



HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF MADRASAS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT:

The history of madrasas is old and goes back to the 11th Century. The prime aim to establish the madrasas was to educate the people, especially the Muslims, and transfer their religious understanding. During Muslim rule, the madrasas got popular, and later in the British era the growth of madrasas was there, and the madrasas also played a vital role in independence later after the creation of Pakistan the madrasas played an important role. The paper will examine the history of madrassa in Pakistan.

KEYWORDS: Madrassa, Historical analysis, Impact, Origin

Introduction:

The term "madrassa" did not exist during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)¹. However, various forms of religious education took place during his time, which could be considered precursors to the modern-day madrasas. One of the most important forms of religious education during the time of the Prophet was through the mosque², where people would gather to pray and listen to his sermons. The mosque served as a center for religious instruction and learning, and it was here that the companions of the Prophet would learn about Islam, memorize the Quran,

¹ Alwi Alatas, "Islamic Educational Institutions in the Past: Kuttāb and Madrasa," *IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies* 4, no. 2 (2021): 192–99.

² Salah Zaimeche, "Education in Islam: The Role of the Mosque," *United Kingdom: Foundation for Science Technology and Civilization*, 2002.

and study the teachings of the Prophet ³.

The Quran also emphasizes the importance of seeking knowledge and education. In Surah Al-Zumar, verse 9, it states: "Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding." The given verse highlights the importance of education and knowledge. There is another verse in the holy Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 269, which states: "He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom is indeed given great wealth. "In this holy verse of the Quran, it focuses on the importance of the knowledge and how Islam emphasis on the education and wisdom.

Literature Review

Origins of Madrasas in Pakistan:

Madrasas have their roots in the Islamic Golden Age, which saw the establishment of institutions dedicated to the study of Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and philosophy ⁴. This knowledge provide institutions are known as madrasas, and they are spread in the Muslim world and also in the Indian subcontinent. In the Indian subcontinent, the first ever madrassa was established in Multan (Now Pakistan) in the 11th century by the Ghaznavid ruler Sultan Mahmud⁵ The Madrasas, or Islamic religious schools, have a long history in Pakistan. During British colonial rule in

³ Asma Afsaruddin, "Muslim Views on Education: Parameters, Purview, and Possibilities," *J. Cath. Leg. Stud.* 44 (2005): 143.

⁴ Ahmed Renima, Habib Tiliouine, and Richard J Estes, "The Islamic Golden Age: A Story of the Triumph of the Islamic Civilization," *The State of Social Progress of Islamic Societies: Social, Economic, Political, and Ideological Challenges*, 2016, 25–52.

⁵ FA Nizami, "5 Islam in the Indian Sub-Continent," *The World's Religions: Islam*, 2002, 62.

India, a system of modern education was introduced, which was seen by some Muslim scholars as a threat to Islamic education and culture.

As a result, a movement emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century to establish traditional Islamic schools, or madrasas, to provide Islamic education to Muslim children. This movement was particularly strong in the northwestern region of British India, which is now Pakistan⁶. The number of madrasas were established in United India during the British rule in India among them Darul-Uloom Deoband which was established in the year 1866 in Deoband and another important madrasa was Nadwatul Ulama it was established in the year 1894 in the Lucknow. In British India Calcutta Madrasah is the first Education institution in British India, was set up in October 1780 A.D. by Warren Hastings of the first Governor General of East India Company at the request of a considerable number of credited and learner Muslims of Calcutta ⁷.

The first modern madrasa in Pakistan was established in 1947 in the city of Karachi, which was then the capital of Pakistan. The Jamia Binoria International madrasa was founded by Mufti Muhammad Shafi, a prominent Islamic scholar, and has since become one of the largest madrasas in the country⁸. These madrasas provided education to the ruling elite, and their curriculum included Islamic law, and theology, However, the madrasa system in Pakistan took off in the 1980s with the support of

⁶ Yoginder Sikand, *Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India* (Penguin Books India, 2005).

⁷ Geoffrey Carnall and Colin Nicholson, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* (Edinburgh University Press, 1989).

⁸ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Religious Education and the Rhetoric of Reform: The Madrasa in British India and Pakistan," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 2 (1999): 294–323.

General Zia-ul-Haq, who was the President of Pakistan at the time. Zia-ul-Haq was a conservative Muslim who believed in the importance of Islamic education and encouraged the establishment of madrasas throughout the country⁹.

Today, madrasas play an important role in Pakistan's education system and society. They provide religious education to millions of students, and many madrasa graduates go on to become Islamic scholars or leaders in their communities and the number of religious scholars are serving in the mainstream political system of Pakistan. However, there has also been criticism of madrasas in Pakistan, while having arguments that they promote a narrow, conservative interpretation of Islam and may even contribute to extremism and terrorism¹⁰.

Madrasas education in Pakistan:

There is a long history of madrasas in Pakistan after independence they have an active role in promoting education. Several studies have focused on the growth and spread of madrasas in Pakistan. ¹¹ noted that the number of madrasas in the country had increased significantly in the 1980s and 1990s, due in part to funding from foreign sources. Many other authors, such as those ¹² have highlighted the impacts of madrassas on the society

⁹ Marie Lall, "Education Dilemmas in Pakistan: The Current Curriculum Reform," in *Education as a Political Tool in Asia* (Routledge, 2009), 193–211.

¹⁰ Eamon Murphy and Ahmad Rashid Malik, "Pakistan Jihad: The Making of Religious Terrorism," *IPRI Journal* 1, no. 2 (2009): 17–19.

¹¹ Zaman, "Religious Education and the Rhetoric of Reform: The Madrasa in British India and Pakistan."

¹² Robert Looney, "Reforming Pakistan's Educational System: The Challenge of the Madrassas," *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES* 28, no. 3 (2003): 257–74.

and the political system of Pakistan and their possible role in promoting the extremist approaches in the country.

There are many other scholars whose studies have explored that the education system of madrasas mainly focuses on memorization rather than critical and analytical thinking and approach.¹³ It is elaborated that the lack of modern subjects in madrasa curricula limits the employment opportunities available to graduates, which can perpetuate poverty and inequality¹⁴.

Several scholars have examined the relationship between madrasa education and terrorism in Pakistan.¹⁵ found that madrasas were not the sole source of terrorism, but argued that they contributed to a broader culture of violence and intolerance. Other researchers, such as¹⁶ have argued that madrasa education can play an important role in eradicating the foundations of radicalization by providing a religious and moral education that emphasizes peace and tolerance.

The role of the Pakistani state in regulating madrasas has also been

¹³ Helen N Boyle, "Memorization and Learning in Islamic Schools," *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 478–95.

¹⁴ David J Roof, "Problems of Common Interest: The Shaping of Education in Pakistan, 1970-2014," *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences (PJCSS)* 9, no. 1 (2015): 35–51.

¹⁵ Kevin R McClure, "Madrasas and Pakistan's Education Agenda: Western Media Misrepresentation and Policy Recommendations," *International Journal of Educational Development* 29, no. 4 (2009): 334–41.

¹⁶ Syahraini Tambak, "The Method of Counteracting Radicalism in Schools: Tracing the Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Learning," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 45, no. 1 (2021): 104–26.

important for further research. ¹⁷ argued that the state has been ineffective in regulating madrasas, which has allowed extremist groups to use them as a platform for promoting their ideologies. Some Other scholars, such as ¹⁸ and¹⁹, have suggested that the state has taken steps to regulate madrasas, but still, there is a need to ensure the check and balances and facilities for madrasas like universities to get positive output and quality education as per modern needs.

Development of Madrasas in Pakistan:

The first madrasas in this region now Pakistan were established in the early 20th century during British colonial rule, and they played a significant role in the country's independence movement. After Pakistan gained independence in 1947, madrasas continued to play an important role in the country's educational and religious landscape. During the 1980s and 1990s, the number of madrasas in Pakistan increased rapidly, particularly those that were funded and supported by Saudi Arabia²⁰. These madrasas were often associated with the rise of Islamist extremism and terrorism in the country. Some of the most notorious terrorist groups in Pakistan, the religious extremist organizations such as the Taliban and Lashkar-e-Taiba, have close ties to madrasas. In response to concerns

¹⁷ Masooda Bano, “Beyond Politics: The Reality of a Deobandi Madrasa in Pakistan,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 1 (2007): 43–68.

¹⁸ Myriam Cherti and Laura Bradley, “Inside Madrassas,” *London: Institute for Public Policy Research*, 2011.

¹⁹ David Vestenskov et al., *The Role of Madrasas: Assessing Parental Choice, Financial Pipelines and Recent Developments in Religious Education in Pakistan & Afghanistan* (Royal Danish Defence College, 2018).

²⁰ Madiha Afzal, “Saudi Arabia’s Hold on Pakistan,” *Policy Brief, Brookings Publications*, 2019.

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about extremism and terrorism, the Pakistani government has taken steps to regulate and monitor madrasas in the country²¹. In 2001, the government launched the Madrasa Reform Project, which aimed to modernize madrasa curricula and bring them in line with mainstream education. Though the program got little success due to no or less involvement of madrasas-related elements, even the graduates were not taken into confidence. In recent years, there have been some positive developments in the development of madrasas in Pakistan. After 2018 in the year 2019 the government of Pakistan announced to implement plans to merge madrasas with mainstream schools to improve the quality of education and reduce the influence of extremist ideologies. The government has also launched initiatives to provide vocational training to madrasa students, to prepare them for mainstream jobs and they shouldn't be limited to traditional religious roles²².

The development of madrasas in Pakistan remains a contentious issue, with some seeing them as important institutions for religious and cultural education, while others view them as breeding grounds for extremism and terrorism. The challenge for Pakistan is to strike a balance between the positive aspects of madrasas and to address the drawbacks or the negative things associated with these religious schools.

Impact of Madrasas on Pakistan's Social and Political Fabric:

²¹ Waseem Ullah, Asif Salim, and Zermina Baloch, "Analyzing the Counter Terrorism Policies of Pakistan.," *Dialogue (Pakistan)* 14, no. 4 (2019).

²² Fazal Rabbi and Shahid Habib, "Discourse on Madrassa Education Reform in Pakistan: Challenges to State Narrative and Its Implications," *Al Basirah* 8, no. 1 (2019).

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The Madrasas have played a crucial role in shaping Pakistan's religious and cultural identity. They have provided religious education and guidance to millions of Pakistanis, and have produced generations of scholars, religious leaders, and activists these madrasas are the major source of education for the poor class of the country. The other side of the Madrasas has also been associated with religious extremism, terrorism, and sectarianism. Some Madrasas have been accused of promoting a narrow, intolerant form of Islam that is hostile to other religions and cultures, and that encourages violence against non-Muslims and even other Muslims who do not share their particular interpretation of Islam this interpretation is generally found in the madrasas which area on the foothills of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border²³.

The one side of Madrasas has also contributed to the fragmentation of Pakistani society along sectarian and ethnic lines. Many Madrasas are affiliated with specific religious or political groups, and they often promote sectarian ideologies that emphasize differences rather than commonalities between different groups²⁴. The madrasas on sectarian lines are generally sponsored by political leaders of right-wing parties to gain political benefits and it was high during the zia ul haq era ²⁵.

In addition, the proliferation of Madrasas in Pakistan has created a parallel educational system that operates outside of government oversight and

²³ Tariq Rahman, "Madrasas: The Potential for Violence in Pakistan?," in *Madrasas in South Asia* (Routledge, 2007), 71–94.

²⁴ Husain Haqqani, "Weeding out the Heretics": Sectarianism in Pakistan," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 4 (2006): 73–89.

²⁵ Moonis Ahmar, "The Dynamics of Elite Politics in Pakistan and Its Nexus with Clergy and Military," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 2 (2015): 44–64.

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regulation. Due to no proper regulating body, it has led to concerns about the quality of education being provided by Madrasas, as well as the lack of opportunities for Madrasa students to gain the skills and knowledge needed to participate fully in Pakistan's economy and society. The growth of Madrasas is present in all provinces of Pakistan, and their distribution varies depending on the population, demographics, and religious traditions of each province. Here is a brief overview of the majority of madrasas in all four provinces of Pakistan²⁶.

Status of Madrasas in all four Provinces:

Punjab: Punjab is the most populous province of Pakistan and has a significant number of madrasas. The madrasas are mainly affiliated with the Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia, and it is the largest madrasa board in Pakistan apart from its other madrassa boards are also present such as the Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Ahle Sunnat ²⁷.

Sindh: Sindh province is multi-language and has a diverse population, with significant Hindu and Muslim communities and both communities live in peace and harmony. The majority of madrasas in Sindh are affiliated with the Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia, Pakistan, as well as the Ittehad-e-Tanzeemat-e-Madaris-e-Deeniya.²⁸ Several madrasas in Sindh follow the Deobandi and Bareilvi traditions and a number of madrasas are in rural areas of the province.

²⁶ C Christine Fair, *The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan* (United States Institute of Peace Press Washington, DC, 2008).

²⁷ Azad Ahmad Khan, "Religious Education and Identity Formation: A Case Study of Pakistan," *South Asian*, 2014, 75.

²⁸ Bano, "Beyond Politics: The Reality of a Deobandi Madrasa in Pakistan."

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Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: This province is known as the home of madrassas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is home to several major madrasas, including Darul Uloom Haqqania, which is known for its association with the Taliban and its controversial role in promoting militancy in the region. The majority of madrasas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are affiliated with the Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia, Pakistan, as well as other madrasa boards such as the Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Ahle Sunnat Pakistan²⁹.

Baluchistan: Though Baluchistan is the least populous province of Pakistan and has a relatively small number of madrasas compared to other provinces. In Baluchistan the majority of madrasas in Baluchistan are affiliated with the Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia, Pakistan, as well as other madrasa boards such as the Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Ahle Sunnat Pakistan. It is important to note that the influence of madrasas in all provinces varies and it is depending on local factors like political, social, and economic conditions as well as sectarian affiliations.³⁰.

Madrassa boards in Pakistan:

In Pakistan, several Madrasa boards are responsible for the registration, regulation, and accreditation of madrasas. These boards include:

- 1-Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia, Pakistan (also known as the Federation of Islamic Madrasas)
- 2-Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Ahle Sunnat Pakistan
- 3-Ittehad-e-Tanzeemat-e-Madaris-e-Deeniya (also known as the Alliance

²⁹ Abdur Rehman Shah and Afsah Qazi, "Political Survival through Religious Instrumentalism: Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Fazlur Rehman's Resistance to Madrassah Reforms in Pakistan," *Politics and Religion* 16, no. 1 (2023): 45–72.

³⁰ Fair, *The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan*.

of Religious Schools)

4-Rabita-tul-Madaris Al-Islamia (also known as the Association of Islamic Schools)

5- Wafaq al Madaris Shia (Jamia Al Muntazar Model Town Lahore)

6-Kanzul Madaris Dawat-e- Islami,Karachi,Pakistan.

In Pakistan, there are different regulatory boards and organizations, madrasas in Pakistan these madrasa boards exist though there is criticism on these boards that they don't follow international standards to modernize madrasas of Pakistan like other educational institutions.

Aim of the Study:

The present study aims to highlight the madrasa education system in Pakistan in Pakistan and to deepen the understanding of this important institution and its role in shaping Islamic thought and practice in the country, and to inform efforts to address the challenges and opportunities facing madrasa education in Pakistan today.

Statement of Problem:

Despite the significant role of madrasa education in shaping the religious and cultural identity of Pakistan, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the history and evolution of madrasa education in the country. This has resulted in a limited understanding of the origins, development, and key actors that have shaped the madrasa education system in Pakistan. The lack of research on this area contributed to the little knowledge and understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing madrasa education in contemporary Pakistan and has hindered efforts to improve the quality and relevance of madrasa education in the country. Therefore, there is a need for a detailed and nuanced analysis of the historical view of madrasa education in Pakistan, which can provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers seeking to address the problems

and challenges faced by the madrasa education system in the country.

Research Question:

What are the factors for the growth of madrasas in Pakistan and how did they increase rapidly in the country.

The above-given research questions help to provide the historical, political, cultural dimensions of madrasa education in Pakistan and can help to generate insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the madrasa education system in the country.

Methodology:

. The historical analysis of madrasa education in Pakistan typically involves a combination of mixed methods, including archival research, document analysis, interviews with stakeholders, and ethnographic observation. Archival research involves the collection and analysis of historical documents, such as government records, academic publications, and religious texts, to trace the development of madrasa education in Pakistan over time. In this method, it is easy to find the conditions that led to the evolution of the madrassas and their historical context and rather any madrassa was established due to a religious point of view or the economic cause in particular areas of the country or any other reason behind their formation and establishment³¹.

The study on this area involves the primary and the secondary sources related to the madrassa in Pakistan, like the visits of madrasas and their syllabus test books, and educational plans. This method helps to find out the actual condition and their system of education and it helps to find the rapid

³¹ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, vol. 15 (University of Chicago Press, 1982).

increase of madrasas in Pakistan. Interviews with stakeholders, such as madrasa administrators, teachers, and students, can provide firsthand perspectives on the experience of madrasa education in Pakistan, including its social, cultural, and political implications. The ethnographic study on this topic helps to find out the conditions, the education system, and course contents of the madrasas and their leisure activities, and their social grooming.

Discussions and Results:

The historical analysis could reveal how madrasas in Pakistan have evolved, from their origins as centers of Islamic education and scholarship to their current role as institutions of primary and secondary education. It will also find out the reasons that helped to increase the rapid growth of madrasas and their education system in the country like pedagogy and curriculum, the social demand by the people state patronage, and religious revivalism. The analysis could examine the content and structure of madrasa education in Pakistan, including the religious texts, subjects, and methodologies used in teaching. It could also identify changes and continuities in the curriculum and pedagogy over time, and how they have responded to social, political, and cultural demands. Societal impact: The analysis could assess the social, cultural, and political implications of madrasa education in Pakistan, including its role in shaping religious beliefs and practices, its contribution to the development of Islamic scholarship and thought, and its impact on broader society. It could also examine the challenges and opportunities facing madrasa education in Pakistan, such as the need for modernization and reform, and the role of the state and civil society in addressing these challenges. The analysis of present studies examines the relations with the world specially the Muslim world as Pakistan's Deobandi and Salafi movements were influenced by

the Indian Deobandi and Salafis after the creation of Pakistan, Pakistani madrasas get foreign findings in terms of the education system and their expenses are sponsored by the mostly Arab world.

Conclusion:

This study concludes that the madrassas in Pakistan reveal a complex and evolving system of religious education that has played a significant role in shaping Pakistani society, culture, and politics. The evolution of madrasas in Pakistan has been shaped by a range of factors, including political, social, and economic developments, as well as the influence of religious leaders and organizations. The start of the war against terrorism and government policies helped or in some areas compelled madrasas in Pakistan to work out to change their curriculum and work on quality to compete with the mainstream education system. However, certain issues need to be addressed on the extremist side of madrassas. There is a need to reform the madrasas and government needs to support their education system and provide proper funding to these Islamic institutes to get the greater benefit in terms of education and religious knowledge and utilize the madrasa graduates in a better way.

Finally, this paper highlights the importance of understanding the education system of madrasas their growth, role in development of the society, religious education, and its promotion in rural areas without any government agency. Further to highlight the problems and challenges faced by these madrasas must be resolved with the help of the government and other stakeholders. It will help out to promote social, political economic, and religious development in the country.



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