

## The Rehabilitation of Radicalized Youth in Swat: A Counter Terrorism Approach

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### Abstract:

This research focuses on the rehabilitation of religiously radicalized youth in Pakistan, and two de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers in Swat, namely the 'Sabaoon De-Radicalization Centre' and the 'Mishal Center for De-Radicalization,' were selected for this purpose. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that contribute to youth radicalization; to learn about the rehabilitation approaches and processes used by government and private sector organizations in Pakistan; and to explore the success and failure of rehabilitation approaches and processes in selected rehabilitation centers in Pakistan. This work is based on qualitative data gathered through structured and semi-structured interviews, as well as Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) from 85 respondents from various segments of society, using purposive sampling. These respondents include reintegrated youth from de-radicalization centers, their families, de-radicalization center officials, influential members of society such as journalists, politicians, Village Defence Committee members, officials from civil and military administration, and members of the general public. The evidences from this research have suggested that the main reasons behind the radicalization of youth are poor socio-economic conditions, misinterpretation of the religion, lust to gain power, authority and prestige and a lot more.

**Keywords:** Swat, insurgency, terrorism, de-radicalization, rehabilitation, terrorism, Conflict.

### INTRODUCTION

The end of the cold war era brought a new paradigm shift in war strategies, and in contrast to the traditional approach of wars among different countries, these new war strategies focused on proxy wars and internal conflicts within states over military, political, cultural, and socioeconomic issues(Duffield, 2001). The literature referred to such conflicts as 'new wars,' which had increased dramatically over the previous two decades. It affected over one-third of the world's population and claimed the lives of approximately four million people, both combatants and non-combatants(Kaldor, 2013). In such conflicts, ethnicity and religion are regarded as the primary driving social factors that play a critical role in furthering radicalization, as opposed to ideology as a political factor(Huntington, 1993). With the start of the Afghan War, the Swat Valley became the base of Jihadis from all over the world, sowing the seeds of militancy and radicalization in Muslim countries like Pakistan(Hussain, 2011). Meanwhile, with the end of the Cold War and the

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disintegration of the Soviet Union, the seeds of militancy and radicalization were sown in the valley when Sufi Muhammad founded Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariyat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) with the ideology of promoting harmony and peace in the valley, but later, this organization became a major factor in heating the radicalization element in the society through the use of religion (R. Khattak & Higdon, 2020). For almost a decade, TNSM was involved in various activities that challenged the government's authority, until the 'US-led War on Terror' was launched as a result of the 9/11 attacks on US soil. TNSM was allegedly involved in recruiting and sending thousands of young fighters, the majority of whom were teenagers and students at religious seminaries (Madrassas), to fight alongside the Afghan Taliban in the war against the Allied Forces (Adnan, 2012).

The Allied Forces inflicted heavy human losses on the Afghan Taliban in the early stages of the conflict through aerial bombing, forcing Sufi Muhammad to return to Swat with around 3000 fighters, with no sign or information about the remaining fighters, whether they were killed or imprisoned in the conflict. After returning and abandoning the youth of Swat in Afghanistan, he requested that the Government of Pakistan arrest him, fearing repercussions for his decision to pit untrained youth fighters against the world's most trained army and eventually abandon them on the battlefield. With Sufi Muhammad's arrest, the leadership of the TNSM was taken over by 'Mullah Fazlullah' – Sufi Muhammad's son-in-law, who was working as a chairlift operator near Mingora at the time (Adnan, 2012). Later, TNSM joined Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and became a TTP supporter and recruiter. Mullah Fazlullah used cutting-edge communication technologies to spread his ideologies and operate in the region. He is well-known for running a pirate radio station that broadcasted his ideologies and demanded the implementation of Sharia through the issuance of various sermons while highlighting various social issues that arose after the merger. Most of the time in his sermons, he demanded that Sharia be fully implemented in the valley as the only solution to these social issues. Due to his ideology and advocacy for women's rights and informing women about their religious rights, he became very popular among Swat's females, who reportedly provided TNSM with gold ornaments and financial support on Mullah Fazlullah's request to spread his cause (S. G. Khattak, 2010). All of these developments occurred at a time when the leaders of mainstream political parties were exiled, creating a power vacuum in the country and allowing religious parties to gain power, resulting in the formation of the Muttahida-Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) led coalition government.

The TNSM launched an armed resistance against the Pakistan Army across Malakand Division in 2007, and began administering Police Stations and paramilitary outposts in Saidu Sharif and Swat. Following various peace talks and negotiations, as well as TNSM violations, the Government of Pakistan had decided to recapture the settled areas from TNSM through a military operation known as Rah-e-Rast (Adnan, 2012). To initiate the military operation, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government ordered a mass evacuation from Mingora and Saidu Sharif. Following the mass evacuation, approximately 700,000 people were displaced, with the majority of them settling in the Internally Displaced Camps established by the Government of KP in Peshawar, Mardan, and Charsadda (ACTED, 2009). The military operation Rah-e-Rast was carried out in early 2009 and inflicted significant damage on the TNSM via aerial bombings on TNSM targets and ground offensives. Within a short period of time, the Pakistan Army reclaimed control of the area from TNSM, killing 1500 TNSM militants and capturing around 250 soldiers, as well as recovering heavy weaponry from TNSM bases across the valley. The Pakistan Army reestablished the government's

writ, and with the normalization of the peace situation, the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were invited back to their homes in the second half of 2009(Adnan, 2012). In the aftermath of the Swat conflict, Pakistan's political and military establishments have paid special attention to the youth as victims of conflict, as well as the de-radicalization of militant and radicalized youth by militant forces. In this regard, the Pakistan Army had set up six de-radicalization rehabilitation centers across the Malakand Division. The most important de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers were the 'Sabaoon Center for Rehabilitation,' which opened soon after Operation Rah-e-Rast in 2009, and the 'Mishal Center for De-radicalization,' which was established in 2011. The Pakistan Army's efforts in de-radicalization and reintegration of radicalized and militant youth will be discussed in the following chapter. This segment of society is the focus of policymakers' attention, as well as the civil and military administrations of Swat, and the provincial and federal governments, in order to use them and their energies in the development of peace promotion in the post-conflict process.

The focus of this study is to understand the factors responsible for radicalization of youth by addressing the questions: What were the socio-economic or other factors which are the driving forces for the radicalization of youth? Which social class of the society has participated most in the militancy? What was the objective behind the recruitment and radicalization of youth by the militants? What role did the families of radicalized and militant youth play during the conflict? Furthermore, this research also aims to find out the rehabilitation approaches and processes adopted by the government and private sector organizations in Pakistan by addressing; What is the role, perceptions, and behavior of society towards the youth militants during the conflict and after the rehabilitation process? What are the mechanisms adopted by the de-radicalization centers to ensure the de-radicalization and rehabilitation of ex-militants? Moreover, what are the funding sources of these projects? What are the contributions of different de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers so far? What are different projects initiated by the Pakistan Army for the de-radicalization and rehabilitation of the radicalized youth?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

### **A) Radicalization**

Most experts agree that there is no simple formula or template for explaining why people become radicalized. Each case of radicalization is unique, as are the pathways and methods used, and must be examined on its own merits and through a different lens. It does not imply that the concept of radicalization is a myth or that it has not yet been debunked (Patel, 2011). Over the last decade, researchers have made significant contributions to the identification of common drivers that contribute to radicalization trajectories. The most common driver identified as a medium of radicalization that can make people receptive to radicalized ideas is 'grievances' that have erupted among people as a result of socioeconomic disparity and expulsion, injustice, identity conflicts, and oppression (Brachman, 2009).

The adoption of extremist ideologies or narratives, which reflect grievances and provide a pathway by identifying what needs to be done, is the second common driver of radicalization found in radicalization research. Radicalization has not been defined explicitly in the terrorism research literature because the focus of the literature is on terrorism, which is the end product of

radicalization. Despite the growing research literature on radicalization and the many positive and non-harmful connotations of radicalism and radicals, there is no universally accepted definition of radicalization. Radicalization can be defined as the process that causes people to become extremists. No one who has studied radicalization can deny that it is a process because individuals do not embrace extremist ideology overnight or develop extremist views as a result of a single influence. Moghadam (2005) defines radicalization as a process that involves a variety of factors and dynamics and evolves over time. Mandel (2009) defined the relationship between radicalization and extremism as follows: "Radicalization is to extremism what velocity is to position." That is, radicalization is a (positive) shift in an individual's or group's level of extremism. Scruton (2007) criticised this definition because extremism can have different connotations, which can lead to ambiguity. It can be political ideas that are demanded on the basis of various religious, racial, or political ideologies that are completely opposed to a society's core values and democratic values. Furthermore, it can be the use of specific methods to achieve political goals at the expense of causing harm to others' lives, liberty, and human rights.

Another common but important driver of radicalization is 'social and group dynamics,' which refers to how small and dense networks of people, particularly friends, are frequently identified as sources of radicalization (Sageman, 2004). As a result of the extremist mind set, these three drivers change people's beliefs in their favour through reasoning and change people's actions into moderate, angry, very angry, and violent. As a result, these three drivers help us understand certain environments as places vulnerable to the development of radicalization and must be viewed as risk factors given that there is no guarantee of an individual becoming radicalized and eventually engaging in terrorist activities. Furthermore, a 'credible and charismatic leader' has the potential to provide justification for the development of radical and extremist attitudes and behaviour (Nesser, 2010). Last but not least, in this age of globalization, the internet has provided access to imagery and visual data with the ability to convey extremist narratives and ideologies while highlighting people's grievances. Social media has made it possible for extremist views to be expressed in chat rooms and web forums, allowing people to connect and form relationships in the same way that a group of friends does, in order to radicalize people on a larger scale. It has been argued that radicalization is a process in which people shift from peaceful activism to tacit support for the cause of the radical organization, which later moves to the provision of material and financial support, and finally, actively engaging people in terrorist activities (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008).

## **B) Youth and Radicalization**

Radicalization is a key theme in recent literature on terrorism discourses, as it is in literature on youth and politics. Radicalization, according to Veldhuis and Staun (2009), is a psycho-social process that progresses from belief to thoughts and then to actions. As a result, certain context-specific variables at the individual (micro) and societal/cultural levels are required to investigate and comprehend the causes of radicalization. Radicalization has also been measured by a terrorist or radical entity advocating religious or racial supremacy by opposing the democratic values of the political system through the expression of thoughts and actions.

The radicalization process is closely linked to participation in terrorist activities and following the pathways of violent extremist actions. Participation of youth in civil conflicts and violent extremist

activities is made possible by a combination of push and pull factors. The recruitment of child soldiers in civil wars, with their desire for pride and respect, has played a significant role in this regard. On the other hand, the development of youth affiliations with terrorist organisations has been viewed as the only source of protection from abuse, torture, a means of survival, and an escape from politically motivated killings. However, in some cases, youth have been encouraged by their families and communities to join such organisations as part of a military culture embedded in the local culture of community defence, where youth are seen as critical agents in the process and this is seen as an important and essential aspect of their transition to adulthood. In the development of radical beliefs and their involvement in extremism, the family and society play a critical role. Individuals are not recruited for terrorist organisations according to any established patterns. For organisations like Al Qaeda, where there is no concept of traditional recruiting patterns like the military services, voluntary enlistment is the primary mode of youth recruitment. It has been mediated for the purposes of Jihad through kin relationships or immediate family relations. Organizations like Al Qaeda seek new members, supporters, and activists for their cause by influencing others through their actions and the presentation of their ideology (Sageman, 2004).

On the other hand, the lack of a strong family and community, as well as conflict exposure, can lead to youth engaging in violent activities. This situation frequently arises when young people have lost loved ones in a long-running conflict or have been treated unfairly, either directly or indirectly. Grief and grievances emerge as important factors in youth involvement in armed groups, and they increase the likelihood of youth involvement in violence. Youth radicalization and increased recruitment in radical extremist organisations are triggered by a lack of access to socioeconomic opportunities, poverty-induced marginalization, and injustice. These organisations use the youth's grievances to their advantage by providing them with certain direct and indirect benefits as a motivational tool for their recruitment. In the event of a youth's martyrdom, certain benefits are provided to his family, which bring pride to them. A young person's self-sacrifice for a religious, racial, or nationalist cause earns respect and influences other young people and their families to join the cause and earn the same respect. Mazer and Lambert (2010) criticised the literature on ideologies that cause radicalization, claiming that all of the work done so far has been conceptual and lacks the empirical aspects needed to fully comprehend the issue.

### **C) Religious Radicalization**

After the Cold War ended, Samuel P. Huntington postulated the 'Clash of Civilizations' theory, in which he predicted that religion would be at the center of politics and political ideologies in the twenty-first century. His ideas were widely criticized as 'mischievous' at the time, but history has proven his theory, and in the modern era, religion is not only dominating world politics as the primary issue, but it has also emerged as the source of global conflict and violent activity around the world (Zabeen, 2012). Religions are the primary source of uniting and mobilizing people in a radicalized manner, as religious radicalism has grown throughout the world. Religion, on the other hand, has dominated people's thoughts, way of life, education systems, and even politics as a result of religion's growing influence in people's lives all over the world.

According to popular belief, religious radicalism refers to the use of violence in the name of religion, in which radicalized people are willing to sacrifice themselves in the name of God in order to gain



martyrdom and rewards in the next life (Agnot, 2011). Religious radicals have little sympathy for the victims because they regard them as Allah's enemies. Religious radicalism, on the other hand, is not limited to acts of violence, but also includes advocating for the implementation of a specific religious law or a sectarian interpretation of religion around the world. At the next level, religious radicals influenced members of society who disagreed with the radicals' views and laws and refused to accept them, resulting in violence against them, social isolation, and efforts to force religious conversion. Furthermore, the radicals opposed cultural norms and practices that contradict religious values and teachings, as well as the instillation of religious values in society (Zabeen, 2012).

#### **D) De-Radicalization around the World**

Child and youth soldiers are marginalized, disempowered, and excluded from traditional structures of control, leadership, and dominance. The militant and radicalized youth must deal with the abrupt change in society that occurs as a result of the conflict. It is extremely difficult for them to overcome the label of ex-militant, as well as a lack of education and employment opportunities, which are major impediments to their successful reintegration after de-radicalization. There is a reasonable chance that rehabilitated youth will re-engage in violent activities in the post-conflict scenario, which is often the result of a sense of deprivation, grievances, social and political marginalization, lack of access to education and employment, lack of physical security, trauma, and so on. The results of rehabilitation processes show that youth can re-engage in violence as a last resort for the aforementioned problems after completing the rehabilitation process (Spear, 2006).

In a post-conflict society with very few opportunities for social advancement, war and conflict are often seen as a reasonable route to gain dominance, control, and empowerment by segments of society such as youth who consider themselves to be a marginalized group, particularly in corrupt and gerontocratic societies such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Algeria. Following the peace process, the situation for young militants became alarming, as they found themselves vulnerable to political, social, and economic deprivation, and were reintegrated into poverty. As a result, the rational decision for them is to continue fighting as mercenaries in local and regional conflicts (Keen, 2000). De-radicalization policies all over the world revolve around rehabilitating and reforming radicalized people as well as criminals with the goal of reintegrating them into society rather than punishing or marginalizing them from their communities. As a result, disengagement, deradicalization, and reintegration strategies are all part of the rehabilitation process.

Disengagement is the process where the individual has to experience the change in his/her social or functioning role and it may or may not be associated to the existing movement or leaving that group. Usually, disengagement is caused by the frustration, inability to satisfy the desired outcomes, and disillusionment due to the change in roles (Horgan & Braddock, 2010). De-radicalization strategies revolve around the processes where an individual limit and reduce his affiliations, commitment, and involvement in violent activities along with reaching to the psychological extent where there will be no longer threat of his engagement in violence. Dis-engagement can also be referred to the process where the initiatives are done to minimize the threat of re-engagement of individuals in violence through the proper addressing to the root causes of the radicalization issues. On the other hand, Reintegration is the process which focuses on the respectable re-introduction of

the ex-militants where all the social, economic, and political opportunities have been provided to the rehabilitated individuals where they can foster and advance in the post conflict context (Horgan & Braddock, 2010).

**Table 2.1 DE-RADICALIZATION MODELS IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES**

Models	Saudi Arabian	Indonesian	Egyptian	Jordanian	Yemeni	Algerian
<b>Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention</li> <li>• Cure / rehabilitation</li> <li>• Care/support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlighting the conflict as the country's own war</li> <li>• Role of former militants in rehabilitation</li> <li>• Effective policing</li> <li>• Efficient and effective prosecution</li> </ul>	Revision/correction of concepts (Tashih Al-Mafahim)	Counter-narratives/ideological responses dictated by the state	Dialogue through a committee consisting of respected religious scholars	Reconciliation and transformation

Due to the strategies utilized, de-radicalization and rehabilitation processes may differ from country to country. The goal of all de-radicalization programmes implemented around the world is to identify and detain terrorists. After the 9/11 attacks, most countries, including Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, established de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers, but the real motivation came after terrorist organizations targeted the states themselves (Ashour, 2008). The basic element of militant disengagement from radical and extremist terrorist organizations is imprisonment, and subsequent methods at each de-radicalization center differ, such as psychological treatment and religious views correction, until release and subsequent monitoring. Saudi Arabia is the only country that has separated hard-core terrorists and radicalized militants from the general prison population in order to keep radicalism at bay.

**TABLE 2.2 DE-RADICALIZATION MODELS IN NON-MUSLIM COUNTRIES**

Models	United Kingdom	Singapore	Australia
<b>Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue</li> <li>• Prepare</li> <li>• Protect</li> <li>• Prevent</li> </ul>	Religious rehabilitation groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Protection</li> <li>• Response</li> <li>• Resilience</li> </ul>

In many states, such as Ireland, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom, the strategy of monitoring re-integrated ex-militants from de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers is carried out with the assistance of the ex-family militant's as well as through police surveillance (Rahimullah, Larmar, & Abdalla, 2013). The resources and commitment levels are determining factors in the success of these initiatives, as these de-radicalization and rehabilitation programmes become successful due to effective post-release monitoring and the commitment of the security forces to the cause. Furthermore, religious dialogue for the correction of religious views has been an effective and vital component of de-radicalization programmes in Britain, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. In contrast, it is impossible to say that this

reeducation about religion and motivation of militants to dissuade them from using violence is proceeding apace, as evidenced by the religious clerics hired by the Malaysian government to correct religious views, and there is no such effort reported to use independent clerics with greater credibility with militants, as all religious clerics in Malaysia are also state officials.

It is important to note that de-radicalization programmes in the United Kingdom, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Yemen are all tailored to the individual and focus on counselling, psychological therapies, corrective religious views, as well as technical and vocational skills (Rosili, 2016). The Egyptian de-radicalization centers, on the other hand, emphasize a collective methodology that focuses on terrorist organisations rather than individual terrorists. The de-radicalization centers in Ireland, on the other hand, have taken a mixed approach, focusing on the rehabilitation of individual militants while also accepting terrorist organizations as signatories (Ali, 2007). It is important to share that British, Indonesian, Malaysian, Pakistani, Saudi, Singaporean, and Yemeni de-radicalization programmes are individual specific which focus on the counseling, psychological therapies, corrective religious views along with the technical and vocational skills. On the other hand, the Egyptian de-radicalization centers focus in the collective methodology where they emphasis on the terrorist organizations rather individual terrorists. Whereas the de-radicalization centers at Ireland have adopted a mixed approach which focuses on the rehabilitation of the individual militants and take terrorist organizations as signatories (Khan, 2015).

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

This research is exploratory in nature and adheres to the liberal school of thought. The study's main theme is religiously radicalized youth and their rehabilitation process, so Lieven's 'Theory of Religiosity and Nationalism' provides theoretical and conceptual foundations for this particular research, as the theory states that religiosity and nationalism are the causes of religious and cultural identity development(Lieven, 1998). Many believers' convictions to embrace militancy in all of its fanatical forms are strengthened by religious philosophy, which is one of the reasons for the creation of a national ideology. During a conflict, society acts as a national and religious fanatic, initially posing no threat to society but later posing the greatest threat to society. Furthermore, this theory emphasizes the spread of war as a result of instilling anti-western sentiments and exploiting weak socioeconomic conditions and policy flaws(Diagonal, 2004).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study's scope includes Swat district and two de-radicalization centers for radicalized youth, Sabaoon De-Radicalization Center and Mishal Center for De-Radicalization. The respondents for interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were chosen using a purposeful sampling method. The information was gathered from influential and prominent members of society in order to provide insight into the factors that led to the radicalization of young boys and, ultimately, armed terrorist acts. In order to learn about the rehabilitation approaches and processes used by the government and private sector organisations in Pakistan, officials from the 'Sabaoon De-Radicalization Center' and the 'Mishal Center for De-Radicalization' were interviewed. Youth (boys aged 15-29) who have been involved in armed, terrorist activities and have already been reintegrated into society after going through the rehabilitation process, as well as boys who are



currently going through the de-radicalization process; one family member of each radicalized/de-radicalized youth; officials from Sabaoon and Mishal De-Radicalization Centers; influential and prominent persons from society; civil administration The de-radicalization centers have gained access to the de-radicalized youth.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Valid research inferences were drawn after arduous and extensive fieldwork under the guidance of the methodology chosen in advance. The information gathered from the field visits, which included interview schedules and focus groups, was organized into the appropriate classifications. The main points and discussions have been divided into three sections, each representing one of the objectives. This section covers the factors of radicalization, the background factors of radicalization, motivation for joining militancy, reaction of families to joining militants, provision of financial support to families, roles and responsibilities of militant youth, and society's perception of militants and their families in order to understand the factors responsible for youth radicalization (objective 1). This section covers the introduction of de-radicalization centers, their administrative hierarchy, the process of de-radicalization and rehabilitation, the environment of the rehabilitation centers, and vocational and financial assistance to the inductees' families in order to learn about the rehabilitation approaches and processes used by the government and private sector organisations in Pakistan (Objective 2).

### **Factors of Radicalization**

According to influential society members, Swat has been a victim of religious radicalization since the dissolution of the princely state, which created a power and political vacuum, allowing the formation and strengthening of the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariyat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The radicalized narratives of Islam arose from the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Islam and the Quran in order to favour and exploit current events and situations in Pakistan and the international political arena, with no room for counter-arguments. Militants, on the other hand, successfully manipulated and justified the government's inability to address the issue of swift justice and eliminate the people of Swat's sense of marginalization following the dissolution of the princely state.

This lapse in the internal situation was exploited by Sufi Muhammad, the TNSM's founder, who demanded that Sharia Law be implemented in the Malakand Division in order to provide quick justice. This incitement began with political goals in mind, but later evolved to include the use of violent and armed means to achieve their objectives and demands. The Civil Administration respondents believed that radicalization occurred in people's minds after the start of the US-led War on Terror, when Sufi Muhammad reportedly brought thousands of young Madrassa students to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Afghan Talibans against the world's most lethal and professional army. Sufi Muhammad returned to Swat with only a few hundred soldiers after suffering heavy human losses and having no idea where the rest of his men were.

Fearing repercussions, he requested that the government arrest him, and the leadership of the TNSM passed to his son-in-law Mullah Fazlullah, who later joined the Talibans in Afghanistan and helped establish the TTP. He was also known for his use of illegal radio channels to spread his own version of Islam and develop a sense of radicalization, for which he was also known as "Mullah

Radio." Furthermore, officials from the Military Administration shared that there were some events in national politics that were used by militants in Swat to continue the narrative of radicalization and recruitment. It includes Operation Sunrise/Siege of Laal Masjid (July 2007); Operation Rah-e-Haq (Swat, Oct – Nov 2007); Operation Rah-e-Rast (Swat, May to August 2009); Operation Black Thunderstorm (April-June 2009), which killed 23 foreign militants out of 1475 total.

### **The Background Factors of Radicalization**

Other factors that contribute to youth radicalization, according to all segments of respondents, include a lack of schooling, school dropouts, a lack of critical thinking, large family sizes that result in a lack of supervision by fathers and authority figures within the family, a low socioeconomic status, aggression in the attitude and behaviour of the youth, and impulsivity of the youth to seize power and authority along with wealth. Furthermore, as shared by de-radicalization rehabilitation officials, some psychological factors include aggression and hostility among youth, defensiveness and evasiveness, family denial, depression and anxiety, sleep problems (insomnia, parasomnia, and nightmares), homosexual tendencies, low self-esteem, feelings of guilt, and dissociative episodes.

### **Motivation for Joining Militancy**

The reasons of joining the Taliban forces vary among each respondent of the de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers. The prominent motivations behind joining the Taliban as shared by the rehabilitated respondents and their family members were seeking power, authority and prestige; few had family members who were involved (and some are still absconders), some of them were convinced at the madrassa to 'join the fight' for Jihad and misguided by the wrong interpretation of Islam; very few joined Taliban to redeem himself for the 'wrong' he had previously done; few were forced to join the Taliban in order to show commitment to the cause and Islam; few were threatened by intimidations of kidnapping and murder of family and self by the Taliban; idealizing the Taliban forces fighting in the Afghanistan against foreign forces; weak socio-economic conditions; dropped out of school and had no goal direction (was loitering around the community when he was recruited) and the brain washing by the Taliban commanders and religious scholars.

Interestingly, the officials at the de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers shared that most of the inductees who surrendered or apprehended did not know the 1st Kalima and/or its meaning. Moreover, they did not know the Urdu language to discern whether the security personnel are Pakistani or Muslim. Furthermore, their lack of critical thinking is evident in the statements they made to justify being involved in TTP: "...All security forces (Army, Police and FC) seen as nonbelievers/ Kafirs/ murtids/infidels"; "...Pak army is actually US Army who hired Indian soldiers."; and ". It is written in the Quran that Jihad against the infidels/ Kafirs/ Americans is obligatory..."

### **Personal Grievances as the Motivation Factor**

Personal grievances are frequently used as a motivational tool to join militant forces in order to gain more and more power and exact revenge after gaining absolute power. Only one of the twenty rehabilitation center inductees stated that he joined the Taliban Forces due to personal grievances, as he was motivated to exact revenge for his brother's death, and he could only do so if he had the power to put him above the law, which the Taliban Forces provided him. He only remained part of

Taliban forces for only a month and he could not materialize his ambitions of taking revenge of his brother's death.

### **Reaction of the Families on Joining Taliban**

Joining the militant forces is a critical decision that has ramifications for the family's social standing and credibility in society. The same thing happened in Swat, according to the respondents from the rehabilitation centers. The 18 inductees who responded said their families did not support their decision to join the Taliban forces. Most of the inductees' families boycotted them and had no contact with them during their Taliban affiliations. Few were beaten up by their families, and one respondent kept his Taliban affiliation hidden from his family. Two respondents were supported by their families, as one inductee stated that his father was also a Taliban and that he encouraged him to join the Talibans, despite the fact that the rest of his family was opposed to this decision. Another inductee stated that his father and brothers supported his decision to join the Talibans because it increased their power, influence, and prestige in society, but his mother was opposed.

### **Provision of Financial Support to Family**

The socio-economic conditions have a very strong impact on the youth militancy in Swat as most of the respondents from all the segments shared that the young militants who became part of the Taliban Forces belong to the poor and middle-class families having ambitions to get power, prestige and wealth. Only three of the inductees shared that they provided financial support to their families due to their poor socio-economic conditions. On the other hand, most of the inductees shared that their families did not accept any financial support from them as they were against their source of income and they utilized their income to self-support themselves not becoming burden on their families.

### **Role and Responsibilities of Militant Youth**

The Taliban Forces trained the militant youth to use a powerful medium to inflict physical harm and spread tears among the people. Because the Taliban had given them power and authority to control the people, they were regarded as a powerful element in the spread of violence throughout society. Youth in the Taliban Forces had major responsibilities such as collecting donations, threatening political and well-known figures by attacking them, making Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), enforcing their version of Sharia and laws, medium of propagating Taliban ideology, motivator and recruiter, spying, doing guard duties, administration, controlling check posts, patrolling, cooking, and so on.

### **Perception about Militants and their Families**

The young people's involvement with the Taliban forces has cast a negative light on their families in society. Youth militants are drawn to militancy, according to community members, because of their immaturity, socioeconomic status, social deprivation, lack of guidance and supervision, desire for power and prestige in society, and fear of the Taliban. People who have close relationships with young militants frequently guide them to leave the terrorists and teach them the true meaning of Islam. People have imposed a social boycott on the families of militants in some cases, and they have had very limited social contact with them, out of fear that the militants' family members could be Taliban spies and may report negatively on them.

## DE-RADICALIZATION IN PAKISTAN

The officials at Sabaoon De-Radicalization Center shared that the center was established by Pakistan Army in September 2009 and inaugurated by the Gen. Ishfaq Kiani. General Ashfaq Nadeem was appointed as the General Officer Commanding (GOC) and Brig. Aamar Najam was assigned the designation of Commanding Officer (CO). This center was established for the de-radicalization of the children and adolescents with a civilian partnership with the Hum Pakistani Foundation which looked after the administration of the center from September 2009 till May 2012. Later, the administration of this center was handed over to the Social Welfare, Academics and Training (SWAT) for Pakistan from May 2012 till date. The modules at the Sabaoon Rehab Center focused on the Religious, Academic, Vocational, Psychosocial, and Extracurricular activities. Sabaoon had taken the best practices from the existing de-radicalization programs which included: 'Religious Dialogue/Religious Correction => Corrective Religious Instruction' and 'Counseling at the individual and family level => psychosocial support from Mental Health Team'. The duration of the de-radicalization process is indefinite depending upon the progress of the individuals. The post reintegration and support to the rehabilitated individuals has been a key element of this project where the rehabilitated individuals were provided academic and vocational development, psychological trainings and continued monitoring of them.

**Table 1. De-Radicalization Centers in Swat**

Centre	Area	Demographic	Age Range	Modules	Duration	Post Reintegration Support
<b>Sabaoon</b>	Mala-kand, KP	Males Surrendered & Apprehended	Under 18 years	Religious Academic Vocational Psychosocial Extracurricular	Indefinite Depending on individual progress	Academic vs. Vocational Psychosocial Continued monitoring
<b>Mishaal</b>	Swat	Males Surrendered & Apprehended	18 and above	Religious Basic Education Vocational Extracurricular	3 - 6 months	Monitoring by LC NO LONGER OPERATIONAL
<b>Paitham</b>	Swat	Males Surrendered and Apprehended	18 and above	Religious Basic Education Vocational Extracurricular	3 - 6 months	Monitoring by LC Intermittently operational
<b>Sparley</b>	Swat	Females & Families	?	Religious and Vocational	3 - 6 months	No longer operational

Sabaoon has added additional components to aid in the de-radicalization and rehabilitation process, as well as continued disengagement through basic literacy and vocational skills for those who lack education/education-related goals, secondary and higher education for those who wish to

pursue academic goals, and extracurricular activities to instill a sense of teamwork, cooperation, and healthy competition. Furthermore, officials from the Mishal Center of De-radicalization revealed that the Mishaal Center of De-radicalization and the Paitham Center of De-radicalization were both located in Swat and focused on the rehabilitation of male ex-militants. Religious, Academic (Basic Education), Vocational, Psychosocial, and Extracurricular activities are the focus of the modules at both Rehab Centers. The rehabilitation process takes 3 to 6 months, and as part of the post-reintegration process, the monitoring was done by Local Command (LC). In order to de-radicalize and rehabilitate ex-militants, the Pakistan Army launched the Sparley Project, which aims to provide academic, religious, and vocational training to females and other family members of those inducted at rehab centers. After successfully completing one-year trainings, they were also given benefits in the form of monthly stipends and business development. Religious, academic, and vocational activities were also included in the modules at this center.

### **Process of De-Radicalization and Rehabilitation**

In Pakistan, there are three levels of de-radicalization that are used to successfully rehabilitate radicalized youth. All of these levels are discussed briefly below.

#### **A. Assessment at Induction**

Militants who voluntarily surrendered or had been apprehended, were kept under the command and control of Local Enforcement Agencies at this level (LEA). All of the ex-militants' attitudes and behaviours were carefully observed, and they were carefully selected on the advice of LEA officials. For their psychological evaluation, all of the recommended individuals are subjected to a series of interviews with Army officials. Successful candidates are inducted at the rehab centers on the recommendation of Army officials. Initially, the rehab officials collect their stories about Islam, evaluate their psychometric levels, their families' stories, and make regular community visits to the members, elders, peers, LC, etc.

#### **B. Intervention**

The inductees enter the most important phase of the de-radicalization and rehabilitation process after completing the first level, which includes Mainstream Education, Vocational Training, Corrective Religious Instruction, Psychosocial Support and Intervention, and Recreation (sports, etc.). The subsequent sections go through the specific details of these rehabilitation models.

- **Mainstream Education**

Mainstream education is based on previous levels of education (accelerated learning techniques are used to help bring inductees up to grade level, and basic literacy (1–6th grade) is provided for those who are illiterate). Depending on the needs of the inducted population, classes go up to BA 4th year.

- **Vocational Training Courses**

The De-radicalization and Emancipation Programme (DREP), which aims to make the inductees useful citizens after their reintegration into society, is a vocational training course that is designed to help and facilitate stable income in the post-reintegration through acquired skill-sets. Motor cycle mechanic and domestic tailoring (12 months + on the job training) are long-term vocational courses, while electrician, air conditioner, appliance, and UPS repair courses are short-term vocational courses (6 month).



- **Corrective Religious Instruction**

This is the most important aspect of the intervention process as curriculum was specifically developed by Dr. M Farooq (late) for Grades 1 - 10th grade which is based on revising concepts related to Jihad, suicide bombing/attacks, tolerance, humanism, equality, believers vs. nonbelievers/infidels/murtids, etc. The verification of Quranic text was encouraged in the curriculum.

- **Psychosocial Support**

All the de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers have Mental Health Team (MHT) of psychologists and social workers which intake narrative, Psychometric assessment to assess ability vs. achievement index and chart future trajectory, as well as regulation of emotional states/difficulties experienced by the inductees. Individual and group sessions are held on a regular basis to help inculcate critical thinking while addressing underlying morbid trends. Community visits (family narratives, community narratives related to inductee involvement) are also planned for the inductees' normalization. The risk assessment is also based on previous information and likelihood of recidivism/re-engagement/re-offending of the inductees.

- **Recreation**

Recreational activities are also intended to help inductees' mental and psychological development. Sports: cricket, football, volleyball, sports day events; national holiday celebration and Eid Lunch (with families); family visits to the facility and home visits and weekend leaves (fortnightly, based on progress at the facility).

### **C. Reintegration**

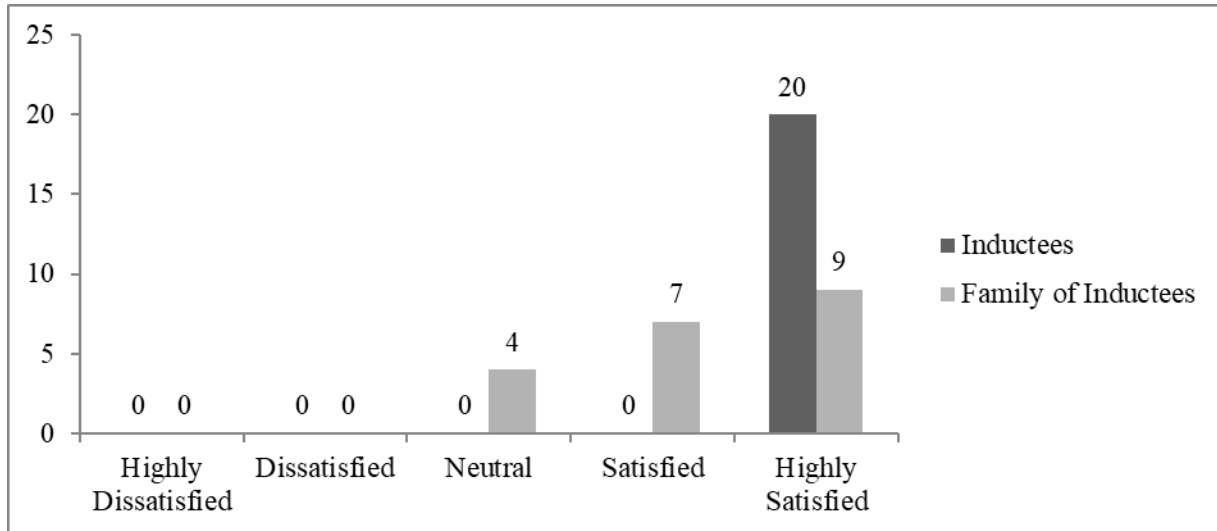
Following a successful rehabilitation process, all rehabilitation centers adhere to certain guidelines. These are known as the Guideline for Risk Assessment, Intervention, and Reintegration (GRAIR). Following the recommendations of the Mental Health Team (MHT) and the Army, the Governor makes the decision to order the withdrawal of internment orders and the reintegration of inductees. Following the successful reintegration of inductees, rehabilitation centers assist them in leading a peaceful and respectable life by providing jobs and assistance in establishing small and local businesses. In addition, the rehabilitation centers have implemented a post-reintegration monitoring system to prevent recidivism, re-offending, and re-engagement.

### **D. Environment of the Rehabilitation Centers**

The inductees and their family members praise the environment of the de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers. The inductees shared that the environment of the rehabilitation centers is very positive and involves various approaches to the psychological development, academic development, corrective religious beliefs, vocational training courses, and the recreational activities. These centers have given them a new approach towards life along with the goal directions. On the other hand, majority of the families of the inductees have also expressed their satisfaction regarding the positive environment of the de-radicalization rehabilitation centers as they were of the view that the environment and facilities which are provided to the inductees at the centers are not available to them at their homes. Few remain neutral as they were of the view that the inductees are kept under so much pressure and away from the people, that even family

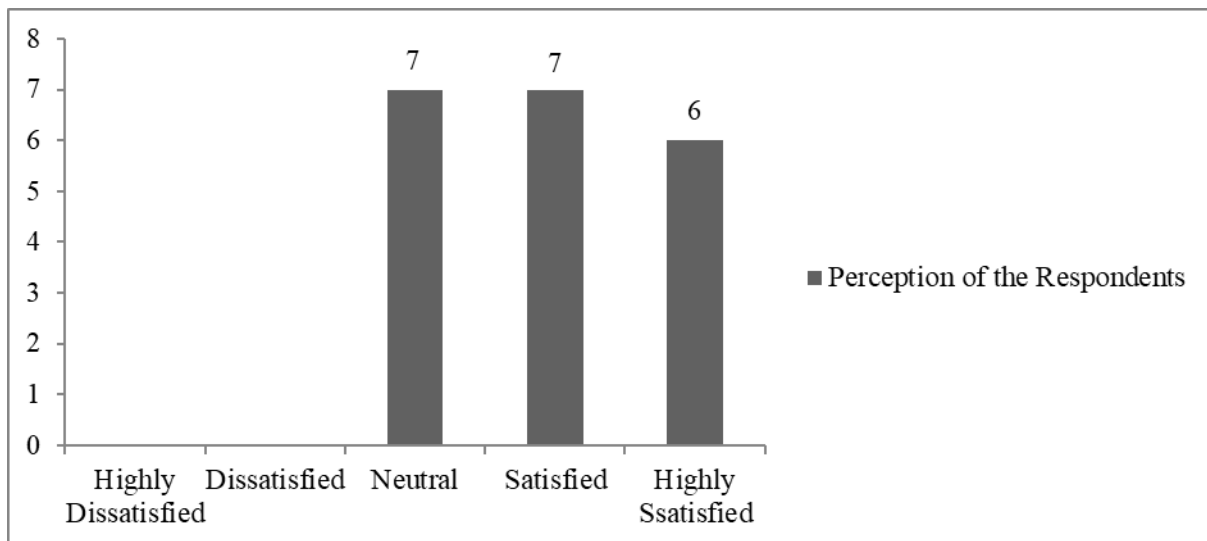
members are not allowed to meet them except for the scheduled time period. Whereas, the officials shared in this regard that it is part of the intervention process and necessary for their rehabilitation and de-radicalization.

**Figure 1. Perceptions of Inductees & their Families about Rehabilitation Centers**



The families of the inductees also expressed their satisfaction regarding the treatment of the de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers’ officials upon their visit and meeting with their family member inducted at the centers.

**Figure 2 Perceptions of Families of Inductees about Treatment with Them at Rehabilitation Centers**



During their visits to the rehabilitation centers, the majority of the respondents stated that they were treated well and with respect. Seven percent of the respondents were uncertain because they believed they would have to go through security checks and wait their turn to visit a family member in a rehabilitation center.

### E. Vocational and Financial Support to the Families of Inductees

Pakistan Army has also initiated Project Sparley for the betterment of the families of the inductees at the Sabaoon and Mishal centers. All the respondents from the families of the Inductees segment shared that they were included in the project Sparley and got corrective religious education along with the technical and vocational training. The respondents also shared that they were provided Rs. 75000 of financial assistance during the 6 month trainings and Rs. 150000 during the one-year training.

### CONCLUSION

The analysis and discussion of the data presented in the preceding chapter leads to the conclusion that a variety of socioeconomic, cultural, and religious factors influenced the radicalization of youth of Swat. The problem of radicalization and extremism in Swat is not limited to religious extremism and terrorism; rather it existed at all levels of the Swat society. Due to their inexperience and immaturity, extremist and radical forces targeted the youth for the propagation of their agenda and cause. The religious aspect of youth radicalization has been successfully addressed by de-radicalization and emancipation programmes adopted by radicalization centers in Swat through indoctrination of corrective religious beliefs in the de-radicalization rehabilitation process.

Efforts of the Sabaoon and Mishal rehabilitation centers are commendable, as the reintegrated youth have gone on to live successful and peaceful lives following their rehabilitation. Sabaoon and Mishal must also be commended for having a very low rate of re-engagement and recidivism of reintegrated youth in terrorist activities. Finally, in light of the primary data analysis, it is suggested that de-radicalization and rehabilitation efforts be accompanied by an effective and efficient counter-terrorism policy, which should be developed in light of the paradigm shift in Pakistan's security situation, focusing on both the soft and hard aspects of terrorism.

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