



## Gen Z's Perception Of Religious Tolerance, Implementation of Islamic Law and Their Relationship with Interfaith Harmony in Pakistan: Moderating Role Of Education and Social Media Exposure



Muhammad Mohsin Khan <sup>1</sup> Isha Akram <sup>2\*</sup> Zainab Yasmeen <sup>3</sup> Zarafshan Gul <sup>4</sup>

Corresponding Author: Isha Akram (✉: [ishakram2003@gmail.com](mailto:ishakram2003@gmail.com))

### Abstract

Gen Z is growing in this world that is highly connected through full of technology and people from different parts of the world. These experiences think that how young people live with each other and how they live peacefully. This study looks at how Gen Z's view the religious tolerance and Islamic laws are linked with interfaith Harmony. It also examines that whether the education and social media exposure change or moderate the relationship. This study uses the quantitative research design to explore how the Gen Z's view different religious beliefs and their tendency to understand and accept other religions in the society. This research design explains how Gen Z's view on religious tolerance and Islamic laws are related to Interfaith harmony and how social media exposure and education helps in shaping true shape of these relationships. The study shows the young generation with higher Religion Tolerance shows more Interfaith Harmony and those with positive views of Islamic laws also show stronger interfaith harmony. This study also shows that education and social media exposure makes this relationship stronger. By focusing on how Gen Z forms religious attitude in this digital world the study helps in explaining that how peaceful relations between different faith groups can develop. The results may guide teachers, policy makers, religious leaders and social media platforms in creating strategies that encourages tolerance respect and better interfaith harmony among youth.

### Key Words

Gen Z, Religious Tolerance, Interfaith Harmony, Islamic Laws, Social Media Exposure, Education, Youth Attitudes

### Introduction

Religion has very high influence on what people thinks and how they act. Religion helps people in shaping their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior (Vajpayee, 2016). For Gen Z's (young people around age between 15-29 years) this world is more like a global village through which they are connected to each part of the world. Gen Z's are more involved on the internet, or social media. Because of this Gen Z's need to learn more about the religious tolerance, meaning respecting other beliefs and living together peacefully (McKinsey, 2024).

In many Muslim countries people living their talks about how the Islamic law or Shariah can be used in the country. Young people or Gen Z's often develop opinions, about how Islamic law or Shariah should be practiced in modern society, and whether it contributes the society positively, with fairness and unity (View of Generation Z's Perception of Religious Tolerance and Implementing Islamic Law in Indonesia, 2025)

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: [mohammad.mohsin@uos.edu.pk](mailto:mohammad.mohsin@uos.edu.pk)

<sup>2</sup> BS Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: [ishakram2003@gmail.com](mailto:ishakram2003@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> BS Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: [zainabyasmeen62@gmail.com](mailto:zainabyasmeen62@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> BS Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: [zarafshanhashmi0055@gmail.com](mailto:zarafshanhashmi0055@gmail.com)

Interfaith Harmony means how people of different religions live together peacefully. How they understand each other, how they try to understand each other, and how they work together. When there is harmony, there is less fighting, less hate and less unfairness in the society. However, there are still some questions which arises and they need to be considered.

Does greater religious tolerance increase the interfaith harmony? How do Gen Z's perceive the implementation of Islamic law, and does it influence the harmony with people of other faith? Does Social media exposure or education weaken or strengthens these relationships?

The study aims to examine that how religious tolerance influences the Interfaith Harmony in Pakistan. It also explains whether the perception of implementation of Islamic laws influences interfaith harmony and investigating how education and social media exposure moderate these relationships. Religious tolerance means that one should respect and accept people from other religions, even if their beliefs and faith differ from other. A person with religious tolerance does not promote hate, discrimination or violence. Instead of this he believes that every person of different religion has full freedom to worship his/her religion (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025).

In case of Gen Z's religious tolerance is structured through schools, families, online content, and social interactions. Higher religious tolerance means that a person with his/her religion develops more trust and peaceful relations with other communities.

This means that how Gen Z's view the role and implementation of Islamic law or shariah. Some young people consider as it a way of promoting justice, morality or social stability. Other may worry that if Islamic shariah or laws are misused or misunderstood it may create problems like contribution to rigidity or exclusion of minorities.

Education influences that how people think, behaves or interact with each other, or how they understand differences. Education itself is equivalence, so it teaches to promote justice, social and religious equity in the society (Pravat Dhal, 2020).

Education encourages the critical thinking that one with his religions should think critically that how they have to live with each other. It teaches open mindedness like how one should think openly, and most important in context of society it shows how one should expose himself to different cultures and religion. Social Media Exposure:(Hameed & Adnan, 2024). Gen Z's spend their most of the time on social media apps like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or you tube, this social media village exposes these young people to social media can either promote the interfaith understanding or it can intensify misunderstanding and stereotype. Therefore, it moderates that how religious tolerance and perception of Islamic shariah influences the interfaith harmony.

## **Literature Review**

### **Religious Tolerance**

Religious Tolerance means respecting people who follow different religions or practicing the religion in different ways. Many people misunderstood it as that one must agree with other religions, it does not mean that one should allow people of other religions to worship their religion with freedom. There should not be hate, discrimination or inequality with minorities living in the society (Life, 2023).

Now question arises how this religious tolerance is perceived by Gen Z's, their religious tolerance is perceived by family, schools, friends, social media and daily interaction with people. It shows that how one should be open minded towards different religious practices. It helps to remove different stereotypes and wrong ideas about different religions. It also supports how to live peacefully in a society where people have different beliefs from each

other. Tolerance is not just a good trait, but it also helps in keeping society peaceful and stable. This shows that tolerance is important for friendly interfaith relationships and peaceful living.

According to this, if Gen Z's have strong religious tolerance, they are more likely to live peacefully with each other irrespective of their religion or different beliefs. If one has developed this characteristic strong, he will. Moreover, he may not judge others quickly, especially based on religion. They feel comfortable talking with people of different religions and willingness to cooperate and work with people with different beliefs or religion increases.

### Implementation of Islamic Law

Implementation of Shariah always remain a topic of discussion in various Islamic countries. This includes that how Islamic shariah or laws should be used in the society for betterment of the society, how laws of Islam should be used in real life society, and government (Sujono, 2023).

Young people often go with two perspectives one that Islam rules and laws bring justice, equality and fairness, while other point of view is that if someone misunderstood these rules it can cause problem in the society like it can reduce personal freedom or affect minorities. If Gen Z's believes that right use of Islamic laws and shariah brings peace, justice and equality in the society, which is true, they will develop a positive and clear image of Islamic laws and will try to use it in a right way. In short, when Islamic law is seen as kind, equal and peaceful, it helps in developing trust between religions, and when Islamic law is misunderstood, it may cause fear or distance among other religions.

### Interfaith Harmony

Interfaith Harmony means that people from different religions or faith living together peacefully irrespective of their religion, faith or beliefs, this determines the healthy society which automatically develops love and devotion for each other. Interfaith Harmony focuses on Respecting and Understanding each other, working together in community or social activity and reducing fights or conflicts caused by religion misunderstandings (World Interfaith Harmony Week and Pakistan, 2021) This does not mean that everyone has to accept other beliefs or faith, it focuses on cooperation and peace.

If Gen Z's is tolerant of other religions and understand the Islamic law, they are more likely to support interfaith harmony. They may join community discussions, peace events or awareness programs. They may reject ideas which spreads hate or discrimination. They are more likely to have friends and work together with people from different religions. So, in short understandings, interfaith harmony is main outcome that depends on how tolerant young people are and how they see Islamic laws and rules.

### Education

(Impact of Interfaith Education on Promoting Religious Harmony - Consensus, 2025) Education is not only for seeking the knowledge but it also depends on how much that knowledge is being put in the practical life. Education helps in shaping morality, critical thinking and awareness of diversity. Educated people are more inclined to understand the concept of coexistence of people from different religions they are more exposed to discussions about human rights, ethics and comparative religion.

Education is not only about gaining facts, but it helps young people thinking carefully before reacting, accepting and understanding other religions, learning about human rights, peace and respect and understanding wrong ideas and stereotypes and questioning them.

When Gen Z is more educated, they are able to understand Islamic laws and rules in better way. Education helps them in becoming more tolerant. Low or limited education can cause misunderstanding a rigid understanding. So, understanding says that education can strengthen the positive effects of religious tolerance and perceptions of Islamic law on interfaith harmony

## **Social Media Exposure**

(Pertiwi et al., 2025) Social media is one of the primaries in fact it is most important and trusted source of information for Gen Z's. It spreads religious contents, debates, personal opinions, and sometimes misinformation which can lead to big chaos. Positive content can promote peace, dialogue, and shared values. Negative content may spread hatred, stereotypes or extremists narratives.

Young people often shape their beliefs based on what they view on regular basis. Social media exposure moderates how Gen Z's interprets tolerance, Islamic laws and harmony. Balanced and credible content may encourage acceptance of peaceful coexistence. Misleading or biased content may increase fear, chaos or conflict. The influence of social media is not always direct; it highly depends on what users are consuming and trusting in.

## **Hypothesis**

### **Perception of Religious Tolerance, Implementation of Islamic law and Interfaith Harmony**

The Religious Tolerance means that Gen Z's should respect all religion even if they do not agree with them. In order to maintain stability and peace in the society peaceful coexistence of different religion is necessary, if it is not considered it may cause many problems or chaos in the society. Religious Tolerance means to understand other people perspectives it does not mean to follow the other religion it just means to accept other religions and try to live with peace in the same society, and when people try to understand this, peaceful coexistence automatically develops in the society (Kayata, 2025). In this way, the religious tolerance represents the amount of respect and positivity one can show to other religion, and it positively contributes to increasing interfaith harmony. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis.

**H1:** Perception of Religious Tolerance has significant positive effect on Interfaith Harmony:

In this modern global world, where everything is connected through internet, Gen Z's grew using Internet, so they are more exposed to different parts of the world, religious tolerance helps them to accept and understand diversity of this world.

When Religion tolerance increases it develops more trust among them, it helps in reducing hate, prejudice or misunderstandings. Religious Tolerant people are more willing to work together in communities. Accepting and understanding differences helps people to talk calmly instead of fighting and arguing. So, if Gen Z's is more tolerance, it becomes more easier for different religious groups to live together (Gen Z More Tolerant of Religious Diversity | School of Sociology, 2018). Interfaith harmony also has connections with implementation of Islamic laws, which can be proposed by the hypothesis:

**H2:** Perception of Islamic law Implementation is positively linked to Interfaith Harmony (Apriianto et al., 2025)

Islamic laws and rules if understood in right way spreads peace, it teaches justice, fairness and respect for all people irrespective of cast, color, religion or creed. Gen Z's may feel that if Islamic laws are implemented correctly it helps in bringing peace and stability in the society, it helps society stay peaceful, organized and honest. Islamic laws in true meaning respect all other religions, it protects people rights and responsibilities. Ge Z's may view Islamic law as a promoter of justice and equality.

Values like truthfulness, kindness and respect helps people from different religion to live with peace. But there is something to be considered, if Islamic laws are misunderstood and implemented in the wrong way it may cause conflict and problems in the society which may harm the interfaith harmony. If this hypothesis is supported it suggests these points, Gen Z's feel that Islamic laws spread peace and respect towards other religions. When Islamic laws are implemented in right way it develops trust among each other. Interfaith Harmony becomes stronger when religious laws are seen as just balanced and stable. This shows that Gen Z's believe that Islamic laws are very important in developing peace and understanding and accepting other religions.

### **Moderating Role of Education**

Education is the only valuable way to learn about different aspects of this world. Education also helps in shaping the right character of human. Education gives a chance to learn about different cultures, religions and ideas. When people are educated, they rely more upon facts and understanding them, instead of listening to stereotypes and rumors (Reza et al., 2025). Education may have significant influence on interfaith harmony, so hypothesis formulation will be like:

**H3:** Education has positive effect on Interfaith Harmony

Education encourages empathy, discussions an open mind thinking. Student study about world religions, history, and peace building topics which enhances their critical thinking to question extremists or hateful ideas. Higher Education teaches responsibility, respect and good citizenship.

Education also moderates the relation between interfaith harmony and implementation of Islamic law. Education allows the youth to study the basic and original core of Islam and its laws in more depth.

**H4:** Education Moderates the Relationship Between Perception of Islamic Law implementation and Interfaith Harmony

True Education about Islam helps in clearing wrong beliefs and misunderstanding about Shariah. Educated students can separate culture from religious teachings. Learning about ethics and laws of Islam helps in understanding right, justice and fairness. Higher Education encourages balanced, thoughtful views about religious laws in the society.

So, the summary of this hypothesis is that when Gen Z's are educated their perception of Islamic laws becomes more positive which helps in supporting better relationships among different faiths.

**H5:** Education moderates the relationship between perception of religious tolerance and interfaith harmony

### **Moderating role of Social Media Exposure**

Social Media is a primary source of education for Gen Z's. The social media exposure can be divided into different aspects. Positive content, peace messages, interfaith harmony knowledge verified scholarly content increases understanding and awareness about different faiths. Negative content, misleading information, hate speech and extremist's narratives can reinforce stereotypes or fear (Muzayyah et al., 2025).

**H6:** Social Media exposure has significant positive effect on interfaith harmony:

If hypothesis is supported, it suggests that social media strengthens the positive relationship with interfaith harmony. Overall, the impact of beliefs on promoting the interfaith harmony depends highly on type of content consumed by them.

Gen Z's with high quality exposure is more likely to interpret Islamic laws positively and encourage peaceful relationships.

Social media consumption by Gen Z's also influences their perception about the implementation of Shariah laws, it moderates the relationship of interfaith harmony with the implementation of Islamic law. Moreover, it also plays significant role on moderating the relation between religious tolerance and interfaith harmony. Both the hypothesis will be proposed in this way:

**H7:** Social Media Exposure moderates the relationship between perception of implementation of Islamic law and interfaith harmony:

**H8:** Social Media Exposure moderates the relationship between perception of religious tolerance and interfaith harmony

## **Methodology**

### **Context**

Compared to other Islamic countries, Pakistan has long history of debating over Islamic law implementation and religious tolerance. The constitution of Pakistan says that the president and prime minister should be Muslims, and the no law would be against the Islamic teachings. Pakistan initially came into being in the name of Islam while rights for minorities were also reserved in its foundation. Minorities have also their reserved seats in legislative and administration as well but still the debate and issues over religious tolerance remain in news. Specially, the generation Z has more diverse perspective over this, and it has significance because this will predict the future direction of societal harmony.

### **Measures**

A structured questionnaire was adapted from previous research to measure the perception. It measures all the items using the adapted scale by Aprilianto et al. (2025).

Perception of religious tolerance was measured by the 10 items, implementation of Islamic law was measured using 7 items, interfaith harmony was measured by 8 items, role of education was measured by 6 items and social media exposure by using 7 items.

All the mentioned items were measured by the likert scale as 1=Strongly disagree, 2= strongly agree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly disagree. This questionnaire was constructed in English language.

### **Sampling and data collection**

The targeted population for this case study are Gen Z's, young people aged between 15-29, who actively uses the social media and are aware of discussions about religion and society. The data was collected from the students of two universities in Punjab, Pakistan and a Madrassa. The students studying in different departments from Government college University Lahore and University of Sargodha, Sargodha were asked to fill the structured questionnaire with closed ended questions. The data was collected in one and half month. The sample size in this study was initially 400 but it was later exceeded to 450.

The study is focused on purposive non-probability convenience technique, this means that participants are selected on their willingness and availability, there is not any misuse of power to include participants in the survey (Bhandari, 2020).

The Quantitative Research design is also useful because it allows to collect the numerical data from large number of people. This data helps to analyze the information statistically and see patterns and relationships carefully (Bhandari, 2020).

## Descriptive Profile of Respondents

Table 1

Gender	N	%	Age	N	%
Male	148	32.9	15-18	33	7.3
Female	302	67.1	19-22	290	64.4
Total	450	100	23-25	115	25.6
			26-30	12	2.7
			Total	450	100
Residence	N	%	Religion	N	%
Lahore	253	56.2	Islam	422	93.8
Sargodha	193	42.9	Christianity	27	6.0
Other	4	9	Hinduism	1	2
Total	450	100	Total	450	100

## Data Analysis

Smart PLS SEM (Partial least Squares Structural Equation Modelling) was used to analyze the data. It helps to analyze data efficiently with small sample size and complex models with moderation and mediation (Hair et al., 2017). In PLS calculation includes two steps, first is assessment of measuring model and second one is assessment of structural model. The model was designed using Smart PLS 4.0. SPSS was also used to analyze the descriptive frequencies. Each software is reliable and efficient in data analyzing.

## Results

### Measurement Model Assessment

The model consists of total 5 constructs. To get the measurement model, the outer loadings, discriminant validity, VIF and reliability is evaluated. After deleting one item (ROE7) from 4<sup>th</sup> construct all loadings are above threshold (Hair et al 2017). The table 2 shows that all values of outer loadings are above the 0.70, which is the recommended threshold.

Table 2

	IFH	IIL	PRT	ROE	ROSE	ROE x PRT	ROE x IIL	ROSE x PRT	ROSE x IIL
IFH1	0.760								
IFH2	0.772								
IFH3	0.740								
IFH4	0.796								
IFH5	0.746								
IFH6	0.744								
IFH7	0.797								
IFH8	0.814								
IIL1		0.790							
IIL2		0.812							
IIL3		0.868							
IIL4		0.850							
IIL5		0.817							
IIL6		0.861							

IFH	IIL	PRT	ROE	ROSE	ROE x PRT	ROE x IIL	ROSE x PRT	ROSE x IIL
IIL7	0.772							
PRT1		0.754						
PRT10			0.717					
PRT2				0.781				
PRT3					0.746			
PRT4						0.772		
PRT5							0.782	
PRT6								0.718
PRT7								0.800
PRT8								0.816
PRT9								0.788
ROE1				0.770				
ROE2					0.736			
ROE3						0.706		
ROE4							0.768	
ROE5								0.749
ROE6								0.703
ROSE1					0.843			
ROSE2						0.856		
ROSE3							0.870	
ROSE4								0.838
ROSE5								0.845
ROSE6								0.863
ROSE7								0.813
ROE x IIL							1.000	
ROE x PRT						1.000		
ROSE x IIL								1.000
ROSE x PRT								1.000

### Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 3

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
IFH	0.903	0.908	0.922	0.595
IIL	0.922	0.928	0.937	0.681
PRT	0.923	0.927	0.935	0.590
ROE	0.834	0.842	0.878	0.546
ROSE	0.935	0.945	0.947	0.717

## Discriminant Validity

Table 4

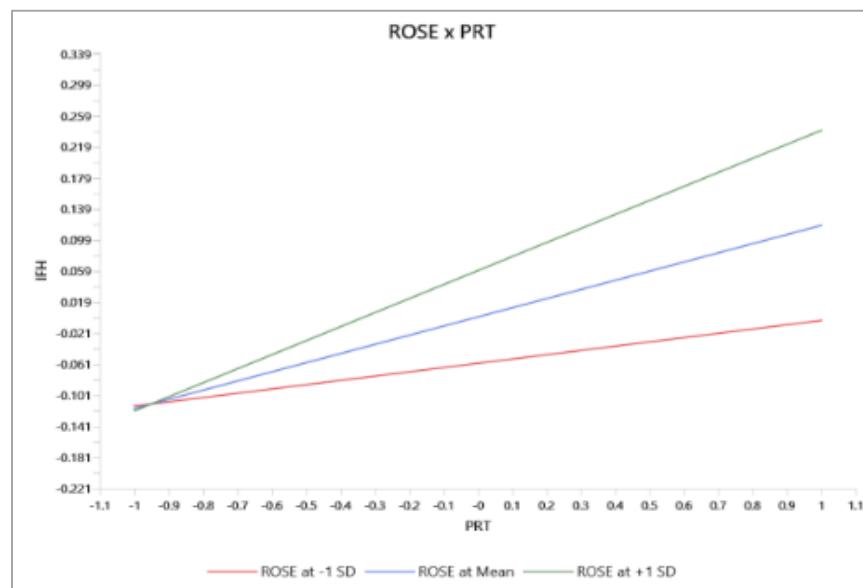
	IFH	IIL	PRT	ROE	ROSE	ROE x PRT	ROE x IIL	ROSE x PRT	ROSE x IIL
IFH									
IIL	0.314								
PRT	0.271	0.158							
ROE	0.502	0.268	0.342						
ROSE	0.229	0.164	0.160	0.383					
ROE x PRT	0.202	0.108	0.368	0.433	0.148				
ROE x IIL	0.087	0.139	0.143	0.217	0.143	0.374			
ROSE x PRT	0.053	0.057	0.197	0.216	0.160	0.499	0.202		
ROSE x IIL	0.078	0.103	0.060	0.170	0.118	0.156	0.401	0.178	

## Hypothesis Testing

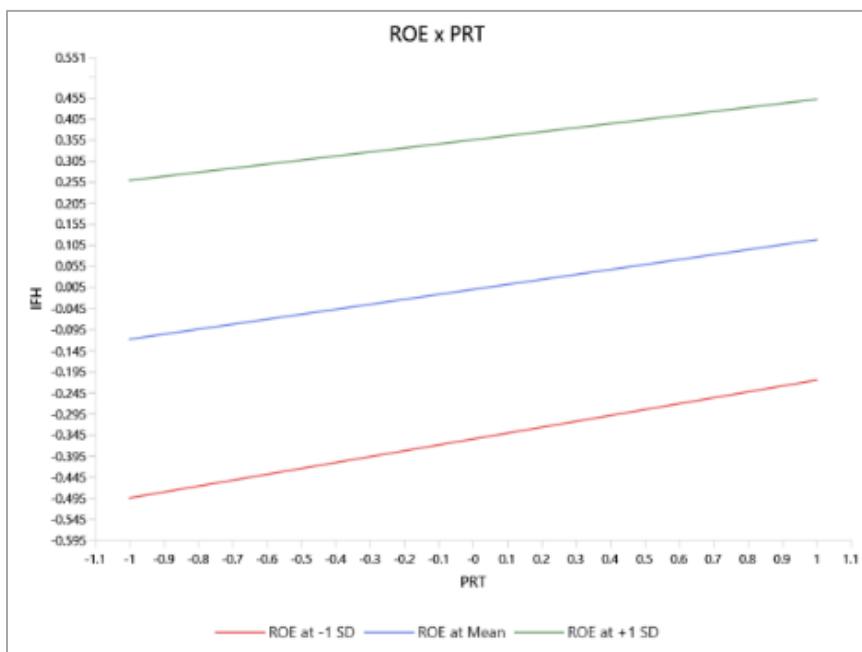
Table 5

Structured Paths	Beta	T value	P value	Supported?
IIL -> IFH	0.184	3.409	0.001	YES
PRT -> IFH	0.118	2.099	0.036	YES
ROE -> IFH	0.355	6.383	0.000	YES
ROE x IIL -> IFH	0.033	0.561	0.575	NO
ROE x PRT -> IFH	-0.022	0.489	0.625	NO
ROSE -> IFH	0.060	1.261	0.207	NO
ROSE x IIL -> IFH	-0.011	0.215	0.830	NO
ROSE x PRT -> IFH	0.063	1.153	0.249	NO

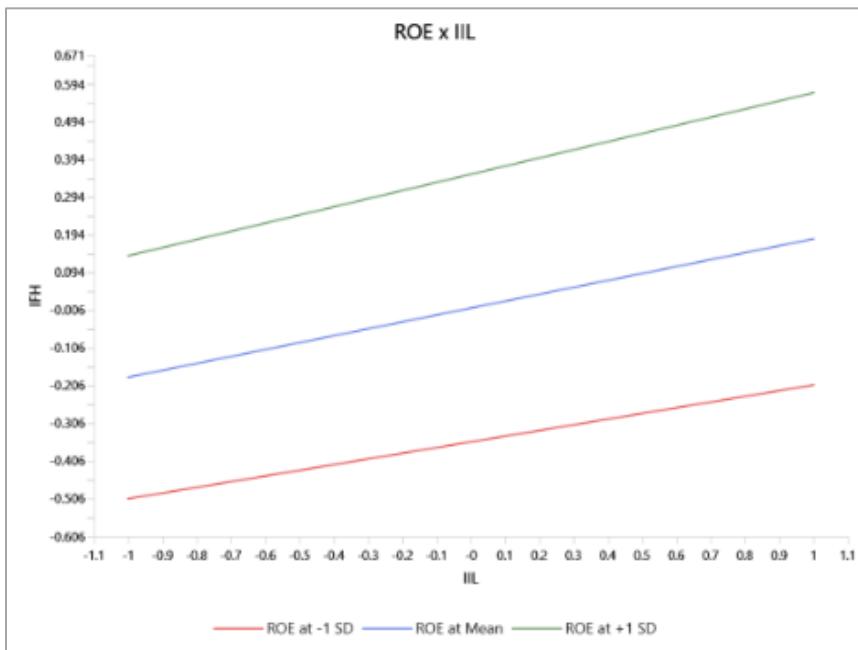
Graph 1



### Graph 2



### Graph 3



### Structural Model Assessment

The study focused on the structural relationship between ROE, IFH, IIL and PRT using hypothesis modeling. There is a mixed pattern of significant and non-significant relationships. The results show that ROE has a significant and positive effect on IIL ( $\beta = 0.184, t = 3.409, p = 0.001$ ). ROE plays an important role in influencing IIL. SO H1 is supported. PRT shows a significant positive impact on IFH ( $\beta = 0.118, t = 2.099, p = 0.036$ ). This indicates that PRT influence positively in IFH. Hence, H2 is accepted. ROE has a significant effect on IFH with ( $\beta = 0.355, t = 6.388, p = 0.000$ ), which suggests that role of education influence interfaith harmony. In ROE, IIL and IFH, ( $\beta = 0.033, t = 0.562, p = 0.574$ ), which suggests that role of education influence interfaith harmony.

$t= 0.561$  ) shows that ROE does not influence IIL and IFH positively. So, H4 is not accepted. The beta= - 0.022 shows that H5 is also rejected. The beta= 0.060 shows there is not significant relationship between ROSE and IFH which means that H6 is also rejected.

## Discussion

The findings shows that religious tolerance has significant relation with interfaith harmony. It means that more a person is tolerant religiously there is more harmony in society. The other hypothesis which is accepted in this study is that implementation of Islamic law in country will positively affect the harmony in faiths. The other conceptual model indicates that education also plays an important role in interfaith harmony. The findings shows that education and social media don't moderate among religious tolerance and interfaith harmony in Pakistani society.

## Implications

The study contributes significantly to the literature related to religious tolerance and interfaith harmony, specifically in text to Gen z's perception in Pakistan. The moderating factors such as education and social media exposure also plays vital role in explaining the context of their ideologies or perception. This is the true demonstration of socialization theory where individual's perceptions or mind sets are influenced by their social exposure and peers at educational institutions.

Meanwhile practically, it helps policymakers, educationist and government for predicting future trends and making policies keeping in view the perception of youth. The religious sector also take benefit by knowing the opinion of people about implementation of Islamic law and its relationship with interfaith harmony. As the youth of present is the future of tomorrow, and it will shape the societies harmony. It is important to take a look at the people and what are their understanding and perception about religious tolerance and harmony.

## Limitations and Future Gap

Apart from its theoretical and practical implications, this study has some limitations as well. First, the data was collected quantitatively from Generation Z people which may have some flaws as it could not take the detailed perception of individuals. Some other factors may also shape their perception which can be added as moderating factors instead of education and social media exposure. The targeted population only lies between specific age group Generation Z only. It limits the generalization of findings as other age groups such as millennials and generation X may have different perception according to their exposure and context. Moreover, the has been conducted in two cities in Pakistan, people living in rural areas may have different perception about religious tolerance and implementation of Islamic law in their country. So, the results could not be generalized over all the Islamic countries around world.

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