



Vol 3 Issue 1 (July-September 2025)

ISSN (Online): 3006-4740

ISSN (Print): 3006-4732

Promoting Tolerance and Social Cohesion through the Study of the Sīrah in Universities: An Analytical Study

Prof. Dr. Zia ur Rehman

International Postdoctoral Fellowship, IRI, International Islamic University, Islamabad
zia.rehman@iub.edu.pk, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4580-7970>

Abstract

This research article examines the impact of the curriculum of the Biography of the Prophet (PBUH) taught in universities in Pakistan. Instead of traditional survey and quantitative methods, this study specifically examines how the study of the Biography is promoting tolerance, effective social harmony and social cohesion among students from the perspective of Social and Educational Psychology.

This paper is based on the assumption that presenting the Sīrah as a practical moral model following the injunctions of the Holy Quran, rather than just historical or religious information, is an indispensable educational need to deal with the challenges of intolerance, sectarianism, and extremism in today's era.

This research was conducted to answer some important questions such as to what extent the curriculum content of Sīrah courses in Pakistani universities, especially the Islamia University of Bahawalpur comprehensively and actively incorporates the aspects of tolerance and interfaith respect inherent in the teachings of Sīrah and what theoretical reforms are needed to make the study of Sīrah more effective by using the principles of educational psychology; such as case study and discussion method so that the course can be further improved.

This research adopts a purely qualitative and theoretical approach. A major part of the research is based on an in-depth analysis of the curricula, course outlines, and recommended teaching materials of Sīrah courses in selected universities in Pakistan, in which it has been seen to what extent the principles of tolerance and harmony are highlighted.

I myself have been working on the curriculum of the Holy Qur'ān and Sīrah in universities for a long time and through discussions with other curriculum experts and religious scholars, I have understood the challenges and opportunities of effectively integrating the teachings of Sīrah in the light of pedagogical philosophy, the effectiveness of the current curriculum, and social psychology, and have gathered results accordingly.



Key words:

Biography, Prophet (PBUH), Tolerance, Social Cohesion, Social Psychology

Introduction of the Topic

This article examines the Sīrah courses taught in Pakistani universities in an attempt to promote tolerance and social harmony through the Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH). The current course of Seerat-un-Nabi studies has played a valuable role in shaping the religious knowledge and moral foundations of students. These courses have certainly proven to be effective in fulfilling their objectives.

However, the complex social and psychological challenges of the present era have given a new dimension to the importance of this subject. The increase in intolerance, sectarian tension, and ideological conflict in society requires that we adapt the Sīrah curriculum and teaching methods to contemporary challenges and strive to increase their effectiveness.

There are numerous examples of exemplary role modeling, forgiveness, and interfaith respect in the teachings of the Seerat e Ṭayyibah. Efforts should be made to make these incidents of the Sīrah a part of the subconscious and attitudes of the students so that they become tolerant in practice.

From the perspective of educational psychology, the purpose of the teachings of the Seerat is not simply to remind the students of the aspects of biography, but to build character in students according to the good example. This research emphasizes the need for active pedagogical methods in the curriculum that equip students with the skills of critical thinking and interfaith dialogue, which can promote social harmony.

This study revives the spirit of the study of Sīrah based on existing courses, highlighting its theoretical and educational potential. This is an additional step (value addition), which can make the courses an effective means of moral and spiritual development as well as socio-psychological training. Thus, this research has the potential to play a key role in the development of a tolerance-based educational policy for Pakistani universities.

Research Methodology

This study will adopt a qualitative approach based on various theories of social psychology and educational psychology. The aim is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the aspects of tolerance and social harmony in the curriculum of Sīrah courses, rather than conducting a survey through a questionnaire. Data will be collected in two ways for this study.

A. Critical Content Analysis of Curriculum Materials: This analysis will focus on the extent to which Sīrah events related to tolerance, respect for differences of opinion, and interfaith relations are highlighted in the curriculum.

B. Important data and information about this topic will be collected through discussions with Sīrah teachers, curriculum developers, and religious scholars from selected universities.

Finally, the research findings will be compiled through the data obtained from the curriculum materials and discussions with experts.

Research Questions

1. Curriculum Analysis: To what extent do current Sīrah curriculums incorporate teachings on tolerance and social cohesion in accordance with the principles of educational psychology? (e.g., do they contain only traditional chapters or do they emphasize understanding controversies and different schools of thought?)
2. Theoretical Application: Under Social Learning Theory, what theoretical scope does the teaching content of Sīrah courses have to effectively present the life of the Prophet (PBUH) as a role model? (i.e., how should practical tolerance & Cohesion be taught?)
3. Pedagogical Practices: What pedagogical philosophies do Sīrah scholars and teachers adopt, and what challenges do they face in interpreting and delivering curriculum content for social cohesion?
4. Reforms and Recommendations: In light of the theories of social and educational psychology, what concrete curricular and pedagogical recommendations can be made to make the study of biography more effective and to make the values of tolerance a permanent part of students' attitudes.

Social Learning Theory & Pedagogical Practices:

Albert Bandura presented the Social Learning Theory which is based on the concept that people learn not only through direct experience but also through modeling. This theory proves that the events of the Prophet's life can be effective modeling for students from which they can learn tolerance. For example, the Prophet's journey to *Tā'if*, the Treaty of Medina, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, the conquest of Mecca and the treatment of enemies, non-Muslims and prisoners in the campaigns; which resulted in a very peaceful society. Social Learning Theory proves that behavior is shaped by imitation of character.¹

Pedagogical practices; is the study of what are the methods of teaching through which a student understands any knowledge in a good way. Educational psychology theory tells us that learning is deepened by social interaction and dialogue. Students learn a lot practically through questions and answers, role plays, case studies, seminars and group activities, etc. Tolerance should not be just 'knowledge' but should become a 'practical skill'.²

Promoting Tolerance through Sīrah Course

Studying the biography and following the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) is obligatory for a Muslim. Allah Almighty has made you a mercy for the entire cosmos. Allah Almighty says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَ الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَ ذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا.³

Indeed, you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example for anyone who hopes in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much.

وَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ.⁴

And We have sent you as a mercy to the entire cosmos.

Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH) course taught in universities in Pakistan provides a comprehensive curriculum for the moral and social training of students. The aim of the course is not merely to

impart historical knowledge, but to present the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a practical model for solving today's social problems, especially tolerance & Cohesion.

Chapter1. The Meaning, Necessity and Importance of the Sīrah (PBUH), and Living According to the Sīrah

This chapter first explains the meaning, lexical and terminological definitions of "Sīrah". This is followed by a discussion of the importance and necessity of studying the Sīrah in the present era, which makes it clear how the teachings of the Sīrah provide guidelines for the individual and collective life of a Muslim.

Chapter2. Teachings and Tolerance: The basic teaching of this chapter is that it is obligatory for every Muslim to follow the life (uswat-ul-hasanah) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This following includes moderation, moderation, and respect for humanity. This teaching creates ideological unity among students and teaches how important it is to accept and tolerate others in order to live a complete Islamic life.

Chapter3. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a Teacher, Friend, Father, Husband, Commander, Ruler, Judge: This chapter describes in detail the various aspects and roles of the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It presents him not only as a religious leader, but as a comprehensive personality who provides guidance in every aspect of life.

The Prophet (PBUH) as a teacher and friend: It is taught that he (PBUH) treated his students and colleagues with kindness, love, and respect. This teaches students to tolerate the mistakes and weaknesses of others and to be tolerant in dialogue.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a Ruler and Judge: It is taught that he established justice and fairness in the state of Medina without distinction of religion or race. He respected treaties with non-Muslims and protected their rights. This instills in students the values of social justice, equality, and respect for the rights of other groups, which is the basis of social harmony.

Chapter4. Salient Aspects of the Married Life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the private and family life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) so that students can get a practical example of the best ethics and tolerance at the home level. It includes teachings on treating wives well, counseling them, and maintaining a peaceful home environment.

This chapter teaches that tolerance and forbearance begin at home. Since the family is the basic unit of society, it is essential to demonstrate tolerance, forgiveness, and mutual respect in domestic life. This teaching teaches students to resolve small differences wisely so that they do not escalate into major conflicts.

Chapter5. The Prophet's Good Manners, tolerance & Cohesion: This chapter is a central study of the noble morals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which directly sheds light on the subject of tolerance and forbearance. It includes his teachings on generosity, gentleness, humility, control of anger, and treating all human beings equally.

This chapter makes it clear that tolerance is not just a social policy but a fundamental moral duty. It includes incidents such as the declaration of a general amnesty on the occasion of the conquest of Mecca, or standing for the funeral of non-Muslims, which teach that respect for

humanity transcends all religious or intellectual differences. This education instills empathy and broad-mindedness in the hearts of students.

Role of Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

To enhance the effectiveness of the course, the following activities are also included in universities:

No.1. Group Discussion and Question and Answer: Through these activities, students get the opportunity to discuss various aspects of Sīrah in a civilized manner, through which they learn to tolerate differences of opinion.

No.2. Assignments: Students are given research assignments on topics in which they have to find solutions to contemporary social problems (such as sectarianism) in the light of Sīrah.

No.3. Sīrah Seminars and Conferences: These are also organized on a large scale, where scholars from different schools of thought are invited. This gives students the experience that there can be multiple perspectives on the same topic and it is important to respect all of them.

No.4. Role of Sīrah Chairs in Universities: Almost all public universities have Sīrah Chairs. Under their management, excellent programs are organized, which gives students the opportunity to learn the character of the Prophet.

Tolerance and Endurance; Key Lessons of the Course:

1. The Old Woman Throwing Rubbish: An old woman used to throw rubbish in the path of the Prophet (PBUH) every day to annoy him. He (PBUH) never showed anger at her. One day, when the rubbish was not visible, he (PBUH) inquired about her condition and found out that she was sick. He immediately went to visit her. Seeing this kindness and unparalleled gentleness of the Prophet (PBUH), the woman accepted Islam and became a Muslim.⁵

2. Journey to Ṭā'if: This incident took place in Mecca during the most difficult period of prophethood. When the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) went to Ṭā'if with the invitation to Islam, the people there mocked him and pelted him with stones. Even in this severe pain, when the angel of Allah asked permission to destroy these oppressors, he (PBUH) refused and said: "I hope that Allah will raise from their descendants people who will worship Allah and not associate anyone with Him." This incident is a great example of patience, forgiveness and hope for future guidance despite severe torture.⁶

3. The Villager Urinating in the Prophet's Mosque: Soon after arriving in Medina, a villager started urinating in the Prophet's Mosque. The companions ran towards him in anger to stop him. The Prophet (PBUH) stopped them and said, "Let him relieve himself, and then pour water over him gently." Later, the Prophet explained to him with wisdom. The villager was deeply moved by the Prophet's (PBUH) wisdom and gentleness and embraced Islam.⁷

4. The Rights of a Jewish Neighbor: The Prophet (PBUH) had a Jewish neighbor who had fallen ill. Ignoring all differences, he visited his house. He always taught the rights of a neighbor, regardless of his religion.⁸

5. The Service of Ḥaḍrat Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) and His Patience: Ḥaḍrat Anas bin Malik served the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) for ten years. According to Ḥaḍrat Anas (may

Allah be pleased with him), during these ten years, if he ever made a mistake or forgot to do something, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) never said "Uff" to him, nor did he ever scold him severely. This was the highest standard of patience, forbearance, and complete kindness even towards a servant.⁹

6. During the Battle of Uhud, when his face was wounded and his sacred tooth was martyred, he raised his hands and instead of invoking evil for the attackers, he said: "I have not been sent as a curser, but as a mercy. O Allah! Guide my people, for they do not know." This is an expression of mercy and avoidance of revenge even in the face of great hardship.¹⁰

7. A Jewish scholar (Zayd ibn Sa'nah) demanded a loan in a crowded gathering in a very rude manner. At that time, Ḥaḍrat 'Umar al-Fārūq was also present with him, who expressed his strong displeasure, but the Prophet (PBUH) said! "Let him demand his right." Then the Prophet (PBUH) paid his debt by giving him something extra in return for his rudeness. Seeing this patience and tolerance, Zayd ibn Sa'nah immediately converted to Islam.¹¹

8. Despite the mortal enmity with the Quraysh, the Treaty of Hudaibiyah: The conditions of the Quraysh of Mecca in the Treaty of Hudaibiyah were extremely unfair and harsh for the Muslims. Despite this, the Prophet (PBUH) accepted all the terms of the agreement. This is the best example of political tolerance, flexibility and a strategy for lasting peace. The Holy Quran described this treaty as a clear victory.¹²

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُّبِينًا¹³

Indeed, We have decreed for you a bright victory.

9. Conquest of Mecca: After eight years of intense hostility, oppression and wars, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) entered Mecca as a conqueror, he (peace be upon him) announced a general amnesty for all the Qura'ysh of Mecca and said: "Today there is no blame on you, go, all of you are free." This was an unprecedented tolerance of forgiveness and rising above personal revenge despite the power.¹⁴

10. Forgiving the "Wahshi" killer of Hazrat Ḥamzah: The "Wahshi" who martyred Hazrat Ḥamzah, his beloved uncle, in the Battle of Uhud, came to accept Islam after the conquest of Mecca. His act was a source of great personal grief for the Prophet (PBUH), yet he forgave him unconditionally and only said that as far as possible, do not come in front of me because seeing you reminds me of my uncle. This is a great example of tolerance and forgiveness.¹⁵

11. Treatment of prisoners of the Battle of Ḥunayn: In the Battle of Ḥunayn, more than six thousand (6000) prisoners were taken from the Hawāzin and Thaḳīf tribes, including women and children. He (PBUH) showed humanity, kindness and compassion and ordered the release of all the prisoners without any ransom at the request of the tribe. This is an unprecedented example of mercy and kindness towards the enemy.¹⁶

12. Accommodation of the Christians of Najrān in the mosque: When a delegation of Christians from Najrān came to Medina, he (PBUH) not only welcomed them to the city but also allowed them to stay inside the Prophet's Mosque. When the time for their worship came, he (PBUH) also gave them complete freedom to worship inside the mosque. This is the best example of interfaith tolerance, respect and religious freedom.¹⁷

13. Standing over the corpse of a Jew: Once, the Prophet (PBUH) was sitting in Medina when the funeral of a Jew passed in front of him. Out of respect, he (PBUH) immediately stood up. When the companions said that this was the funeral of a Jew, the Prophet said: "Isn't he a human being?" This incident is evidence that Islam teaches respect for the life, dignity and humanity of all human beings.¹⁸

Summary

This research article examines the effectiveness of Sīrah courses taught in Pakistani universities, especially in the context of promoting cohesion and tolerance. It is clear that the current Sīrah course aims to develop religious knowledge and moral training among students. The aim of this study is to assess the theoretical and practical effectiveness of these courses in the face of contemporary challenges.

The research is based on three methods. 1. Social Learning Theory. 2. Pedagogical Practices. 3. In-depth discussions with senior Sīrah teachers and experts.

My analysis proves that the university course is not just historical information, but also a practical role model, which can instill an attitude of tolerance in students. However, it can be further improved through curricular and extracurricular activities.

This theoretical foundation of tolerance & Cohesion is further strengthened by several historical events in Sīrah. The journey to Taif, the general amnesty at the conquest of Mecca, the refusal to curse in the Battle of Uhud, standing at the passing of a Jewish funeral and all other teachings; They teach the lesson of forgiveness and respect for humanity despite power. These events serve as practical modeling for students.

In addition to the course, other activities, such as group discussions, question and answer sessions, conferences and seminars, transform tolerance from theory to practical skills. The presence of Sīrah Chairs and other co-curricular activities give students the opportunity to interact practically with people from different religious and intellectual backgrounds, which reduces group prejudices and promotes harmony.

Findings and Analysis

The findings of this research are compiled through

1. Social Learning Theory
2. Pedagogical Practices
3. In-depth discussions with senior teachers and experts.

The findings of this research have shown that the Sīrah curriculum taught in universities provides a powerful theoretical framework for teaching cohesion and tolerance. The core chapters of the curriculum, especially the role of the Prophet (PBUH) as a judge and ruler, and good conduct, present practical models of forgiveness, justice and tolerance based on social learning theory. These models are reinforced by authentic events such as the general amnesty at the Conquest of Mecca and the respect for the rights of the Jews. Furthermore, the curricular activities associated with the course, such as group discussions and question and answer sessions, help to bring tolerance from theory to practice by developing students'

critical thinking and listening skills. However, if taught only through traditional lectures, the impact of this material on behavior may be limited.

The detailed discussion of experts and the analysis of active pedagogical practices concluded that there is no deficiency in the course content, but rather the need to make it more active and experiential. Although *Sīrah* Chairs and *Sīrah* Conferences create an excellent atmosphere for inter-intellectual dialogue, there are options for further improvement for the real development of tolerance & Cohesion. These options include training teachers in modern methods based on role plays and case studies, and involving students in joint social service projects with people from different religious or social backgrounds through co-curricular activities. These measures will transform tolerance & Cohesion from a learned value into a practical skill, which will promote sustainable harmony in society.

Recommendations:

1. Training programs based on modern active teaching methodologies should be organized for teachers of Seerat and Islamic studies. The focus should be on using case studies, role plays, and discussions based on ethical dilemmas instead of traditional lectures.
2. Practical assignments related to tolerance and cohesion should be made mandatory within the course. For example, students should be given the task of preparing a draft resolution of a social conflict in the light of the principles of Qazi.
3. Students should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular social services projects where they work with people from different religious, linguistic, sectarian, and social backgrounds. This practical interaction will be most effective in eliminating prejudices within them.
4. In the *Sīrah* curriculum, incidents related to tolerance and cohesion should be taught not only as a tradition, but also in an analytical manner. Students should be taught how to think in order to find solutions to modern-day problems (such as extremism or sectarianism).

References:

1. Bandura A, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*, Prentice-Hall, USA, 1986.
2. Fry H, Ketteridge, *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Routledge, UK, 2009.
3. Al-Qur'ān 33: 21
4. Al- Qur'ān 21: 107
5. Mawlānā Shiblī Nu' mānī & Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī, *Sīrat al-Nabī*, Al-Faisal Nashran, Lahore, 1991, P. 210
6. Şafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, *al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm*, al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah Lahore. 2021, P. 183
7. Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, Kitāb Dhikr al-Fiṭrah, 55
8. Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Marḍā*, 5657
9. Mansoorpuri Qazi Muhammad Suleman, *Raḥmatu li'l-'Ālamīn*, Markaz al Harmain Faisalabad, 2007 P.
10. Ibid, p. 130
11. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Şaḥīḥayn*, 6547
12. Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm, P. 473
13. Al- Qur'ān 48: 01

-
- 14 . Khalid Masood, Ḥayāt-i Rasūl-i Ummī, Dār al-Tadhkīr, Lahore, 2004, P. 493
15 . Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Maghāzī, 4072
16 . Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm, P. 567
17 . Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Maghāzī, 4380
18 . Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Janā'iz, 1312