya beliefs are distorted by clerics and people in the media who are highly influenced by clerics' open propagation of hate against them. Inaccurate and biased information about the AMC and baseless allegations against them are aired through different national TV channels, YouTube channels, and on other social media platforms. Ahmadiis are frequently portrayed as infidels and traitors. No authority has ever objected the negative role of the media against the AMC, but they have banned official and unofficial websites of the AMC: MTA (the TV channel owned by the AMC), YouTube channels that are run by different Ahmadi individuals, and its online and published literature. Such circumstances have put extra pressure on poor AM women and men by creating an increased fear of violence and a heightened sense of isolation. However, women are more stressed, and feel greater strain, burden, and distress than men (Sharma *et al.* 2016).

Three issues – barriers to accessing adequate health-care services, renting homes, and finding a marriage partner – were prioritised significantly higher by men than women.

Different gender-based perspectives related to the identified issues of poor AM women highlighted some important underlying facts which are key to gauging the level of their marginalisation. Further, it is important to consider circumstances to understand the real structure and building process of the issues. Below are the details of experiences and opinions shared by the focus groups to clarify the nature of the key issues faced by poor AM women in Pakistan. A critical review of the issues reveals that they are not mutually exclusive.

A. They can be trapped and put behind bars due to Ordinance XX of the Pakistan constitution

Fear of Ordinance XX was univocally ranked the highest priority by all the respondents. The key reason is that, in practice, it is almost impossible for the AM to avoid the customs that are common between Islam and the culture of Pakistan – an Islamic republic of 97 per cent Muslim population – such as using words *Mashallah* (an Arabic word to express appreciation), and citing Koranic verses in different pieces of writing and invitation cards, etc.

Ordinance XX of the 1984 Pakistan Penal Code (PPC)¹ forbids AMs from publicly practising their religion. It prohibits AMs from referring to themselves as Muslims, from saying *azan* (call to prayers), from reciting *Kalima* (the formal content of declaration of the Islamic faith), from reciting the Koran, and from speaking, writing, or visibly representing, or in any manner whatsoever posing themselves as Muslims and outraging the religious feelings of Muslims. Otherwise, they shall be punished by three years' imprisonment and shall also be liable to paying a fine. Since the implementation of the 'draconian Ordinance XX', Ahmadis have been arrested for minor things, such as saying *Assalam-u-Alaikum* (a way of greeting in Islamic culture), keeping a copy of the Koran in their bags, using words from the Koran during a discussion, etc. Ispahani (2015) mentioned that on 12 January 1990, the District Magistrate in Abbottabad charged 55 AMs for holding 'a prayer meeting in a private household'.

I am a man of strong emotions. However, I cannot concentrate on my job due to fear that my wife at home and children in school may be attacked and arrested anytime if somebody complained. (Amir)

My mother never allowed me to pray in the backyard of my home. She was afraid that somebody might call police if he peeps into our home or notices from the nearby roof top. (Hafsa)

*We are not spared after our deaths and in our graves in Pakistan. We are not allowed to say *namaz-e-janaza* [a kind of prayer Muslims offer before burial of a dead body]. Our graves are disinterred even in the graveyards which are the property of AMC. Our dead bodies are exhumed. (Asim)*

*How can we avoid saying *Assalam-u-Alaikum*, stop reciting Koran, saying prayer, reading Islamic books, celebrating Eid? These things are basics of our faith. It is simply irrational to avoid 'posing directly or indirectly like Muslims', when actually we are Muslims. (Kulsoom)*

AM practise their religion secretly. However, a little carelessness can be the cause of their arrest. It is very hard to find a lawyer to fight their cases. The lawyers who fight cases for Ahmadis face many dangers and sometimes are murdered. In this environment, Pakistani poor AM women remain under stress and in fear of persecution of themselves and their families.

¹ See Ordinance XX and Pakistan Penal Code. f

My father was in jail for six months before his bail. His crime was to put on a badge with Kalima on his shirt. (Arifa)

Mainstream Muslims misuse these oppressive laws to satisfy their hate and even for personal gain in any disputed matter with an AM.

A Sunni Muslim called my cousin with a book which had some references from Koran. My cousin went on a bicycle with the book in a shopping bag. The caller was already at the meeting spot with police who arrested him just because of carrying a book which included Koranic verses. (Sofiya) Later on, it was found that her cousin's younger brother had some argument with the caller while playing cricket together in school.

B. They have no access to their mosques and cannot carry out peaceful religious activities, such as prayer and worship, in comparison to other poor women of the majority religion

Both the men and the women also ranked this issue the highest priority. AMs are banned from calling for prayer (*azan*), referring to their worship places as *masjid* (mosque), and saying prayers in public. Mosques and Muslim prayer rooms are everywhere in Pakistan, such as at bus stations, railway stations, airports, and supermarkets. However, it is a criminal act for Ahmadi to say prayer openly. They can only pray at home. Before the terroristic attacks on Ahmadiyya mosques in Lahore in 2010, Ahmadi women used to say Friday prayers in Ahmadiyya mosques, but since then, for security reasons, AM women have been asked by the AMC leader (Khalifa-tul-Masih) to pray at home.

Ashraf said, 'We cannot safely celebrate Eid and say prayer inside our *namaz* centres [Ahmadi mosques] without fear'. He was speaking in context of the incident of a mob attack on an Ahmadi mosque on the second day of Eid-ul-Adha in 2019 in Ghaseetpura, Faisalabad.

Since we are barred by law to call our worship places as mosques, we call them as namaz centre. Unfortunately, due to security reasons our Jama'at has asked women not to come to namaz centres. We pray at home and remain concerned for the safety of our men and children in the namaz centres. (Samina)

Our mosques are also our learning centres. We can watch Friday sermon by Hazoor [Khalifa] and other religious programmes at MTA through dish antenna at

our mosques. However, our women cannot go to mosques. MTA [TV channel owned by the AMC] is banned in Pakistan and cannot be accessed at home without dish antenna. I cannot afford to buy a dish antenna. (Hamid)

In Pakistan it is very risky when we go to the mosque. Anyone can attack on us. Therefore, our Jama'at issues directions such as everyone should not come from same direction, every day we should try to take a different way to the mosque, and we should not wear the caps outside the mosques to hide our identity. (Arsalan)

Since I have no car or motorcycle, I walked off my home to say Friday prayer well before time to avoid interaction with Muslims of mainstream sects. However, I forgot to take off my cap. Some boys identified me and shouted 'qadiani Kafir [Ahmadis are non-believers]' 'Gustakhay Rasool ki aik he saza, sar tan se juda [one who insults the prophet Muhammad, must be beheaded]'. They started approaching me. I felt the goosebumps and started running towards a bus on the road. Fortunately, bus speed was slow enough to jump me in and survived any serious accident. After that I never went to mosque from that road and always put on cap only in the mosque. (Majid)

Blasphemy allegations will put me in a lengthy incarceration. I cannot afford bribe money or heavy fee of the lawyers to fight my case. There are several pending cases in courts against AM, in which even women and children have been charged with blasphemy law. (Hafsa)

Ahmadis were doing some repair work and renovation of our mosque in 2008. Someone complained that we were doing blasphemy. Hence, the case of blasphemy was registered against the entire Ahmadi population including women and children in Kotli. (Irum from Kotli)

Aliya from Rabwah said that a First Investigation Report (FIR) of blasphemy is still active against the whole Ahmadi population of Rabwah because of their religious celebrations. The complainants said that their Islamic sentiments were hurt because Ahmadis were serving food, distributing sweets, and displaying bunting.

In schools, colleges, universities, and private educational institutes, either mosque or prayer rooms are necessarily available. However, Pakistani law forbids AMs to say prayers, while all their fellow students not only get break time for praying but also freely say prayers.

At my academy, teachers always took break at the prayer time. All of my class fellows used to say prayer except me. (Rubaab)

I did not disclose my Ahmadiyya faith at my school. Yet, I never said prayer at school because my parents had warned me of possible consequences. It is very unfortunate for us that law stops us from saying prayer which is one of the essential elements of our religion. (Kulsoom)

C. They are unable to freely mark important occasions within their religious calendar compared to those of the majority religion

In addition to the above-mentioned issues, this was ranked as one of the most sensitive issues for all the men and women in the focus groups. There are many important occasions in their religious calendar: the annual congregation, the day of Musl-e-Maud, the Khilafat day, the Masih-e-Maud day, Seerat-un-Nabi, and others. However, the Government of Pakistan has banned AMs from celebrating any kind of occasion in their religious calendar. They cannot even organise sports tournaments and community celebrations. The government issued such orders in 1989 at the occasion of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Centenary, and since then restrictions have never been lifted. Therefore, AMs celebrate religious events inside the big homes of rich Ahmadis who live in expensive housing schemes, which are relatively safer than those of poor Ahmadis, and without letting anyone outside of the Ahmadi community know. They must be very careful in maintaining confidentiality of any kind of meeting otherwise they will risk being charged for criminal offences. Many times, such events are cancelled due to fear of attacks on the homes.

I feel sense of belongingness when participate in different events arranged by the Jama'at. I feel happy. However, travelling is expensive and, therefore, I cannot afford to attend all meetings which are held in big homes far away from my home. (Afia)

I am declared best speaker many times at different events arranged by the Jama'at. I feel so much proud and wish to perform in every event. However, due to safety reasons and financial problems I cannot attend all such meetings since those are organised far away from my home. One day when I left home with my younger brother to attend one meeting, two boys from my neighbourhood started chasing us. They were staring at us. I was terrified and returned back to

my home. Therefore, Jama'at asked me to stay at home for some time because lives of many other Ahmadi women could be at risk. (Arifia)

Our Jama'at has different organisational units such as Lajna Imaullah, Khuddam-ul- Ahmadiyya and Ansaarullah. Throughout the world, these units regularly organise different events and their annual gatherings. However, Pakistan have criminalised any kind of celebrations of the AMC. I am 41 years old but never attended any annual gathering. (Zubair)

The AMC celebrates all important events in the Islamic calendar all over the world, with the exception of Pakistan, such as Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Adha, and slaughtering animals at Eid-ul-Adha. Unlike the AMC, other religious minorities are fortunate to have the legal right to celebrate their different religious and community activities. The Government of Pakistan announces official holidays for other minorities on their important religious events, their salaries are disbursed early, and some government representatives participate in their activities.

Pakistani laws are against us. We are not even safe inside our homes. We are attacked by mob even if we arrange any event at our homes. Clerics and their followers take police to our homes on Eid-ul-Adha and snatch our animals to be slaughtered. (Amir)

D. Decision makers say bad words against them and use the 'Ahmadiyya card' for political gain

This issue was ranked second by the women. However, second ranking for the men was their women being abused and mistreated. When the government is trying to foster public support, they may bring up an issue related to the Ahmadi people as a way to detract from other issues concerning the public. This is using the 'Ahmadiyya card' for political gain.

There are many religious political parties in Pakistan that have been very active in Pakistani politics since its inception. They have strong street power, mainly due to their leading role at thousands of madrassas (religious schools) where millions of families have their children enrolled (Andrabi *et al.* n.d.). Therefore, different parties have their representation in the provincial as well as national assembly. Although they have never been ruling parties, they hold an important position in national decision making and in establishing the Government of Pakistan through their alliance with the most appropriate democratic party. Decision

making by such alliances is highly influenced by clerics. Declaring AMs as non-Muslims in 1974, followed by legislations at different times that have deprived Ahmadis from their human and religious rights, are clear evidence of the clerics' power in decision making at national level (Haqqani 2006).

Since alone religious parties cannot introduce laws, clerics always become a part of the ruling party to gain power in law making against us. (Amna)

All major sects of Islam in Pakistan – such as Sunnis and Shiites (75–85 per cent and 15–25 per cent, respectively, of the country's Muslim population) – have common differences from the religious beliefs of the AMC (Haqqani 2006). They criticise each other and have declared each other as Kafir at various times. Therefore, both sects have been engaged in a sectarian war in Pakistan for a long time (Bhattacharya 2019). However, they target their common 'enemy' to maintain their public support in times of common stakes; for example, showing solidarity to the Government of Pakistan under pressure from international agencies and to get their representation in different religious platforms, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs. As a result, the general public in Pakistan believes that the AMC is a major risk to Islam. The hate campaign against Ahmadis is intensified by slogans of religion-based politics of the different groups, including religious parties and secular civilian and military leaders who use it for their own interests (Haqqani 2006).

We are eight Ahmadi families living near a very big and famous mosque associated with a madrassa. Almost on every Friday, a guest from different political-religious parties is invited to speak at the mosque. Different representatives from local government also participate in Friday prayer in the same mosque. Their speeches are abusive and contain bad words such as infidels, Kafirs [non-believers], dogs, pigs, rapists, prostitutes, traitors of Islam and Pakistan, agents of Jews, and many more. (Osama)

Foul language against us by our leader make us feel aliens in Pakistan. We live in a constant state of fear that people who are supposed to protect us seems wishing to kill us. I always wished I would leave Pakistan as soon as I got money to get visa and ticket. (Sakina)

AMs are not sympathised with and do not get support from the political leaders in Pakistan, even when they face the highest level of injustice, such as the murder of around a hundred AMs in a single day in brutal attacks on Ahmadiyya mosques in Lahore, Punjab in 2010 (Rahman 2016). Neither the President, the Prime Minister, nor any member of the national or

provincial assembly visited the Ahmadiyya centre in Lahore, the targeted mosques, or the injured in hospitals. However, Governor Punjab Salman Taseer visited Ahmadiyya centres, and the Interior Minister, Rehman Malik, visited the injured in a hospital.

My cousin was martyred in the Lahore massacre. It was a horrible day. I saw blood and flesh all over the places. I could not sleep for many nights. Although AM did not demand, government announced financial compensation to the families of the deceases but did not pay them. (Osama)

On the day of the attack, hate banners against AMs were hanging on almost all the main roads of Lahore. One of the banners stating 'Jews, Christians, Ahmadis are enemies of Islam' was fixed outside the Lahore High Court. On another was written, 'Friendship with Ahmadis is rebellion against the prophet Muhammad'. One banner was inviting people to kill Ahmadis through a message 'Ahmadis deserve death only'. These banners remained in place even after the attack.

There are special minority seats in each provincial and national assembly. However, unlike other religious minorities, such as Christians and Hindus, AMs have no representation in the assemblies. Neither are they included on any government committee. Even the National Commission for Minorities (NCM), whose members include all the other minorities, is not represented by an AM. For the Ahmadi people to access these special minority seats they would have to accept their 'minority' status, which would mean stating they are non-Muslim. However, it is worth noting that even where many Ahmadis in Pakistan disclose their religious identity in documentation such as identity cards, passports, and job application forms, which automatically puts them in the religious minority quota, not a single Ahmadi has been offered a job under the 5 per cent quota reserved for minorities in government jobs. In the same way, decision makers openly express their hate views at all forums – such as electronic and print media, social media, and in public gatherings – that Ahmadis will not be provided with any kind of minority rights and membership in the NCM unless they accept themselves as non-Muslims.

Ahmad said that Pakistani leaders have the right to declare us non-Muslims, but they cannot force us to behave like non-Muslims: 'They call us dogs, but they cannot ask us to bark.'

They used their majority to declare us non-Muslim. We never protested this decision. However, how can they force us to behave like non-Muslims? We are proudly true Muslims, but they ask us not to follow Islam. They force us to make

new Kalima, new book and another God. It is unjust. As a human being, we have the right to believe us whatever we want. (Hamza)

Most recently, a visa-free border crossing for the Sikh community, the Kartarpur Corridor, was developed by the government to connect the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan to the Indian border so that Sikh devotees can visit the gurdwara in Kartarpur. Immediately after its completion in November 2019, clerics started to spread propaganda that the Government of Pakistan has developed this corridor to facilitate Ahmadis to visit their sacred places in Qadian, India where they will conspire against Pakistan (IHRC 2019). This campaign was full of hate speeches. Key politicians such as Fazal-u-Rahman and different state ministers were asked questions on TV and for the print media. They explicitly stated their disassociation with the AM, reaffirmed their anti-Ahmadiyya beliefs, and strongly denied any kind of relaxation to the AM (Stanca 2020). This incident created a hostile situation for the Ahmadis in Pakistan. They were afraid of possible attacks on them and on their assets.

We never demanded any kind of facilitation from the government to allow us to visit Qadian. They have banned us to perform hajj which is an important part of our religion. How can we expect from the government that they will assist our access to Qadian?(Ahsan)

Different state ministers, including the Minister of Religious Affairs, regularly participate in anti-Ahmadiyya conferences and seminars, which are organised almost every month. The print and electronic media give coverage to their hate speeches. Therefore, using the 'Ahmadi card' for gaining public support is common in Pakistani politics, especially when the government is in any kind of crisis. All politicians, including those in ruling party, opposition parties, and religious parties abuse AMs on a daily basis. The general public is extensively violent against Ahmadis. Ahmadi women do not leave their homes and keep their children at home too. Ahmadi families in high-risk areas travel to Rabwah to avoid any violence against them.

I am from Faisalabad which one of those cities where anti-Ahmadiyya sentiment is maximum. Government of Pakistan declared us non-Muslims in September 1974. Therefore, a large number of anti-Ahmadiyya rallies are conference are held by the orthodox Muslims in September of each year. People look crazy against us. My husband asks me every year to take children to my parents' home in Rabwah. (Hira)

Humaira expressed her grief describing how she was terrified on seeing 'infidel' written on the wall of her house when she came out to drop her children at school one morning. The label 'infidel' in Pakistan is like a licence for the general public to kill Ahmadis. 'It was my last morning at my home in Sialkot. I immediately took my children to Rabwah and asked my husband to sell the home as soon as possible.'

According to a report of the US Department of State, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Noor-ul-Haq Qadri, participated in a conference called by Hafiz Saeed, a UN-designated terrorist, and said, 'Government and the Prime Minister of Pakistan will always stand against Ahmadis' (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2008). The same report mentioned Sardar Muhammad Yousuf, the then Minister of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, who announced 2018 as the year of 'Khatm-e-Nabuwat' (Finality of the Prophethood), a religious assertion commonly used to target AMC. The minister asked religious institutes and public universities to set up Khatm-e-Nabuwat 'chairs' and to promote the topic in their syllabuses. Consequently, a large number of Khatm-e-Nabuwat conferences (i.e. with the purpose to criticise the Ahmadiyya faith) were held all over Pakistan. Key politicians including the Prime Minister of Pakistan and government officials participated in these conferences and hate speeches were delivered in their presence. It created a fearful environment, especially for the Ahmadi women who feared losing their husbands and families.

Humaira started crying while stating her survival from anti-Ahmadiyya violence:

After a Khatam-e-Nabuwat conference, clerics with a large mob marched towards my home. They shouted slogans that Qadianis should be beheaded. They threw stones at my home. I was terrified and my children were scared. They put their heads in my lap. I called the police to protect us. Police remained standing for hours in front of my house until the rally went away from our street.

Tahir Ahmad, 68 years old, told that he had witnessed similar trends of using the 'Ahmadiyya card' by both the democratic governments of the Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League and the marshal law regimes of Zia-ul-Haq and Pervaiz Musharraf.

Whenever some government in Pakistan is in crisis and need rescue; to hide their inabilities and failures; they all use a trump card of Ahmadiyya issue to divert the attention of common public. First, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto used it by declaring us non-Muslims to gain support of religious parties to strengthen his government which

was slipping out of his hands. He was followed by Zia-ul-Haq who banned us from even saying prayers just for the sake of stretching his marshal law which finished on his death after 11 years. Same trends continued during the following governments. Current government of Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf has many times used the same tactics to retain their popularity by targeting Ahmadis. Their ministers ignite the public sentiments against Ahmadis. For instance, the minister of parliamentary affairs Ali Muhammad Khan frequently said that Ahmadis should be killed. Most recently Noor-ul-Haq Qadri, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Religious and Inter-faith Harmony Affairs, stated that any form of 'soft-heartedness' toward the Ahmadis was both un-Islamic and un-patriotic. (Tahir Ahmad)

General Asif Bajwa was said to be an AM at the time of his appointment as Chief of Army Staff (Fair 2017). A spokesperson of the Pakistan Army explained in the media that General Bajwa believed in the finality of prophethood and was a Muslim. Later, General Bajwa invited anti-Ahmadi clerics to his son's wedding, arranged a religious gathering at his house where anti-Ahmadi clerics were invited, and posted his photos taken around Kaaba (a building at the centre of Islam's most important mosque, the Masjid al-Haram in Saudi Arabia) on social media to prove that he had no association with the Ahmadiyya faith.

In a country whose army chief is afraid of anti-Ahmadiyya clerics and their followers, how can an Ahmadi like me can protect his family?(Adnan)

The current Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, participates in anti-Ahmadiyya conferences. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan avoids questions related to Ahmadiyya persecution from the international media. The last government also showed similar behaviour towards AMs. Captain Safdar, son-in-law of the then Prime Minister, stated on the assembly floor that all Qadianis (a pejorative term for AMs) must be thrown out of the country because they are traitors and enemies of Islam and Pakistan (Dawn 2017). The third largest party, the Pakistan People's Party, declared Ahmadis as non-Muslims in 1974.

I was forced to leave my teaching job within three months of joining a private academy after captain Safdar's speech against AM. It was my sole source of earning. Academy principal asked me to resign because he could not afford any problem due to my Ahmadiyya faith. (Amna)

Prime Minister Imran Khan removed Atif Mian, a world-renowned Ahmadi economist, from his economic advisory board after huge opposition from clerics and their like-minded

politicians (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2008). The Federal Minister for Narcotics Control of the current ruling party, Azam Swati, said on a TV show, 'I and Prime Minister Imran Khan both send a "curse" to the Ahmadiyya community' (Office of International Religious Freedom 2019). Neither his party nor Imran Khan himself have disassociated from Swati's statement. Amir Liaquat Hussain, member of the current National Assembly of Pakistan, used posters in his election campaign in which he was stating himself as the 'Savior of the End of Prophethood' (non-Ahmadis claim that Ahmadis do not believe in the end of prophethood and, therefore, are said to be infidel) (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2008). While addressing a rally in Peshawar, the current Minister for Defence, Pervez Khattak, proudly announced that he introduced a compulsory chapter on the finality of prophethood in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa textbooks (*ibid.*).

Pakistan's only Nobel Prize winner, Dr Abdus Salam, was not acknowledged by the Government of Pakistan as Muslim. The government has never highlighted his achievements because it will cause an angry response from the general public. The tombstone of Dr Abdus Salam in Rabwah had been defaced to erase the word 'Muslim'.

E. They are fearful of being killed due to fake accusations

The women ranked this issue third, while the men ranked it second.

AMs are accused of blasphemous faith. Therefore, implications of the Pakistani blasphemy laws are unavoidable for them without committing any offence. The Federal Shariat Court has ordered the death penalty and nothing else for contempt of the prophet Muhammad (Section 295-C of the blasphemy laws). Most of the religious leaders and many politicians openly demand the hanging of AMs. In cases where complaints against AMs are registered, the courts take a long time to decide the outcome. It is important to mention that murderers of AMs, almost in every case, relate delaying the death penalty by the courts as the main reason for them taking the law into their own hands. There are a large number of cases against Ahmadi women and children pending under the blasphemy laws. Most recently in 2020, an Ahmadi woman was charged with insulting the prophet Muhammad after people objected to her donating money to a local mosque (Kermani 2020). Renowned personalities such as Governor Salman Taseer have been assassinated because of their opposition to wrong use of the blasphemy laws. Merely accusing someone of blasphemy exposes the accused to harassment, threats, and attacks.

All of us were forced to leave Pakistan after my uncle was sentenced to death in 2017. He was accused of tearing down a religious poster and, therefore, was facing charges of blasphemy since 2014. (Munazza from Punjab)

Imran elaborated on the incident told by Munazza:

Actually, that was a matter of hate against Ahmadis in our village. Villagers were forcing Ahmadi families to leave the village. Finally, they filed a blasphemy case against four Ahmadis. One was killed in police custody immediately after their arrest. Other three were sentenced to death. Our families left everything behind including their lands and animals and moved to safer places.

Fear of losing our lives have made us very concerned about our children. My husband took a huge debt money from his well-wishers and we left Pakistan to Thailand in 2012 after paying almost all amount to the agents who managed our travel. However, we are stuck in Thailand since then. My husband is in the detention centre and I am surviving with my children on only little financial help from the Jama'at. If we had more money, we could migrate to a country which allows immigrants. (Aleena)

Respecting Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) to the highest level is a part of our faith. Allegations of blasphemy and infidelity against us are only lies. Clerics fear losing their power if people accepted true Islam. (Arfa)

Poor AM women are very vulnerable to the opportunistic use of blasphemy laws, and are often used to settle personal grudges. They live in places where everyone is aware of their religious faith and consequently, they feel alienated. They have no money to hire expensive lawyers to defend their cases. Instead of protecting them, the police arrest them.

A big angry mob in Gulshan-e-Ravi Lahore gathered in front of our mosque and started shouting that we were conspiring against Islam. We were afraid that they would burn our homes and kill us. Soon police arrived. Instead of acting against the very aggressive protesters, police arrested my [female] friend with her ten-year-old son and seven other Ahmadi men. Only female police can arrest a woman in Pakistan. However, in this incident no female police were there. (Arifa)

Schoemaker (2016) reported that some non-Ahmadi boys in Gujranwala (a city in Punjab province) had conflicts with an Ahmadi boy. They accused him of blasphemy over his post

on Facebook. Soon, an angry mob attacked Ahmadi families and burnt their houses. They looted valuables and dragged furniture and other stuff out of their homes and set them on fire. One old lady along with her two grandchildren (both less than ten years old) were burnt to death, and a pregnant Ahmadi woman lost her baby.

Non-Ahmadis believe that the killing of Ahmadis is a noble cause. An Ahmadi woman cannot go outside her home alone, even in daytime: they may be harassed and attacked anytime. Arooba expressed her agony by saying that 'in Pakistan we feel like in death cell where we are waiting for our hanging'.

Clerics in Pakistan have distorted the teachings of Islam. They have corrupted many minds in Pakistan through their concept of violent 'jihad'. Therefore, people feel pride in killing us. (Ahmad)

Unlike Ahmadis, other minorities can raise their voices. They have their representatives in the parliament. They have their rights at least in the documents. However, AM are helpless in Pakistan. (Usama)

Hamid from Kasur district in Punjab province told how, in 2013, clerics led a mob to attack an AM family of five in their home due to their Ahmadi faith. The family locked themselves in a room, but the mob broke down the door and then brutally physically tortured the wife, the husband and their 70-year-old uncle. The police were just spectators of this injustice and cruelty (Tanveer 2013).

Amir told that Tahira Parveen Malik, an active member of the AMC, was shot dead in a busy market of Lahore. The murderers shouted anti-Ahmadiyya slogans while fleeing.

Poor AM women are afraid of sending their children outside their homes, even for schooling. Due to their poor financial situation, they cannot afford to send them to private schools and provide a pick and drop service for them. Their children walk to government-owned schools and parents fret until their children return home. Most schoolteachers, even in Rabwah, are non-Ahmadis. Sometimes irresponsible behaviour from the teachers can create severe anxiety.

Nuzhat, a mother of two, said, 'I cannot afford a van service for pick and drop of my children at school. At the same time, I cannot send them alone. Therefore, I every day I go with my children to school and bring them back after school is finished.'

I was walking back to my home from the market after grocery. Some boys were standing at the street corner. Once they saw me, they started shouting 'gustakhay Rasool ki aik se saza, sir tan se juda [one and only punishment to a blasphemer is to behead]'. I was terrified. I fell down in panic when started walking faster towards my home. I could not go out of my home for many days due to fear. (Afifa)

Ammara said that her daughter was always afraid of attending Islamic studies lectures at her school. 'I was also worried that attending the lecture and writing examination of Islamic studies can put her in trouble.'

I graduated from engineering university Lahore where my senior Ahmadi student from Taxila was murdered when he was sitting in the lawn of university hostel. His death was celebrated by Islami Jamiat students [a student union of Jam'at-e-Islami] at engineering university Taxila on arrival his dead body in Taxila, his hometown. (Zeeshan)

F. They are forced to hide public manifestations of their faith to be accepted by society

Hiding religious identity was ranked fourth by the women. However, the men believe that the issue of hiding identity can be more dangerous once the identity is revealed later. Therefore, they placed it at a higher level, i.e. third position.

The Pakistani law prohibits AM to express their belief in any way in public. To avoid harassment, persecution, rejection from jobs and admission to educational institutions, and many other hardships, Ahmadi women try to hide their religious identity. For instance, they change the style of their hijab and burqa, and if they live in Rabwah they would not reveal that address. Ahmadi women dress modestly and do not reveal their body shape: traditionally, they wear a loose coat or jilbab over their dress and a veil covers their head and the lower half of the face up to the bridge of the nose, leaving the eyes and forehead clear. Many Ahmadi women wear a brown coat and black veil, and they are easily recognised as Ahmadi through their unique style of dressing. Ahmadi women who wish to hide their identity modify their traditional outfit by, for example, wearing a black burqa similar to those used by orthodox Muslim women, using a big shawl to cover their heads.

Rubab said, 'There is no other way of our survival in the society'.

In 2008, my younger sister was granted admission at Punjab Medical College, Faisalabad. She did not disclose her religious identity and continued her studies without any problem. However, her identity was disclosed when she was showing photos of my marriage ceremony to her friends at the college hostel. In the photos Ahmadi women were visibly wearing burqas. Therefore, her fellow students found that she was Ahmadi. Suddenly everyone became her enemy. Her roommate refused to share room with her. Students from all the hostels in the medical college called her in a hall room. They argued with her for not disclosing her religious and scolded for sharing her utensils with her roommate. Later, protests started against all Ahmadi students. Along with other Ahmadi students, she was physically attacked, case was registered against her in the police station, she was rusticated from the college and one year was wasted appealing against the decision. After more than one year she was transferred to another college in a different city. (Arifa)

I have asked my daughters not to disclose their religious beliefs anywhere. Even our best friends disconnect with us when they know about our religious faith. (Sana)

G. The poor AM women experience more violence and harassment than other poor women

Both the women and the men ranked this issue fourth.

Violence, fear, harassment, and insecurity faced by poor AM women is different from that faced by other women. Poor AM women are not protected by the authorities. Any injustice against them goes unnoticed and oppressors remain unpunished. Unlike other women, poor AM women are socially isolated. They can easily be trapped and blackmailed by oppressive anti-Ahmadiyya laws.

I had a small argument with my neighbour over a minor issue of kitchen smoke from my home. She started cursing me. She started calling me qadiani [a religious slur used to refer to AMs], infidel, and impious. My husband immediately intervened, apologised from her and we locked ourselves in a room. Fortunately, her husband wisely cooled down her to avoid any big trouble. (Umaiza)

Poor AM women in Pakistan face sexual harassment, mob violence, and violence by the police and personnel in authority. People of all ages including uneducated and highly educated young and old men and women harass vulnerable poor AM women. People often settle their revenges by misusing blasphemy laws. They snatch lands and forcibly displace the helpless poor AM women. Poor AM women are mentally tortured, abused, and taunted, bad names are called at them, and they are chased and harassed.

I was sitting alongside my husband who was driving a motorbike. Two boys on another motorbike chased us in our street and pulled my headcover. I was nearly to fall off my motorbike. The boys brought their bike in front of ours and gestured us to cut throat. We complained in the police station. They told us that they will look into the matter. However, they did not register our complaint. (Nadira)

Violence against our women is considered normal and justified by the orthodox Muslims in Pakistan. Since anti-Ahmadiyya laws are very oppressive, we instead of perpetrators are blamed and stigmatised. (Bashir)

My home was situated in a street through which hardly two persons can walk together. Whenever I walked back to my home from the college, boys already sitting in front of their homes started walking alongside me. I felt so bad. My father complained to their parents with no effect. (Amna)

Clerics are propagating against us that Ahmadis offer their women and money to attract people towards Ahmadiyya faith. It is disgusting. (Ummama)

In my academy, nobody wanted to sit with me. I had my own glass to drink water because I was not allowed to use the glass at water dispenser. I felt isolated and of no value. Even my good performance in exams was not appreciated by teachers as others were admired. (Eshal)

Currently, Khadim Hussain Rizwi – the founder of Tehrik-e-Labiak – is inciting people to kill us to become a beloved of God. He insists if anybody cannot kill Ahmadis, he/she should openly humiliate and show hatred in any possible way. Many people got inspired by his teachings and killed many Ahmadis. The authorities are failed to stop him. (Ahmad)

I am from Rabwah. I saw that non-Ahmadis from nearby cities used to come to Rabwah [98 per cent AM population] only to tease AM women. They call bad words to AM women. They shout 'hoor'[a derogatory phrase used against Ahmadi women to objectify them]. (Saad)

Nadira recalled an incident that took place in a graveyard belonging to the AMC. She said that people had complained at the police station against Islamic inscriptions engraved on tombstones. The police pressurised the AMC to remove the text; however, the Ahmadis replied that it was a violation of their faith to erase Koranic verses themselves.

Unlike other minorities, we are not even safe after death in our graves. We were terrified when one morning we heard the news that in the last night some unidentified people desecrated the graves of Ahmadis and disinterred their remains in Model Town Lahore. (Nadira)

Unjust persecution, harassment, and violation of human rights of other minorities are highlighted by electronic media, print media, and social media in Pakistan. Their representatives in the national and provincial assemblies act as their safeguards. Civil society also protests against any human rights violation against other minorities such as Christians and Hindus. However, unfortunately, nobody owns us. A large part of society is against us. There are some sympathisers who remain silent due to fear of reprisal. (Sajid)

Can you imagine that the High Court of Pakistan has ordered us even not to use the names 'Muhammad' or 'Ahmad'. Serving judges like Justice Shaukat Siddiquee of Islamabad High Court and retired judges like justice Nazir Ahmed Ghazi and Justice Khalid Mahmud of Supreme Court of Pakistan deliver hate speeches against us. Where we can go for justice? We have no way out. (Rubab)

Dr Khalid Mahmud served as Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. He was a Sunni scholar well known for his works related to Khatam-e-Nabuwat (literal meaning is 'Finality of the Prophethood' and it is a campaign against AMs). He lived in Manchester, UK after his retirement where he continued his hate speeches against Ahmadis until his death in May 2020. His anti-Ahmadiyya speeches can be found on social media channels (see Kamran 2012a, 2012b; and Islamnorway 2012). Justice Nazir Ahmed Ghazi is also a retired judge from the high court of Pakistan and is an active leader of the anti-Ahmadiyya campaign in Pakistan. His lectures can be found on electronic and in print media (see Ashgar 2011 and Nagina TV 2016), and he is also a famous religious anchor on a TV channel in Pakistan.

Various religious organisations regularly arrange Khatam-e-Nabuwat rallies and openly spread hate against AMs. The AMC is the only sect of Islam which is opposed by all the other sects of Islam. Therefore, anti-Ahmadiyya sentiment in Pakistani society is significantly high. Some religious groups are so violent that they search for and harass AMs who are performing any Islamic norm, and often they are accompanied by the police to take legal action.

On Eid-ul-Adha, an announcement was aired through the mosque's loudspeaker in our street that sacrificing animals was an Islamic act and, therefore, was a criminal offence by qadiyanis [a religious slur used to refer to Ahmadi Muslims]. Then, a group of clerics along with two police officers visited our homes to check if we had animals to sacrifice. They took our lamb and threatened us to register a case of blasphemy against us. (Hamima)

Sundus, a mother of two young children, is afraid of Pakistani people:

I live constantly under severe pressure. I feel that me and my kids are very unsafe. We do not call our relatives and friends at home so that nobody notices anything about our home. Anytime anything can happen against us by our enemies.

Since AM women cannot go to their mosques, they hold meetings in different homes. Such meetings are intended to serve as a learning and training platform and a source of healthy group activities. The host invites her female friends and relatives, including children. Although many Ahmadi women wish to host the meetings, it is not possible in high-risk localities. The visiting women's unique outfits can expose the religious identity of the host family if they have kept it secret. Also, mass gatherings can cause violence from the opponents.

I was living very near to Mansoori – the head office of Jam'at-e-Islami [a large religious political party] in Lahore – after my marriage. My husband asked me and my children not to disclose our religious identity. On few occasions I also accepted invitation to the rituals arranged by my neighbours to give them impression that we were not different from them. Therefore, I could not invite Ahmadi women to keep our identity secret. (Sundus)

Nadira's daughter was harassed at her college in Lahore by students from her class. During a group discussion in the classroom, they said her arguments were against Islamic teachings. They turned angry, called the founder of the AMC an imposter prophet and said Kafir to his followers. It created tension in the classroom environment. Nadira's son made a

complaint to the administration against the misbehaviour of the students in her sister's class. Later, he was threatened by male students from the same college. At one evening, the offenders marched towards her home with a mob, shouting that they had defamed Islam. They were inciting others to burn her home. Her neighbour was a kind police officer who immediately called the police, stopped the attackers, and persuaded them to go back by making a promise to look into the matter with urgency. The police officer kept his police force deputed at the home for one week to prevent any further attack.

The Ahmadi women's monthly Misbah [magazine] has been banned by Pakistan since 2012. Misbah was a good source of our learning and entertainment. Our writings were also get published which made us happy and important. But sadly, it is gone. (Ummama)

Christian have crosses on their churches and homes, Hindus freely keep different sacred objects in their temples and homes, and Sikh gurdwaras such as in Nankana Singh get financial and management support from the government during their annual functions. They can carry and read their books. They wear crosses and rings of their own choice. Sadly, we have three years imprisonment and fine, and even death penalty if we read Koran. We are penalised for wearing rings engraved with Koranic words, writing Koranic verses inside our homes and worship places. For this reason, our worship places and homes are attacked with police to erase Koranic verses and we are arrested. (Usman)

Since carrying Jama'at books and Koran is prohibited in Pakistan, I wrapped couple of my favourite books of Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih [title used for founder of the AMC], and a copy of Koran in my luggage to hide their titles from airport immigration when I was travelling to Thailand. (Imran)

Ummama shared an incident where two Ahmadi women in Karachi were attacked and seriously injured. They were accused of carrying a piece of cloth with Koranic verses which they intended to frame and hang on the wall of their home. The police, under severe pressure by Sunni Tehrik (an anti-Ahmadiyya Pakistani Barelvi organisation), filed the blasphemy charges against both women. Ummama stated that later, due to no evidence, both women were released on bail by the court.

When a non-Muslim woman says Assalam-u-Alaikum to a person from the Muslim majority, they are overjoyed as if someone had accepted Islam. They share videos on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. However,

the same words uttered by an Ahmadi woman can put her in jail for three years.
(Saad)

Ahmadis are even unsafe in their own city, Rabwah. Due to the immensely hostile situation for them in Pakistan, many poor Ahmadi families migrate to Rabwah for their safety and for basic facilities such as medical services, schooling, and small jobs which are provided by the AMC. The Government of Pakistan does not provide any funds for schools, hospitals, libraries, or postal system in Rabwah. The AMC funds its own non-profit institutions.

Unfortunately, orthodox Muslims try to disrupt the life of AMs in Rabwah. They arrange congregations of Khatam-e-Nabuwat (Finality of the Prophethood) and Seerat-un-Nabi (Life of Prophet Muhammad) more than twice a year in Rabwah, to which clerics guide large mobs of people. Hate speeches full of abusive language against Ahmadis continue for days. AM women are bounded to their homes with their children during these events. The AMC arranges 24-hour security using volunteers. Most children do not attend their schools for the duration of these gatherings.

Adnan said that at one time in 2017, a systematic killing of AMs was started in Korangi, Karachi.

My husband was extremely worried during a series of murders of AM in Karachi. One day he asked me to pack up the luggage and take children to my parents who lived in Hyderabad [a city in Pakistan] as a safety measure. We had no personal car. Therefore, he went out to look for a taxi which could drop us on the bus stand [Arifa started crying]. Enemies were ambushed. I heard bullet firing just after few minutes of his departure. My heart went down. I started prayer God and took my children in a room which was farthest from the main door of my home. I was telling myself that target would not be my husband. But my phone rang and my husband's friend told me that my husband was no more. My world was finished and earth slipped away from my feet. I fell down. My elder daughter (16 years old) holded me. We all were crying. Suddenly, I realised that the lives of my children were in danger. I contained myself with my five children in that room for five days to avoid bullets being fired from outside. By then everything in my kitchen was finished. I used my phone to call grocery shop in the street, but they refused to sell anything to me. Someone cut electricity connection to my home. I called the nearby electrician shop who also denied to fix. In one night, leaving everything behind, I took my children to bus stand in a car sent by the Jama'at and went to my parents' home in Hyderabad. I sold my jewellery and home to

arrange money for my and my children's passports, visas, and air travel tickets. I got passports on urgent basis. I was afraid that our passports might be denied or delayed due to my Ahmadiyya faith which was compulsory to mention on the passport. Therefore, I hired an agent who charged me extra money to help me. Although life is not easy for me in abroad, our lives are safe [she continued crying]. (Arifa)

H. They have many difficulties with admission acceptance to educational institutes. They are ignored by the instructors and isolated at the institutes in comparison to other poor women

The women placed this issue at fifth position, while the men ranked it seventh.

Poor AM women face many problems while seeking admission to government schools, colleges, and universities in Pakistan, and problems continue after they have been admitted. Local schools deny admission due to pressures from local clerics. Some schools offer admission but do not take any responsibility for the safety and rights of Ahmadi students at their institutes. Ahmadi students face hatred, insults, and torture from teachers and fellow students. Teachers discriminate them from non-Ahmadi students.

Asif explained how difficult it is for Ahmadis to apply for admission via an online registration form, which was introduced in 2009. This form requires applicants to mention their religious identity by choosing between 'Muslim' and 'non-Muslim'. This is a complicated situation for Ahmadi applicants as they believe themselves to be Muslims. Contrarily, the Pakistan constitution declares Ahmadis as non-Muslims. In cases where an Ahmadi selects the option 'Islam', he/she can be charged for a criminal offence under the blasphemy laws. This kind of form is designed to force Ahmadis to declare themselves as non-Muslims. In the past, educational institutes in Rabwah placed Ahmadis in the 'Muslim' category. Since the introduction of the oppressive online registration system, institutes in Rabwah affiliated with the Agha Khan University Board, which does not require applicants to state their religious identity. However, institutes outside of Rabwah that are not affiliated with the Agha Khan University Board create serious problems for thousands of AMs just due to their faith. Their refusal to sign the declaration leads to their automatic disqualification for not fulfilling the admission requirements.

Ali described how her sister was forced to leave the academy where she was studying by the administration, under pressure from teachers and students:

Her fellow students refused to sit with her, and teachers denied facing pressure if any student accuses them of favouring an Ahmadi student. Since teachers in different private academies know each other, my sister was denied admission in nearby academies too. Therefore, she moved to another academy out of her town where nobody was aware of her religious identity. (Ali)

I always advised my children not to disclose their religious belief and avoid reacting to any kind of offensive comments from non-Ahmadis. I was very careful after the daughters of my Ahmadi friend faced so much opposition from fellow students and mistreatment from the teachers that she left her education incomplete. Her father had to consult the doctor for her treatment and after two years she was able to resume her studies in another institute. (Anwar)

Ahmadi students face unfair punishment, harassment, and discrimination at the educational institutes they attend. Therefore, Ahmadi women are afraid of sending their children to educational institutes. Ahmadi students are not allowed to sit in Islamic studies lectures. Touching the Islamic book can cause serious trouble for them. At the canteens, AM children are not allowed to eat with mainstream Muslim children. Similarly, AM children are not allowed to share or use the same glasses or crockery. This is because Ahmadis are said to be the worst creatures: dogs, pigs, and a sign of God's anger. Therefore, people do not share utensils with them anywhere – in offices, schools, or public spaces.

There are Ahmadi-owned schools in Rabwah so Ahmadi women living in that city face no problem until they continue studies. The participants' perception was that there is no preferential treatment given to boys in comparison to girls within the AMC as the supreme leader, Hazrat Khalifa-tul-Masih, regularly preaches the equal treatment of boys and girls in accordance with Islam. However, Ahmadis live in every city of Pakistan and they all face problems regarding educational institutes.

My daughter was admitted to a private academy. We did not disclose our religious identity and said ourselves Muslims in the admission form. Since it was a private academy, they did not ask to sign any declaration to denounce Ahmadi faith. However, she spent entire period of her studies in fear and faced mental torture when most of her teachers were often spending part of their lecture time on spreading hate against Ahmadis. (Sumaira)

Ahmadis experience a more oppressive atmosphere in government schools. Most government schoolteachers are typically under the influence of clerics. Some of them openly

express their association with extremist groups such as Jamaat-u-Dawa and Jamaat-e-Islami and have joined their Facebook pages. Many share the anti-Ahmadiyya slogans such as ‘Qadianis are Kafir and it is a part of our faith to expose them’.

Ammara shared the reasons for leaving her education incomplete:

After completing my intermediate, I took admission in BSc. at government T.I. College Rabwah. Taj Din was my physics teacher. He had beard and his attitude was like a Mullah. He was a science teacher. However, his almost every lecture finished at the topic of finality of prophethood. He insulted our beloved great promised Messiah. It was a great torture for me. Finally, I left the college without completing my Bachelor degree. (Ammara)

Our lives are greatly affected by the hatred and mistreatment at educational institutions. Therefore, poor AM women are not well educated. Many of them are intelligent but avoid going to school because of the abusive behaviour from non-Ahmadis. Consequently, we cannot provide quality education to our children. (Arifa)

My first preference is always not letting my teachers and class fellows know that I am Ahmadi. Otherwise, same is expected like discussion on our faith, facing the Kafir mantra, reminding that Pakistani law bounds us to perform Islamic rituals, Ahmadis should be killed, Ahmadis must change their religion. Educational matters are very difficult for the poor AM women. Many class fellows ended their friendship with me just because of my Ahmadi faith. Teachers also ignore us in class activities. (Amna)

Until secondary school level (12th grade, age 16–17), poor AM women cannot afford to attend the big institutes, and instead go to small tuition centres, local small private schools, or government schools where most of the students are familiar with each other’s family backgrounds. Parents of other children ask them to stay away from the Ahmadi students. Teachers treat Ahmadi students differently and often ignore them in order to avoid any objection from their colleagues or from other students, or their parents, of favouring an AM. Some teachers also have extremist mindsets and they intentionally misbehave.

Ummama’s daughter was in Al-Noor Academy, a very famous private education institute in Shahdara, Lahore. She became so terrified by the situation that she and three other Ahmadi girls left the academy:

Mr Ali was my daughter's English subject teacher, but his every lecture ended with the topic of Khatam-e-Naboovat and hate speech against Ahmadis. Nobody knew that we were Ahmadis. We sent couple of common friends to the academy principal to ask Mr Ali to avoid religious discussion in the class. However, the academy principal said that it was the duty of every Muslim to defend Khatam-e-Naboovat and condemn Ahmadis at every level.

Above 12th grade in colleges and universities, admissions are offered on merit scholarships. The campuses are in big cities so students normally do not know each other's family background. Many AM women hide their identity: they change their hijab and sometimes follow customs which are not part of their faith in order to be socially accepted. As already mentioned, Ahmadi women wear a loose coat or jilbab over their dress and a veil that covers their head and the lower half of the face up to the bridge of the nose. Many Ahmadi women wear a brown coat and a black veil. When Ahmadi women wish to hide their identity, they modify their traditional outfit by wearing a black burqa similar to those used by mainstream Muslim women. They also use a big shawl to cover their heads. In cases where their identity is revealed, it is not uncommon for AM women to suffer severely violent actions including mental and physical harassment. Therefore, only a small number of poor AM women go to colleges and universities, and those who do live in a constant state of fear.

Asifa did not complete her engineering degree:

I was second year student at the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore when my Islamic studies teacher came to know that I was an Ahmadi. His first reaction was furious. He called me in his office and told me that I was a Kafir [infidel] and consequences of false declaration by me of being Muslim can be very serious. I was terrified. I immediately informed my father. He complained to the university but instead of taking some safety measure my identity was revealed to other teachers and students. Male students from Islami Jamiyat Tulba [student wing of Jam'at-e-Islami, a religious political party] started a campaign against me. They displayed messages on notice boards that 'Qadianis are the worst enemies of Islam', 'Sympathisers of Qadianis are also Kafir'. I was not allowed to attend the lecture of Islamic studies. Some other teachers also started ignoring me. All my female friends started avoiding me. One of my best friends messaged me that she could not afford to face opposition due to her association with me. Nobody was willing to keep me in their study groups and

projects. Finally, I terminated my studies at the university as I could no longer face the continued hostility.

Samayya reported that ten poor Ahmadi students, including seven girls and a female teacher, were expelled from Chenab Public School and Muslim Public School in Hafizabad in 2011 due to their faith. Apparently, the school principal said that he took this action to save his school and was forced to do so under severe pressure from the villagers.

I. No jobs are offered

This issue was ranked at sixth position by both the women and the men.

Job application form asks about the religion. If we mention Ahmadiyya, then no test/interview call is received. In case we say Muslim, later we can face the worst charges of blasphemy and others under the Ordinance XX. (Shabbir)

The Islamabad High Court has ordered all Pakistani citizens to disclose their religious identity. Otherwise, they will be guilty of betraying the state. People applying for government jobs must declare their faith, and most private jobs require employees to do so. Jobs in the private sector are not offered to AMs mainly to avoid a potential backlash from other employees. Although the government has a 5 per cent quota reserved for minorities in government jobs, no Ahmadi has been offered a job as part of it. As previously explained, for Ahmadi people to be included in the quota for minorities, they would have to accept a 'non-Muslim' status; and even when Ahmadi people have disclosed their status on identity documents, automatically placing themselves in the 'minority' category, none of them have been offered a job under this quota.

Ahmadi women who are employed generally decide not to reveal their faith for fear of reprisals or employment termination. Afifa stated Islam as her religion in the paperwork when she got hired as a teacher in a private academy. Other teachers and her students followed her on her social media accounts. Through her 'friends' list and list of liked 'pages' on Facebook, soon her religious identity became known. She was accused of 'posing as Muslim', which is prohibited by the Pakistan constitution. She was asked to leave the job with immediate effect because the academy staff and students did not tolerate Ahmadis.

Arifa had no job in Pakistan because her identity card and passport stated 'Ahmadi'; however, she has been working in Thailand for the last four years:

My father was working as a shopkeeper. He tried his level best to give me good education. I always wanted to help my father through earning some money by using my education and skill. After I graduated, I was very disappointed that I was unable to get a job due to my Ahmadiyya faith. Most of companies rejected me because my address was of Rabwah and religion was mentioned as Ahmadiyya on application forms. One company called me for interview. They asked me that I would be needed to change my traditional hijab which reveals my Ahmadiyya faith. I declined their offer. In Thailand, I live with my husband. I am working as a schoolteacher without any problem related to my religious faith. School is owned by Sikh, mostly staff is Hindu and students are from different religious backgrounds including from other sects of Islam such as Brelvi, Deobandi, and Shia. Since Thailand does not recognise refugees, life is not easy here. I need a very big amount to continue with my visa which is arranged by agents. So financial pressure is excessive but life is safe.

Poor women of mainstream Muslims earn money by various means to feed their children. They work from their homes in jobs for which no education or money is needed. Some run their own small shops, such as eateries, while others sell groceries from home, provide sewing and stitching services, or manually pack dry tea leaves in sachets or pack nuts. None of these works is possible for poor AM women because Pakistani people consider it haram ('an act that is forbidden by God') to interact with AMs.

Shezan International Limited is a Lahore-based beverage brand whose owners have Ahmadiyya faith. Many clerics and some social media groups have a continuous campaign to boycott Shezan products. They have declared it 'haram' to use Shezan products. Therefore, there are many areas in Pakistan where the supply and sale of Shezan products is banned. (Hassan)

Shezan has hired many non-Ahmadis. However, there have been several systematic anti-Ahmadiyya campaigns to boycott Shezan products. Shezan factories have been attacked many times: in June 2010, terrorists attacked a Shezan factory in Lahore using high-explosive bombs, injuring four people (Tanveer 2010). In 2012, 100 lawyers voted to ban Shezan products and later, the Lahore Bar Association banned the sale and purchase of Shezan products from court complexes. The lawyers threatened strict action would be taken against anyone who buys or drinks Shezan juices (Yasif 2012).

I am very good at stitching. I informed my neighbourhoods through small pamphlets that I was available for stitching services. I knew many people look for

tailors near Eid [main religious celebrations in Islam]. I could not get order even from my immediate neighbours. Few Ahmadi families near my house gave me stitching orders. They told me that people did not wish to get my services because I was an Ahmadi. (Rubab)

Many females with the help of their children in my street started earning some money by manual packing of dry leaves of black tea in small sachets. It was sold in the local market then. I approached to the owner of this business and offered my services. He asked me to come back on next day. Next day he told me that other people had resisted my hiring, and that his customers could boycott his product too. Therefore, he apologised to hire me. (Aima)

Poor AM women are therefore overly dependent on their male family members, who go to other towns and cities to earn money and, without them around, are at more risk of violence and harassment. In addition to their ongoing financial crisis, they are also deeply concerned about the safety of their children:

We were the only Ahmadi family in our small village. Our survival in that village was due to my husband's good relations with some influential villagers. However, many others were jealous and wanted to break that friendship bond. Our village is about 40km from Lahore city where my husband worked. He cannot come to home daily because we cannot afford bus fare and me and my children cannot live with him in Lahore because living is expensive in Lahore. My husband had asked me and my children not to go out of the home in his absence due to fear of non-Ahmadi villagers who were forcing us for a long time to leave the village. However, sometimes it was necessary for me to visit doctor or for some other matter. I could feel the hatred and anger in the villagers against me. I always feared that someone might attack me and my children until that happened one day in real. One woman falsely accused my son (12 years old) of stealing money from her home. My husband was not at home. She called her husband to my home and started shouting. When her husband realised that I was alone with my children, he forcefully entered into my home. He started thrashing everything. When I resisted, both of them started beating me. Then they started shouting that I had anti-Islamic books [these were actually Ahmadiyya books] at home. People started gathering in front of my home. Since I was aware of the consequences, I was trembling and was requesting them to spare me and my children. One of the villagers was kind-hearted. He asked others to wait until my

husband comes back next morning. In midnight, same man helped me to leave the village and I travelled to Rabwah where my husband joined us.

In Pakistan, Christian, Hindus, and Sikhs have shops in different markets and hire people from their communities. Rabwah is a very small city and, therefore, provides few employment opportunities. Ahmadis from Rabwah are not offered jobs in neighbouring towns because their address exposes their religious identity. Many uneducated and less-educated Christian women do small jobs in almost every government department, many others work as maids in different homes. Some Christians have high-ranking jobs such as in the judiciary and in the army. Mainstream Muslims highlight them on social media to show how much religious minorities are enjoying life in Pakistan, with their quota in government jobs and admissions at the universities. Meanwhile, AM businesses are destroyed as it is considered haram to do business with Ahmadis. They are not even employed for small jobs such as a cook or a maid in people's homes.

Even if somebody wishes to offer a job to an AM, they do not; not only for fear of criticism and anger from others, but because the same fatwas issued against Ahmadis will likely be announced against them too. The research and publications desk of Jamia Qadria Rizwiyya, Faisalabad (a Sunni-run organisation) issued a printed fatwa against an AM, extracts of which are given below.

Qadianis are hypocrites and apostates - Meat slaughtered by them is not licit and lies in the forbidden degree - If a Muslim sympathizes with Qadianis and considers them persecuted as a result of their boycott, he himself is outside the fold of Islam, and one who does not call an infidel, infidel, he himself is an infidel.

Thus, all Muslims should boycott Qadianis from all interactions of life and death. If a Qadiani is sick, do not visit him; if he dies, do not offer his funeral prayer; do not allow his burial in a Muslim graveyard – it is forbidden to visit his grave (TPA 2001).

Tens of anti-Ahmadiyya printable stickers and fatwa quotes of clerics are available on the official website of Khatam-e-Nabuwat. Some examples translated into English are:

‘The smallest cooperation with any Ahmadiyya in your common lives is one of the biggest sins.’

‘Never help any Ahmadi. Any sympathy to an Ahmadi is haram and cannot be forgiven.’

‘A person who has friendship with any Ahmadi is errant, cruel, and rightful to the greatest anger of God.’

‘Friendship with Ahmadis is a rebellion against the prophet Muhammad.’

Although owner of the [garment] shop was a non-Ahmadi, some of his relatives were Ahmadi. Therefore, he hired me on the request of one of them. He asked me to sit in the basement where public dealing was the least. I was hired to monitor the stock inventory. The owner was concerned about the anger faced by his visitors including suppliers. Some suppliers were also very religious. Therefore, he strictly advised me not to talk too much with anybody. (Afifa)

We are not offered jobs because they consider us dirty and reason of bad fortune. Ahmadis are called ‘the worst creature’. They are called dogs and pigs and it is believed that offering jobs to Ahmadis is the reason for God’s anger, therefore ‘bad fortune’. (Saniya)

J. They are openly asked to abandon their faith, or convert to another sect, for them to feel safe

The women ranked this issue seventh and the men ranked it fifth.

Ahmadis are openly offered the choice between their faith and death. This narrative has become more intense with the passage of time. Tehrik-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP, a religious political party) has gained incredible popularity in recent times, based on their extremist stance on AMs. Khadim Hussain Rizwi, chairman of TLP, has repeated many times that AMs should either ‘recite the Kalima [Islamic statement of faith] or accept death’ (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2008). In 1985, General Zia ul Haq – then president of Pakistan – said that the Ahmadis in Pakistan have only two options: either leave the country or abandon their faith to be accepted by the Pakistani nation.

Clerics and their followers, understanding the vulnerability of poor AM, often ask them to abandon their faith to earn respect and to save their lives and valuables. Sometimes they are offered money.

Almost all religious minorities are offered to abandon their faith and accept Islam which has been redefined by the clerics. However, unlike any other minority, we are considered as infidels. Therefore, we have only choice either to accept clerics' Islam or die at their hands. (Rubab)

It happened many times with me in the college. I was asked to abandon my faith and accept Islam for the sake of my safety. For them, it was a kind piece of advice to me. (Salma)

K. It is almost impossible for them to approach local/national authorities in comparison to other poor women

The women placed this issue at eighth position, while the men consider it more serious and ranked it fourth.

Poor AM women have various issues in relation to the local authorities, such as patwari for matters related to land, local councillors for conflicts and utilities/facilities issues, the police station (SHO, SP, DSP, DPO)² for legal issues, ministers (MPA/MNA)³ for major issues, elders of the neighbourhood for family and neighbourhood issues, and public offices (for example, the education office, and for identity documents such as birth certificates, national identity cards, passports, family registration, and marriage certificates). However, the authorities are wary that other people can blame them for showing sympathy to AMs.

Some boys in our street were often shouted anti-Ahmadiyya slogans in a loud noise when passed by my home. First, I complained to their families with no effect. Then I went to police station and told them that my children were scared of their behaviour. The head moharrar [a clerk in-charge and custodian of a police station] listened me briefly but did not allow me to see station house master [SHO]. He said that I should remain quiet and not to highlight the issue otherwise it will become a big religious issue. Instead of writing my complaint, he verbally promised me to talk with their elders to stop their harassment. (Areeba)

² SHO – Station House Master; SP – Superintendent of Police; DSP – Deputy Superintendent of Police; DPO – District Police Officer.

³ Elected members of the Pakistani parliament: MPA – Member of the Provincial Assembly; MNA – Member of the National Assembly.

Our wheat field on two acres Narowal [a city in Punjab province] was ready to cut and sell in the market. Some unknown people set our ready-to-cut field on fire. Our whole crop burnt to ashes. We took the matter in panchayat [a local court of elders of the village] but nobody seemed interested mainly due to the head of panchayat who was a known figure of a religious political party and had anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments. (Zeeshan)

Patwaris are responsible for land transfer. They are skeptical when a poor AM woman approaches them to buy or sell a piece of land. They never facilitate Ahmadis. Instead, they use various tactics such as demanding bribe money, unnecessary documents, or witnesses in order to torture her.

Without bribe money it is impossible for us to get any kind of legal work done by the authorities. Even amount of bribe money which is demanded is more than our capacity. However, we are helpless. We often borrow money from others for making basic national documents such as passport. (Ummama)

Our ancestors' land was to be divided in the family. All beneficiaries from our family were agreed on their parts. Some of our family members had mentioned Islam and other had Ahmadiyya in their identity documents. Difference in religion was nothing to do with land transfer. However, patwari and his assistant asked us to get statements of no objection by mentioning the religious identity of everyone on legal papers. It could put us in big problem of announcing our religious identities on legal papers. They asked us for extra money to 'manage' that so-called requirement. We could not complaint to land department because the matter could get more complicated. (Nadira)

Ministers and councillors are elected by the general public. Most people are against AMs, and many are violent due to their blind faith in clerics who opportunistically use religion to maintain their high status. Various ministers and councillors include famous clerics in their election campaigns. In their processions, they openly declare AMs to be the biggest enemies of Islam and Pakistan and announce that they do not need the votes of Ahmadis. Although most ministers and councillors seem to share the sentiments of the clerics, others become part of such hate campaigns to maintain their public support. Hence, Ahmadi women are afraid of contacting them to request help with solving their issues.

The authorities in Pakistan maintain a distance from us. They do not want to face criticism from extremist clerics due to any kind of association with AM. Jama'at-

e-Ahmadiyya Pakistan has sent repeated requests to Federal Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari for a meeting ever since the current government was formed in 2018. So far, she has not replied once. (Arifa)

The police are aware of all the hate, mistreatment, and other illegal acts against AMs. However, they have never tried to stop these heinous activities: they have orders from their seniors and political leaders not to interfere in matters involving Ahmadis to avoid any outrage from the general public. Pakistani courts of justice are also biased against Ahmadis.

Our complains in the police station are useless. Police always promise us to act, but practically they do nothing. Perhaps everyone is afraid of facing same treatment for supporting Ahmadis which AM face. (Amna)

Clerics started construction on a part of Rabwah which is the property of Ahmadis. Ahmadiyya Muslim Jam'at approached the High Court. The court ordered to stop the illegal construction on Ahmadi-owned property. However, clerics did not stop construction. Ahmadiyya Muslim Jam'at went again to the High Court with the claim of contempt of court by the Mullahs. Judge asked whose contempt is it? Representative of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jam'at replied that it was contempt of the court. Judge replied that if it was contempt of the court and not contempt of the Ahmadis then what was the case Ahmadis had approached to the court for?(Ummama)

Sundus narrated how Punjab Medical College in Faisalabad rusticated 15 Ahmadi female students and eight male students not only from the college but also their hostels in 2008. Four of the female students were in the final year of their studies. Orthodox Muslims (all sects of Islam, including Shia but excluding Ahmadis) were running an extensive hate campaign against AMs in the college. They pasted the posters on the room doors of Ahmadi students in hostels, depicting insulting photos and derogatory remarks against the founder of Jama'at Ahmadiyya. One student took the poster off her door and complained to the hostel warden. The protesters named it an act of blasphemy and they demanded the Ahmadi students to be punished as such. Protests spread all over Faisalabad. Ahmadi students were dragged out of their rooms at midnight and were so badly beaten that two male students nearly died. Male Ahmadi students kept the attackers busy so that female students could escape via the rear gate. People from the local Jama'at Ahmadiyya Faisalabad helped the female Ahmadi students to jump over the college gates transferred them to Rabwah. The next day, the police registered FIRs against all Ahmadi students and the college principal issued orders to

rusticate them all. Ahmadi parents approached all the national authorities, including ministers, MPAs and MNAs, but nobody supported them. However, Governor Punjab Salmaan Taseer cursed the college principal for allowing the protests. He was later threatened and assassinated when he objected to the misuse of the blasphemy laws. The health minister asked the Ahmadis to remain quiet for their own safety. Some students left their studies incomplete and went abroad and the remainder were sent to other institutes in different cities. It wasted more than one precious year of the medical students' lives.

L. Violence against them is never highlighted by the Pakistani media

The women put this issue at ninth position and the men ranked it tenth.

Issues such as human rights, forced conversions, abduction, murders, discrimination, and harassment are sometimes highlighted by the media when poor women from other religious minorities, such as Hindus and Christians, are concerned. However, the cause of Ahmadi women has never been a topic in the media. The media has never highlighted their miseries. Contrarily, both male and female anchors openly speak against Ahmadis on TV. They call clerics or their followers, who first falsely explain the Ahmadiyya faith, and then embark on a one-sided debate between the anchors and guests to always reach the same conclusion, i.e. that AM beliefs are contradictory to Islam. They never invite an Ahmadi spokesperson to explain their point of view and to reply to their allegations. It leads to hate against AMs in society.

It seems very funny when TV anchors call only anti-Ahmadiyya clerics to tell what Ahmadiyya beliefs are. Why they don't call any Ahmadi to tell about Ahmadiyya faith? We are responsible what we say, we are not responsible what they understand. (Uzma)

The International Human Rights Committee (IHRC) has reported several cases of murder, as well as harassment, threats, and violence against Ahmadi women. Such unfortunate incidents are happening regularly in Pakistan. However, the Pakistani media – including digital and print – has never highlighted the violation of Ahmadi women's human rights.

The IHRC reported that on 30 April 2020, in a village in Nankana district, a 55-year-old Ahmadi woman named Ramzan Bibi was falsely booked under Section 295-C, which calls for the death penalty. Her only 'sin' was to donate some money for an event being held in the mosque of the non-Ahmadis. Her donation was declined and, being surprised, she asked

why the man had turned it down. The man assaulted and abused her. One passerby asked the man not to use abusive language to a woman. Instead, he started shouting and a quarrel broke out, which caused some physical injuries to Ramzan Bibi. The clerics from the village manipulated the situation and registered a case of blasphemy (295-C) against the innocent Ahmadi woman on the basis of a false and baseless testimony of a non-Ahmadi man against her. She was immediately arrested and put behind bars in Sheikhpura Jail. Now she is in Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore, where she awaits trial. This incident was not reported in the Pakistani media (IHRC 2020).

The Government of Pakistan has banned all of our websites. They also banned our TV channel – MTA International. There are dozens of TV channels almost speaking on daily basis against AM. What is then fear of orthodox Muslims from our single TV channel? If they believe that we are wrong, let people see our beliefs on Ahmadiyya websites and MTA International. (Babar)

TV channels in Pakistan do not show any images which relate to the AMC. In May 2020, the programme *Sehri se Pehlay* on Geo TV aired a short video showing how the Mayor of Houston in the USA participated in a virtual Ramzan (a holy month of the Islamic calendar) activity arranged by Muslims. The video contained some graphics of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association. The public in Pakistan became furious and Geo TV was heavily criticized and said to be sympathisers of Ahmadis. On the same day, Geo TV apologised for their 'mistake' and announced their 'true association with Islam'.

Usman smiled and said:

Pakistani media do not highlight the achievements of its only Nobel laureate Dr Abdul Salam who was an AM. His work or personality has not been included in the books. So, we don't expect that media will talk about any common Ahmadi.

Similarly, some newspapers have dedicated spaces for publishing hate material against Ahmadis on an almost daily basis. Paid advertisements such as anti-Ahmadiyya slogans, announcements of anti-Ahmadiyya conferences, curses against Ahmadis, and fund-raising campaigns to publish material against Ahmadis are printed by various newspapers. Sayeed (2018a) cited a report on the Pakistani media which listed 3,936 news items and 532 editorial pieces from Pakistan's Urdu-language media in 2017 that contained 'hate propaganda' against the AMC.

There are many YouTube channels whose only purpose is to spread hate against Ahmadis. For 'subscriptions' and 'likes', extreme hate and violence is injected into society through

social media. Stickers, pamphlets, and handouts that are full of anti-Ahmadi content are published in the name of Khatam-e-Nabuwat (Finality of the Prophethood) and openly distributed to the general public. Neither PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) nor the Federal Investigation Agency have stopped the propaganda against Ahmadis. Some decision makers in media regulatory authorities and law enforcement agencies are either reluctant to speak up or are under the influence of their set religious belief systems, so they remain silent.

The Ahmadiyya daily newspaper, *Al-Fazl*, has been banned from being published in Pakistan. Many Ahmadi journalists working for *Al-Fazl* and other Ahmadi publications have been charged under Pakistan's blasphemy laws and anti-terrorism act.

On 28 May 2010, AMs were attacked while saying Friday prayers in their mosques. Ninety-four Ahmadis were martyred and more than a hundred were injured. In response, Ahmadiyya women were in deep sorrow and prayed for their children and husbands. Media reporting was biased by some commentators and anchors.

I was unable to stop my tears. I saw live reporting of bloodshed for more than three hours on TV. I was praying for the safety of our children and men who were in those mosques. However, media was reporting 'religious minority sect' instead of calling us Ahmadis. Attack was on Friday prayers, by media was saying that a congregation was under attack. Later, many TV channels attended the press conference of our Ameer, but none of them aired the programme. (Hassam)

Pakistani law does not allow the AMC to build a mosque. However, Ahmadiyya mosques that were built before the inception of Pakistan are being demolished just because of the religious-based persecution of AMs. In 2018, a 100-year-old Ahmadiyya mosque in Sialkot was demolished by a mob led by politicians and religious clerics (Sayeed 2018b). Not a single mainstream TV channel covered the news of the attack. Karim from Sialkot shared his affection for the historical Ahmadi mosque:

I visited the mosque many times. It was small and very simple building. I always felt something amazing about my ancestors who had prayed here and spread the message of Islam. It had also some memories for Pakistan history related to Allama Iqbal [a Muslim poet and philosopher] who once attended this mosque. Sadly, we are losing all of our Ahmadi monuments one by one under the nose of Pakistani authorities.

M. They are unable to wear hijab without being harassed more than other women

The women ranked this issue tenth, and the men ranked it eleventh.

AM women can be easily identified due to their distinct burqa, which features unique stitching. The hijab is worn in such a way that the veil covers the lower half of the face up to the bridge of the nose, leaving the eyes and forehead clear. Women from other minorities and mainstream Muslim women either do not use a burqa or they wear their hijab differently.

Ahmadi women face more harassment than Ahmadi men. Ahmadi men have more similarities to non-Ahmadi in their appearance, names, and language. Therefore, they may hide their religious identity to avoid the harassment and persecution. However, AM women are unable to hide their identity mainly due to their unique attire.

Women in Pakistan are commonly harassed by licentious youngsters standing in the streets and in shopping markets. They are often punished by the general public and are also handed over to the police. Unfortunately, poor AM women who walk along the streets to go shopping face harassment which nobody criticises. People criticise the hijab of Ahmadi women. Some have made nonsense stories as part of propaganda against Ahmadi women, such as clerics and their followers telling people that AMs will try to trap you by offering you money and their women.

I was walking back to my home in the afternoon after attending a meeting at my friend's home. Some boys in the street whistled at me. One of them said that let's follow 'hoor'[a derogatory term to refer to an Ahmadi woman] to paradise. Other said, 'She is qadiani. Convert her to Muslim and go to paradise.' Then everyone started laughing. There were other people in the street. No body objected their actions. (Salma)

Nobody knew at my college that I was an Ahmadi. One day, my class fellows were cursing the founder of the AMC. One of them said, 'I tell you to be aware of qadiani girls. They trap Muslim boys by keeping their veil under their nose. We must avoid them to keep our faith safe.' (Arshad)

Someone sent me a video on social media which was criticising our burqa. I was shocked when I heard, 'Qadiani girls use skin-tight burqa with a belt on back side to expose their body'. (Amna)

I was buying clothes from a market. I was wearing my burqa. Someone from the neighbouring shop said, as if he was advising to the cloth seller, 'bik na jaana' [don't sell yourself]. I immediately left the shop. (Uzma)

People of all ages and gender take pride in teasing Ahmadi women in any possible way. Nobody stops them; and even if someone wishes to, they remain silent due to the fear of facing criticism over supporting Ahmadis and perhaps being accused of blasphemy. The minimum that Ahmadi women endure is an expression of displeasure. Orthodox Muslim women mistreat and abuse them.

One of my female class fellows said to others that I was dressed up in unique hijab to look prominent in the class. (Asma)

Taunting and mockery start by the non-Ahmadis as soon as we step out of our homes. (Rashida)

*People call us with different derogative names which are not used for other minorities such as *gustakh* [insolent] *Ahmadis*, *Mirzayen* [a religious slur used to refer to Ahmadi women], *Qadiani Hoor*, *infidel*, *Kafir* and *Randi* [prostitutes]. These words are very insulting not only for us but also for our faith. (Rubab)*

To harass us they shout slogans 'Khatam-e-Naboovat zindabaad' [long live anti-Ahmadiyya movement of Kahatam-e-Naboovat, i.e. Finality of the Prophethood]. Pakistani orthodox Muslims consider this slogan a so-called compulsory ingredient of their belief. This slogan means that they are inviting others to torture us to satisfy their hate against us. (Amna)

N. They face social boycott

Both the women and the men ranked this issue eleventh.

Unlike other minorities, AMs face social as well as economic boycott. Nobody shares their happiness or consoles them in their miseries. Nobody attends AM marriages and funerals. AM are forbidden to be buried in common graveyards. On the one hand, AMs are isolated from the non-Ahmadi community, and on the other, they cannot enjoy the company of their own community because the Government of Pakistan has banned them from their religious

obligations and ordered the AMC not to arrange their annual games, *jalsas/ijtimas* (gatherings/conferences), or educational and sports competitions.

After knowing about my Ahmadi belief, my friends in the college who used to eat and drink with me stopped talking to me. I could not say prayer alone or with my class fellows in my college because Pakistani law has said it a punishable blasphemy act of an Ahmadi and many people under the influence of Mullahs believe it noble to immediately kill a blasphemous. (Rubab)

My office colleagues used to have lunch together in the office. After my religious identity became known at my office, I was conveyed the message through office peon that I should not eat my lunch sitting with my colleagues. Office peon asked to get my own plates and glass from my house. The behaviours at my office were changed so quickly and severely that I had to contact with the doctor due to my mental stress. Soon, I left the job. (Afia)

Non-Ahmadis do not do any business with Ahmadis. Very often they are denied help when in need. During the disastrous floods of 2010 in Pakistan, the local governments of Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, and Rajanpur districts denied food and shelter to approximately 500 internally displaced AM families (Malik 2011).

O. It is very difficult for them to acquire national documents such as a national identity card and passport

The women ranked this issue twelfth, and the men ranked it ninth.

Documents such as national identity cards, passports, and family registration certificates are hard to obtain. In the registration centres, poor AM women are treated badly due to their religious faith, which is obvious from their burqa. People who have money hire agents to help get their documents to save them from the troubles which face the poor at document centres.

Mixed-religion families are subject to unnecessary enquiries by the officers and become a source of fear and harassment for the Ahmadi women. Very often, poor AM women are put in a dangerous situation where the administrative staff at the registration centres ask them questions of a religious nature in the presence of many people. Sometimes male family members mention Islam instead of Ahmadiyya so that they can get jobs and avoid many

other problems. In the case of new converts, as it is illegal in Pakistan to convert out of Islam newly converted Ahmadiyya also carry their old religious identity with them. In such cases, people mostly change their religion to Ahmadiyya on their identity documents after they have migrated to other countries.

At the passport office I told my religion as Ahmadiyya to the officer. The officer expresses his displeasure and murmured 'Pakistan se bahir Janay ka acha tareeka he' [you have devised a good excuse to move abroad]. (Asma)

I was applying for passport of mine and for my two years old son named Ataa Muhammd. I told my religion as Ahmadiyya to the officer. Officer looked at me and said, do you know qadianis are not allowed to use name Muhammad? I was scared. However, that officer was kind. He asked me to be careful about my religion and son's name. If that officer were of extremist mind, me and my two years old son could face blasphemy charges. Thank God, I left Pakistan. (Iqra)

There are various reasons for family members having different religions written in their identity documents. For instance, some members of the AMC, usually males, have 'Islam' stated as their religion. This is mainly due to their fear of not finding a job due to their Ahmadiyya faith and, therefore, not getting enough food to survive. Once 'Islam' is written on an identity document, it is a very difficult and dangerous task to change the religion, say, Islam to Ahmadiyya. Doing so will be considered as an act of infidelity, and the penalty for infidels under Pakistani law is death. Pakistani law is framed in such a way that one can embrace Islam but cannot leave Islam.

My father was a schoolteacher by profession. When I became 18 years old in 1997, he asked one of his old students in the registration office to make my national identity card. It was the time when there was no computerised data and digital identity documents in Pakistan. He just needed my photo and basic information. No physical presence was needed. He typed my name, put my father's name and home address and mentioned Islam as my religion. I did not know until I got my identity card. Once I tried to change the religion from Islam to Ahmadiyya, I was told by the authorities to go to the court first. I am afraid that someone can kill me in the court accusing of infidelity. (Zubair)

I closed my eyes and signed the declaration of disassociation with Ahmadiyya faith. I feel really bad that I told a lie. I had no other option to survive in Pakistan. I

was the only bread-earner in my family. It seemed impossible to find a job in Pakistan with my identity as Ahmadiyya Muslim. (Imran)

Another reason of mixing religions in a family is when – although it is not preferable – an Ahmadi man marries a non-Ahmadi woman. Therefore, some parents have different religions (i.e. one parent has 'Ahmadiyya' and other has 'Islam' stated in their identity documents).

I filled the form to make my identity card and mentioned my religion as Ahmadiyya. The officer first showed her displeasure. Then she checked the family tree and noticed that my father was Muslim and my mother was Ahmadiyya. She asked me to clarify. My father had asked me not to speak or explain anything related to religion. I told her that I don't know. The officer replied that a Kafir married to a Muslim is not allowed in Islam, do you know this? I was scared. However, I politely requested her to make my document and then ask such questions from my parents (they were intentionally standing outside the office). She looked at me with anger and typed my data. (Tooba)

Mixed religions in a family is also possible when a born Ahmadi decides to leave Ahmadiyyat and become Muslim. Similarly, in many cases, some members of a non-Ahmadi family embrace Islam Ahmadiyya.

Being unaware of the rules, and under pressure of faith-based persecution, poor AM women are vulnerable to oppression. They are asked for bribe money which is more than their paying capacity. They cannot complain to higher authorities against this corruption as it could create more problems for them. They face discrimination, harsh behaviour, and demands for irrelevant information. Officers in these departments frequently demonstrate their displeasure, hate, and non-cooperation.

I applied renewal for my passport after paying processing fee at the Pakistani consulate in Bangkok. However, the officer in Pakistan who was supposed to check my record visited my home and asked my brother to give him under table money rupees 3,000 to get clearance. My brother had no money to pay bribe. The passport which I should have got in three weeks was not received even after two months of my application. I asked my brother to pay bribe money to the officer. My brother paid him rupees 3,000 but he asked that now he needed rupees 5,000 because passport was stuck in the security-related issues. Since I

am a refugee, I became worried that without passport Thai authorities will put me in jail and the bail amount is significantly higher than the bribe money which was asked by the officer in Pakistan. Therefore, I asked my brother to pay rupees 5,000 to the officer. Finally, I got my passport after five months. (Asifa)

Asifa further said that most Pakistani refugees in Thailand have been waiting for their resettlement for many years. Therefore, everyone has similar stories related to passport renewals.

Legally, I am not allowed to work in Thailand due to my refugee status. I borrow money from our relatives. Sometimes I take risk and do carpentry work on daily wages. My monthly earning is hardly 7,000 Thai bhat. I have three children. Last year I paid almost three months earnings just for the renewal of passports of my family. Application fee is OK but paying bribe money is a big burden on me. (Latif)

All Pakistani Muslim citizens applying for passports are obliged to sign a statement explicitly stating that they consider the founder of the Ahmadi community an 'imposter' and consider Ahmadis to be non-Muslims. The application for a national identity card requires a similar declaration. This legal requirement has forced every AM to state that they are non-Muslims. Since their passport does not recognise them as Muslim, Ahmadis cannot travel to Saudi Arabia to perform hajj, which is a basic element of Islamic belief.

I was there holding my one-year old daughter to make our passports. I had no money for agents to offer who could help me in reducing the process time. Therefore, I travelled through different counters in queue for more than two hours. The officer at the second last counter asked my religion to enter data. As soon as I told that both of us were AM, he showed displeasure and asked to go back to the first counter without giving any reason. (Rubab)

I cannot go for hajj in my life. My passport does not allow me to get visa. I am a devout Muslim. However, Pakistani law forces me to accept myself as a non-Muslim who is not allowed to perform hajj. (Ummat ul Mahdi, 54 years old)

The authorities at the passport office sometimes don't even ask the religion and simply enter Muslim. This happened to my daughter. If she would have not changed to 'Ahmadi', somebody could have made an accusation of apostasy on her. (Arifa)

My national identification card had 'Islam' as my religion for the past many years, and I tried to fix the error. The official declined and said that I should go the court first. He further said that I could cause him accusation of apostasy. He shouted at me. On another day at a different branch of national identity card office, I finally had it changed after paying bribe money. (Amna)

Ahmadi marriage certificates are legal as per Pakistani law. However, a person with an Ahmadi marriage certificate who is registered as Muslim on their national identity card can be accused of apostasy. Mariya said that her husband had 'Islam' written on his national identity card so that he could get job. Therefore, she had two marriage certificates: one is the original issued by the AMC and the other states both bride and groom as Muslim, obtained by paying bribe money.

Ammara, 22 years old, shared an event when she was investigated at the airport:

My passport mentions me 'Ahmadi'. Leaving for Thailand in 2015, I was called to a room at Lahore airport. I do not remember name of the room. There were two persons in the room. They examined my passport for a while. Then they asked me some questions such as do you believe that Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) is the last prophet? I replied 'yes'. Further, they asked who addresses on Ahmadiyya TV, then? I tried and failed to convince them that we believed promised Masih as a Ummati Nabi [follower prophet]. I was frightened being alone in the room. I did not want to discuss more to avoid any trouble. I spent that time in confusion and praying. Due to many prayers, they returned my passport. (Ammara)

P. It is not possible for them to shop in local areas

The women ranked this issue thirteenth, while men considered it of lower priority and ranked it eighteenth. This is likely because men are more mobile than women within the Ahmadiyya community, so perceive this to be less of an issue for Ahmadi women.

All women in the focus groups said that non-Ahmadi shopkeepers did not serve them. Selling and buying from AMs are both considered haram. When Asma went to Lahore Urdu Bazar, local merchants refused to ship supplies to her small bookstore due to the address of Rabwah.

Anti-Ahmadiyya stickers, posters, banners, and wall chalking can be seen everywhere in Pakistan. Hate slogans are displayed in all public places, including bus terminals, railway stations, small and big markets, grocery shops, cloth shops, and restaurants. Sadly, anti-Ahmadiyya stickers are also sold and displayed in various bookstores. Some anti-Ahmadiyya slogans are 'Qadiani [a derogatory term for AM] are not allowed to enter', 'No business with Qadianis', 'First enter Islam then enter the shop', 'A smile to a Qadiani hurts Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) in heavens'.

Salma said that 'a grocery shop near my home displays "dogs and qadianis are not served here"'.

The one and only action against a shopkeeper was tried by the Government of Pakistan in 2017 regarding the hateful stickers in Hafeez Center – an IT market in Lahore – stating 'Qadianis are not allowed', but later the government surrendered to the protests by hundreds of shopkeepers.

Ahmadi women fear that shopkeepers who have put up notices to ban AMs from entering their shops will file a blasphemy case should their identity be revealed while buying something in such a shop. Hence, Ahmadi women are forced to shop in areas far away from their homes where people do not know them. They cannot afford to spend large amounts of money on transportation so they travel very long distances on foot carrying heavy groceries and risking their lives and honour. Consequently, young Ahmadi women avoid going out for shopping.

Areeba went shopping for some clothing with her friends. At the payment counter, she was asked about her religious identity because of her burqa. The shopkeeper would not take payment and asked them to put the stuff back because the shop does not serve Ahmadis. On their way home, two men on motorbikes attacked them, physically harassed them, snatched their jewellery at gunpoint, and said: 'Mirzai [a derogatory word used to refer to AMs] should be killed or thrown out of this country'.

I started living near Mansoorah [headquarters of Jama'at-e-Islami, a religious political party, in Lahore] after my marriage. First time, I went to a local grocery shop. The shopkeeper was rude and said to me, 'do not enter my shop, get out. This shop does not serve Mirzayen [a derogatory term for Ahmadi women]'. (Asia)

Q. They are misrepresented by the instructors in educational institutes

The women ranked this issue at fourteenth, and the men ranked it thirteenth.

Uzma said, 'Not all teachers, but some do this in educational institutes'. Teachers at educational institutes passionately tell their students that AMs do not believe in finality of the prophethood. Teachers of Islamic studies, in particular, frequently express their extremist thinking towards the Ahmadiyya faith. The chapters related to Khatam-e-Nabuwat (Finality of the Prophethood) have been integrated into textbooks at all levels in the Pakistani educational system explicitly to target AM (Ballard 2012).

I have not disclosed my religious identity at my college due to fear of persecution. The teachers, especially of Islamiyyat, which is a compulsory subject, twist the meanings of Quranic verses and Hadiths in textbooks to criticise founder of the AMC. It is very painful when they insult Hazrat Ghulam Ahmad. Their hate intensity against Ahmadis is horrible. I always feel insecure at my college. However, I cannot object their arguments because of violent Pakistani society. Therefore, I hardly managed 40 per cent attendance in my Islamiyyat lecture.
(Asia)

Many teachers in government schools are inspired by clerics. They openly advocate that Ahmadis use money and their women to attract people to their religion. They advise their students to keep their distance from AMs.

Ahmadi girls in educational institutes in Pakistan also face violence and harassment due to student unions that have support from various religious and political parties: Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (associated with Jamat-e-Islami), Muslim Student Federation (associated with Pakistan Muslim League), People's Student Federation (associated with Pakistan People's Party), Insaaf Student Federation (associated with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf), and many others.

Aiza related an incident from her student life at the Punjab University, Lahore:

Everyone in my university knew that I was an Ahmadi. Therefore, not many students were my friends. Once a male class fellow came to me and asked for a copy of my assignment which was awarded very good grade. He was appreciating my work. Suddenly, four boys from Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba attacked. My class fellow fell down, they dragged him away and started beating

him with wooden sticks, punches, and glass bottles. I tried to interrupt and asked why they were doing so. They kept on beating and abusing him. They shouted at me 'Get off you infidel girl. Do you want to make others Kafir too? How dared you?' My class fellow's head was bleeding and he was asking for help. I was in a shock. A big crowd gathered but nobody helped. Teachers who were passing by did not interfere too. One teacher was passing by in his car. He came near to me and asked to go back as soon as possible. Then I realised the sensitivity of the situation. I passed through the crowd and immediately went back to home in taxi.

Clerics in Pakistan are very clever: they know how to keep themselves prominent and convince people that they are defending their interpretation of Islam. Using an anti-Ahmadiyya narrative through electronic, print, and social media is their most effective tool. They have used their legitimacy to become a key part of Pakistani politics and have dangerously influenced the state policies with their interpretation of Islam (Mehmood and Seror 2020). Many TV anchors have also found that this topic boosts the ratings of their programmes. Therefore, the overall environment in Pakistan is very corrosive to AMs. It has also influenced the educational institutes:

Anti-Ahmadiyya narrative by different political and religious parties has caused harassment of AM in the Punjab University. Noticeboards display many anti-Ahmadiyya slogans, such as 'friend of a qadiani is a traitor of Islam and Pakistan', 'qadiani are British agents' 'qadiani are infidel', 'qadiani cannot be tolerated at key position in Pakistan'. It is not easy to survive in such cruel atmosphere. Therefore, I never enjoyed my university time. (Rubab)

Bigot teachers are easily found on social media: on their Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups they express their anti-Ahmadiyya views and post videos in which Ahmadi women are presented as prostitutes and of immoral character. They destroy the innocent minds of the students who follow them.

I was student at a college in Lahore, which was a branch of the largest network of private institutes in Pakistan. CEO of the college is a chemical engineer and was our chemistry teacher. Now he has joined Jamat ud Dawah [a banned extremist religious group of Ahle Hadith sect which is headed by Hafiz Saeed – a UN-designated terrorist]. His social media pages are followed by thousands of students. He posts violent videos and statements which are threatening to AMs.

In one of his videos he was himself firing in the air with a revolver. He has invited different extremist clerics as key speakers at his institute including Hafiz Saeed. Thank God, I left the college in good times. There are many Ahmadi students in the Stars College who are scared and fearful. (Nimra)

R. They and their families experience threats to their property and land

The women ranked this issue fifteenth, and the men ranked it twelfth.

Orthodox Muslims in Pakistan often misuse the blasphemy laws against AMs to get revenge, snatching land and thereby forcibly displacing them to satisfy their hate (Rajak 2018). Therefore, many Ahmadi families have migrated at different times to take refuge in Rabwah.

In 2016, the authorities auctioned off the land in Rabwah for developing a housing scheme for Muslims with low income. This land is originally our property which was in the possession of the government under pressure from some clerics and Ahmadiyya Muslim Jam'aat is fighting for their right in the court of law. We were hoping to get this land back so that the Jamaat could build homes for the poor Ahmadis. The sad thing is that AM were not allowed to participate in the auction. Advertisement in the newspaper explicitly mentioned that AM cannot participate in that area development scheme. Every applicant was also required to provide a duly certified affidavit stating his/her disaffiliation with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jam'aat. (Sonia)

Huma said with heavy tears in her eyes:

If anybody wants to see what we face and how we are treated in Pakistan, see the videos of Gujranwala incident [2014] in which our homes were set on fire and our sisters and children were burnt alive. No one can believe that those were human who did this. All offenders are clearly visible in every video clip which they made themselves as a record of their 'victory'. Sadly, but expectedly not even a single person has been brought to justice. They just wanted to displace us from our homes. (Huma)

Ummat-ul-Batool remembered how during the rule of General Pervaiz Musharaf all AM shops and homes – including her home – in a village near city Daska were burnt by a mob:

We saved our lives by fleeing our homes leaving behind everything. The police arrived at the scene but did not take any action. The authorities charged seven Ahmadis under the blasphemy law.

S. They cannot enjoy any leisure activities in comparison to other poor women

Both the women and the men ranked this issue sixteenth.

As soon as Ahmadi women step out of their homes, they are exposed to harassment, violence, and persecution. People in their surroundings stare at them, express their displeasure, and hurl abuse. No complaint can be made since offenders know the women's vulnerability to state laws, and they harass them without any restriction or fear. Consequently, AM women avoid leaving their homes and are always scared of non-Ahmadis.

We feel alien in our society. Nobody cares about us. No one welcomes us in their company. Sadly, Government of Pakistan has banned our own gatherings too. I feel lonely sometimes but then I have learned to enjoy at home and spend time with the families. (Salma)

My wife is taking medicine of hyperventilation and antidepressant after she was detected with high level of anxiety disorder four years ago. Once she attempted suicide. The problem is social isolation and constantly thinking about the safety of her children. After leaving Pakistan, she is recovering well in Thailand. (Babar)

Lajna sadar of our halqa [sector] was murdered when she was doing Eid shopping in a busy market of Lahore. (Sajda)

The Government of Pakistan announces holidays for other minorities and some government representatives participate in their activities. Salaries to the minorities are disbursed early. On the other hand, AMs cannot have any kind of freedom and luxury. Celebrating Eid is among the best occasions in Islam: everyone in Pakistan enjoys going on outings, visiting parks, eating at restaurants, playing in playgrounds, visiting relatives and friends, slaughtering animals, shopping, etc. Eid should be the happiest occasion for any AM; however, the law does not allow them to celebrate it. Therefore, AM women and their families cannot fully enjoy the leisure aspects of Eid.

On Eid day I took my family to Iqbal Park, a public park in Lahore. My younger daughter's ball rolled to a group of females who were playing with their kids. My wife went to pick up the ball for my daughter. The females from that big group stared at my wife, threw the ball back to her and murmured 'Mirzai Kafirs [a way of referring to Ahmadis as infidels] ' are here. We were frightened by this reaction and felt better to go out of the park for the safety of our kids. (Azhar)

We went to eat our dinner at a small restaurant in a nearby street. My wife was wearing burqa. Generally, customers are free to choose the table in a restaurant. However, the restaurant staff asked us to sit at a corner table. We understood their behaviour. We had our dinner quietly and went back home. On religious occasions we are never accepted as a part of celebration. So, in these situations how we poor people in Pakistan enjoy outside home. It is better to stay at home where we are relatively safe. (Sultan)

People recognise us from our burqa. When we go out to any restaurant or park with our kids, people's behaviour is directly or indirectly unpleasant towards us. It is easy to understand that we are causing discomfort for them. Therefore, outing is not enjoyable for poor AM women. (Sajda)

T. It is very hard for them to find a home to rent

The women placed this issue seventeenth. However, the men considered it a significantly bigger issue for their women and ranked it eighth. This is probably because, living in a patriarchal society, Ahmadi men are more likely to look for housing than the women, and therefore would be more acutely aware of the difficulties facing the Ahmadiyya community in finding a home to rent.

Non-Ahmadis do not rent their houses to Ahmadis. They consider AMs as '*achhut*' (word used for the lowest class in India) and infidel. The participants' perception was that other non-Muslim communities also avoid AMs because of the fear of violence from Muslim communities.

Many poor AM women do not own their home and they cannot afford to rent homes in areas of the rich. Therefore, they live in small rented houses in densely populated communities where people know each other. Such small communities hold strong social bonds among their members and they never allow AMs to enter their area.

The rich live in societies that are barricaded and have security. They are relatively more educated. The families living in the rich housing schemes/societies are not very socially linked with each other. They travel in their own cars and can shop anywhere. Therefore, it is relatively much easier for the rich Ahmadi women to hide their religious faith.

It seems there is no problem in renting a house in Rabwah, because the majority population (98 per cent) is AM. However, outside Rabwah it is a significant problem. Any prospective tenant is required to give the landlord a copy of their national identity card, which exposes her religious identity. If an Ahmadi manages to rent a house in another way, they will be thrown out when their identity is exposed. This results in psychological problems for the poor AM women, who remain concerned for the safety of their families. Additionally, they may well have legal issues and murder threats to cope with.

I was looking for a house on rent in Shaad Bagh, Lahore. My husband worked in a nearby fruit market. I was visiting different homes myself and had requested different property agents. I saw boards on the houses available on rent and talked with the owners, they denied that their house was available on rent. Property agents told me that it was very difficult for me to get a rented house because of my Ahmadiyya belief. One agent asked me to come after one week. I contacted him in time. He replied that nobody wanted to accept Ahmadi tenants because of the fear of clerics and neighbours. Finally, I was accepted by an Ahmadi family who was living bit far away from Shaad Bagh. It is extra burden on us to spend more money on the transportation to the place of my husband's work. (Hajra)

I understand that it is not safe to live alone with my children in a rented house anywhere other than Rabwah. Therefore, I live in Rabwah. However, my husband works in Lahore which is far away from Rabwah. It is not possible for my husband to come daily or weekly basis mainly due to expensive transportation. It is very hard for me to live most of time alone, my children miss their father, I also sometimes become aggressive being under pressure of my responsibilities. Therefore, sometimes I shout on my children. I know it is bad for them, bad for me. But sometimes I lose control. (Muneeba)

U. Sometimes they observe religious customs that are not a part of their religion

The women ranked this issue eighteenth, and the men ranked it nineteenth.

There are different customs that other sects of Islam believe as part of their faith, but the Ahmadiyya faith does not own. However, a few of the Ahmadis who have kept their religious identity a secret observe some religious customs that are not part of the Ahmadiyya faith. It does not happen often.

My physics teacher's father passed away. Academy administration arranged Fateha Khawani [a custom observed by non-Ahmadis after someone's death: people sit together and raise their hands to recite Surah Fateha, the first chapter of the Koran]. I also participated to look like them so that nobody can know I had a different faith. (Asia)

Nabeela explained that she and her younger sister and parents had lived on the rented ground floor of a house for four years, with the house owner living on the first floor. The family had not disclosed their religious identity, otherwise they would be asked to leave with immediate effect. The owner would observe religious customs that are not a part of their religion, to which her younger sister and parents were invited. Sometimes they made their excuses and sometimes they attended to help keep their identity hidden.

V. They cannot vote in elections

The women ranked this issue nineteenth, and the men ranked it seventeenth.

Pakistan would have declared AMs as not eligible to vote but for the criticism the government would receive from other countries and the United Nations. In the media and on different international platforms, the Government of Pakistan portrays that the AMC 'boycotts' elections. However, the reality is different. The electoral law in Pakistan effectively eliminates AM on the grounds of their beliefs.

There are two electoral lists in Pakistan: the main list is for Muslims and 'non-Muslims' and the other is a separate list for Ahmadis. To register as voters, AMs are required to either deny or hide their faith or agree to be placed on the separate AM electoral list. As the basis of AM belief is to identify as Muslim, AMs are thus unable to vote. The national identity card must be shown to cast a vote and those Ahmadis who have 'Islam' stated on it also never go to

polling stations due to fear that someone might complain or even shout that he/she is Ahmadi and registered as Muslim.

We wish to vote, but not at the cost of renouncing our belief. (Rubab)

More than 90 per cent residents in Rabwah have Ahmadiyya Islam faith. Although, total population of Rabwah is not less than 70,000, I have never seen a single poster of election campaign from any political or religious party. They do not involve us in the political process so that we could not ask for our right to vote. (Samiyya)

W. It is hard to find a marriage partner

The women ranked this issue twentieth, and the men considered it a higher priority and ranked it fourteenth. The difference in priority seems to be because in Pakistani culture, men (such as fathers and brothers) are traditionally the caretakers of unmarried women (single, divorced, and widows). Generally, they are supposed to be responsible for marriage-related matters, including the arrangement of financial resources for their related women. Therefore, they wish to fulfill their responsibility in good time.

The AMC has a databank of eligible men and women. Ahmadi men and women can request their *Ameer* to process their applications for placement of their names in the databank. Information about any eligible Ahmadi is made available by the marriage secretary (an official rank in the AMC) on request.

According to the AMC, Islam allows a Muslim man to marry a Muslim woman. Although a Muslim man can also choose a woman of Jewish or Christian faith, it is not preferable. However, an Ahmadi woman is prohibited from marrying a non-Ahmadi man. The AMC believe that if a woman marries outside her faith, she and her children will be exposed to non-Muslim and non-Ahmadi culture and practices, which can make it very difficult for her to remain steadfast in her own faith and bring up her children as Muslims. It is believed that a man, on the other hand, can more easily influence his wife and bring her into the Islamic way of life (Lajna Imaillah 1996).

Poor Ahmadi women face an additional challenge in finding a marriage partner: a large number of Pakistani AMs have already migrated to other countries, and many are planning to do so. Therefore, Pakistani Ahmadi men and their families prefer either a resourceful

Ahmadi woman in Pakistan who could help her husband to move abroad, or an Ahmadi woman who is already out of Pakistan. It has created a mismatch ratio between Ahmadi men and Ahmadi women in Pakistan.

Due to above-mentioned limitations, many poor AM women fear being too old for marriage and consequently experience different kinds of social pressure, which can lead to physical and psychological issues. Parents of such women also worry about their daughter's future.

Poverty is a big issue for us. It is a key reason of our low education. If an Ahmadi woman is rich, she can have good education, can arrange visa and resources to move abroad, and can earn if needed. Therefore, it is easy for the rich women to get approached by the interested families of Ahmadi men for marriage.

(Shabana)

The poor women of other sects such as Shia, Ahl-e-Hadith, Sunni do intersect marriages. However, an Ahmadi woman only marries an Ahmadi man.

Therefore, we have issues of late marriages. (Osama)

X. They experience barriers to accessing adequate health-care services

The women ranked this issue twenty-first, and the men ranked it fifteenth. There are two predominant reasons for the higher priority given by men. First, due to security issues, fear of discrimination, and the meagre health-care system in public hospitals, poor AM women are often accompanied by men from their families who look after matters such as: taking care of them during long waiting times, buying medicines (on many occasions doctors prescribe medicines and ask the patient's caretaker to buy them from private drug stores outside the hospital), and moving the patient from one station to another in the hospital. Second, as mentioned earlier, generally men are the breadwinners in poor Ahmadiyya families, but they can neither bear the cost of expensive medical services at private hospitals nor they can frequently take their women to Ahmadiyya-owned hospitals in Rabwah due to travelling expenses and getting time off from their jobs.

Rich Ahmadi women can go abroad or attend big private hospitals in different cities. However, poor AM women normally visit inexpensive local dispensaries and government hospitals. The respondents in the focus groups said that sometimes the medical staff showed their displeasure while treating AMs. Another issue with public hospitals is the

unsatisfactory service they deliver to their patients (Hussain *et. al.* 2019). The respondents also expressed their concern related to the harassment of Ahmadi women by the general public in congested government-owned hospitals. Whenever possible, Ahmadis visit hospitals in Rabwah, which are funded by the AMC. These include the Fazle Omar Hospital Complex, Begum Zubaida Bani Gynecology and Obstetrics Wing, Tahir Heart Institute, Blood and Eye Donor Center, and Tahir Homeopathic Research and Training Institute. They provide free treatment to all Ahmadis as well as to non-Ahmadis.

Once I went to Mayo Hospital in Lahore for my checkup. I felt some people kept on staring at me. I was in line to pay for my ticket at the registration desk. I heard someone behind me tried to pull my overcoat. I was scared. Later I decided to always go to Rabwah for my treatment. I cannot face staring people at me and harassment in the public hospitals. I also know that any kind of response from my side can create more trouble in the name of blasphemy. (Ayesha)

I was scared of carrying the doctor's prescription [Hoowa Al-shaafi is a Koranic verse meaning Allah cures and is written on registration tickets and prescriptions by the doctors in hospitals]. Blasphemy laws are so cruel that such prescription is sufficient to register a case against me. (Tooba)

Begging or supplicating are sometimes necessary to convince the health-care workers to admit Ahmadi women to government hospitals. Recently, a government hospital in Karachi asked Ahmadis to sign a religious declaration form before any kind of treatment (Raza 2020).

I must travel to Rabwah every month so that my wife can receive treatment for her ailing heart. Frequent travelling to Rabwah is very expensive for us. Sometimes, I have to take leave without pay. However, we feel safe and best treated at hospitals in Rabwah. (Hassan)

Y. They face mobility/transportation issues in comparison to other poor women

This issue was least prioritised by both the women and the men.

In Pakistani culture, rich people do not use public transportation (they drive their personal cars), while the poor use buses, trains, rickshaws, and taxis. There are serious safety concerns for poor AM women commuters using public transport, especially buses and trains, since that is the way that the masses travel.

The women reported five issues for poor AM women that are significantly different from those of other poor women in Pakistan: (1) anti-Ahmadiyya stickers in buses, trains, and rickshaws; (2) anti-Ahmadiyya stickers, banners, posters, and wall chalking at bus stations and railway stations; (3) fellow passengers not wishing to travel with them; (4) denial of services by drivers and conductors; and (5) they are not offered seats if they are in need.

Anti-Ahmadiyya stickers are commonly found in buses, trains, and rickshaws. Similar stickers, banners, posters, and wall chalking are normally seen at bus stations and railway stations. It causes a high level of psychological harassment to poor AM women. Tariq, an Ahmadi who allegedly tore off an anti-Ahmadiyya sticker in a bus, was arrested and charged under blasphemy laws in October 2006 (US Department of State 2008).

Referring to her experience of going to college in buses with anti-Ahmadiyya stickers, Samiyya said, 'I feel trapped in a small place with fear of no escape until I reach my home.'

I was travelling by bus. When bus stopped near Narang Mandi stop to get more passengers, one boy started throwing stickers in passengers' laps through the bus windows. I also got the stickers. I was frightened after looking at the sticker. It read 'Ahmadis are conspiring against Islam. Give us donation to stop their anti-Islam activities'. I did not throw that sticker away because it could cause serious trouble for me. I put that in my bag. (Afifa)

A fellow passenger started shouting that he will not travel in the bus in which I was travelling with my wife. The bus staff changed our seats far away from that man and convinced him to travel by the same bus. (Amir)

Respondents said that sometimes transportation staff denied their services to them:

I asked a rickshaw driver to take my kid by sharing with another child from same school. Rickshaw driver denied his services to my kid due to our Ahmadiyya faith. (Sana)

In some cities of Pakistan, such as Chiniot and Faisalabad, the transporters often deny letting Ahmadi women ride in their buses, especially when anti-Ahmadiyya conferences are held. Therefore, poor AM women are forced to use expensive private taxis, which are owned by the Ahmadis.

In Pakistani culture, generally men offer seats to women. However, Ahmadi women are not offered seats.

Poor AM women also face sexual harassment during their journey. The main types of sexual harassment at bus stops and railway stations are staring, stalking, indecent gestures, whistling, passing sexual remarks, and inappropriate touching. The most common forms of sexual harassment in buses and trains include passing sexual remarks, staring, pushing, inappropriate touching, and playing loud vulgar songs by the bus staff.

I was in burqa when I rode a bus. Couple of molvies [clerics] were very near to me. They showed displeasure and murmured. I was afraid of them. (Ummama)

The participants perceived that women from other persecuted communities such as Shia, Sikh, and Hindu can travel to Iran, Saudi Arabia, and India to visit important religious places and attend events. However, Ahmadis are not allowed to go to Saudi Arabia for hajj and Ummrah.

In Pakistan it is common to introduce each other during travelling. Hatred is expressed when non-Ahmadis come to know that the fellow passenger is from Rabwah. Therefore, mostly Ahmadis tell their province name instead of city name. Even then, non-Ahmadis start discussing that there is a city named Rabwah in your province which is the city of 'Mirzayee' who are the worst Kafir and have their own paradise and hell, etc. etc. (Usman)

Due to the aforementioned mobility issues poor AM women feel a sense of anxiety, insecurity, and agitation. For this reason, many of them are not interested in getting jobs or pursuing higher education. This is a direct waste of human resources which could be of benefit to economic activity, educating the next generation, and other aspects of a contented life.

6. Discussion and analysis

Although many researchers have focused on the persecution of AMs (e.g. Raja 2020; Ahmed *et al.* 2019; Wolf 2019; Rashid 2018; Uddin 2017), only a small number of studies (e.g. Gualtieri 2004) have highlighted the problems of AM women, and there is hardly any such study in the Pakistani context. Men and women can have different perspectives on issues faced by religious minorities, but women's perspectives have been rarely investigated (Noor *et al.* 2015). Furthermore, no study was found which examined the intersectionality of poverty and religious persecution of Ahmadi women. Hence, poor AM women are invisible

and unheard in the literature of social sciences. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the gender perspectives on unique modes of discrimination of Ahmadi women in Pakistan, which are generated due to the combined effect of their faith-based persecution and poverty.

Women from any marginalised religious community are the easiest target for violence and persecution in Pakistani society. However, issues of poor AM women in Pakistan are unique in nature due to their complexity, generated by the synergic effects of state-sponsored persecution and poverty. Lack of financial resources, limited education, vulnerability to the state's oppressive laws, and hate against them in the Pakistani society have caused them to be excessively dependent on their male family members. Nevertheless, efforts from their men have not been effective in reducing their troubles, mainly due to the extremist mindset of orthodox Muslims in Pakistan which has been developed by state policies over a long period of time. Unfortunately, the state's anti-Ahmadiyya policies continue to tighten, with regular additions through parliamentary legislations and the court of law. Therefore, faith-based violence, harassment, and discrimination against poor Ahmadi women continue to grow. Consequently, they are unable to perform any productive role in society.

The role of religious clerics in Pakistani politics has done the real damage to the society. There are different sects in Islam, each of which has its own interpretation of Islam, which has confused people about the true teachings of Islam. This confusion has led to the emergence of a large part of society that seems to be looking for 'religious guidance' to become 'better Muslims'. Therefore, the religious clerics have gained a leading position in society since they are believed to provide the 'correct' interpretation of Islam. A religious leader's strength is in his arguments that prove his sect 'right'. Unfortunately, the clerics exploited the situation and started criticising other sects to prove them contradictory to Islam (Haqqani 2006). It has resulted in hate speeches and brutal sectarian violence all over Pakistan. After 9/11, the Government of Pakistan tried to control sectarian violence, but this led to all sects identifying the AMC as their common 'enemy' and a 'threat to Islam'.

6.1. The ripple effects of state-sanctioned persecution

Overall findings from the current study suggest that systematic faith-based persecution of poor AM women in Pakistan continues to grow, particularly since the implementation of the blasphemy laws and the anti-Ahmadiyya ordinance (Ordinance XX) in 1984. Wolf (2019) also observed that state-sponsored suppression is the key thrust to the growing physical and

non-physical violence in all aspects of the lives of the AMC in Pakistan. Poor AM women are an easy target for the perpetrators.

Findings show that the issues directly related to state-sanctioned persecution were the top concern and were also the root cause of all the other issues. The Pakistan constitution has criminalised the religious practices of the AMC. Consequently, orthodox Muslims have achieved a monopoly and hold excessive power and privileges of the state, which enable them to freely persecute AMs (Grim and Finke 2007). In doing so, they have found poor AM women as soft targets to spread fear in the AMC.

Although Ahmadi women do not publicly talk about their religious identity, people recognise them through their attire. Religious and political parties are responsible for religious extremism in Pakistani society. They accuse Ahmadis of working against the interests of Pakistan with the support of countries that are trying to weaken Pakistan. They have effectively used hate against Ahmadis to distract people from their negligence in running government affairs. Consequently, people believe Ahmadis are traitors and a threat to Islam. Pakistani law declares them as infidels and liable to the death penalty. Poor AM women remain worried about the safety of their lives and that of their families. People take advantage of their fear and offer them money to abandon their faith; however, rarely does an Ahmadi woman abandon her faith. There are many cases of murdered Ahmadis after they refused to fulfill the demands of religious extremists. Failure in forced conversion has resulted in various teasing tactics, including physical and non-physical harassment and violence. People call AM women by derogatory terms, such as *marzyain*, *marzai hoor*, prostitute, infidel, *Kafir*, etc.

The blasphemy laws are often misused against poor AM women to displace them. They are forced to sell their property and their valuables are snatched. Any contradiction or argument by poor AM women can cause their homes and other valuables to be burned. The media, police, local administration, and politicians such as members of national and provincial assemblies are well aware of unjust actions against poor AM women, but they remain silent and the preparators go unpunished.

Discrimination of poor AM women continues in their daily livelihoods, jobs, and in educational institutes due to the requirement that forces them to state themselves as 'non-Muslim'. Similar kinds of requirements have effectively excluded them from the electoral process.

Hate against them is also expressed in public places, such as parks, restaurants, and markets. They are forbidden from entering shops and using public transport – either verbally

or by exhibiting stickers with discriminatory notices to deter them. People will not rent their houses to them and mistreatment of AM women at some healthcare centres has also been reported.

To avoid persecution, poor AM women prefer to stay at home. Some try to hide their religious identity outside of the home, sometimes observing customs that are not part of their religion, in order to be accepted by society. Many Ahmadi women migrate to Rabwah where they can feel relatively safe. However, growing violence against them is now making it difficult for them to survive in Rabwah too. Consequently, many AMs are selling their properties and taking loans so they can migrate to other countries.

Only one of the issues identified was not directly related to the state and societal persecution: respondents reported that poor AM women can face difficulty in finding marriage partners. Delayed marriages put them under severe social pressure and, consequently, can lead to various mental health issues such as depression.

6.2. Types of harassment against poor AM women and the perpetrators

Poor AM women face physical and psychological harassment from both males and females, and from both state and non-state actors. Religious political parties such as Tehrik-e-Khatam-e-Naboovat, Jam'at-e-Islami, Jamiyat-e-Ulema Islam, Tehrik-e-Labiak, Sunni Tehrik, Jam'at-ud-Dava, Lashkar-e-Jhangwi, Al-Qaida, and Lashkar-e-Taiba are primary preparators.

Harassment is delivered via different channels, including: internet platforms such as websites, blogs, Vlogs, and YouTube channels; social media; print media such as newspapers, magazines, and books; TV; and announcements and sermons through loudspeakers used in mosques and conferences that are held outside mosques.

The main types of sexual harassment are: staring, stalking, indecent gestures, whistling, passing sexual remarks, calling derogatory names/terms, chasing, pushing, and inappropriate touching. Psychological harassment is caused by fear created by anti-Ahmadiyya speeches. The level of psychological harassment is very high when anti-Ahmadiyya speeches are delivered by politicians and religious clerics. They often result in threats of police action, kidnapping, physical torture, killing, job termination, expulsion from educational institutes, blackmailing, and snatching belongings and attacks on AM properties; and physically violent actions such as target killings, mob attacks on AM houses and worship places, burning down AM properties thereby forcing migration, and arrests by

police. The perpetrators also create fear among potential sympathisers of Ahmadis so that they feel themselves completely helpless.

The most dangerous form of violence are hate-campaigns, which are exercised regularly in an organised way. Many anti-Ahmadiyya conferences and other events, such as public rallies, are arranged in almost every city of Pakistan throughout the year, especially on days that are important in the AMC religious calendar. For instance, at the anniversary of the death of the AMC founder, excessively hateful speeches are delivered and pamphlets are distributed everywhere. Different hate pamphlets are thrown into the houses of Ahmadis.

All rallies and conferences are arranged with the permission of local administration and law enforcement agencies. They know the purpose of these activities. However, instead of taking any action against the perpetrators, different state officials and politicians become a part of their rallies and conferences.

6.3. Poor AM women's basic needs are not met

Although there is no authentic population record of Ahmadi women, many sources suggest that they number several million. Their exclusion from the mainstream is causing a huge negative impact on social and economic conditions in Pakistan.

Due to their extraordinary persecution, poor AM women in Pakistan are deprived of even their basic needs and, therefore, they are unable to become a 'fully functioning person' or as Abraham Maslow says, 'self-actualising' (Maslow 2013). Maslow presented five levels of basic needs (*ibid.*). Without satisfying the lower levels of basic needs (i.e. physiological needs, safety needs, needs of love, affection, and belongingness), a human cannot demand higher levels of needs (i.e. needs for esteem, and needs for self-actualisation). The current study focused on 25 issues identified as facing poor AM women in Pakistan. A deep analysis indicates that all said issues are related to the lower levels of basic needs. For instance, poor AM women in Pakistan face physical and psychological harassment, and live in a hostile environment full of hate and, consequently, feel alienated.

A person can be valuable to society only when all their basic needs are satisfied. However, needs satisfaction depends on the environment:

If the environment is right, people will grow straight and beautiful, actualizing the potentials they have inherited. If the environment is not 'right' (and mostly it is not) they will not grow tall and straight and beautiful (Abraham Maslow, cited in Cartwright 1979: 7).

Due to the oppressive environment of Pakistan, poor AM women have not reached the level of needs for esteem, which would make them feel of value to society. Instead, they experience frustration and an inferiority complex, believing themselves as weak, helpless, and worthless (*ibid.*). Therefore, poor AM women are facing many psychological issues, which ultimately affect their families. Without satisfying the basic needs of poor AM women, there is no point in them having a desire for self-actualisation – a drive to be and do that which they were ‘born to do’.

6.4. The persecution of poor AM women in different contexts

This study found that poor AM women are persecuted in all dimensions as defined by Wolf (2019): (1) political dimension, (2) constitutional-legal and judicial dimension, (3) social and economic dimension, and (4) cultural and religious dimensions. However, Wolf (*ibid.*) focused on the AMC in general and did not distinguish between gender-based perspectives on the issues of persecution. Therefore, problems that are faced by poor AM women, in particular, remain unhighlighted. Findings of this study have provided new insights and broader perspectives in all four dimensions of persecution. The study also highlights the need for cross-sectional studies by disintegrating religious minorities based on different characteristics, such as gender, age, financial situation, etc.

This study explicitly finds that the persecution of poor AM women is significantly more than that of other women and poor Ahmadi men in Pakistan. Poor AM women are very vulnerable to violence and harassment, and this situation is exacerbated by limitations caused by poverty. For instance, poor AM women live in densely populated localities among lower-class and middle-class people. People of such localities have poor knowledge of religion and are relatively more influenced by local clerics (Van der Veer 1994). Local clerics spread hate and harassment against vulnerable people by using not only loudspeakers but also roaming in the streets (Hoodbhoy 2017). Sadly, different religious parties use the mosques and madrassas to defend and boost their own status. Therefore, the Government of Pakistan seems to have no intention to control their activities due to their ‘capitulation’ (Wolf 2019). ‘Discriminatory contestation – the phenomenon of religious-political outbidding’ by the politicians has conferred great power to the above-mentioned extremists who are strategically told by the decision makers that the AMC is a threat to their beliefs (*ibid.*). Consequently, poor AM women feel surrounded by people who consider them as their biggest enemy. These circumstances have a deep negative effect on poor AM women and they suffer the most as a result of the social and economic boycott of the AMC.

6.5. Pakistan's violation of international covenants

Religion is a personal matter for anyone. The state has no right to interfere. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 states, 'member states have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms'. Article 2 of the declaration gives freedom 'without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion' to all citizens of the member states. Unfortunately, Pakistani parliament has misused its powers to politically declare AMs as 'non-Muslims' and to ban them from practising their religion.

Similarly, the state-sponsored violence, the country's legislation, and the state policies which allow persecution of the AMC all clearly violate a long list of international covenants that it has signed, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment (CAT) (Wolf 2019).

7. Conclusion

The key purpose of this study was to investigate how poverty and religion-based persecution interact with each other to affect Ahmadi women in Pakistan. Secondly, it was intended to find gender-based perspectives on the issues that were identified as being the combined effects of poverty and the religious persecution of Ahmadi women in Pakistan.

Many researchers have confirmed that participative ranking methodology (PRM) is well suited to assessments in humanitarian issues due to its capability of combining qualitative and quantitative data, and it was therefore implemented for this study. It has been found that the dimension of poverty has greatly added to the sufferings of Ahmadi women in Pakistan due to persecution by both the state and society. Twenty-five key issues were identified as being critical to poor AM women. The top-ranked issues were found to be directly related to state-sanctioned persecution, followed by the issues that were considered to be directly related to societal persecution. It has been noted that societal persecution

becomes more intense when the persecution is initiated by the state. Only one issue (i.e. difficulty in finding a marriage partner) was generated within the AMC, and therefore was not directly related to either state-sanctioned or societal persecution.

The study explicitly finds that the persecution of poor AM women is significantly more than that of other women and poor Ahmadi men in Pakistan. AM men have more similarities to non-Ahmadis in their appearance, names, and language. Therefore, they may hide their religious identity to avoid harassment and persecution. However, AM women are unable to hide their identity, mainly due to their unique attire, and hence they are exposed to violence and harassment. Some take their families to other countries to seek asylum. Many AMs who cannot flee the country, mostly due to financial and visa problems, take refuge within Pakistan in Rabwah.

The AMC is the most persecuted religious minority in Pakistan (Human Rights Council 2019; Human Rights Watch 2020; Wolf 2019). Since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, persecution of the AMC is still endemic. The decision makers, judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and the media turn a blind eye to violations, harassment, and discrimination against poor AM women. This study confirms that the situation is worsening steeply since the discriminatory legislation of 1974 and 1984, and that poor AM women are the principal victims of the oppressive state policies.

8. Recommendations

1. The Government of Pakistan should end institutionalised violence and discrimination against the AMC, by (a) revoking unjust laws, (b) countering extremism, and (c) giving the AMC their due human and religious rights. Pakistan needs to revisit the ideology of its founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah:
 - a. You are free; you are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion, caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the state.⁴

⁴ Quote from Presidential Address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 11 August 1947.

2. Persecution of the AMC and the hate campaign against them are long-standing issues. Repealing the anti-Ahmadiyya laws alone will provide little protection to poor AM women so long as societal attitudes toward AM remain biased. As per the proverb 'a fish rots from the head down', change must come from the top. First, all political parties must discourage the policy of appeasement of apartheid proponents to avoid capitulation and never use discriminatory contestation (Wolf 2019). Second, the decision makers must educate all citizens of Pakistan – especially children and youth, who are nearly 63 per cent of the population (Imtiaz *et al.* 2015) – and religious clerics that intolerance is the biggest enemy of a progressive society and nobody is above law. They should engage in constructive social activism, at educational institutes and at all other forums.
3. Hate speeches by political and religious leaders have been used as weapons against religious minorities. There should be strict laws against these acts and other hate material, and they must be enforced at any cost.
4. The media in Pakistan is very biased and has never been adequately penalised for spreading rumours and hate. There should be a strict check and balance on all forms of media, especially digital media, print media, and social media.
5. It is time to act on what is written in the Pakistan constitution: that all citizens of Pakistan have equal rights in all sectors of society. Furthermore, the safety and security of the lives and property of all religious minorities are the responsibility of the Government of Pakistan. Poor AM women must be considered as a part of these declarations.
6. The Government of Pakistan should devise capacity-building programmes for poor AM women. Financial support should be provided either by making jobs available to AM women or by including them in support programmes. Educating and training AM women on the procedures and documentation that have to be dealt with at different public offices, such as local administration and police stations, should be implemented to empower them.
7. Finally, Grim and Finke (2007) suggest that religious persecution can be significantly reduced when governments guarantee religious freedoms for all.

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Annexe 1: Key issues and their ranking

Overall priority ^a	Issue	No. of respondents ^b					Rank of the issue ^c (No. of sticks)				Average rank ^d (no. of sticks/group size)			
		A : Group 1	B : Group 2	C : Group 3	Total : A+B+C	Percent (%)	D : Group 1	E : Group 2	F : Group 3	Total = D+E+F	G : Group 1	H : Group 2	I : Group 3	Overall Average Rank
1	They can be trapped and put behind bars due to Ordinance XX of the Pakistan constitution.	10	10	10	30	100	100	100	100	300	10	10	10	10
	They have no access to their mosques and cannot carry out peaceful religious activities, such as prayer and worship, in comparison to other poor women of the majority religion.	10	10	10	30	100	100	100	100	300	10	10	10	10

	They are unable to freely mark important occasions within their religious calendar compared to those of the majority religion.	10	10	10	30	100	100	100	100	300	10	10	10	10
2	Decision makers say bad words against them and use the 'Ahmadiyya card' for political gain.	10	10	10	30	100	100	99	100	299	10	9.9	10	9.97
3	They are fearful of being killed due to fake accusations.	10	10	10	30	100	93	97	95	285	9.3	9.7	9.5	9.5
4	They are forced to hide public manifestations of their faith to be accepted by society.	10	10	10	30	100	90	93	94	277	9	9.3	9.4	9.23
5	Poor AM women experience more violence and harassment than other poor women.	10	10	10	30	100	91	92	87	270	9.1	9.2	8.7	9
6	No jobs are offered.	10	10	10	30	100	88	84	84	256	8.8	8.4	8.4	8.53

	They have many difficulties with admission acceptance to educational institutes. They are ignored by the instructors and isolated at the institutes in comparison to other poor women.	10	10	10	30	100	85	95	76	256	8.5	9.5	7.6	8.53
7	They are openly asked to abandon their faith, or convert to another sect, for them to feel safe.	10	10	10	30	100	82	84	86	252	8.2	8.4	8.6	8.4
8	It is almost impossible for them to approach local/national authorities in comparison to other poor women.	10	10	10	30	100	82	78	87	247	8.2	7.8	8.7	8.23
9	Violence against them is never highlighted by the Pakistani media.	10	10	10	30	100	75	81	73	229	7.5	8.1	7.3	7.63
10	They are unable to wear hijab without being harassed more than other women.	8	9	10	27	90	60	73	63	196	6	7.3	6.3	6.53
11	It is very difficult for them to acquire national documents such as a national identity card and passport.	9	8	10	27	90	65	55	74	194	6.5	5.5	7.4	6.47

12	They face social boycott.	8	9	10	27	90	56	74	63	193	5.6	7.4	6.3	6.43
13	It is very hard for them to find a home to rent.	5	6	10	21	70	33	43	75	151	3.3	4.3	7.5	5.03
14	They and their families experience threats to their property and land.	7	6	8	21	70	46	38	53	137	4.6	3.8	5.3	4.57
	It is not possible for them to shop in local areas.	7	8	6	21	70	44	58	35	137	4.4	5.8	3.5	4.57
15	They are misrepresented by the instructors in educational institutes.	6	6	7	19	63	41	44	51	136	4.1	4.4	5.1	4.53
16	They cannot enjoy any leisure activities in comparison to other poor women.	6	7	8	21	70	39	42	43	124	3.9	4.2	4.3	4.13
17	It is hard to find a marriage partner.	7	5	7	19	63	41	29	45	115	4.1	2.9	4.5	3.83
18	They experience barriers to accessing adequate health-care services.	6	4	6	16	53	40	29	44	113	4	2.9	4.4	3.77

19	They cannot vote in elections.	10	10	10	30	100	32	40	39	111	3.2	4	3.9	3.7
20	Sometimes they observe religious customs that are not a part of their religion.	4	6	5	15	50	28	45	32	105	2.8	4.5	3.2	3.5
21	They face mobility/transportation issues in comparison to other poor women.	6	6	6	18	60	34	33	31	98	3.4	3.3	3.1	3.27

a: The impact of the issue of priority 1 maximum.

b: Number of respondents who reported it an issue.

c: Rank of the issue is total number of toothpicks assigned by the number of respondents.

d: Average rank = [Rank of the issue/Group size] is used to get the overall priority of the issue.



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