

Chapter 7

Description of the Pakistani Context



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Pakistan is the sixth largest country in the world. It has a youth population of over 55% who are below 24 years of age (Yousaf 2014). These young people are without or have nominal education, technical skills, and there are few schools, colleges, and vocational training centers. A vast majority of these youngsters are marginalized and forced to live in vulnerable conditions. Many of these adolescents are either living on the streets or off the streets (Iqbal 2008). The young population is active and they need opportunities, but these are limited or unavailable throughout the country, particularly in urban slums. This cohort of youths is victims of the youth bulge phenomenon. Some of the juveniles have generated a hate for everyone, believe in homogeneity, and are supported by their kith and kin or people of their own ethnic background. These adolescents are alienated from the state and society. Some of them reject diversity and segregate themselves into their ethnic and linguistic groups. They are vulnerable and are potential victims of violent activities.

Although crime data is scarce, the few available official records in Pakistan depict an image of declining crime rates, especially in Islamabad (Gillani et al. 2009; Jalil and Iqbal 2010). Contrarily, we know that population explosion, rapid urbanization, and limited resources have not only generated “shanty towns” but also risky and disadvantages urban neighborhoods in the country.

Urbanization is increasing in Pakistan. The urban population is 39.23% and its growth rate is 3.19% per annum (World Bank 2017). The slum population was 47% of the total urban population a decade ago (United Nations 2010). According to World Bank estimates, Pakistan has one of the highest rates of urbanization and this has occurred without proper planning and management (Arif and Hamid 2009). Rural migrants move to towns in order to seek better opportunities in education, employment, health, hygiene, and a prosperous lifestyle, but they end up settling in shanty towns, in risky urban neighborhoods and disadvantages residences of the metropolitan cities or even small cities in the country. The result is marginalization, segregation, destitution, and neglect, especially for the adolescents. The dreams of the new settlers bring about their deprivation.

Social dimension: The risky urban neighborhoods of Islamabad and Rawalpindi (where we collected data) are poor and youngsters are unemployed. Some of the adolescents were students; others were destitute and neglected children. Some of the juveniles were also working as child laborers (in hostels, restaurants, and workshops) gravitating to such places to spend some time and fulfill their social needs.

Diversity dimension: Adolescents in the risky urban neighborhoods of Islamabad and Rawalpindi are marginalized, deprived, and segregated. They are conscious of their identity and they fight for the recognition of their identity. They believe in honor and respect, although this honor and respect is more important to their family and kinship network. Still, social networking (other than with kin) is increasing due to increasing social media and Internet connectivity. Adolescents encounter diverse groups in schools and colleges. However, these social bonds are secondary and kinship is the primary bond.

Safety dimension: Pakistani urban neighborhoods were perceived as risky and unsafe. It was common belief that every kind of deviancy and crime was taking place on the streets of those urban neighborhoods, including, but not limited to drug addiction and trading, theft, burglary, robbery, and petty theft, such as bag snatching from females, on the streets. They were not only the perpetrators of criminal activities but also victims without a social welfare system or social safety network, family and kin were responsible for the safety and development of these adolescents. Thus, dependency on the family was an important aspect of adolescence, and similarly some of the families were engaged in deviant acts.

Initially, and in the early phase of this project, we compiled four Focus Group Discussions with adolescents between 15 and 21 years of age. We found different perspectives and gleaned some important information. However, we realized that these Focus Group Discussions were not fruitful and we were getting conformist narratives. In order to get the representative data, we decided to conduct in-depth interviews. In fact, in total, we conducted 38 in-depth interviews, but eight of them left halfway, or partway through the interview and we were unable to convince them to complete their interviews in the Pakistani urban neighborhoods. The data of these interviews was not complete and, in our view, was not sufficient. Therefore, we had to exclude these eight interviews from the data.

We conducted interviews in three neighborhoods in Pakistan: Bari Imam and France Colony F-7 in Islamabad and Dhok Matkial in Rawalpindi. As with the German data, we used three sources for the data collection. First, we searched official records for data, but official data amounted to close to nothing. The official told us that they falsely construct data in order to avoid problems with their personal Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs). To have the highest arrest rate in the police precinct, it is negative indicator of the official's performance and therefore they downsize crime statistics.

Second, a rapid appraisal of likely respondents was established through the access ladder (Neuman 2014)¹. We used influential people as well as ordinary people living

¹I recognize the contribution of my Research Assistants: Rahat Shah and Asif Hayat. They were helpful in the field research and supported me in the data collection.

within the community to establish contacts. We had conversations with people who have frequent interaction with young people, including barbers, auto mechanics, and motorcycle mechanics. We also communicated with experts like taxi drivers whose services are used by adolescents. Interviews were also conducted with the shopkeepers, who were sometimes vulnerable to or collaborators in juvenile activities. Meanwhile, interviews with the police officials helped to understand the law enforcement agencies. In lieu of interviews with social workers, we interviewed the local councilor and Imam, who helped to understand the level of help given to adolescents.

We recorded the data and took notes where it was possible. However, not all interviews could be recorded and we had to rely on our memory when compiling the notes.

7.1 Neighborhood Selection in the Pakistani Context

Although we did not get official records from the police or the Bureau of Statistics, we nonetheless were given some indications from the police that certain areas had high crimes rates in urban neighborhoods. These were France Colony, Bari Imam, Bhara Kahu, Khana Pull, and Tarnol in Islamabad. It was easy for the research team to conduct interviews in Bari Imam because of the close proximity to the Quaid-i-Azam University where the Pakistani research collaborator was based. We were also close to the France Colony in F-7 Sector. It was possible to reach it within a couple of minutes. It was also convenient to establish the links with the community members there.

In Rawalpindi, we had a number of areas which were earmarked as high crime areas: Dhok Matkial, Dhok Hassu, Burmi Colony, and many more areas. However, it was almost impossible to approach those areas due to ongoing military operations, called “Operation *Radul Fasad*”, against radical groupings in 2016 and again later on. A detailed description is given below of these urban neighborhoods:

7.1.1 *Bari Imam*

Bari Imam is a shrine of a local Sufi saint called Pir Sayyed Abdul Latif Shah Qalandar. The original name of the village is called Noor Pur Shahan, which is better known as Bari Imam and it is village adjacent to the important government buildings. Although the total population is not known exactly, it is between 50,000² and 60,000. This neighborhood is just one kilometer away from the power corridors of Pakistan—the offices and houses of the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan are nearby. It is also surrounded by the Diplomatic Enclave to the South where the

²Statistics in Pakistan are always questionable and one cannot rely on them because there is no system or control to provide reliable figures. These are estimates only.

majority of countries have their embassies, and the diplomatic community resides nearby. The Quaid-i-Azam University is close to the neighborhood to the East! On Northern side, it is adjacent to the last bits of the Himalaya Mountains. It has naturally growing plants, but there is no planned greenery.

This community is poor, marginalized, and segregated, as well as stratified. It is not a planned urban neighborhood and has grown up without the proper facilities of sanitation, water supply, and adequate road infrastructure. It is one of the polluted areas and one can see the sanitation water flowing on roads and streets. Garbage can be found excessively on the streets in the Bari Imam.

It is one of the deviance-ridden places in Islamabad. This locality is the hub of the drug trade. Anybody can buy marijuana, heroin, and alcohol (which is forbidden for Muslims in Pakistan). The adolescents sniff glue—Samad Bond, petrol, and become drug addicts. Young people gather there for their enjoyment: gawping at girls, watching Sufi dancing on the shrine, and using drugs. They also gather there to play cricket, football, badminton, and snooker. It is also a center for other deviant activities like theft, bag snatching, and sexual harassment.

Bari Imam has a population of Punjabi, Pashtuns, Kashmiri, and Gilgiti origin. These communities migrated from their native areas to Islamabad for better social and economic opportunities but settled in Bari Imam. It is one of the places where a number of ethnic groups live permanently but also commute to their native villages once a month or at least on public holidays. It is also a place where people who practice Sufi Islamic traditions, traveling on Thursday and Friday, come to pay homage at the shrine of Bari Imam.

7.1.2 France Colony F-7 Sector

France Colony is situated in F-7 Sector of Islamabad. It has a population of about 5000–6000 inhabitants and is surrounded by upper class areas. This colony is located in one of the richest areas of Islamabad. Nearby, the France Colony is Jinnah Super Market, which is one of the elite areas of the town. However, France Colony is a risky urban neighborhood and it is one of the poorest areas. The majority of the residents are Christian, and they have migrated from various regions of the country. Many of them are from the Punjab province, and they settled here hoping for a bright future.

These residents are poor, marginalized, ghettoized, and form their own ethnic and religious community. They have mixed houses made of mud and concrete. A canal flows between the community and the water is polluted because it is the gathering point for the effluent from other parts of town. It has a really bad smell all year-round. Nonetheless, these residents are accustomed to living near the banks of the water canal. The majority have a better lifestyle compared to what they had in their native towns. They come to this slum in search of life's dreams, but settle in miserable conditions.

These residents work as laborers, like manual workers, auto mechanics, motorcycle mechanics, sweepers, and sanitary workers. If they are well off, some of these residents have shops in the Jinnah Super Market. For Christians, the community has

a Church where they arrange their community and faith festivals. The Muslims of the community have their mosques. They claim that they live peacefully together and hardly have any fights based on faith.

Drug dealing is part of the slums of Islamabad. Similarly, France Colony is a place which supplies drugs, such as marijuana, heroin, *gutka* (crushed areca nut, tobacco, catechu, paraffin wax, slaked lime, and sweet or savory flavorings), *sheesha* (water pipe with tobacco and flavors), and the glue brand, *Samad Bond* can be found. Particularly, it is one of the places that supplies alcohol in Islamabad because Christians in Pakistan are legally allowed to drink alcohol. They have permits to produce and trade alcohol, that is, where their Muslim neighbors buy alcoholic products. A number of the interview partners reported that they were providing and selling beer, wine, and their varieties to university, colleges, and even school students. They also reported that, due to their business, they also have transgression with some of their customers.

This neighborhood also reported frequent clashes with the police because of the sale of alcohol to Muslims. Even some of the police officials buy alcohol and then blackmail the alcohol providers to supply them free of cost. In the past, some of the alcohol providers resisted and they clashed with the police officials. Since the streets of this neighborhood were quite narrow, on one occasion they threw stones at the police officials, resulting in wounds and scolding. After these incidents, police officials stand guard at the entrance of this urban neighborhood but do not dare to enter into the colony.

7.1.3 *Dhok Matkial*

Dhok Matkial is one of the most violent neighborhoods in Rawalpindi. It is situated on the Islamabad Expressway. It is one of the unplanned but densely populated areas of Rawalpindi. It has a population of over 5000 inhabitants. Dhok Matkial has one of the most diverse populations. A number of families and youngsters came from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (including Hazara), others from Gilgit-Baltistan, Punjab, and Kashmir. Afghan migrants are also part of this neighborhood.

The population of this urban neighborhood is poor and marginalized. It has potholed streets, an open sewerage system, interrupted water supply, limited gas supplies, and some of the houses are without an electricity connection. A river, which was a clean water a decade ago but is now a sewerage stream, flows between the houses, creating bad odors. Moreover, buffalos and other animals can be found there, swimming, grazing, and drinking water from the stream. This stream was full of solid waste and garbage. And yet, many juveniles gather around the stream to play, to rest and to recreate and to practice deviant activities on and around the bank of the river.

Drug addiction and drug trading were reported frequently. It was reported that marijuana, heroin, and *gutka* were used frequently in the community. It was also reported that locally unbranded alcohol, although unfit for human consumption.

This neighborhood was reported to be center for extremists. A number of extremists, hiding in the community, were captured in military and security forces opera-

tions between 2016 and 2017. Security forces declared them to be loyal to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. They were arrested and put into prison. However, it was generally observed that even common people were feared. They were not willing to talk about the research and a number of respondents declined the request to be interviewed.

Consequently, it was difficult for the researcher to conduct extensive fieldwork here. It was also not risk-free, as a number of the families who have closed connection with extremists were residing in this neighborhood. The data of this neighborhood is limited. We were able to document only a couple of incomplete interviews.

7.1.4 Lyari

Lyari is an old town—rather it was once the downtown of Karachi, which is the business hub of Pakistan. It has a population of over 600,000 inhabitants. It was supposed to be one of the richest towns of the country in 1950s, but has since slowly and steadily turned into a risky urban neighborhood. This town has a complex history of rivalry and gang wars. Two formal gangs were reported in the town: People’s Aman Committee (PAC) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) militant wing. Lyari has bloody clashes due to the gang war of these two groups and many subgroups. The Government of Pakistan started a security operation against the gangsters in 2013, but by 2017 it was still ongoing. For the research team, it was not possible to gain access to any of the gangster groups to obtain real insight into the gang wars. Therefore, the research team was unable to collect the data from this neighborhood.

7.2 Description of the Pakistani Sample

The description of the urban neighborhoods of the Pakistani sample reflected that they were risky and disadvantaged. Altogether, we have a sample of 38 interviews from these neighborhoods. However, eight respondents declined the interviews and some of the interviews consisted only of a brief conversation. Therefore, the research team decided to use only 30 interviews. Some of these interviews—those who were nondeviant were open to the idea—were tape recorded with the permission of the respondents; however, deviant interviewees declined permission to record their conversation. We transcribed all the interviews on paper. These interviews were conducted in local languages (Urdu, Punjabi, and Pashto). The names of the respondents are anonymous in order to protect their privacy. Table 7.1 shows the number of interviews per neighborhood.

In addition to being a risky neighborhood and known as a place for deviant adolescents, Bari Imam is close to the workplace of the Pakistani researcher who has developed close connections with the respondents. Therefore, we found more respondents in this neighborhood. The level and intensity of violence were obvious in the risky urban neighborhoods in Bari Imam, France Colony, and Dhok Matkial. One

Table 7.1 Interviews per neighborhood, Pakistan

Neighborhood	Number of interviews
Bari Imam Islamabad	20
France Colony F-7 Islamabad	7
Dhok Matkial	3
Sum Pakistan	30

Table 7.2 Frequency of the codes, Pakistan

Code	Sum
Neighborhood perception	111
Street Wisdom	285
Respect	82
Symbols	185
Toughness/Masculinity	73
Friends	269
Enemy	20
Violence	389
Success	14
Family	127
Technology	26
Police	39
Others	1.797
	3417

can see the violence, drug sales, and frequent fights among juveniles in these urban neighborhoods. These are epicenters of such activities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi districts. The research team offered tea, or wherever it was possible, food of the local variety, to interviewees, but not money, because if we offered money it may have attracted spurious respondents who were simply after the stipend.

The deductive coding of the interviews was done in line with the street code concept. As mentioned in the previous chapter, we used MAXQDA 18 for the data coding and analysis of the data. Table 7.2 shows the frequency of the codes.

7.3 Code of the Street in Pakistan: An Overview of the Neighborhoods

The Pakistani sample, drawn from the three neighborhoods, has a number of similarities and differences with each other in order to compare the street codes at the national level. They are comparable because of the somewhat similar level of neighborhood composition, available infrastructure, the level of poverty, segregation, and

linguistic and ethnic compositions, all of which portrait similarities albeit with slight differences.

7.3.1 Description of the Violence-Related Norms and Neighborhood Perceptions in Bari Imam

As described earlier, local *pothwari* (a dialect of the Punjabi language) and Pashtuns (from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) dominated this neighborhood, although there is also a strong representation of people of Kashmiri and Gilgit origin. There is also an Afghan settlement. Strong social control of the family is practiced by both locals as well as migrants. Therefore, it is the family that controls the behavior of juveniles in this neighborhood. These youngsters claimed that they were obedient to their parents and elders (grandparents). They know that they can gain a bad reputation if they fight with others and that they could have to face punishment from their family, but this does not deter them from engaging in fights. Thus, they are both victims and perpetrators.

Family honor and violation of respect are important reasons to fight with others. This is similar to Anderson's code of the street. However, restoring the family honor, especially if someone asks to date one of the family females or pursues her for sexual reasons, triggers juvenile violence and this is one of the biggest reasons they fight with each other or become "enemy" of each other. A group of juveniles mentioned that they form a "group" in order to save their family honor and respect. They do not allow outsiders to approach their girls and women of the family, which is violation of their norms. If these females were to be insulted, there would be an immediate reaction from the juveniles and mostly this response was violent. Frequent fights to preserve family honor and retaliate against insults of both female and male family members were mentioned.

Notwithstanding these rules, these juveniles also mentioned that they come to neighborhood streets to find a partner, not for marriage, but just for sexual gratification. The Bari Imam Shrine is a gathering place where these juveniles are able to watch girls coming in and out of the city, try to talk to them, tease them, try to befriend them, and exchange phone numbers. But if boys from other areas come there to do the same, they fight with them. They feel that Bari Imam is their territory and no one should come there to challenge their control. Despite being knowing the family rules and being fiercely protective of their own family members' honor, females from other families were "legitimate" targets for dishonoring and victimization. This behavior was reported frequently, and it was one of the prime reasons for fights. Moreover, these juveniles went outside of their neighborhoods to behave similarly there, and, on encountering the local juveniles, fight over and for girls ensue.

Friends were supposed to support each other in fights. Rather, they are obliged to fight. If they do not fight, they were considered as cowardly, disloyal, and a cheater. As penalty for not fighting for friends, such youths were excluded from their

friendship group, indicating future distrust. Moreover, no other group would include the ostracized youth into their friendship group. They used mobile phones and social media to communicate with each other. However, if they are in trouble, they avoid the use of these forms of communication in order to evade the law enforcement agencies. It was mentioned that they used media for communication, watch YouTube for fun, and share the videos through WhatsApp or Facebook and Instagram.

The juveniles were afraid of the police. They did not trust the police and perceived police officials as beings corrupt, through taking bribes, and being involved in criminal activities. Therefore, they do not report any violence to the police. Rather, these juveniles try to settle their problems through the interventions of their respective elders.

The future plans of these respondents were to get an education, become employed, and build their own house. It was also mentioned that getting marriage was a prerequisite for future plans. Some of the juveniles mentioned that they wanted to gain employment and then would abandon their violent behavior. A few of them mentioned that they preferred a criminal future life. Almost all of them wanted to have a prosperous future, with education, employment, money, and a wife.

7.3.2 Description of the Violence-Related Norms and Neighborhood Perception in France Colony F-7 Islamabad

As mentioned earlier, France Colony F-7 Sector Islamabad is mainly a Christian neighborhood, with inhabitants from different regions of the Punjab as well as from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Most of the youngsters were employed but these were manual and low-paid jobs. These juveniles and their families were employed in solid waste collection, waste disposal, cleanliness, and manual jobs. Some of them were unemployed and in search of jobs. They wanted to earn money and wanted to have a better livelihood. Similarly, some of the young were dissatisfied with their manual work or low-paid jobs.

Juveniles were using drugs, including marijuana, heroin, the glue brand, Samad Bond, sniffed petrol, and drank alcohol. Being Christian, these juveniles' families have permission to produce and consume alcohol as mentioned earlier. Juveniles were using this freedom to sell and transport alcohol to Muslims who drink alcohol products. Often fights were reported between the police and the juveniles over the alcohol trade and alcohol provision to police for free. They were against police and law enforcement agencies as they considered them as their enemy. Interestingly, they also reported that these young juveniles fight with each other's customers or beautiful girls who come to buy alcohol products. These juveniles also reported that they fight for respect and family honor.

7.3.3 *Description of the Violence-Related Norms and Neighborhood Perception in Dhok Matkial*

Dhok Matkial has a similar street code to that as reported in Bari Imam. The composition of the population is heterogeneous. Majority of the population is from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir, Afghan migrants. They also have a strong population of Hazaras and Punjabi. This neighborhood was notorious for radicle and extremists. Family honor, respect, and violation of these codes were the strong reasons to fight with each other.

7.4 Reflection About the Pakistani Context

The Pakistani data and the street code reflected that a broader street code exists with its contradictions. The data reflected that there are multiple dimensions to the violence. One of the main reasons for the use of violence is to restore family honor and respect. Those who wanted to manage the conflict and violence have to accept their elders' decisions. The elders of the community have a *laissez-faire* authority to manage the conflict. The data reflected not only the street code but also violence, violence trends, and its linkage with state institutions, like police. In addition, we found violent groups. They do not call themselves as gangs. Rather, they call it a violent group. Nonetheless, their activities were somewhat similar to gangs. They were not hard-core gangs but may be referred to as loose gangs.

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