

## CLOSED MINDS AND OPEN BALLOTS: INVESTIGATING NEED FOR COGNITION, DOGMATISM AND EXTREMISM IN PAKISTANI VOTERS

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### ABSTRACT

Few studies have focused on the psychological underpinnings of political behavior among Pakistani voters. This research aims to study the interrelationship between need for cognition, dogmatism and extremism as witnessed in the political ideologies of Pakistani voters. Utilizing data from a cross-sectional survey of 111 eligible Pakistani voters, recruited through purposive random sampling, this research employed standardized psychometric measures, i.e. the Need for Cognition Scale (Cacioppo et al., 1984), Dogmatism Scale (Rokeach, 1956), and Extremism Scale (Bertelsen & Ozer, 2018), to examine the interplay between cognitive engagement and ideological rigidity, as they impact voters' political dispositions. Results from correlational analysis uncovered a significant inverse relationship between the need for cognition and extremism, as well as positive association between dogmatism and extremism. Contrarily, no significant correlation was found between the need for cognition and dogmatism. Regression models showed that extremism attitudes significantly predict higher dogmatism, alongside lower need for cognition. MANOVA and ANOVA analyses did not reveal statistically significant effects of age, education, or political affiliation, but income predicted the need for cognition, albeit marginally. The findings of this study highlight the insidiously spreading ideological inflexibility in Pakistan, and the dangers they pose within the country's existing polarized political context. A plethora of implications, notably for media reforms and general civic education, are discussed.

**Keywords:** need for cognition, dogmatism, extremism, Pakistani voters, polarization

### Introduction

Political polarization in Pakistan continues to evolve. What began as hierarchical elite divisions in 1947, when Pakistan was first founded, has now shape-shifted to resemble an emotionally charged polarization, most evident among its countrymen and their ever-burgeoning display of intolerance and ideological inflexibility. Needless to add, the current political zeitgeist is reflective of cult-like loyalty, where the room for healthy civic dialogue continues to shrink (Sadiq, 2024). Hence, the present context necessitates a nuanced and

empirical understanding of the psychological factors that influence these aforementioned ideologies.

Interestingly, the average Pakistan voter is susceptible to myriad influences, such as collectivistic pressures, categorical social structures, propaganda-driven media, and heavy censorship on independent content that limits access to reliable information, all of which shape peoples' understanding of the bigger political picture. Previous work by Sadiq (2024) delineates that psycho-social factors such as emotional

loyalties, suggestibility and conformity, as well as caste/ethnic affiliations, can have an irrevocable impact on voting decisions. Most decision-making is heavily influenced by candidate charisma, media-portrayals of candidates, as well as familial allegiance to a political candidate, rather than a deliberate, cognitive evaluation of candidate policies or agenda. In the light of these considerations, it is imperative that these propensities be studied at length in order to better understand the impediments that democratic maturation encounters in Pakistan as it continues to struggle to survive (Sheikh et al., 2015).

Previously, Oskarsson and Widmalm (2014) studied political tolerance and personality traits in India and Pakistan; however, cognitive traits like need for cognition and their connection with attitudinal traits such as dogmatism and extremism within a political context have not yet been empirically examined in a non-Western setting. The current study aims to investigate this relationship between the need for cognition, which involves effortful thinking, and dogmatism (rigid beliefs) and extremism (polarized, intolerant thinking) among Pakistani voters. It seeks to explore the relationships among these variables and as well as investigate how age, education, and income influence these cognitive traits. Another goal is to clarify any existing links between individual political orientations and the cognitive dispositions being studied.

The empirical terrain of political psychology has long been marked by a sustained interest in the nexus between cognitive rigidity and political ideology. Previous research shows that people with a high need for cognition are more likely to engage in analytical information processing (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Contrarily, dogmatism is characterized by cognitive inflexibility and reduced openness to differing viewpoints, which in turn impacts how individuals engage with ideological content (van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2017). Western-centric research delineates a similar trend, indicating that cognitive rigidity may likely be a precursor to extremist and polarized attitudes (Zmigrod et al., 2019). More recent findings also confirm this link, showing that inflexible cognitive styles predict stronger ideological beliefs and a

considerably lower willingness to change those beliefs (Zmigrod et al., 2020). Furthermore, more recent empirical work suggests that political ideologies align with different cognitive styles and may reflect differences in the complexity of thought processes, amongst other cognitive facets (Jost, 2021).

Zmigrod et al., (2020) in a landmark review, discusses the nuanced ways in which cognitive rigidity is seen to be entangled with a wide variety of ideological orientations, the conceptual roots of which can be found in nationalism, dogmatism as well as religious conviction. A recent study on neuropsychological assessments of cognitive flexibility relayed remarkable results, individuals endorsing far-left as well as far-right political views were found to present with the highest levels of cognitive inflexibility. These findings echo the strong association between cognitive rigidity and extremism as it exists in today's increasingly polarized world (Zmigrod et al., 2020).

Cacioppo et al. (1984) coined the term, 'need for cognition' to mean an individual's ability to engage in effortful thinking, and to draw pleasure from the process. Political psychology literature indicates that voters presenting with a high need for cognition tend to analytically engage with political content more when compared to those with a lower need for cognition. Experimental studies have previously examined the role of the need for cognition primarily in the context of voting strategies (O'Hara et al., 2009). Findings garnered from these studies provide insights for information dissemination among voters. However, given the Western centrism of these studies, it would not be wise to generalize the results to Pakistan's socio-political scenario.

Pakistan has recently been enveloped in a treacherous wave of extremism, and it is only logical to factor this into the existing socio-political situation of the country. Extremism, as defined by Bertelsen & Ozer (2018) is seen as a kind of ideological rigidity that is not just indicative of hostility but also intolerance towards anybody with opposing views to one's own. Events, such as those with emotional underpinnings (political assassinations) are believed to further limit cognitive flexibility in potential voters

(McLaughlin et al., 2019). An unfortunate trend insofar as literature on political psychology goes, is the concentrated focus on candidate extremism (Meisels, 2026; Boleslavsky & Cotton, 2015; Bafumi & Herron, 2010), rather than voter extremism (Padilla, 2023; Aragonés & Xefteris, 2017). One particular aim of the current study is to shift that focus onto voter psychology, as they look to shape the political landscape of this country.

In comparison, the term ‘dogmatism’ (Rokeach, 1956) is meant to describe a tendency to yearn for categorical truths. It is widely believed that an unhealthy attachment to this desire for stark realities can predispose one to polarized opinions (Decety, 2024). Political research conducted on dogmatism suggests that voters with a high degree of dogmatism tend to prefer more extreme candidates (Praister & Hamilton, n.d.). This research also examined voter strategies, but is primarily conducted from a political lens, and does not delve deep into the cognitive thinking styles of voters, and the implications thereof. As is true for a majority of the literature on these constructs, this study was also conducted in North America and is more communicative of Western political structures.

While research on political cognition is still in its infancy, significant inroads have been made in establishing a connection between political ideologies and cognitive processes that drive the political decision-making process. Investigations in political cognition point towards a certain degree of mental rigidity and inflexibility. These cognitive elements in turn, contribute to the proclivity of voters to want to seek much less information about their preferred political party, hence leading to in-group favoritism that manifests itself in their voting choices (Beri & Reddy, 2022). Such mental rigidity and low need for information processing have been observed in voters with extremist political attitudes that can be both right-leaning and left-leaning (Zmigrod et al., 2020). This notion rests on the hypothesis that political extremists on both sides of political ideologies perceive information in black-and-white, reducing the probability of seeking more or other facets of information, therefore giving rise to dogmatic

thinking that is not only rigid but also extreme in its nature (van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2017). This finding detracts from the need to delineate political parties into left-wing and right-wing for this research, a task that was already somewhat futile based on Pakistan’s complex system of political parties and ideologies.

Inarguably, voting behavior and preferences are reasonably influenced by voters’ longstanding cognitive attributes and their demographic variables, hence the interaction among these variables must be studied to unveil the nuanced aspects of voting behaviors that have hitherto remained shrouded in uncertainty especially in a country like Pakistan where political instability has remained a constant thorn in every stakeholders’ side. It is expected that results from this study will reveal the psychological underpinnings of voting behavior, as well as encourage further nuanced research on voters, which will help promote a more evidence-based approach to study the present socio-political context of Pakistan, which so far as mostly been construed as a game of thrones devoid of logic.

Finally, a further aim of the present study is to examine how the focal cognitive constructs, i.e. need for cognition, extremism and dogmatism play out in the average Pakistani voter, thereby illustrating the psychological mechanisms that drive ideological inflexibility in a country like Pakistan, currently prey to cacophonous political discord and wrangling. This research helps promote an understanding of the cognitive processes driving political behavior, by investigating how cognitive engagement (measured by need for cognition) and ideological inflexibility (reflected in dogmatism) interact to induce extremism in voters. This is not only an addition to the existing literature on the cognitive underpinnings of voter behavior, but furthers the empirical insights into how certain psychological traits predispose or protect individuals to either dogmatic and/or extremist positions.

### Objectives

To investigate the relationship between extremism, dogmatism and the need for cognition.

To examine how demographic factors impact dogmatism, extremism and the need for cognition.

### Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>: Extremism will negatively correlate with the need for cognition.

H<sub>2</sub>: Extremism will positively correlate with dogmatism.

### Methodology

#### Sample

The study employed a purposive random sampling strategy to recruit participants for the study. Since this study is geared towards understanding the socio-cognitive processes that drive political ideologies in voters, the purposive element of sampling ensured that identified participants were eligible to vote in political elections and the random element of the sampling procedure ensured randomization thereby increasing the representativeness of the sample. Participants were approached via online platforms, as well as through academic and professional associations, and data was collected virtually through secure digital platforms.

#### Inclusion Criteria

- Pakistani citizens were selected.
- Individuals aged 18 and older were selected as part of the sample.
- Participants who reported good physical and mental health were included.

#### Exclusion Criteria

- Overseas Pakistanis were excluded.
- Pakistanis who are actively associated with a political party were excluded.

#### Sample Characteristics

The study recruited 111 participants, with a gender split of 19% (N=21) males and 81% (N=89) females. Since the study used a purposive random sampling strategy, participants were drawn from a pre-defined pool of eligible study population and the resultant gender imbalance in the sample may be reflective of differences in engagement motivation of participants as is usually the case with studies that require voluntary participation. Only participants who are eligible to vote in

Pakistan (18 years and older) were selected. The researchers ensured that a diverse representation of citizens from across Pakistan participated in the study, and that Pakistanis from a wide variety of educational and socio-economic backgrounds were recruited. Participants' subjective experience of their physical and mental health was elicited using the demographic form and those who self-reported satisfactory physical and mental health on the demographic questionnaire were included in the study. Additionally, participants self-identified their political party affiliation.

#### Psychometric Tools

All instruments were made available to the participants in both English and Urdu. The translated versions were back-translated by linguistic experts to ensure conceptual equivalence. However, most participants chose to complete the surveys in English.

1. **The Dogmatism Scale:** Constructed by Rokeach (1956) to measure dogmatism, rigidity of beliefs. This scale consists of 40 Likert-type items measuring rigidity of beliefs and closed-mindedness. The possible score range is between 40-280 with higher scores indicating greater dogmatism. Internal consistency varies between 0.68 to 0.85 for various samples and reliability varies between 0.71 to 0.84.

2. **Need for Cognition Scale:** Constructed by Cacioppo et al. (1984) to measure the tendency to engage in effortful thinking and cognitive tasks. This scale consists of 18 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Internal consistency is reported to be 0.90 and test-retest reliability is reported to be 0.75. The possible score ranges between 18-90 with higher scores indicating greater need for cognition.

3. **Extremism Scale:** This questionnaire assesses the probability of accepting radical ideology as well as the probability of violent behavior against some social groups. This tool has 14 Likert-type items. The questionnaire can be used to investigate personal dispositions (general attitudes) towards different types of extremism, including nationalistic or racial, religious, political, and football hooliganism (Bertelsen & Ozer, 2018). Internal consistency is reported to be

0.89. The possible scores on the scale range between 14-98 with higher scores indicating strong attitudes of extremism.

### **Procedure**

A pilot study was conducted before the main study to assess feasibility, practicality, and any other methodological difficulties that may arise during the actual study. Data was collected from 5 Pakistani citizens (2 males, 3 females) through convenience sampling. The instruments were shared via three separate Google Forms, and participants were requested to complete and return those questionnaires, as well as share any feedback they had. The participants reported that they would have found it easier to complete all the questionnaires in a single form, rather than three separate forms. Participant feedback was taken into consideration, and the required modifications were made during the subsequent data collection process. It is important to mention that the study utilized a minimal risk, non-interventional design where non-vulnerable adult voters voluntarily participated in the study and were free to withdraw at any point in time. The data collected was completed anonymously and was collected through an online survey methodology. This was an independent, self-funded project not affiliated with any university, hospital or funding body. In light of the above consideration, a formal institutional review board approval was not categorically mandated. Notwithstanding, the researcher ensured that the study was being carried out under stringent ethical considerations where procedures such as informed consent, right to withdraw, voluntary participation and confidentiality.

The data was obtained from eligible Pakistani voters, aged 18 and over. For the purpose of the present study, one hundred and eleven individuals were recruited, voluntarily, via several different community/recreational centres, educational institutions, social media as well as local citizen networks, across the country. The survey itself was

conducted using a secure digital platform, i.e., Google Forms which included an integrated survey composed of (1) instructions and guidelines (2) demographics (3) standardized questionnaires. This form was available in both English and Urdu, and the participants were free to pick any of the two languages they were comfortable filling the form in. Additionally, all participants were ensured of confidentiality, anonymity and that the data collected would solely be utilized for research, only. Furthermore, all queries by participants were duly addressed and their support acknowledged.

This study complied with American Psychological Association's (APA) ethical protocols and standards. Informed consent was obtained from the participants by sharing an information sheet delineating the purpose of the study, and the expected procedures, as well as the voluntary nature of participation. Participants were further ensured the right to withdraw at any time, alongside their complete anonymity. Data garnered from all individual participants was stored in an ethical manner, using password-protected databases. The participants were also informed and reaffirmed that this is a minimal risk study, without any tangible risks. However, any emotional discomfort arising from items discussing ideology or politics was addressed by providing debriefing contact information. Upon completing the survey, all participants received a succinct document outlining a summary of the study's goals and impact, and how they could get in touch with the researchers to learn more about the outcomes.

### **Statistical Analyses**

The study's data was statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson's correlation, ANOVA, MANOVA and Linear Regression) were used to analyze the obtained data.

**Results**

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of the sample (N=111)*

Variables	Number	%
Gender	21	18.9
Male		
Female	89	80.2
Not Specified	1	0.9
Province	106	95.5
Punjab		
Sindh	3	2.7
KPK	2	1.8
Political Affiliation	17	15.3
PML-N		
PPP	8	7.2
PTI	56	50.5
Other	30	27
Income	5	4.5
<Rs. 50,000		
Rs. 50,001-75,000	10	9.0
Rs. 75,001-Rs.100,000	15	13.5
Rs. 100,001 – Rs. 150,000	20	18.0
More than Rs. 150,000	61	55.0
Employment Status		
Employed	58	52%
Unemployed	52	47%

Note.

PPP = Pakistan People's Party; PTI = Pakistan Tehreeke-e-Insaf; PML-N = Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz).

Table 1 shows demographic variables including gender, provincial belongingness, political preference, income and employment status of the

sample participants. For all categorical variables frequencies and percentages are shared in the table shared above. However, the mean age for the respective sample is  $28.01 \pm 8.88$  years and the mean for number of years of education is  $16.59 \pm 2.06$  years.

Table 2

*Pearson Correlations Among Need for Cognition, Extremism, and Dogmatism (N = 111)*

Variables	M (SD)	NCS	ES	DS
NCS	51.41(10.16)	—		
ES	49.21(15.06)	-.210*	—	
DS	165.32(43.36)	-.007	.616**	—

Note.  $p < .05$ .  $p < .01$ .

NCS= Need for Cognition, ES= Extremism Scale, DS = Dogmatism Scale.

The results of correlational analyses show that there is a significant negative correlation between variables of need for cognition, extremism and dogmatism among Pakistani voters (N = 111) of the study sample. The findings suggest that individuals with higher tendency for cognitive engagement are less likely to endorse extremist views. No significant relationship was found

between need for cognition and dogmatism, ( $r = -.007$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating no significant association between these two constructs. However, a strong positive correlation was observed between dogmatism and extremism, ( $r = .616$ ,  $p < p < .01$ ), which indicates that voters with higher levels of dogmatic thinking are also more likely to have extremist attitudes.

Table 3

*Simple Linear Regressions Predicting Dogmatism and Need for Cognition from Extremist Dispositions (N=111)*

Outcome Variable	Predictor	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI
Dogmatism	(Constant)	78.03	11.17	—	6.99	.000	55.90, 100.17
$R^2 = .380$	Extremism	1.77	0.22	.62	8.17	.000	1.34, 2.20
Need for Cognition	(Constant)	58.35	3.23	—	18.05	.000	51.94, 64.76
$R^2 = .044$	Extremism	-0.14	0.06	-.21	-2.24	.027	-0.27, -0.02

Note. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE B = standard error of B;  $\beta$  = standardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval.

Two separate simple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine whether extremist dispositions predict levels of dogmatism and need for cognition. The first model indicated that extremist dispositions significantly predicted higher dogmatism scores, ( $B = 1.77$ ,  $t(109) = 8.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ), accounting for 38% of the variance ( $R^2$

= .380). This suggests a strong positive association between extremism and dogmatism. While, the second model suggested that extremist dispositions significantly predicted lower need for cognition ( $B = -0.14$ ,  $t(109) = -2.24$ ,  $p = .027$ ), although it explained only 4% of variance ( $R^2 = .044$ ).

Table 4

*One-Way MANOVA comparing study variables Need for Cognition, Extremism and Dogmatism across different Political Party Affiliations (N=111)*

Dependent Variables	df	MS	F	P	M (PPP)	M (PML-N)	M (PTI)
NCS	3	119.79	1.17	.32	64.12	57.64	59.76
ES	3	422.03	1.90	.13	46.12	42.29	51.80
DS	3	2043.53	1.08	.35	170.12	149.00	170.26

Note: M=Mean, MS=Mean Square, df=Degrees of Freedom

A one-way MANOVA was conducted to examine whether political party affiliation (Pakistan People's Party, Pakistan Muslim League-N, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) was associated with high levels of need for cognition, dogmatism and extremism. The multivariate test using Wilk's Lambda indicated that the combined dependent variables did not differ significantly by political party affiliation, Wilks'  $\lambda = .906$ ,  $F(9, 255.693) = 1.179$ ,  $p = .309$ .

### Analysis and Discussion

The present study examined the interplay of three variables, namely, need for cognition, extremism and dogmatism among Pakistani voters. Statistical analysis delineates a distinct inverse relationship between need for cognition and extremism, as well as a robust positive relationship between extremism and dogmatism, however, no categorical association was revealed between need for cognition and dogmatism. There was no significant association established between age, education, need for cognition, dogmatism and extremism. Income however was marginally predicting need for cognition. The present findings relate with the previously conducted work specifically in light of a deepening context of socio-political polarization in Pakistan.

Need for cognition and extremism have been negatively correlated ( $r = -.21$ ), implying that individuals who do not engage in effortful thinking are more likely to endorse radical ideologies. Cacioppo and colleagues' (1984) proposed that individuals with high need for

cognition thoroughly scrutinize arguments more frequently. Therefore, there are greater chances for them to resist simplistic polarized narratives. Moreover, it is crucial to observe that these findings can have implications in Pakistan's current socio-political scenario, where individual effortful thinking can help guard against polarization and unrealistic demands of loyalty from respective groups.

The findings also show a strong correlation between dogmatism and extremism ( $r = .62$ ;  $R^2 = .38$ ). Rigidity for categorical truths as implied by dogmatism morally absolutist thinking in extremism are closely aligned. Regression analyses results of the present study depict that extremist inclinations are responsible for predicting variance in dogmatism. It can be inferred that our efforts to curb rigid ideological perspectives may also help reduce extremist attitudes and ideologies. That said, it is imperative to note that while a direct relationship was identified between need for cognition and extremism, the same findings were not replicated for need for cognition and dogmatism, which attests to the varying manifestations of dogmatism and extremism in the real world.

The absence of a significant relationship between need for cognition and dogmatism ( $r = -.007$ ) demands a closer look. These results, at first glance, appear to be counterintuitive, given that mainstream literature draws a negative association between reasoning and dogmatism (Parker, 2017). However, a closer look at Cacioppo and Petty's (1982) landmark study addressing the validity of

the need for cognition pedantically examined the relationship of this variable to dogmatism and proposed, “the association should be weak, since the need for cognition is a more specific construct than the dogmatic nature of one’s personality.” The study went on to report a negative but weak relationship between the two constructs, as is seen in the current study as well. To better contextualize this finding in Pakistan’s political zeitgeist, it is important to pay heed to the fact that these results align with Pakistan’s existing political culture, in which diverse individuals can harbor equally entrenched ideologies. Research shows that individuals prone to dogmatism are less likely to seek out contradictory information (Schulz et al., 2020), yet the possibility of *not* seeking any information at all, or of cognitively engaging with content, particularly content that reinforces and reassures one of the monopoly and absoluteness of one’s beliefs (i.e. confirmation bias) may still be prevalent. This finding also suggests that fostering the need for cognition alone may not do enough to erode the belief perseverance paralyzing the country right now.

Furthermore, secondary analyses did not indicate that older or less-educated voters would be more dogmatic or extremist, nor that younger or more-educated voters exhibit a greater need for cognition, contrary to intuitive expectations. It is crucial to note that comparable findings were found for need for cognition and age in earlier works by Cacioppo et al. (1996) as well as by Soubelet and Salthouse (2016), where a weak relationship was identified between the said variables. Previous studies on academic achievement and need for cognition indicate positive albeit weak relationships (Cohen, 1988; Liu & Nesbitt, 2024). No study to date has examined the association between the level of education, specifically, and the need for cognition. A similar trend has been studied between dogmatism and age as well, with a clear non-linear relationship identified (Schmitz, 1982). However, previous literature has found a significant inverse relationship between dogmatism and level of education attained (Close & Bergmann, 1979). It is probable that the same findings could not be replicated in the current study because individuals

with significantly low educational attainment were underrepresented. Consequently, although an inverse relationship was reported, it was not significant.

These findings imply that psychological dispositions are distributed across age and education strata more evenly than anticipated, possibly because pervasive political instability and repeated cycles of polarized campaigning have socialized broad segments of the voting electorate into similar thinking patterns, regardless of life stage or educational exposure.

Income showed only a marginal effect on need for cognition ( $p = .056$ ), suggesting that while augmented exposure may predispose individuals to increased cognitive engagement, income alone has little bearing on Pakistan’s polarized public sphere. It would be interesting to investigate in the future as to whether urban-rural divides, media literacy, a reflective curriculum in the schools, or generic civic education programs more strongly shape the need for cognition.

Finally, in-depth analyses did not indicate any significant differences in political party affiliation (PTI, PML-N and PPP) and the levels of need for cognition, extremism and dogmatism. Voters endorsing any of these three major parties appear to be equally susceptible to dispositional traits such as dogmatism and extremism and show a comparable degree of need for cognition; any differences found were statistically insignificant. However, the rates of dogmatism witnessed in Pakistani voters appear to be astoundingly high, deepening existing concerns of reflectively minded citizens, who have been raising alarms about the fast-deteriorating socio-political fabric of the country since the last few decades.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study carry myriad implications. Firstly, the conclusions are reflective of the present social dynamics of the country. The country is currently prey to amplified political propaganda, which is insidiously chipping away at the country’s democratic roots. Consequently, political and media reforms that seek to address extremism and polarization should aim to promote greater cognitive engagement, introduce

a curriculum that encourages reflective thought, and introduce politically neutral and thoughtful media formats. Finally, in the light of the present results and given how evenly spread out close-mindedness is across age and education, reforms should target the public at large, rather than being hyper-focused on the youth or those who are formally educated. The general public must collectively learn to recognize the repercussions of the deep-seated polarization as it spreads like wildfire throughout the country, paving the way for social fragmentation and democratic weakening. The study presents with certain limitations. To begin with, the use of a cross-sectional design indicates that the relationship is merely of association, and not causal. Self-report measures are amenable to a host of biases, including, but not limited to, the social desirability and acquiescence biases. The sample, even though diverse, likely underrepresented the rural populations, alongside voters residing in Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. Future research can address these limitations by utilizing a longitudinal design to track the socio-political dispositions of voters across a period of time, as well as compound the results by employing more qualitative strategies to gain further insights.

To put it succinctly, findings from this study uncover the psychological traits broadening the radical divide in Pakistan. Understanding and addressing these psychological pitfalls thus emerges as a crucial step toward nurturing a more reflective, and in turn a less divided, electorate.

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