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Religious Harmony as a Tool of Conflict Resolution and Pluralism in Tharparkar, Sindh

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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the concept of religious harmony as a practical mechanism of conflict resolution and pluralism in Tharparkar, Sindh where the communities of Hindus and Muslims inhabit the same settlements, use the same language, attend the same markets, engage in the same livelihoods and share the same cultural spaces. The approach used was a qualitative case-study orientation, which was achieved by using a structured interview corpus that was created based on a semi-structured guide with 44 statements. Six integrated themes emerged: lived neighbourliness and routine cooperation; shared culture, livelihoods interdependence and mutual support; containment of conflict through trusted mediation and restorative settlement; pluralism through dignity, religious freedom and respect of sacred spaces; peacebuilding agency of women and young people; community resilience and pressures from scarcity, inequality, misinformation and political use of identity. It is the conclusion that harmony is not the lack of conflict, but rather a social skill that is put in place and maintained, to ensure that no conflicts escalate into a communal conflict. A multi-layered response system was supported by elders, religious leaders, teachers, families, women's networks, youth volunteers, civil society, and local institutions for fact verification, rumour interruption, practical settlement, and relationship repair. The study adds an integrated process model involving shared culture and interdependence leading to relational memory, which in turn facilitates early dialogue and mediation, leading to reconciliation, pluralism and social stability.



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1. Introduction

Religious harmony is now being recognized more as a social capacity or capacity to act in ways that maintain difference without turning the practice of religion into a regular way of excluding, intimidating or harming others. It grows out of repeated acts of mutual recognition, shared responsibility and communication which enable individuals to retain their fidelity to different faiths in the context of a shared civic and social space. According to Agung et al. (2024), local wisdom can serve as cultural capital inherited from one generation to the next, which shifts the way coexistence makes sense in the local context through a community-specific moral lexicon. Relational mechanisms are particularly salient in the context of Pakistan, where constitutional principles, powerful religious identities, minority rights issues, and differential state protection intersect, shaping the aspiration as well as the practicality of harmony (Akbar & Yaseen, 2020). Tharparkar is an especially relevant context in which to consider this dilemma, as Hindu and Muslim communities can be found to live in the same settlements, speak the same languages, and have access to the same marketplaces, as well as share environmental risk and systems of livelihood dependence. In this way, harmony can be explored in the district not just as a formal program or a statement of tolerance, but as a daily activity.

Pluralism is not just numerical, as diversity can exist without equality, without contact and without protection from discrimination. A plural social order must provide for individuals and communities to be able to be religiously different and also have access to public institutions, take part in decisions in the local sphere and be recognised as legitimate members of the same political community. Conceptually, covenantal pluralism in Pakistan is a relational order that is based on freedom, equality of

citizenship, and constructive engagement in the face of deep difference and therefore places trust and responsibility in addition to legal rights (Ramsey, 2021). Regional scholarship also warns that diversity can be fragile when social and political systems categorise religious groups differently, and when national dynamics seep into local dynamics (Sealy et al., 2022). Such apprehensions are relevant to Tharparkar where stories of exemplary co-existence can shed light on important peace practices, but can also obscure unequal opportunity, caste and class disadvantage, gendered constraints, or limited institutional voice. Both the quality of interreligious relations and the circumstances where harmony is fragile, partial, and/or reliant on informal protection, must therefore be carefully examined.

One of the most likely mechanisms for religious harmony to serve as a tool to prevent conflict is through everyday contact. Through school, trade, transport, farming, health, neighborhood exchange, and community projects, contact can replace any generalized images of another group with knowledge of persons and families. Reimer et al. (2021) identified that structured intergroup contact can promote social cohesion among adolescents when contact is maintained and facilitated by contextual factors that promote cooperation and limit status competition. Experimental evidence suggests that contact can lead to less affective polarization, if encounters humanize opponents and are not structured as oppositional encounters (Tausch et al., 2024). Contact may be even more important in Tharparkar because interdependence in environmental, livestock, market and mobility aspects often demand practical cooperation between the communities of different religions. The question to be asked is thus not just whether Hindu and Muslim residents interact, but whether such interactions form relational memory that can be drawn upon when some incident, rumour,

or political provocation endangers relationality across the board.

It is also important to consider inequalities concerning minority security and confidence in public institutions as part of the study of harmony. Access to education, employment, relief, representation, and justice becomes more challenging to manage when they are perceived as favoring one group over the other, material grievances can be reframed as identity issues, and when this access is denied to one group, it undermines the credibility of local peace stories. Even though inequalities in assistance and recognition may affect vulnerability and social trust, religious inequalities are not always well integrated into development and humanitarian agendas, as shown by Sabates-Wheeler and Barker (2024). In Pakistan, minority communities' research reports continue to highlight the significance of representation, safeguarding of rights, and equal treatment in institutions, as well as interpersonal goodwill. This distinction is important in the context of Tharparkar since cordial relations in neighbourhoods are not a guarantee for substantive pluralism. Harmony is more sustainable when there are fair practices, easy complaints systems, safe enclaves for the practice of religion and visible participation in decision-making related to the use of common resources and public services.

Conflict resolution is the lens of this article since harmony becomes a social issue when it can assist communities to manage the conflict, clarify disputed facts, achieve a resolution, and repair the relationship. Interreligious dialogue's role in peacebuilding is most evident when it is combined with concrete avenues for its reinterpretation of conflict, repudiation of collective guilt, and mobilisation of moral resources for reconciliation, as demonstrated by Driessen (2025). Although studies have been conducted about tolerance among various communities, local wisdom, and

minority rights in Pakistan, the existing studies lack process-level explanation of how the social relations are mobilized in everyday life, between the initiation of a local dispute and the reestablishment of social cooperation. The present study fills that void by tracing a mechanism sequence between relational memory and de-collectivization, fact verification, trusted mediation, restorative agreement and social reintegration. It also sets interpersonal harmony apart from 'structural pluralism', enabling positive representations of co-existence to be explored as well as unequal opportunity, lack of institutional voice and reliance on informal protection. The analysis was structured in terms of ten interrelated objectives: patterns of harmony; historical, cultural, social and economic foundations; conflict prevention and conflict settlement; formal and informal mechanisms; shared cultural practices; equality and inclusion; role of women and young people; role of leadership; and context-sensitive recommendations. The article adds a new analytical lens to understand the local harmony that can be used as a tool for conflict resolution, when it is not enough, and how the main tenets of the article can be tested by field-based research in Tharparkar.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Religious Harmony, Pluralism and Social Cohesion

Religious harmony is a concept that can be understood as lying between the concepts of tolerance, recognition, cooperation and shared citizenship. Tolerance might mean to be tolerant towards that which one dislikes, while harmony might mean to have relations and norms that enable interaction without the need of the erasure of disagreement. Chia (2022) holds that covenantal pluralism offers a more solid foundation for plural societies, as it entails a freedom of conscience along with obligations to interact, safeguard, and collaborate across religious lines. A

compatible account of multicultural secularism would focus on the ways in which public institutions should be enabling of religious diversity and not necessarily see equal citizenship as the private sphere of religion (Modood & Sealy, 2021). These viewpoints point to the need to evaluate harmony on a variety of fronts: freedom to practice religion, dignity in social interaction, participation in decision-making, access to public goods, and peaceful means of settling disagreements. It is a multi-dimensional approach which stops the concept of peace from being defined by the lack of visible communal violence in Tharparkar and allows us to consider whether rights, voice and reciprocal obligation facilitate everyday peace.

The nexus between minority rights and social cohesion does not necessarily have to be antinomic, and the protection of difference can even serve to boost confidence in a common political system. Choudhary (2021) makes it clear that constitutional protections for religious minority communities should be understood in the context of the social conditions that enable communities to feel like they belong and that they are treated equally. Ferrari et al. (2021) also advocate for an integrated strategy where legal measures, institutional structures, and social norms are all intertwined. This literature is relevant to rural and peripheral situations, where formal institutions might be far away and where people often use interpersonal networks or local leaders to resolve issues. While informal harmony can provide quick, culturally appropriate assistance, it can also place at risk recipient participants depending on the goodwill of influential actors. A strong pluralism system should thus prioritise local mediation, while questioning the fairness of mediation results, whether women and less powerful groups are given a voice and whether community settlements can be linked to enforceable rights in the case of a failure of informal mediation.

2.2 Everyday Interfaith Contact and Lived Coexistence

There is lived coexistence, which is created by repeated encounters, and usually not in an explicitly theological way. The practical grammar of neighbourliness can be developed through sharing transport, goods, school, sickness visits, borrowing equipment and cooperating in emergencies. De Botton et al. (2021) demonstrate that 'solidarity actions' rooted in a religious diversity perspective can elicit moral responses beyond group lines and turn diversity into co-support. Survey data from Germany also suggests that there can be interactions between religiosity and social cohesion via community involvement and prosocial orientations, but that this depends on the type of religious involvement and the social context (Hillenbrand, 2023). These findings suggest a focus on analysis of the activities of residents, how the residents cooperate to the other and how the social space is so that the contact is realized frequently. In Tharparkar, markets, schools, water sources, health centres, livestock trails, agricultural activities and family gatherings can all be places of regular contact that create the familiarity that helps to overcome generalized suspicion.

But harmony does not arise by itself with contact since contact can co-exist with hierarchy, social distance or fear. In Lombok, Budiwanti & Eidhamar's (2024) research reveals that peaceful coexistence and the security of minorities are not the same, with the possibility of security issues present in the society being revealed under political or religious pressure. Khalli et al (2022) recognize the social, cultural, religious and institutional aspects of socio-religious harmony as there is no specific indicator that can explain the lasting harmony. All of these studies call for a focus on the quality of contact: whether participants meet on an equal footing, whether there is more to the interaction than merely business, whether families have reciprocal obligations, and

whether there is an opportunity for disagreement to be expressed safely. The difference matters to Tharparkar, because economic entanglements can dampen the incentives to fight and leave some inequalities unchallenged. Thematic analysis should therefore account for integrative narratives, as well as critical accounts, and view tension not as a lack of harmony but as proof of the effort that is being made to preserve harmony.

2.3 Local Culture, Shared Livelihoods and Sacred Space

A culturally legitimate language of interreligious coexistence is a language of local wisdom, which elicits culturally familiar norms for interreligious living in terms of hospitality, neighbourly duty, restraint and shared belonging. Pajarianto et al. (2022) reported that religious moderation and local wisdom contributed to tolerance by linking with abstract concepts and customary practices to one's community identity. In Sindh, a study on the exchange of text messages, between Sindhi Hindus and Sindhi Muslims, demonstrates the expression of respect, festival greetings and social solidarity through the common language and daily communication (Ali & David, 2021). This is not to say that theological difference is resolved in such communication, it is rather to say that a social field is created where difference can be acknowledged without the relationship coming to an end. The linguistic, cultural, and ecological context of Tharparkar is particularly significant for this perspective because communication in Dhatki and Sindhi, folk practices, shrine spaces, marriage rituals, mourning rituals, and desert life may provide a shared reservoir of belonging. The analytical task is to find out how these practices function in everyday life and if they do or do not maintain their influence when communities are under conditions of scarcity, political mobilization, or external messages of ideology.

Common suffering can create unity by recognizing vulnerability as a shared condition and providing support amongst communities, regardless of religious affiliation. Hamdi et al. (2024) demonstrate that faith-based charitable efforts can foster the establishment of large-scale humanitarian solidarity if their assistance is provided based on need and not communal affiliation. Catalano (2022) offers a view of dialogue as a culture of encounter that extends beyond doctrinal dialogue, and is expressed in listening, hospitality, and collaborative action. These insights expand the understanding of the interfaith practice to include helping to carry a sick person, helping to cover funeral expenses, fixing a water point, guarding a religious gathering, or giving fodder after a drought. The use of sacred space can also be a marker of the level of relational trust as well as the respectful ways that communities act around temples, mosques and shrines, thus indicating the awareness of the vulnerability and dignity of each other's worship. In Tharparkar, shared culture and sacred difference can give insight into how pluralism is lived out through the selective participation of residents (e.g., in the provision of security, welcome, or service).

2.4 Conflict Resolution, Religious Leadership and Restorative Practice

When interreligious dialogue can shift from symbolic exchange to means that will avert escalation, it becomes relevant to conflict resolution. According to Cuciniello (2024), educational and interreligious dialogue can be regarded as a preventive measure that has the potential of reinforcing inclusive citizenship and diminishing the attractiveness of extremist representations. Tahir and Ali (2022) in Pakistan point out mistrust, lack of knowledge, political interests, and lack of institutional support as challenges to interfaith dialogue and highlight the opportunities that can arise from continuous dialogue. Frequently

community conflict starts with a tangible issue, like land or water or debt or insult or political competition or misinformation, and gets more dangerous when it gets framed as one religion's attack against another. Thus, a useful peace mechanism needs to de-collectivize blame, check facts, offer renowned facilitators, and develop a remedy that can restore material interests and social dignity. The status of elders, religious leaders, teachers, family members and local officials are to be assessed based on impartiality, accessibility and follow-up after an agreement.

Moderation of religion can play a role in reconciliation if it decreases the perceived moral illegitimacy of outgroups or their intrinsic threat. Indeed, Zaduqisti et al. (2020) reported that Islamic political moderateness was linked to tolerance and a desire to reconcile, suggesting that religion can be a source of peace and not just a source of division. Multicultural religious education helped Poso to achieve sustainable peace as evidenced by linking learning, community memory and practical interaction among religious groups (Mashuri et al., 2024). From these findings it is suggested that the understanding of conflict resolution is a process that goes beyond the settlement meeting. Public clarification, apology, compensation, shared meals, return visits, school based learning, renewed cooperation can communicate that the relationship is repaired. Close settlements are where restorative practice is especially crucial, as the parties to the conflict keep on meeting each other after the dispute has been resolved. So the durability of harmony is conditional on the transformation of meaning of the event through community procedures; otherwise it becomes an item in collective memory as proof of religious hostility.

2.5 Rights, Education, Women, Youth and Emerging Threats

Reproduction of harmony takes place by way of households, classrooms, religious institutions, media environments and local governance, a fact that makes women and youth not peripheral to peacebuilding. Carland (2022) demonstrates that Muslim women's "social-cohesion work" is often a blend of religious calling, public involvement and common sense bridge-building, and that it is not adequately acknowledged in formal accounts of community leadership. As highlighted by Essomba et al. (2023), young teachers need practical training and supportive policies to be able to engage with religious diversity in ways that go beyond superficial celebration, but rather through meaningful dialogue. Care networks for women can offer early warning, anonymous communication and support within households and young people can practice and build cross-community relationships through schools, sports, volunteering and digital communications. This very digital connectivity can speed up rumours, attacks on labelling and political talking points from outside the district. The relational aspects of pluralism should, therefore, be explored in a contemporary analysis of Tharparkar, focusing on who transmits local traditions of coexistence, who is able to challenge misinformation, the protection of minority rights and whether new communication forms strengthen or weaken relational foundations of pluralism.

2.6 Analytical Synthesis and Research Gap

The examined scholarship postulates religious harmony as relational, cultural, institutional and political, but these are studied as separate components. Contact research highlights that through frequent contact, generalized suspicion may be reduced and covenantal pluralism emphasizes equal citizenship and freedom within deep difference. Contact-based

explanations fail to, on their own, pinpoint the community procedures in use when a real clash over some issue starts to heat up, as Reimer et al. (2021) show. Local wisdom studies show that shared cultural repertoire can facilitate the normalisation of coexistence, but there is still not enough developed relationship between cultural familiarity and specific actions to restore the same. The role of local norms in fostering tolerance is demonstrated by Pajarianto et al. (2022), and the literature on multireligious peacebuilding highlights that participation, voice, and remedies need to be interrogated or tolerance may be undermined by informal power. King and Owen (2020) thus highlight the importance of peacebuilding efforts with local roots, whilst also highlighting the institutional problems. At the center lies the issue of how to link the quotidian of everyday life with the process of conflict containment and how to integrate the process of everyday life into rights, fair procedures and accountable institutions. This study tries to integrate the same in one analytical model; relational memory, de-collectivization of conflict, fact verification, layered mediation, restorative settlement, social reintegration and structural pluralism.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design and Analytical Corpus

The study was taken with a qualitative case-study approach to explore how religious harmony could be helpful in resolving conflict and pluralism in Tharparkar, Sindh. The analytical design was shaped by the approved outline and the semi-structured interview guide prepared for the Hindu and Muslim residents, religious leaders, teachers, community elders, civil society actors, local representatives, women, youth, traders, and livelihood actors. The unit of analysis was the response statement and not the sentence, as each response was a coherent account related to the interview question and research objective. The approach used was

exploratory and interpretive and focused on how mechanisms, meanings, tensions and relationships between themes could be identified, not on parameter estimation at the population level.

Workbooks were provided with a prepared qualitative corpus derived from the interview guide for analysis preparation and methodological demonstration. It did not include audio recordings, verbatim field transcripts, consent records or identifiable information from recruited human participants. The corpus consisted of 30 participant profiles, and 44 responses for each profile, which amounted to 1,320 response units. It was designed to ensure a balance of the religious community (15 Hindu, 15 Muslim cases) and gender (15 women, 15 men). It comprised of seven talukas, rural/urban settlement, five age groups, six education groups, ten community roles and three analytical stances. This architecture allowed for systematic cross-case comparison, but was subject to careful interpretation because the balance was a feature of the construction of the corpus, and the frequencies were not the natural ones that occur in the field.

3.2 Interview Framework and Objective Alignment

The interview guide included the topics of conceptual understandings of harmony, current Hindu–Muslim relations, contact in daily life, historical–cultural root causes, common practices, crisis support, livelihoods, observed cooperation, experiences of conflict, causes of conflict, processes of conflict resolution, leadership in conflict resolution, informal mediation, respect, dialogue, communication, sacred spaces, festivals, pluralism, equality, religious freedom, discrimination, local values, family and education, schools, women, and youth; media, threat, scarcity, political use of identity, resilience, transferability, institutional action, minority protection, and long-term

recommendations. Each question was linked to any of the 10 research objectives. This mapping provided the way to make sure that both the descriptive and explanatory aspects of the study were addressed and that the traceability was maintained between the outline, the instrument, the data structure and the findings reported.

3.3 Thematic Analysis and Cross-Case Comparison

Thematic analysis was carried out in six interdependent steps. The entire corpus was read, so that the recurring concepts and the spectrum of positive, balanced and critical stances became familiar. Then, primary codes were assigned based on the topic addressed by each statement: respectful coexistence, livelihoods interdependence, solidarity in crisis, localized disputes, mediated settlement, trusted leadership, subtle discriminations, women as social connectors, media amplifications, relational resiliences and sustainable pluralism. Secondary codes were noted that provided additional explanations including the sharing of code, family memories, lack of resources, rumours, apology, restitution, security of worship places and equal representation. The interview sequence has been collapsed into six higher-order thematic clusters based on related codes.

The results were compared among the religious groups, male and female, age groups, settlement types, taluka, educational level, community role, and analytical attitude through cross-case analysis. Given that all participant profiles answered all the questions, the coded-reference counts were considered as a measure of the extent of the thematic architecture and analytical coverage, not as evidence that one theme was more prevalent with an unstructured population. The analysis focused on convergence, when the same mechanism was identified in cases in different positions, divergence, when critical profiles were

identified with positive narratives, and complementarity, when a process was described by one group of cases from a different social position. Quotes were chosen for recurring meanings, to maintain contrasts, and to illustrate the relationship between response text and interpretation.

3.4 Analytical Credibility, Reflexivity, and Ethics

In order to ensure the analytical credibility, an audit trail was employed to connect the research objectives, interview statements, primary codes, secondary codes, themes, and participant contexts. Negative-case sensitivity was added by keeping in place the statements which disputed idealized versions of harmony, such as those concerning unequal opportunity, subtle discrimination, limited institutional voice, political manipulation, and caution in speaking about sensitive religious matters. Reflexive interpretation was performed to differentiate between evidence found in the documents and the claims that would be subject to field verification. The analysis was thus directed toward the degree of internal consistency of the data, the credibility of the mechanisms described, and the potential of the framework for future empirical studies.

No inferential statistical techniques were used, due to qualitative data and due to the fact that the distribution of the participants was intentional for balance. Corpus composition, objective alignment and thematic allocation were summarized using descriptive counts. Thematic synthesis was used to develop explanatory relationships, which were then visualized using figures. Characteristics of the participants, coded-reference architecture, mechanism summaries, illustrative statements, threats, and protective factors were reported in tables. Because the corpus was not created with recruited participants, no institutional human subject's approval was required for this exercise of analysis. Informed consent,

confidentiality protocols, secure data management, sensitivity to religious or political risk, and formal ethical approval from appropriate institution would be required for any future field study involving the use of the guide.

4. Results

4.1 Participant Profile and Analytical Corpus

The analytical corpus was composed to provide broad social coverage across the categories identified in the research outline. Thirty participant profiles generated 1,320 question-level response units, with every profile contributing one response to each of the 44 interview statements. Equal representation of Hindu and Muslim profiles ensured that the analysis did not treat one community as a peripheral comparison group, while equal representation of women and men made gendered interpretation possible across the full interview schedule. The seven talukas were represented through five cases each from Mithi and Islamkot and four cases each from Nagarparkar, Chachro,

Diplo, Dahli, and Kaloi. Twenty cases were classified as rural and ten as urban, reflecting the study's interest in village-based coexistence while retaining perspectives connected to town institutions and markets.

Age, education, and community role were also distributed to prevent the thematic synthesis from being tied to a single social position. The age profile included five cases aged 18–24, six aged 25–34, six aged 35–44, five aged 45–54, and eight aged 55 or above. Each of the six education categories contained five profiles, ranging from no formal schooling to master's-level education. Ten role categories were represented by three profiles each: resident, teacher, community elder, religious leader, civil society worker, local representative, student, farmer or livestock keeper, trader, and women's group member. This composition enabled the findings to examine harmony as experienced through household relations, education, religious leadership, governance, commerce, agriculture, and community organization.

Table 1: Participant Profile of the Structured Interview Corpus

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Religious community	Hindu	15	50.0
	Muslim	15	50.0
Gender	Female	15	50.0
	Male	15	50.0
Settlement	Rural	20	66.7
	Urban	10	33.3
Age group	18–24	5	16.7
	25–34	6	20.0
	35–44	6	20.0
	45–54	5	16.7

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Analytical stance	55+	8	26.7
	Strongly positive	12	40.0
	Positive with concerns	12	40.0
	Mixed/critical	6	20.0

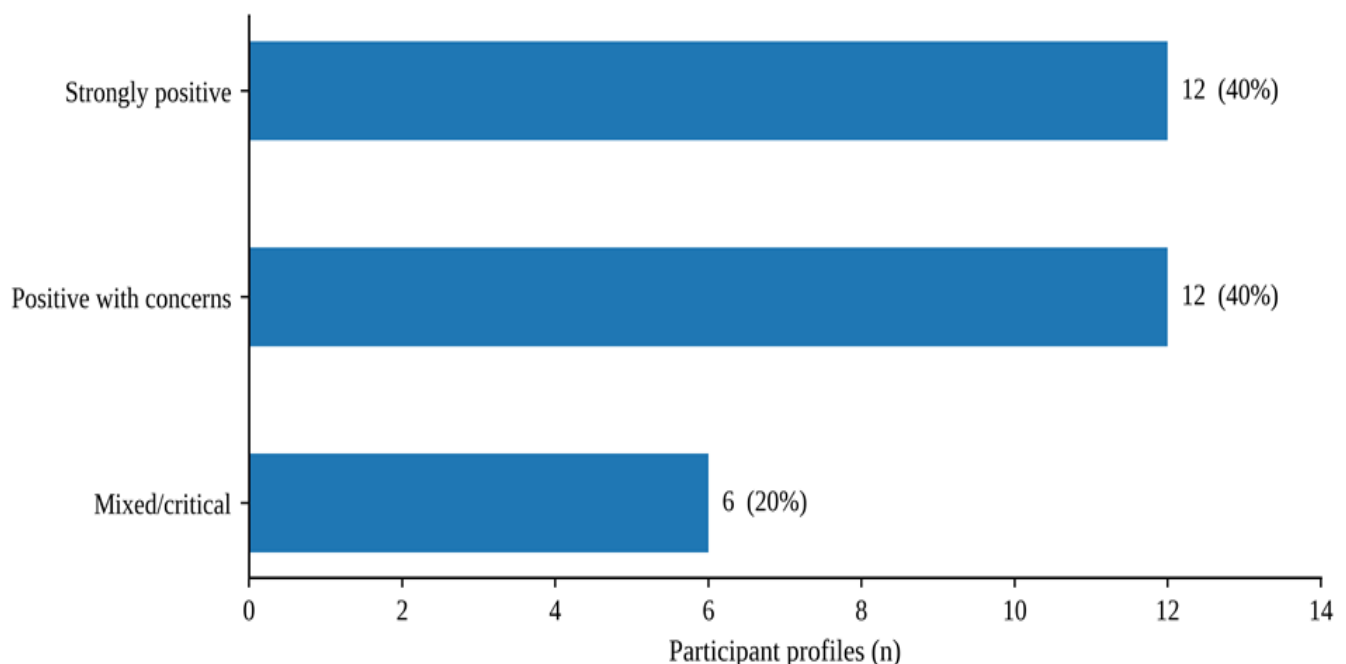
Note. Percentages are based on 30 participant profiles. The distribution reflects the analytical design of the corpus and is not a demographic estimate of Tharparkar.

Table 1 demonstrates that the corpus was structured for comparative breadth rather than proportional representation of the district population. This distinction shaped the interpretation of every subsequent result. Equal religious and gender categories permitted close comparison of mechanisms, yet they did not authorize claims about the actual demographic distribution of Tharparkar. The same caution applied to role and education categories, which were

deliberately even. The value of the profile architecture lay in its ability to test whether a concept such as trust, mediation, or inequality remained coherent when narrated from different positions. Convergence across balanced cases strengthened the internal plausibility of a theme, whereas differences identified conditions that a field study should investigate more closely.

Figure 1: Distribution of Participant Analytical Stances in the Dataset.

Analytical stance assigned in the structured corpus



The analytical-stance distribution offered a further layer of contrast. Twelve profiles were classified as strongly positive, twelve as positive with concerns, and six as mixed or critical. Figure 1 shows that four fifths of the profiles maintained a broadly affirmative account of coexistence, but half of this affirmative group explicitly introduced concerns about inequality, misinformation, institutional weakness, or changing social conditions. The critical profiles did not reject the existence of harmony. Their distinctive contribution was to resist romanticization by emphasizing that personal respect could coexist with unequal access and that local peace could remain vulnerable to outside narratives. The stance variable therefore helped the analysis distinguish celebratory descriptions from conditional and corrective interpretations.

The participant identifiers were used as case labels rather than personal names. Context strings linked each response to religion, taluka, and role, making it possible to trace quotations without implying that the profiles represented identifiable residents. The full-transcript sheet assembled the 44 responses for each profile, while the response-level sheet retained question number, interview statement, primary code, secondary code, theme, subtheme, analytical valence, and objective alignment. This layered data structure supported movement between individual cases and cross-case themes. It also reduced the risk that a quotation would be detached from the question that elicited it or that a theme would be reported without a clear connection to the research objectives.

The corpus was divided into six integrated thematic clusters. Pluralism, equality, and sacred respect accounted for 300 response units; everyday harmony and shared life accounted for 240; conflict prevention and mediation accounted for 240; threats, pressure, and resilience accounted for 210; institutional pathways and transferability accounted for 180; and women, youth, and

generational agency accounted for 150. These values reflected the number of interview statements grouped under each cluster multiplied by 30 profiles. They were therefore used to communicate analytical emphasis rather than spontaneous prevalence. The distribution shows that the interview design devoted substantial attention to both positive mechanisms and the conditions that could weaken them, supporting an interpretation of harmony as an ongoing social achievement.

4.2 Everyday Harmony as Lived Neighbourliness

The first substantive theme described religious harmony as lived neighbourliness rather than doctrinal agreement. Participants repeatedly defined harmony through the ability of Hindu and Muslim residents to practice their own religions while treating one another as legitimate neighbours, coworkers, customers, classmates, and community members. The responses linked dignity to ordinary conduct: greetings, conversation, assistance, respect for boundaries, and the refusal to interpret difference as hostility. P001 summarized this relational understanding by stating that harmony was “a practical relationship based on dignity, trust, and the willingness to protect each other’s rights.” The emphasis on practice shifted the concept away from passive tolerance and toward a reciprocal expectation that communities would act together during routine life and moments of pressure.

Current intercommunity relations were represented as generally cooperative, familiar, and embedded in long settlement histories. A recurring claim was that families knew one another across generations, allowing present interactions to draw upon accumulated knowledge of character, past assistance, and shared experience. P001 explained that disagreements were usually treated as personal or resource-related

matters rather than conflicts between Hindu and Muslim communities, adding that long-standing relationships were the strongest protection against escalation. This distinction was central to the theme. Harmony did not eliminate disputes; it supplied a classification

rule through which residents could interpret a dispute as limited to the persons and issues involved. Preventing the event from becoming a symbolic confrontation between religions was itself a form of conflict resolution.

Table 2: *Major Thematic Architecture of the Interview Corpus*

Major Thematic Cluster	Questions	Response Units	Principal Analytical Focus
Everyday harmony and shared life	1–8	240	Definitions, daily interaction, cooperation and relational memory
Conflict prevention and mediation	9–16	240	Disputes, causes, actors, dialogue and restorative mechanisms
Pluralism, equality and sacred respect	17–26	300	Sacred spaces, festivals, rights, inclusion, discrimination and education
Women, youth and generational agency	27–30, 42	150	Care networks, informal mediation, youth influence and participation
Threats, pressure and resilience	31–37	210	Media, scarcity, politics, structural risks and resilience
Institutional pathways and transferability	38–41, 43–44	180	Leadership action, governance, minority protection and recommendations

Note. *Response-unit counts reflect the number of questions assigned to each cluster multiplied by 30 profiles; they indicate analytical coverage rather than population prevalence.*

Table 2 organizes the six thematic clusters and clarifies how the coded architecture supported the study objectives. Everyday harmony involved definitions, relationship quality, routine contact, cooperation, and examples of shared action. Conflict prevention and mediation focused on disputes, causes, leaders, informal mechanisms, respect, and dialogue. Pluralism extended the analysis to sacred spaces, equality, freedom, discrimination, family

socialization, and education. Thematic integration was important because the interview responses rarely treated these domains as separate. A statement about shared trade could also explain trust, a statement about festival participation could illuminate social recognition, and an account of women's care work could describe both everyday harmony and conflict prevention.

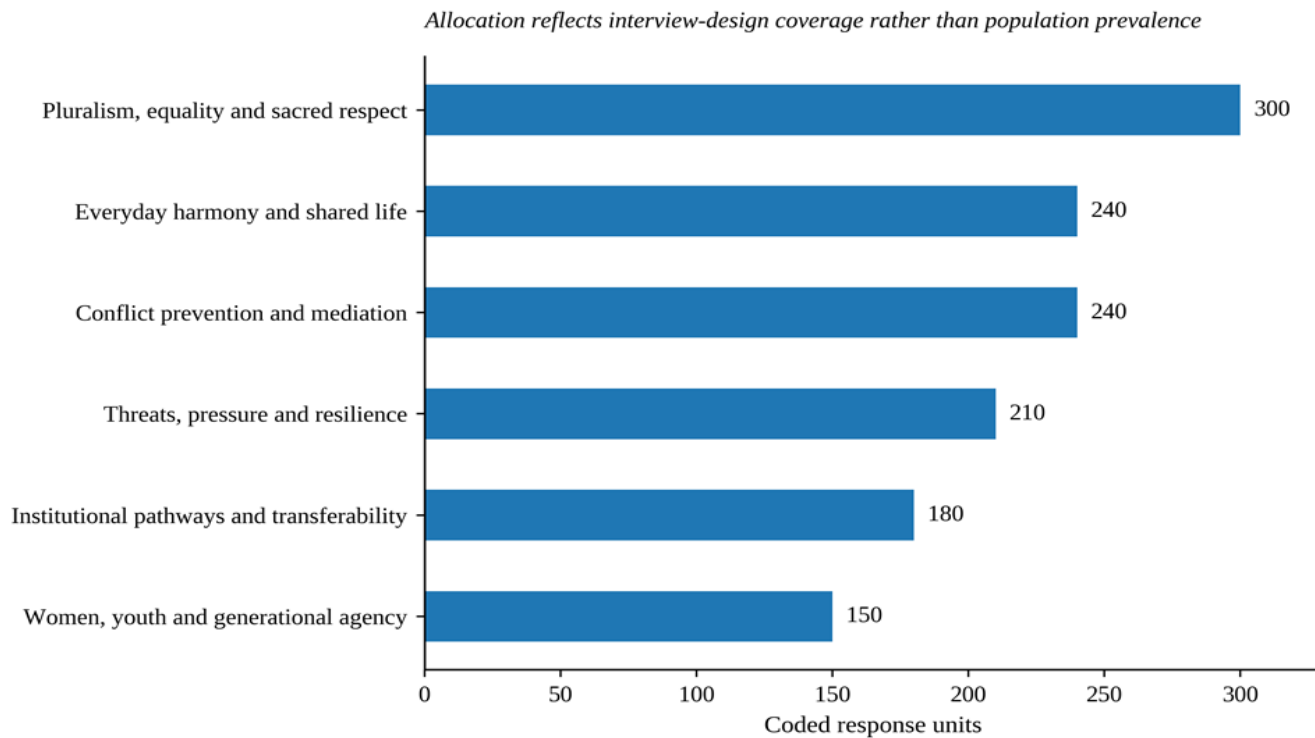
Figure 2. *Coded Response Units Allocated to the Six Integrated Thematic Clusters.*

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of response units for the different major clusters, and it is evident that pluralism was measured by a wider range of questions than any other domain. Pluralism was not more prevalent than day-to-day collaboration, however, as the figure suggests. It demonstrates the instrument's analysis of pluralism by posing ten questions and everyday harmony by posing eight questions. The value of the distribution is that it illustrates the fact that the analysis did not identify harmony with a single positive attitude. It rather examined the concept in terms of equality, sacred-space respect, educational practice, discrimination, resource pressures, political narratives, women's participation and institutional recommendations. This width enabled the final model to accommodate both relational strength and structural limitation.

Routine interactions were mentioned, such as, marketplaces, schools, farms, transport, health facilities, water points, local committees and social functions. The

interaction was through these spaces and by necessity practical; but the responses framed the interaction as more than transactional. The borrowing of equipment, the exchange of labour, information exchange, visits during illness and friendships at school created familiarity which rendered generalized stereotypes less credible. The fact that these encounters were everyday did not require analytical significance, as participants did not rely on formal interfaith programs to explain coexistence. Peace was thought of as a characteristic of social relations that periodically occur. Formal dialogue continued to be useful, but it was recognized that these dialogues would be effective insofar as they are built on the basis of normal cooperation.

Shared identity proved to be layered rather than singular, as the corpus revealed. While religious affiliation was still evident, common language, locality, desert life, livelihood exposure and village belonging were cited as an overlapping basis of connection. These identities were not substitutes for Hinduism

or Muslim identity, but were ways of balancing the way all interactions were religionized. When it came to thinking of reasons for people to cooperate, participants often employed the terms neighbour, family, village, community, market, and local tradition. Thematic comparison revealed that both religious communities tapped into this multiple system of identity. Harmony was not necessarily interpreted as assimilation; no consistent pattern emerged to indicate this. It was rather offered as a way of maintaining religious difference in the broader context of local identity.

Cooperation stories provided illustrative content to the theme. These included joint repair of water points, collective transport to medical emergencies, contribution to treatment costs, help following house fires, distribution of food and bedding and labour for reconstruction. These examples had three characteristics in common. They were a response to a tangible need, they formed interreligious networks, and they established a memory that can then help to build trust. P001 provided an example of a jointly repaired water point as an illustration of how the minimum of resources along with mixed committees can provide peace infrastructure. It was not only the present benefit that made these events important. Residents recalled who helped during vulnerability, and that could make a difference in the future to dispel the image of the other community as being one threat.

This good report was still qualified. Mixed and critical profiles stated the level of co-existence differed from one locality to another, as well as depending on the economic situation and the credibility of leaders. Social segregation limited opportunities to gain personal knowledge, and unequal access to services could reinforce the notion that all residents were not held in equal regard. Some respondents were happy to talk about customs and practical differences but were not happy to

speak about theological and/or political issues. This caution did not necessarily signify intolerance, but rather awareness that trust, like other things, was situational, and words could be shared outside the initial exchange. The conclusion indicates that the most effective way to live in harmony was through repeated contact, trusted communication, and fair practical arrangements supporting each other.

4.3 Shared Culture, Livelihoods and Mutual Support

The second theme addressed the interdependence between culture and livelihoods, providing harmony with a lasting social basis. Common elements of shared language, folk music, local dress, hospitality, wedding customs, condolence visits, seasonal gatherings, and respect for shrines were mentioned. There was a sharp distinction between cultural participation and religious conversion or forced ritual participation among the respondents. People in one community may give sweets to people in another, go to the social part of another community's celebration, help organize it, or send greetings without crossing religious lines. This separation enabled participation to be compatible with religious integrity. Harmony was best where communities could see the importance of another communities' event without feeling compelled to efface the difference.

Language emerged as one of the most salient connectors. Sindhi and Dhatki communication enabled neighbours to exchange jokes, stories, practical details, and local memories, without the necessity of developing an interfaith vocabulary. The corpus indicated that the religious identity was part of a familiar cultural world, which was conducive to a decrease in social distance. This was complemented by folk traditions and local poetry, which shared images of desert life, hardship, hospitality, and moral responsibility, accessible across

communities. Participants spoke of this cultural overlap as evidence that religion was not the sole basis for determining membership and was one important aspect

of identity. Analytical implication was that pluralism in Tharparkar could be enhanced by the existing cultural resources which were recognized by the residents.

Table 3: *Cultural, Economic and Relational Mechanisms Supporting Harmony*

Mechanism	How it supported harmony	Illustrative evidence in the corpus	Boundary condition
Shared language and culture	Created familiarity and a common repertoire of belonging	Dhatki/Sindhi interaction, folk music, weddings, condolence visits and hospitality	Cultural similarity did not remove religious difference
Livelihood interdependence	Raised the social and economic cost of communal rupture	Trade, farming, livestock routes, transport, labour and water information	Scarcity and unequal control could produce resentment
Crisis solidarity	Converted neighbourliness into remembered moral obligation	Medical transport, treatment funds, fodder, fire relief and reconstruction labour	Support based only on personal ties could remain uneven
Festival and family participation	Renewed contact and recognized the significance of another community's occasion	Greetings, food exchange, social visits and logistical support	Participation needed to remain voluntary and respectful
Sacred-space respect	Affirmed the public legitimacy and security of each community	Route management, water, cleanliness, vehicle protection and condemnation of damage	Protection needed to be symmetrical and institutionally supported

Note. *Mechanisms were synthesized across questions on shared practices, livelihoods, mutual assistance, festivals and sacred-space respect.*

The relationship between the cultural and economic mechanisms and illustrative evidence is presented in Table 3. The mechanisms were complementary. Structured communication by common language eased communication; frequent communication encouraged trust; trust enabled economic exchange; and exchange of the good made a breakup of the community more difficult and expensive to achieve. Social interaction was re-established through festival and family involvement, and through crisis support that the relationship with it

could withstand vulnerability. The table also shows a required boundary condition: participation was peace-supporting when it was voluntary, respectful, and was attuned to religious boundaries. Pressure to cross ritual boundaries could transform a bridge-building practice into a source of discomfort.

Interdependence of livelihoods was observed in the areas of trade, agriculture, livestock, vehicles, casual labour, credit, and water. Participants said that regular exchange incentivized reputation within the entire community. Those traders relied on

customers and suppliers from both religions and farmers and livestock keepers required information on routes, fodder, water, weather timing, and availability of labour. P008 explained that “trade, farming, livestock care, transport and availability of water make communities economically dependent on each other” and that “livestock routes, fodder and water timing are particularly significant in the livelihood dimension”. Economic relations were therefore a pragmatic peace interest as religious conflict would disrupt markets and resource arrangements on which several households relied.

Economics did not appear “harmonious” in the corpus. Water scarcity can exacerbate competition, especially when residents felt water, employment, relief, credit, or public services were being unfairly allocated. Economic relations facilitated peace, provided they were governed by clear rules, and where there was an expectation of exchange. They were exposed when a strong entity was able to control resources and not be held accountable. Having this qualification is crucial to distinguish cooperation for independence from compliance for dependency. A field study should consequently seek to identify who makes water scheduling decisions, who controls access to the market, who is granted relief and whether there is a risk of social sanctions against a minority household that challenges water scheduling decisions.

Shared life was most evident morally in mutual support when someone was sick, when there was a funeral or marriage, in times of drought, when livestock were lost, or in a household emergency. Contributions included transport, food, labour, money, bedding, blood donation and emotional support. This help took the form of neighbourhood and family networks and did not necessarily come from a formal interfaith body. The answer pattern indicated that an urgent situation momentarily changed the social setting with need being more salient

than religious affiliation. The help was symbolic, and happened at times of greatest vulnerability. A neighbour who made arrangements for transport to hospital, or helped rebuild a damaged house, entered the family moral memory.

Sacred areas were considered as religious places and as trials of the respect of the citizen. Respondents reported on avoiding disruptive conduct at mosques, temples, and shrines; providing assistance with cleanliness or routes at large gatherings; paying attention to parked vehicles; providing water; guiding visitors; and standing against harming religious property. These activities tended to be non-ritualistic supportive activities. They expressed concern for the safety of the other community's worship. Respect for sacred space also provided a tangible gauge of the extent of local harmony beyond private friendship. Whereby residents preserved a worship place or helped a religious assembly, they were either implicitly or explicitly saying that the other community was publicly legitimate.

Thematic synthesis found culture, livelihoods, supports, and respect of sacred space interwoven with each other, in a network of reciprocal expectations. Each mechanism provided a form of evidence: culture provided familiarity, livelihoods provided mutual dependence, support provided moral obligation, and sacred respect provided recognition. These mechanisms combined made coexisting a relational system able to absorb disagreement. The weakness also showed the cracks. Cultural narratives may be glorified, livelihood relationships may be abusive, favors may be accorded on the basis of personal ties, and sacred respect may be inconsistently applied. Thus, for sustainable harmony, there needed to be not only the retention of local practices, but also institutional protection that minimized reliance on individual goodwill.

4.4 Conflict Prevention, Mediation and Restorative Settlement

The third theme addressed the core research question by showing how harmony was connected to conflict resolution. Respondents described minor disputes involving land boundaries, water turns, debts, political support, public space, teasing, offensive comments, and rumours. Serious communal violence was not normalized within the corpus. The more common danger was interpretive escalation: an ordinary dispute could be presented as proof that one religious community had attacked or disrespected the other. Conflict prevention therefore began with classification. Elders and trusted residents attempted to define the issue as personal, material, or informational before religious identity became the organizing frame.

The main conflict drivers were rarely described as purely theological. Resource competition, personal rivalry, unequal access, political alignment, disrespectful language, and misinformation appeared more consistently. Religion entered the conflict when actors used communal labels to widen support, protect status, or intensify moral outrage. This finding supports a mechanism-based interpretation in which identity amplifies a dispute that originated elsewhere. The implication is not that religion is irrelevant, because sacred identity can make perceived offence more emotionally powerful. The implication is that effective resolution must identify the original grievance and prevent strategic or accidental reclassification of the event as collective religious hostility.

Table 4. *Conflict Drivers, Mediating Actors and Restorative Outcomes*

Conflict driver	Escalation risk	Principal mediating actors	Restorative outcome
Water, land or resource dispute	Material grievance interpreted through religious identity	Elders, resource committee, local representative	Adjusted schedule, boundary agreement, compensation or monitored arrangement
Offensive comment or teasing	Personal insult generalized to the wider community	Families, elders, teachers, religious leaders	Apology, clarification and commitment against repetition
Rumour or edited digital content	Rapid collective blame and public mobilization	Youth volunteers, teachers, leaders, civil society	Fact verification, withdrawal, public correction and follow-up
Political rivalry	Religious labels used to recruit support	Neutral elders, leaders and local officials	Issue-based dialogue and rejection of communal framing
Unequal service or opportunity	Loss of confidence in impartial institutions	Local government, representatives and mixed committees	Transparent decision, complaint review and monitoring

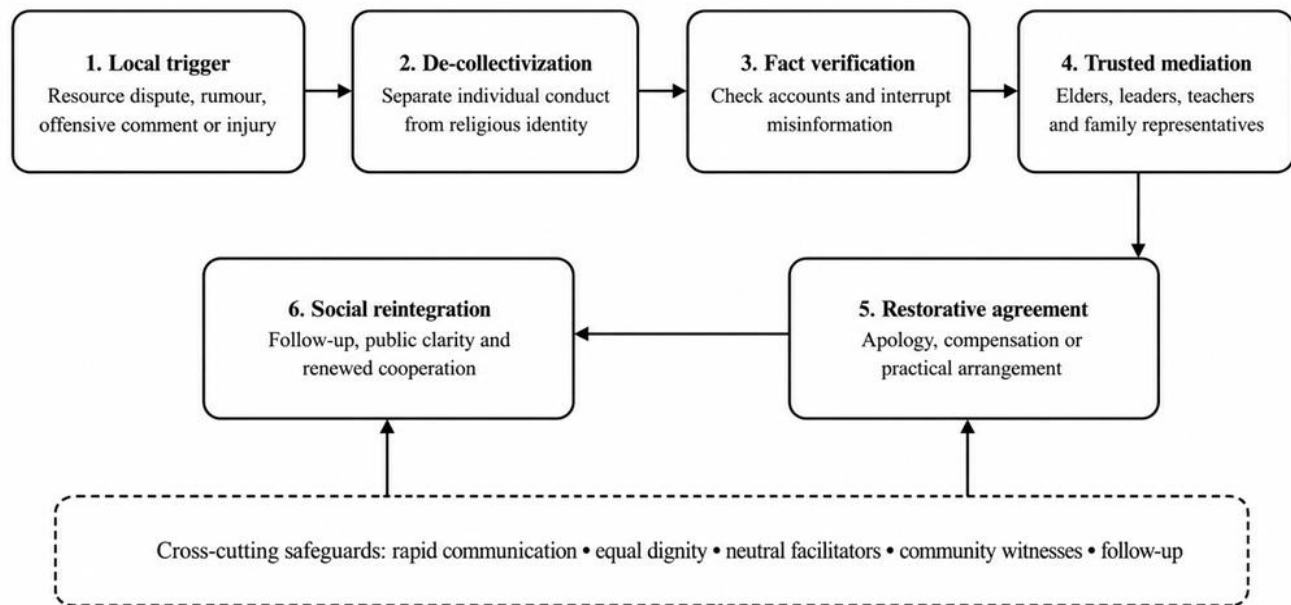
Note. *The table reports recurrent process patterns contained in the structured responses and should be validated through field interviews and observation.*

Table 4 provides an overview of the most common conflict triggers, mediators and restorative responses. The table shows that there was a reoccurrence of the same local institutions at various stages. Families would try and discuss it with each other first as much as possible before involving elders. Religious leaders gave moral framing and public reassurance, teachers, representatives or officials helped to verify facts and deal with practical matters. Multiple actors helped mitigate reliance on one authority and enabled the response to be tailored to the nature of the conflict. A resource disagreement called for technical or administrative intervention, while for the offensive message, there was a need for clarification, withdrawal, and the public reassurance. The most credible mediators

were described as persons trusted by both communities, not necessarily formally.

Separate listening was the typical first step in the resolution process. Mediators listened to both sides' story, determined the specific issue, and determined if there were rumours. When the wind calmed down, a joint meeting was held. These agreements may be in the form of apology, compensation, restitution, revised resource plan, removing inflammatory material, or verbal/written promise. The settlement was socialised by community witnesses. This sequence was necessary to preserve dignity, as it did not require a participant to be exposed to immediate public confrontation, and also because the final remedy was for both material and relational harm. So, as a result, informal procedures were restorative, not just punitive.

Figure 3: *Thematic Conflict-resolution Pathway Derived from the Interview Corpus.*



The conflict-resolution pathway which was generated from the thematic synthesis is provided in figure 3. De-collectivisation, fact verification, trusted mediation, restorative agreement and social reintegration were the steps taken following a local trigger. The

pathway helps explain the reason harmony was identified as a means, not just an end. By virtue of its ongoing relationships, the community members were able to break the escalation cycle; in addition, the relationships helped to resolve the conflict. The process

was circular, the trust led to mediation and the mediation led to a fair settlement that furthered the trust in future situations. The cross-cutting safeguards were rapid communication, equal dignity, neutral facilitators, community witnesses and follow-up. In the absence of any safeguard, the process was exposed to the danger of rumour or perceived bias again.

Religious leaders played their part by publicly dissuading collective blame and presenting neighbour protection as a moral duty. They were most helpful when used symmetrically. Inter-partisan religious leadership was identified as a potential exacerbator of polarization, whilst inter-community leaders of trust were seen to have the potential to defuse passions and open up room for concrete negotiations. Community elders provided relational knowledge, as they knew family histories, past conflicts, and community norms. Information verification and safe dialogue were linked to teachers and civil society workers, particularly if younger people were involved. Local representatives or officials were more significant if the dispute was about services, property, or legal responsibility.

There was a tendency for women to be involved in mediation before a public meeting. They relayed messages to the households, soothed younger relatives, recognized rumors and set up assistance for households affected. This work took the edge off the conflict and maintained communications when male relationships were difficult because of politics or public honour. Women's role is informal which is both strength and weakness. It provided them with household level information, and it enabled a quiet intervention; however, it did not guarantee inclusion in any discussion regarding compensation, public apology, or institutional change. As a result, they advocated for formal recognition of women's peace work but not its exclusion of the

trusted household networks that facilitated it.

Follow up differentiated between 'temporary settlement' and 'reconciliation'. Participants reported subsequent visits, meals shared, additional market meeting and clarification, and witnessing whether or not pledges were fulfilled. These practices brought some predictability and marked that it should not be pushed into future relationships. A public correction was particularly significant when misinformation was being spread beyond the initial actors. If not corrected, the factual dispute could be resolved and the communal narrative could continue. The theme thus recognized communication following agreement as a unique peacebuilding phase. Reconciliation was not just about the cessation of disagreement, but also the restoration of the social sense of the disagreement.

The corpus depicted informal mediation as simple, legitimate, and quick. It also presented risks. The powerful families might dominate the course of proceedings, women or younger family members might be unable to voice their opinions, minority might feel compelled to agree to a settlement to avoid being isolated and a local agreement might not have legal protections. Respondents consequently supported links between community mechanisms and fair public institutions. The most defensible form of mediation was informal mediation, where there was voluntary participation, facts were verified, mediators were accepted by both parties, remedies were not too severe, and serious offences were still subject to law. Harmony was not a condition for silence or impunity; it was an environment for relating where disagreement could be dealt with without a collective hostility.

4.5 Pluralism, Equality and Respect for Sacred Space

This theme distinguished pluralism from simple coexistence. Respondents defined

pluralism as the ability of different religious communities to practice their faith, retain distinct identities, participate in shared decisions, and receive equal dignity. The response pattern repeatedly rejected forced sameness. People could cooperate while maintaining religious boundaries, and public belonging did not require ritual participation in another faith. This definition made pluralism relational and institutional at the same time. It involved respect in daily interaction, freedom in religious practice, and meaningful access to community and public life.

Perceptions of equality were more qualified than descriptions of neighbourhood

harmony. Many profiles stated that residents were treated respectfully in mixed settlements, yet opportunities were not always equal in employment, education, political influence, services, or representation. P004 observed that “most people are treated with dignity in daily interaction,” then added that unequal economic status and representation affected full participation. The same response warned that the positive image of the district should not prevent discussion of unequal power and access. This tension was one of the most analytically important findings because it showed that interpersonal tolerance could coexist with structural disadvantage.

Table 5: *Dimensions of Pluralism and their Safeguards*

Pluralism dimension	Positive evidence	Qualification or risk	Required safeguard
Religious freedom	Visible worship and participation in community life	Caution during wider periods of tension	Consistent security and rights protection
Social dignity	Respectful neighbourhood interaction and mutual assistance	Derogatory remarks and subtle exclusion	Norm enforcement and accessible reporting
Institutional equality	Shared schools, markets and public spaces	Unequal employment, services or representation	Transparent procedures and inclusive decision-making
Sacred-space recognition	Practical assistance and protection during gatherings	Uneven maintenance or selective response	Equal standards for all worship places
Communicative inclusion	Open discussion within trusted relationships	Fear of misquotation or political misuse	Facilitated and confidential dialogue spaces

Note. *Thematic evidence distinguished interpersonal respect from structural equality and institutional protection.*

The dimensions of pluralism found in the corpus have been divided in Table 5. Religious freedom was a concept of open worship and community involvement. Social dignity meant respect in the treatment and

prohibition of derogatory language. Institutional equality was about services, employment, representation, protection and complaint mechanisms. Sacred-space recognition was related to the safety and

legitimacy of temples, mosques, shrines and religious meetings. Communicative inclusion was a sense of being able to speak about difference, raise a grievance without fear. As the table indicates, one measure of “harmony” would not be enough. A locality can be strong with regards to neighbourly respect and weak in terms of representation & institutional accountability.

Religious freedom remained, in general, visible and accepted, especially in communities where the relationship had long been established, with the local community offering protection. Participants mentioned open worship, festivals, processions and involvement in markets and schools. Caution was raised during times of broader national tension or a lack of faith in authorities. This trend indicated that one aspect of freedom involved the nature of the relationships in the local context. This relational protection was beneficial, but might not have been equitable. A rights-based system should not rely on personal relationships for security or inclusion of minority families.

Discrimination themes emphasized both subtle and intersectional discrimination and not simply communal hostility. These covered derogatory comments, differential treatment in employment, and attributing lower influence to minority members, and failure to complain about unfairness. Some answers referred to the interaction of religion with caste, class, gender, remoteness and education. This qualification made sure all inequalities could not be equated with religious differences, but also that identities could be reinforcing. The analytical conclusion was that the scope of minority protection should not be restricted to the security of religious gatherings, but be responsive to overlapping disadvantage.

Pluralist recognition in practical terms was manifest as respect for sacred space. Provision of routes, water, cleanliness, security and parked vehicles, and guidance

for visitors, signaled that the other community's worship was worthy of legitimate public presence. The respondents also appreciated public condemnation of damage or insult to any religious place. The most compelling was those that were mutual – that the same protective standard that applied to temples should also be applied to mosques and shrines. This symmetry brought the respect for sacred space from courtesy into becoming a local principle of equal belonging. But it would be indicative of the lesser security of the religious presence of one community if maintenance were uneven or selective enforcement occurred.

Communication of religious difference was reported as both being open in the context of intimate relationships and careful in broader and politicized contexts. There was a good level of ease in talking about customs and festival arrangements and practical boundaries, but theological controversy and national politics may cause concern about misinterpretation. Groups that were thought to require separate spaces for free speech were women and younger participants. Safe communication thus entailed more than a permission to talk. It relied on facilitation, confidentiality, a respectful use of language and an understanding that if something was said, it wouldn't be repeated without context. This discovery tied pluralism to communication governance, particularly in a society where private statements may just become public.

A two-layered conception of harmony was upheld by the theme. The relational level included friendship, mutual assistance, respect and cooperative memory. The structural level contained equal protection, fair service, representation, complaint mechanisms and accountable decisions. The corpus indicated that there was a relatively high level of relational harmony within its own logic of construction and structural pluralism was still partially achieved and less frequent determined qualified. Both levels

were necessary for sustainable resolution of conflict. Relationships would be able to stop any escalation from happening immediately, and fair institutions would decrease the grievances and power imbalance that would increase the likelihood of escalation.

4.6 Women, Youth and Generational Continuity

The fifth theme identified women as central producers of interreligious connection. Their roles were described through visits, food exchange, childcare, health support, weddings, condolence practices, and assistance during family crisis. These activities created dense networks across households and often continued when public political disagreements strained relationships among men. Women's peace contribution was therefore embedded in care and social reproduction. It maintained

channels of communication that formal institutions might not see but could rely upon during tension.

Women also appeared as early-warning actors. They often learned about a disagreement, insulting comment, household concern, or circulating rumour before it entered a village meeting. P020 stated that women mediated through family dialogue, calming younger relatives, carrying messages, and organizing support, while focusing on relationship restoration rather than public blame. The response added that women knew about tension early because they remained connected through household and care networks. This combination of information access and relational credibility made women's networks a preventive resource rather than only a source of post-conflict support.

Table 6: *Women's and Young People's Roles in Peacebuilding*

Actor group	Peacebuilding roles	Main constraints	Institutional pathway
Women	Care networks, household communication, calming relatives, crisis support and informal mediation	Limited mobility, low public visibility and exclusion from formal settlements	Reserved committee places, mediation training and protected consultation
Young people	School contact, sports, volunteering, digital campaigns and rumour correction	Polarizing content, political recruitment and weak media literacy	Youth peace teams, digital verification training and service projects
Teachers	Equal treatment, mixed-group learning, local history and intervention against insults	Dependence on individual commitment and limited materials	Structured peace, rights and media-literacy curriculum
Women's and youth organizations	Cross-community projects and early-warning links	Symbolic inclusion without decision power	Budgets, reporting channels and direct connection to local government

Note. *Roles were identified across questions on women, youth, education, mediation and inclusive peace structures.*

The roles and constraints that have been associated with women and young people are

summarised in Table 6. Women's participation was provided by care networks,

informal mediation, crisis assistance, and household communication, but their authority was restricted due to mobility constraints and the lack of formal committees. Youth participated via friendships in schools, sports, volunteering, Internet campaigns and quick communication, and the access to polarizing information entailed a risk. Both were often included in symbolic activities and decisions without necessarily having the right to influence the latter. The results reflect a meaningful participation that is based on voice, resources, training and institutional connection, and not merely presence.

Youth were depicted as a double-edged sword. School and college contact could normalize diversity and sports, cultural activities, community service established common goals. Youth volunteers would be able to quickly debunk rumours, create positive digital content and help in case of emergency. The same connectivity exposed them to national or transnational narratives which did not reflect local relationships. Respondents were concerned that people were more likely to be influenced by the same message repeated online than by their own experiences and that messages that included emotional pictures or collective names were more likely to influence them. Youth peacebuilding thus needed digital literacy and meeting people from other faiths.

Not the same generational comparison was consistent. Recalling of mutual dependence and long family relationships were connected with older residents, while some younger participants were described as more educated and inclusive. Age alone did not predict tolerance. The direction of change was determined by migration, schooling, internet use, employment and quality of family socialization. Transmission was the major issue. Local expressions of protection, cooperation and fair settlement would not remain relevant if they were not shared with

the younger generations and narrated and documented.

Teachers and schools were the ones who were in between the generations. Peace-supporting practices identified were: mixed group work, equal treatment in classrooms, local history, debate, art, community service, and interventions against insulting language. A few responses pointed to the informal nature of peace education and its reliance on the commitment of teachers. A more systematic one would be to incorporate citizenship, rights, diversity, conflict-resolution skills and media literacy, but not view religious communities as fixed, opposed blocs. Then education might enhance not just interpersonal understanding, but also the capacity to assess polarizing claims.

There were repeated calls for formal inclusion. Those responding suggested that women and young people should be included in village peace committees, in mediation training, receiving small grants for joint projects, having safe spaces for consultation, sports and service projects, and direct connections with the local government. Private consultations were seen to be helpful if the age or gender hierarchy prevented the free expression of opinion, although it was important that the outcome of such consultations became public decisions. Inclusion without influence would recreate the same marginalisation that the programme set out to tackle. Participation was therefore approached as a redistribution of voice and capacity, and the theme had this as its focus.

Women's and youth's functions linked the private, public and digital aspects of harmony. Households were a common working area for women, schools and online networks for young people and both engaged with community groups. Together they may establish an early-warning system for issues that might first manifest inside households, in classrooms, or as rumours on social media.

The evidence in the corpus revealed that these actors needed to be shielded from backlash and that they needed credible leaders to respond. Informal knowledge was linked to an institution that could act: Agency.

4.7 Threats, Information Pressure and Community Resilience

The sixth theme examined pressures that could weaken coexistence. Participants identified poverty, unemployment, water scarcity, drought, migration, unequal services, political manipulation, discrimination, weakening contact, and external ideological influence. These pressures were not treated as independent variables. Scarcity could intensify competition, competition could produce grievances, political actors could interpret grievances through religious identity, and

social media could circulate that interpretation rapidly. The threat pathway therefore involved interaction between material conditions and meaning-making.

Resource scarcity had an ambivalent effect. Shared hardship could encourage cooperation because all residents depended on information, relief, transport, water, or livestock arrangements. Prolonged scarcity could also expose unequal power and produce competition over aid, jobs, water turns, and migration opportunities. Respondents repeatedly emphasized fair distribution and transparent procedures. A mixed relief committee or publicly documented allocation could prevent residents from viewing assistance as religiously biased. Resource governance was therefore part of peacebuilding rather than a separate technical issue.

Table 7: *Threats to Religious Harmony and Protective Responses*

Threat	How it could weaken harmony	Protective response identified in the corpus
Water scarcity, drought and unemployment	Increased competition and perceptions of biased distribution	Mixed allocation committees, transparent criteria and public records
Misinformation and viral content	Converted private disputes into public communal narratives	Rapid verification, trusted community pages and public correction
Political instrumentalization	Used religious identity to widen personal or service disputes	Issue-based dialogue and consistent rejection of collective blame
Subtle discrimination	Eroded confidence while remaining difficult to report	Confidential complaints, monitoring, equal protection and representation
Weakening intergenerational transmission	Reduced the authority of local memories of cooperation	Documentation, school learning and intergenerational dialogue
Social separation and migration	Reduced personal knowledge and routine cross-community contact	Joint service, cultural and livelihood initiatives

Note. *Threats were interpreted as interacting material, political, social and informational pressures rather than isolated causes.*

Table 7 provides the connection between the major threat and suggested protective response in the corpus. Scarcity was combined with transparency of allocation and mixed committees. Misinformation was coupled with swift verification and credible communication. The political instrumentalization went hand in hand with public rejection of collective blame and issue-oriented local decision making. Subtle discrimination was coupled with confidential complaints, monitoring, and equal protection. Weak intergenerational transmission was combined with education and documentation of coexistence locally. From the table it can be seen that resilience was not the form of cultural optimism, but organized capacity.

Particular attention was made of social media since it changed the narrative of conflict in terms of its speed, scale and persistence. Some private disagreement could be recorded, edited, sent, and understood by an audience not in the local context. P030 said that social media fasten the pace of rumours and make private arguments public while trusted community pages and youth volunteers could assist in confirming rumours. The answer also reiterated that experiential content beats online content. This was a formulation of the basic information challenge: Residents had to find ways that they could communicate at the speed of the digital, but with the trust of the face to face.

Political instrumentalization was defined as an effort to seek to redefine service, representation or rivalry disputes by means of religious identity. Local communities were not depicted as passive receivers of such narratives by participants. Much that was argued flew in the face of common sense and was discounted by many residents' deep-seated knowledge of neighbours. It was less effective when there was social isolation or when trusted leaders were silent. It was therefore important that religious and community leaders made public statements,

but these had to be accompanied by factual clarification and fair action. Moral appeals, with no practical response, may seem symbolic.

Relational depth, speed of response and institutional fairness were the foundations of community resilience. Residents' doubts were fueled by long family histories and recollections of cooperation. The event was prevented from being shaped by rumour because of rapid contact, which enabled leaders to shape the event. Fair institutions led to greater trust that grievances could be addressed without communal mobilization. Any weakness in one of these resulted in a less resilient response. Multiple unaddressed discrimination may lead to a declining in rates of relational memory and a tainted settlement may lead to less credibility in subsequent mediations.

One of the critical profiles highlighted that harmony should not be idealized. The reputation of coexistence in Tharparkar might become a reason to not talk about unequal power, prejudice, or failure of institutions. One open reflection said that there was no excuse for silence over inequality because of strong traditions of coexistence. This caution reinforced the principal interpretation. Harmony was not offered as an enduring cultural asset. It was a sustained capacity that involved self-critique, fair resource governance, responsible leadership and a way to for individuals with less power to voice concerns safely.

An early-warning framework was supported by the threat analysis. Signs ranged from abrupt shifts in speech patterns, to the spread of unconfirmed information through the media, to disagreement about limited resources, to differential service provision, to restricting attendance at local gatherings, to threats to places of worship, to avoiding normal communication. Protective action comprised of verification, dialogue, mixed committees, targeted support, public

clarification, and follow-up. The framework was also similar to the general overall model in that it looked at prevention as the activation of existing relationships and institutions before the conflict took a turn of communal identity. Field research can be used to determine which indicators are most visible or which actors can best react.

4.8 Institutional Pathways and an Integrated Explanatory Model

The final results theme translated the analysis into institutional pathways. Respondents recommended regular contact among religious leaders, mixed mediation committees, school-based peace and media-literacy activities, civil-society documentation of discrimination, fair service delivery, secure worship places, confidential complaint channels, and representation of minority communities, women, and young people. These recommendations extended

beyond ceremonial interfaith events. The desired institutions were expected to solve practical problems, respond to rumours, and demonstrate impartiality through visible procedures.

Religious leaders were expected to condemn hate speech consistently, visit affected communities, maintain contact across faiths, and connect moral teaching to neighbour protection. Their credibility depended on applying the same standard regardless of which community was accused. Community elders were valued for local knowledge and relational authority, but mixed membership was necessary to reduce perceptions of bias. Teachers and civil society actors were positioned as facilitators of learning, documentation, and information verification. Local government was responsible for services, representation, security, and accountable complaint mechanisms.

Table 8. *Objective-level Synthesis of Thematic Evidence*

Objective	Evidence synthesized from the corpus	Interpretive result
1. Patterns of harmony	Definitions, relationship quality, daily contact and cooperation examples	Harmony was represented as lived neighbourliness and reciprocal obligation
2. Historical, cultural, social and economic foundations	Shared language, traditions, support and livelihoods	Layered local identity and interdependence created relational memory
3. Prevention and resolution	Respect, dialogue, de-collectivization, mediation and follow-up	Harmony contained escalation and supported restorative settlement
4. Formal and informal mechanisms	Families, elders, leaders, teachers, representatives and officials	Layered mediation was strongest when actors were trusted by both communities
5. Shared cultural practices	Festivals, visits, folk culture and sacred-space assistance	Voluntary cultural participation strengthened recognition and trust
6. Tolerance, respect and inclusion	Freedom, dignity, equality and communication	Interpersonal respect was stronger than complete structural equality

Objective	Evidence synthesized from the corpus	Interpretive result
7. Threats to coexistence	Scarcity, misinformation, discrimination and identity politics	Material and informational pressures could interact to weaken resilience
8. Women and youth	Care networks, early warning, education and digital action	Both groups were essential but insufficiently represented in formal structures
9. Religious and community leadership	Moral reassurance, mediation, fact verification and public clarification	Credibility depended on impartiality and connection to practical remedies
10. Recommendations	Mixed committees, fair services, education, complaints and local adaptation	Relational and institutional measures needed to operate together

Note. *The table connects the research outline to coded evidence and the resulting interpretation.*

Table 8 synthesizes evidence against the ten objectives. Every objective was represented in the coded corpus, with the largest allocations directed to conflict prevention, historical and social foundations, and threats to harmony. The evidence supported the central proposition that harmony functioned through everyday contact, reciprocal support, layered identity, de-collectivization of disputes, trusted mediation, and restorative follow-up. It also qualified the proposition by showing that harmony alone could not correct unequal access, guarantee minority rights, or prevent digital and political manipulation. The objective-level synthesis therefore combined support with clearly defined limits.

Transferability was treated cautiously. Participants believed that mixed committees, neutral mediation, shared service projects, public rejection of collective blame, and youth-led rumour verification could be adapted elsewhere in Sindh or Pakistan. They did not assume that Tharparkar's practices could be copied unchanged. Long settlement histories and shared ecological experience could not be manufactured immediately, and symbols meaningful in one district might not carry the same authority elsewhere. Transfer required local participation, diagnosis of power relations, and selection of practices that matched the receiving context.

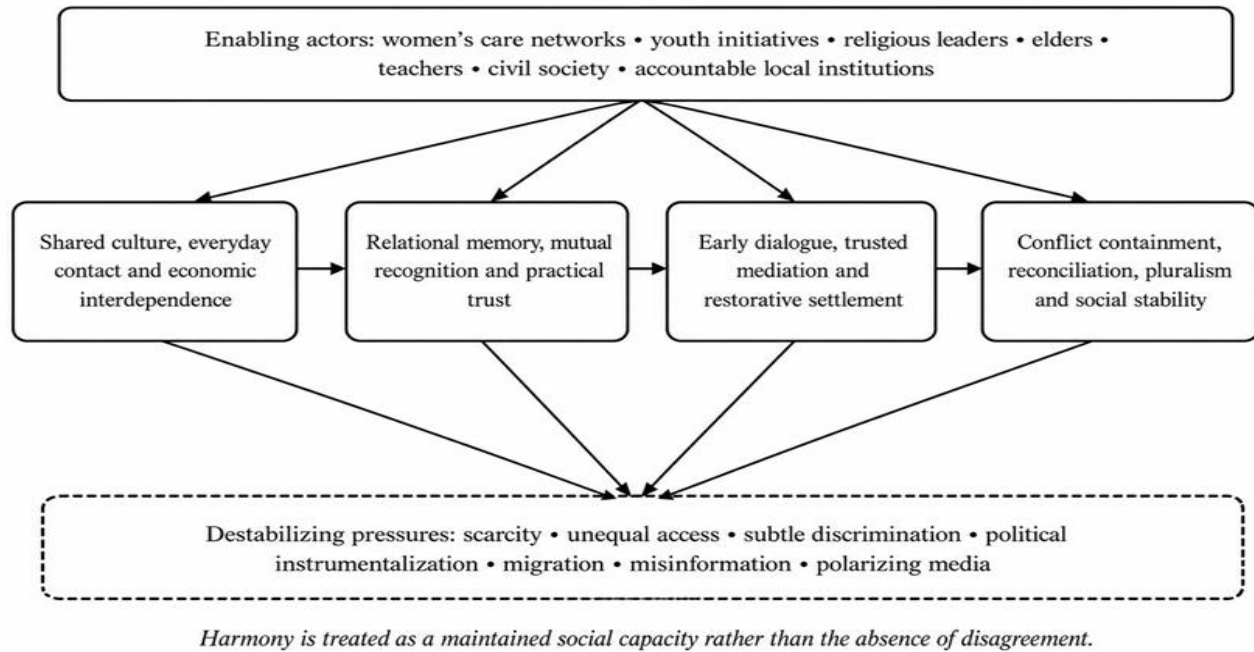
Figure 4: *Integrated Model of Religious Harmony, Conflict Resolution and Pluralism.*

Figure 4 presents the integrated explanatory model. Shared culture, everyday contact, and economic interdependence generated relational memory, mutual recognition, and practical trust. These resources supported early dialogue, trusted mediation, and restorative settlement, which in turn contributed to conflict containment, reconciliation, pluralism, and social stability. Women's networks, youth initiatives, religious leaders, elders, teachers, civil society, and accountable institutions acted as enabling agents across the chain. Scarcity, unequal access, discrimination, political instrumentalization, migration, misinformation, and polarizing media applied destabilizing pressure at each stage.

The model explains why harmony was described as a maintained capacity rather than a condition of permanent agreement. Relational memory could weaken when discrimination accumulated; mediation could fail when leaders lacked neutrality; reconciliation could remain incomplete when public rumours were not corrected; and pluralism could be shallow when equal participation was absent. The model also

identifies intervention points. Shared projects strengthen contact, documentation preserves cooperative memory, early-warning networks improve detection, mixed mediation increases legitimacy, and fair service systems reduce identity-based grievance. Each intervention reinforces a different link in the chain.

The strongest result was the convergence between positive and critical cases on the need for fairness. Strongly positive profiles emphasized relationships and cooperation, positive-with-concern profiles emphasized emerging pressure, and mixed or critical profiles emphasized unequal power and the danger of idealization. Despite their different tone, all three positions supported dialogue, credible leadership, and protection of dignity. The difference concerned the sufficiency of local tradition. Positive accounts treated it as a strong foundation; critical accounts argued that the foundation required institutional reinforcement. The integrated model incorporates both positions by placing relational mechanisms and governance mechanisms in the same explanatory structure.

The findings provide a detailed analytical foundation for field investigation. The 44 interview statements can be retained, but later data collection should allow follow-up questions, spontaneous themes, and locally specific examples that a structured corpus cannot reproduce. Sampling should include less visible settlements and participants with experiences of exclusion, while observation should examine markets, schools, worship environments, resource committees, and mediation meetings. Field validation should also compare public narratives with private accounts and institutional records. The present results support the study objectives at the level of conceptual coherence and mechanism identification, while clearly delimiting the claims that remain to be tested through empirical interviews.

5. Discussion

The results place religious harmony in Tharparkar in the category of a relational infrastructure and not a passive attitude to difference. Through the experience of a common language, repeated neighborhood interaction, market exchange, livelihood reliance, support in times of difficulty, and respect of sacred sites, a repository of concrete information about the trustworthiness of other families and community role players was built. The results of the present study complement the explanation of Agung et al. (2024) that local wisdom is cultural capital that can normalise interfaith communications, while demonstrating how cultural familiarity transforms to operate during pressure. The repeated interaction gave rise to the relational memory, the residents were able to remember if they had been helped, fairly exchanged or had cooperated in the past when a new rumour challenged them to suspicion. This is a mechanism that accounts for the significance of ordinary contact beyond social cordiality. Reimer et al. (2021) demonstrate that intergroup exposure can foster cohesion if interaction is cooperative,

and socially supported. In the corpus, contact served a similar purpose by decreasing the believability of general accusations which increased with the knowledge of specific neighbors, and its protective role was diminished where segregation, migration or unequal access diminished repeated contact.

This relational infrastructure, which was given material and moral depth through the sharing of livelihoods and crisis solidarity. Household survival and the continuity of the local economy made communal rupture costly in terms of trade, farming, livestock routes, transport, labour, credit and water information. De Botton et al. (2021) link religious diversity to solidarity actions which transform religious diversity into a shared assistance. The interview corpus also depicted emergency transport, treatment contributions, fodder support, fire relief and reconstruction labour as morally impactful events which were remembered in the collective memory beyond the actual requirement. When need takes precedence over community, faith-based charitable deeds can expand solidarity, as demonstrated by Hamdi et al. (2024). The Tharparkar results indicate that such support constitutes an intertemporal peace resource, as previous support forms a proof that can be used against future efforts to portray the other community as being monolithically threatening. Economic interdependence was not regarded as necessarily just, and can turn cooperation into resentment, given that some have less than others and some have more control than others. Its conflict-detering impact was reliant, in part, on clear guidelines, ongoing interaction, and trust that smaller households would not face social consequences for contesting decisions.

The conflict-resolution pathway provides the main process contribution of the article. In Harmony, the community actors distinguished between individual behaviours and the collective religious identity, fact checking was carried out prior to mobilizing

the community, mediators were chosen to be acceptable to both sides, and remedies were developed that considered material damage and social dignity. The importance of overcoming the blame game and tying moral reflections to concrete reconciling steps is highlighted in the context of interreligious dialogue and its contribution to peace (Driessen 2025). This present analysis has identified the intermediate steps by which that principle manifests itself: separate listening provided an opportunity to defuse the public defensiveness, fact verification disrupted the rumour, mixed mediation provided a consolidation of legitimacy, and an apology, compensation, restitution or new arrangements of resources provided a tangible basis for settlement. The results of this study suggest that tolerance and willingness to reconcile are only consolidated when translated into procedure, as found in Zaduqisti et al. (2020) when they link religious moderation with tolerance and willingness for reconciliation. This temporary agreement was then turned into social reintegration through follow-up visits, re-engaging with the market, shared meals, and public correction. This restorative sequence is particularly relevant in contexts in which the conflicting parties remain in close contact with each other and non-resolved narratives can outlast the original grievance, especially in close settlements.

The results also differentiate between relational harmony and structural pluralism. Most profiles reported acceptable interactions in the neighbourhood, and seeing people use their religion openly, but problematic profiles highlighted unequal access to employment, services, representation, ability to complain, and influence over neighbourhood decisions. According to Ramsey (2021), covenantal pluralism is characterized by three things: freedom, equal citizenship, and constructive engagement across deep difference. This multidimensional understanding is reflected

in the corpus, as cordiality alone did not ensure that all residents would have the opportunity to engage on an equal footing. Ferrari et al. (2021) link minority rights with institutional arrangements and social practices, and the results indicate the need to assess these areas as a whole. Informal protection can act quickly and be locally accepted, but it can also be non-uniform, as security can depend on the good will of some influential people and this can change when those relationships break down or when power is unequal. Sabates-Wheeler and Barker (2024) show that religious disparities can still be invisible in development and humanitarian frameworks. So in Tharparkar, the issues of fair water allocation, relief distribution, public services, employment procedures and representative committees were not secondary governance issues; they were structural issues that impacted on confidence in harmony itself.

Pluralist recognition was manifested through tests of sacred-space respect and communication governance. Routes, water, cleanliness, guidance to visitors, security around temples, mosques and shrines, all these were provided, demonstrating that each community's worship held legitimate public status. The best accounts were symmetrical, as a protective norm became more credible if it covered all religious sites, and was not just "courtesy." Di Placido and Palmisano (2025) link the themes of religious freedom, diversity governance, and interreligious dialogue, and the results suggest that these should be considered as interdependent practices. Communication was a parallel challenge. According to Lindsay (2023), narrative media has the potential to change the perception of interreligious relations as a result of changing the interpretive frames. The corpus revealed that the editing of clips, forwarding of messages and de-contextualizing of claims could turn the tide by substituting in simplified narratives that operate on an

emotional plane, rather than on the basis of personal knowledge. So, rapid verification, trusted local pages, public clarification and youth-led correction were all conflict prevention techniques. Their worth lay in their speed and credibility, as a tardy correction might resolve the factual issue, but not the communal interpretation.

Women and youth became enablers, with their work spanning private and public, educational and digital. Casavecchia et al. (2023) report on the role of women in the lived interfaith dialogue, in a socially embedded bridge-building. The findings in Tharparkar shed light on the preventive aspects of this work: women's networks of care were the first to sense tension, acted as messengers between households, played a calming role with relatives, and kept communication alive when public relations were difficult. According to Carland (2022), the contribution of Muslim women in social-cohesion work in formal leadership is sometimes not sufficiently recognized. It was a similar disparity in the corpus; the informal consultation on household data did not always result in the control of compensation, public apology, or institutional reform. Youth were also caught in a double bind. Cooperation may be normalised in schools, sports, service projects, and digital campaigns, and polarising content, political recruitment may undermine local memory. Essomba et al. (2023) stress the importance of hands-on training and enabling structures when dealing with religious diversity. Formal committee places, protected consultation, media-literacy trainings, and direct links with local government could transform women's and young people's social knowledge into peace capacity that is relevant to decision-making, while not dismantling the networks that gave women their credibility.

The integrated model presents a theoretical understanding of harmony as a social capacity that can be maintained. The model starts with common culture, common daily

interaction, and economic interdependence; progresses to relational memory and recognition; and connects with early dialogue, mediation, restorative settlement, reconciliation, pluralism and social stability. This approach does not assume harmony is a fixed cultural feature, but also refrains from seeing harmony as an absence of communal violence. The peaceful coexistence of minority vulnerability is well captured by the positive everyday relation and incomplete structural equality, which cautions Budiwanti and Eidhamar (2024). The model also sheds light on fragility. In short, scarcity can make interdependence become competition, discrimination can make relational memory go astray, partisan leadership can make mediation illegitimate, and misinformation can override local experience. Harmony can still maintain its efficacy if it allows actors and accountable institutions to enhance each link, recognise early-warning signs and accept criticism, not as an attack on coexistence, but as a means to maintain harmony.

This combination of relational and institutional interpretation has important practical implications. Mixed resource committees, regular contact between cross-faith leaders, school-based conflict literacy, school-based media literacy, secure space for worship, confidential complaint mechanisms, representation of women and youth, and mechanisms for correction in public in the event of misinformation should all be prioritized through peacebuilding programmes. Kwuelum (2024) argues that interreligious peacebuilding needs to be locally led and includes power and institutional complexity, not symbolic encounters. The result confirms warning and suggests that the ceremonial dialogue should be related to the practical service issues, the resources distribution and mediation ability, and follow-up. The next empirical step is limited by the study's limitations. The framework of the interviews developed the

corpus systematically and allowed for easy comparison, but it lacked recorded field interviews, naturally occurring frequencies, observation or institutional records. The model should thus be tested by purposive sampling and maximum variation sampling from talukas, private interviews, public interviews, observation in markets and worship sites, documentation of mediation cases and comparing information of community narratives with information of service and complaint records. Less visible settlements, exclusionary reporting by participants, caste and class intersections and formal-rights/settlement-practice conflicts should be given special attention during field validation.

6. Conclusion

Thematic analysis of the structured interview corpus was used in this article to look at religious harmony as a practical tool of conflict resolution and pluralism in light of the social context of Tharparkar, Sindh. Harmony was more of an organized capacity to accommodate difference, maintain mutual obligations and avert individual conflicts from communal confrontations. The social foundations of this capacity were shared language, familiarity with each other's culture, interdependence of livelihoods, support during times of crisis, respect for sacred spaces, and long memory for relationships. These foundations lay the groundwork for early communication, fact verification, trusted mediation, apology, restitution, practical compromise, public clarification, and social reintegration.

The analysis discriminated between interpersonal harmony and structural pluralism in celebratory narratives of coexistence. Neighbourly dignity and religious freedom were seen as strong relational assets, but unequal opportunity, subtle discrimination, lack of representation, scarcity, migration, misinformation, and political appropriation of identity were all

potential factors that could cause trust to erode. Substantive pluralism thus meant fair services, clear resource allocation procedures, safe religious premises, effective complaints systems, transparent decision making and a meaningful voice for minority residents. Informal mediation remained an important element, as accessible and culturally legitimate, but it was best justified when it was not compulsory, mediators were acceptable to both communities, remedies were proportionate, and serious offences still went to court.

Care networks for women and youth communication practices were identified as key and under-recognized peace resources. Through households, women helped to connect people, sense when things weren't going well and spread the word, soothe tensions between family members, organise and coordinate assistance; young people facilitated cooperation through education, sport, volunteering, service and digital ways. Their effectiveness also grew when informal knowledge was connected with institutions that could validate information, safeguard participants, distribute resources, and take action to resolve issues. Religious and community leaders – elders, teachers, civil society, and local government – were most credible when they applied the same standards to communities and provided links to concrete action.

The integrated model is based on contact and interdependence leading to relational memory, which in turn leads to de-collectivization, dialogue, trusted mediation and finally to restorative settlement, reconciliation, pluralism and social stability. All of these links can be broken by destabilizing pressures, and reinforced by inclusive and accountable institutions. While the model provides a mechanism based contribution that can be useful for future studies, the model's propositions need to be tested empirically to create a practical tool for locally rooted peacebuilding. The use of a

mix of purposive interviews, observation, mediation-case analysis and institutional records in various settlements, especially focusing on experiences of exclusion and the intersections of religion, caste, class, gender and remoteness, should be an integral part of

the field investigation. This can identify Tharparkar's areas of most resilient relations, areas with a weak institutional safety net, and practices that are suitable for responsible application in other plural contexts

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