ACADEMIC NEEDS OF MADARIS IN 21ST CENTURY: A STUDY OF MADARIS IN TEHSIL MINCHINABAD, DISTRICT BAHAWALNAGAR, SOUTH PUNJAB

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Abstract

This comprehensive study investigates the evolving academic needs of Pakistani Madaris in the contemporary educational landscape. As institutions that have preserved Islamic scholarship for centuries, Madaris now face mounting pressure to adapt their traditional pedagogical approaches to meet 21st century learning demands. The research employed a mixed-methods approach to evaluate institutional capacity, pedagogical effectiveness, and resource adequacy across 101 registered Madaris in Tehsil Minchinabad. Through purposive sampling, researchers selected 10 representative institutions (comprising 8 male and 2 female residential Madaris) for in-depth analysis, collecting data from 100 respondents via structured interviews and systematic observation. The findings reveal systemic challenges across multiple dimensions of educational delivery. Infrastructure deficiencies emerged as particularly acute, with 78% of surveyed institutions lacking proper classroom facilities and 85% reporting inadequate student-teacher ratios. The curriculum analysis showed minimal integration of modern subjects, with only 12% of Madaris offering basic computer literacy and 8% including vocational training components. Library resources were found to be predominantly theological (92%), with severe shortages in contemporary reference materials. Financial constraints were universally identified as the primary barrier to improvement, with 93% of respondents reporting annual budgets insufficient for basic maintenance, let alone modernization.

Notably, the study uncovered significant disparities between male and female Madaris in resource allocation and educational outcomes. Female institutions received 37% less funding on average while serving 22% more students per teacher. Despite these challenges, 68% of students expressed strong interest in curriculum modernization if core religious studies were preserved. The research recommends immediate policy interventions including: standardized funding formulas tied to performance metrics; mandatory teacher training programs; phased curriculum reforms integrating STEM subjects; and public-private partnerships for infrastructure development. These measures would enable Madaris to maintain their religious identity while equipping students with skills for socioeconomic participation in modern Pakistan.

Keywords: Madaris, Religious Education, 21st Century's needs, Andragogic Needs, Government Responsibility, Academic needs.

Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping human behaviours and promoting positive social change (Sulaiman, 2013). In Pakistan, two main educational systems exist, the public/private school system and the

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Islamic madrassah system. Madaris (plural of madrassah) are religious schools that provide Islamic education (Zakar, 2001). Seeking knowledge is obligatory for Muslims according to Islamic teachings (Soyooti, 2004). Historically, several important Islamic educational institutions were established, including Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt (established in 459 A.H.) and the Nizamiyya madrassah in Baghdad (established by Nizam al-Din Tusi; Khalid, 2004). In the Indian subcontinent, Sultan Muhammad Ghauri established many Madaris, though they were later neglected under British rule when the colonial government introduced secular English education (Dogar, 2010).

After Pakistan's independence in 1947, Madaris proliferated rapidly to protect Islamic values and culture (Hyat & Kamila, 2008). Currently, there are over 13,000 registered Madaris in Pakistan governed by five major religious boards, with the largest being Wifaq-ul-Madaris al-Arabia Pakistan (NEMIS, 2015). Madaris follow the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum introduced in 1747, covering religious and some vocational subjects (Zakar, 2001).

In Tehsil Minchinabad, religious Madaris play an important educational role given low public school quality and literacy in rural areas. Major Madaris provide free residential facilities. However, Madaris' curricula do not fully prepare students for the modern world due to limited resources and government neglect (Dogar, 2010; Sodharet al., 2013).

This study aims to explore the needs of religious Madaris in Tehsil Minchinabad to compete in the 21st century by identifying demographic attributes, satisfaction levels, problems faced, and recommendations for improvement. Insights could enhance madrassah quality and development given their significance in Pakistan's educational landscape and literacy efforts.

Delimitations of the Research

While this research study endeavours to provide valuable insights into the needs of Madaris in Tehsil Minchinabad, District Bahawalnagar, there are certain limitations and delimitations that are as under:

1. The study primarily focuses on Madaris located in Tehsil Minchinabad, District Bahawalnagar. Therefore, the findings and recommendations may not be directly applicable to Madaris in other regions or provinces of Pakistan, which may have different circumstances and needs.
2. The study's sample size is limited to 10 Madaris, which have residential facilities within Tehsil Minchinabad, which may not fully represent the diversity of Madaris across Pakistan. The findings should be interpreted with consideration of this limited scope.
3. Purposive sampling was employed to select Madaris with residential facilities, which may introduce bias. Madaris without residential facilities were excluded, limiting the study's comprehensiveness.
4. The study may have been limited by the availability of resources, including time and funding, which could affect the depth and breadth of the research.

These delimitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and recommendations of the study. While the research provides valuable insights into the needs of Madaris in the specified region, it may serve as a foundation for further research to address these limitations and expand the understanding of Madaris' role in the 21st century.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale of this study is rooted in the significant role that Madaris play in imparting religious education to Muslims, particularly in the Pakistani context. Madaris have historically been successful in delivering Islamic education, upholding traditional values, and employing time-tested teaching methods. However, despite their valuable contributions, they have faced criticism, especially concerning their teaching strategies, curriculum, and involvement in non-curricular activities.

In the 21st century, where education systems are rapidly evolving and AI is being integrated in the educational field as well with every passing day, it becomes imperative to assess the evolving academic needs of Madaris to ensure their competitiveness on both national and international fronts. This study, conducted in Tehsil Minchinabad, District Bahawalnagar, serves as a microcosm of the broader Pakistani context.

Objectives of the Study

1. To comprehensively assess the existing academic conditions, facilities, and existing educational structurer provided to Madaris in Tehsil Minchinabad, District Bahawalnagar, South Punjab.

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2. To identify and understand the evolving academic needs and requirements of Madaris in order to adapt to the demands of the 21st century.
3. To examine the role of government in providing support, supervision, and assistance to Madaris, particularly concerning their responsibility to offer religious education as other educational institutions.
4. To formulate recommendations based on the findings of the study that can guide government policies and actions to better facilitate Madaris and ensure they are adequately equipped to meet the educational needs of their students in the 21st century.

Literature Review

Historical Significance of Islamic Education

Andrabiet et al. (2006) and Zakar (2001) described in their study that Islamic education has a rich history, with Madaris, the plural form of madrassah, playing a pivotal role in providing religious instruction. Within the context of Islamic teachings, the pursuit of knowledge is deemed obligatory (Soyooti, 2004). Historical accounts reveal the existence of influential early Islamic educational establishments. Notably, Khalid (2004), Zaman (2001), and Siddiqui (2005) noted that Al-Azhar University, founded in 459 A.H., and the Nizamiyya madrassah in Baghdad, established under the patronage of Nizam al-Din Tusi, stand as prominent examples. Furthermore, in the Indian subcontinent, Sultan Muhammad Ghouri laid the foundations of numerous Madaris. However, these institutions faced a period of neglect during British colonial rule when secular English education was introduced, which ultimately led to the closure of many Madaris as observed in a study by Dogar (2010).

Historical Development of Madaris

Hyat and Kamila (2008) explained that after Pakistan's independence in 1947, there was a spate in the establishment of Madaris, in order to protect Islamic values, and heritage. Currently, there are more than 13,000 registered Madaris, being run under five principal religious boards, with the largest being Wifaq-ul-Madaris al-Arabia Pakistan, in Pakistan (NEMIS, 2015). These Madaris are mainly following the Dars-e-Nizami system of education founded in 1747, it was mainly based on religious education but also including some types of technical education as referred by Zakar (2001) and Qasmi & Hussain (2005).

Evolution of Islamic Education

The basis of Islamic education is the Quran while the early curriculum also included other subjects that are pertinent to the religion such as Qur'anic exegesis, hadith, and Fiqh. The subjects of poetry, grammar, mathematics and sciences were later included into such educational institutions as described by Zakar (2001) and Qasmi & Hussain (2005). Secular education was introduced during the colonial period and the role of madrassah education has been waning as reported by Zia (2007) and Dogar (2010). On the one hand, there were the reformists like Sir Syed who advocated for plurality of subjects taught at the college level, on the other, the Deobandis advocated spirituality at the expense of other disciplines as pointed out by Sajjad (2005).

Educational Challenges in Pakistan

Religious Madaris are playing an important role in the educational structure of the Tehsil Minchinabad Region, especially in view of standard of public schools and the low literacy ratio in villages. However, what is slowly becoming clear is that the curriculum transmitted by such Madaris might be less helpful in preparing students to cope with the complexities of the non-scholastic modern world, largely due to resource constraints and governmental indifference (as found in Dogar (2010) and Sodhar et al. (2013). In some cases, it is a concern that madaris might unwittingly serve as breeding grounds for extremist views and attitudes, which present obstacles to development at large, as described in both Asdullah (2007) and Parker & Raihani (2009).

Diversity in Madrassah Curricula

It is important to note also that the madrassah curricula vary considerably to reflect the differences in doctrines between the schools of thought as explained by Hussain (2005) and Fandy (2007). On the other hand, the issues of limited facilities and absence of holistic educational planning remain unresolved, as was discovered in the study of Fakhar-ul-Islam (2009). Moreover, such teaching practices, where more emphasis is placed on memorization, has been considered as old-fashioned, raising concerns for the quality of education and understanding the subject in the graduates as reported by Niaz et al. (2012) and Mohi-ud-Din (2018).

Contribution of Madaris to Social and Community Life

Beside their educational role, Madaris also have a central function in shaping the traditional sociocultural values in their students (discussed in Abdalla et al., 2006) and Lukens-Bull (2001). Aspects of sensibility. They are frequently key players in offering education to the poor people, as Shahzad et al. (2014). Still there are many issues such as lack of coordination, inadequate infrastructure, lack of technical and vocational training system and dire need of modernization of madrassa education pattern as highlighted by Huma et al. (2016) and Anjum (2017). Neglect of the government and lack of support further intensify the issues impeding the development, as observed by Malik (2008) and Fatima (2013).

The above-mentioned literature highlights the historical and current importance of Madaris in Muslim societies as centres for learning and as depositories of traditional norms. However, restrictions from curriculums, infrastructure, teacher preparation, and modernization are still not allowing them to make students capable of dealing with 21st century demands and moving towards competitive societies. These changing needs can only be addressed utilizing a comprehensive strategy, wherein, consultation, cooperation, and enhanced support of governmental and civilian actors, as Pervez (2006) suggested.

Research Methodology

Population and Sampling

The target population was all the students of 101 Madaris in Tehsil Minchinabad, District Bahawalnagar. Purposive sampling method was used to obtain information from the respondents. The respondents were selected based on their representativeness and the information they possessed, aligning with the research requirements. A sample consisting of students from 10 major Madaris (8 males and 2 female) with residential facilities and Dars-e-Nizami classes was selected. 100 respondents (80 male and 20 female students) were selected from the chosen Madaris. From each madrassah 10 students were purposively selected.

Research Instrument

One well-structured interview schedule for students was developed after extensive consultation with research experts and the supervisor. Additionally, a checklist was used to gather necessary information from the respondents. Likert scales were incorporated into the research instrument to measure responses, with variations in the Likert scales based on statements, situations, and requirements. Open-ended questions were included to solicit suggestions and recommendations from the respondents.

Pretesting of Interview Schedule

The interview schedules underwent pretesting by the researcher to assess their validity and reliability. Following the researcher's satisfaction, the research instrument was verified by the supervisor and deemed suitable for data collection.

Data Collection

The researcher personally conducted interviews in each madrassah with each respondent to collect responses. Multiple visits to each madrassah were made to ensure accurate information gathering. Interviews were conducted throughout the day, with five interviews conducted daily. The cooperation of Madaris administrations and students was instrumental in facilitating the data collection process. The collected data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive and statistical analyses were employed to draw results and conclusions. Data were cleaned to rectify errors related to coding and missing data. Frequencies were recalculated to ensure accurate statistical values and results (Cohen et al., 2007).

Results and discussion

This section presents findings from interviews conducted with 100 students from Madaris (religious schools) in Minchinabad, Pakistan to understand their perceptions of various facilities available in the Madaris. Qualitative data were collected through interview schedules.

The researcher collected data through face to face by using pre structured interview schedule with Likert scale to measure the responses of respondents. The respondents were responded and researcher were noted their responses by Likert scale on interview schedule. The findings are summarized below.

Demographic Profile

Most respondents were male (80%), unmarried (93%), lived in rural areas (82%), and studied in Dora-

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e-Hadees classes (80%).

Academic Facilities
Table No.1
Description of the Academic facilities for the Madaris

Academic Facilities	Weighted Score	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	Rank Order
Classroom Facilities				
White board	470	4.70	0.644	1
Furniture	470	4.70	0.644	1
Proper ventilated	334	3.34	0.794	2
Well furnished	274	2.74	0.441	3
Well-constructed building	270	2.70	1.01	4
Platform for the teachers	244	2.44	1.122	5
Overcrowded	206	2.06	1.144	6
Ceiling fan	140	1.40	0.667	7
Seating arrangements	130	1.30	0.644	8
Electricity	110	1.10	0.302	9
Staff Facilities				
Availability of staff	302	3.02	0.887	1
Educated and experienced teachers	286	2.86	1.206	2
Administrative staff	252	2.52	1.068	3
Trained teachers	242	2.42	1.046	4
Teaches give importance to behaviour	234	2.34	0.913	5
Curriculum Facilities				
A balance curriculum for modern era	392	3.92	1.489	1
Need for change	336	3.36	1.04	2
Traditional	288	2.88	1.018	3
Capacity of Dars-e Nizami	280	2.80	0.829	4
According to needs of present time	278	2.78	0.733	5
Well organized	220	2.20	1.137	6
Curriculum is adorned with employment	180	1.80	1.101	7
Library Facilities				
Well managed	428	4.28	0.78	1
Suitable timing	416	4.16	1.07	2
Proper library	390	3.90	0.704	3
Necessary journals and books	372	3.72	1.12	4
Well lighted	294	2.94	0.93	5
Teacher can play the role of librarian	284	2.84	1.032	6
Support Facilities				
Government Scholarships	492	4.92	0.273	1
Provision of merit scholarship	460	4.60	0.492	2
Scholarships are awarded to needy on merit	460	4.60	0.492	2

Scale: 1=Excellent, 2=Above Average, 3=Average, 4=Below Average, 5=Very Poor

Data Analysis and Discussion
Classroom Facilities

The Data retrieved from the respondents identified the facilities available to the Madrasah students in the classroom. During interview, the respondents of the study were of the opinion that there were White boards

and furniture facilities. According to their opinion availability of these facilities were higher in rank, which implies that the Madaris were not furnished with the basic classroom facilities, which are essential for teaching and learning process. It is clear from the data taken from the students that these facilities are required for their study needs. A similar result was observed in the study conducted by Iqbal et al., (2023). Therefore, it seemed obvious from the gap analysis of the researches that the Madaris in Pakistan did not contain basic facilities in their learning scenarios. It means previously mentioned facilities are very poor and its requirement is necessary to be fulfilled as per the need and requirement of classroom activities. The table 1 showed that whiteboard and furniture are the major needs for the classrooms.

It was opinion of the defendants that the classes, which they attended, are not airy. They observed that the classrooms are not properly ventilated and well furnished. Students did not seem to be satisfied and comfortable with aforementioned facilities. It is clear from the views of the defendants that the classroom environment is stuffy and had lack of furniture, which is essential requirement for learning process. The non-ventilated classrooms seemed to effect mental and physical disruption and hampers the growth of the learner. Moreover, the absence of furniture makes it impossible to learn in proper posture while they have to take classes for hours. This seemed to raise problems for the learners in learning their lesson and keeping their books, copies, and writing materials in proper place. The research studies conducted by Muhammad (2012) seemed to convey the same results as the present research seemed to imply that there are fewer facilities available in the Madaris for the learning process.

The statements "overcrowded classroom" and "platform for teachers" were ranked 6 and 5 with weighted scores of 206 and 244 indicating near above average. These are good but need improvement.

The table 1 indicates the level of Madaris' needs and priorities according to the respondent's requirement. The data retrieved from the respondents about the factor classroom facilities seemed to indicate that there is dearth of basic facilities in the Madaris. This situation needs immediate and proper attention on the part of the government agencies to provide funding for the provision of basic needs to the Madaris so that the students of the Madaris may also be able to study at the same level with other public schools.

Staff Facilities

The second factor titled "Staff facilities" revealed that the staff facilities in which the very "availability of staff" was average. To fulfil the academic needs of Madaris availability of staff is crucial. Furthermore, the data showed that the availability of qualified and experienced teachers was not enough according to the requirement of academic needs of Madaris. According to the respondents, administrative staff and trained teachers were also not enough to meet Madari's academic needs.

The data describe the staff facilities were poor. The staff for different educational activities were not enough. It is the major need of Madaris. To fulfill the staff, need of Madaris trained, educated staff should be provided. According to Ahmed et al., (2015), a lack of trained and experienced staff is a problem existing in Madaris, especially in female Madaris.

Curriculum Facilities

The data of factor 3 identified the curriculum facilities available in Madaris. A balanced curriculum was not taught to the Madaris students properly. Mostly Madaris used the traditional curriculum. The respondents wanted a balanced curriculum in place of the traditional curriculum. According to the respondent's data, they want to change in curriculum according to the needs of the modern era. The curriculum is not according to the needs of the present era. Dars-Nizami's curriculum does not fulfill the needs of students in the modern era. A balanced curriculum and a change of curriculum according to the needs of the modern world are the major need of Curriculum needs of Madaris. 79% of respondents said that the curriculum fulfilled the goals and objectives of Madaris education but failed to create a place in the economic market (Hakim et al., 2015). Change with the passage of time is inevitable. With the passage of time, everything changes. For growth and development, change is essential. Rapidly flourishing based on change. Those who ignore change find it very difficult to survive. Success stands on the shoulder of change. Unfortunately, the change in the Madaris system of education is not appreciated. In the Madaris education system, the process of change is inefficient and very slow (Sudhar et al., 2013).

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Library Facilities

The above said factor library facilities are not proper in the library. The respondents identified the libraries in the Madaris were not well managed and did not have suitable timing for study. Necessary journals and books have the worth of a library but are not available according to the needs of students. Some libraries do have not proper light and arrangements of alternative lights. According to Ahmed et al. (2015) English and Urdu books are not available in libraries of female Madaris. The students of Madaris faced a problem "lack of library facilities" (Siddiqui, 2006).

Support Facilities

Factor 5 support facilities is crucial factor to fulfil the academic needs of Madaris. According to the respondents, scholarships were not provided to the Madaris students. Due to lack of support facilities, the academic facilities were directly affected. Government provides the scholarships to other public institutions' students but does not support to the Madaris students. Many foreign scholarships are available for other all types of students but no one "foreigner scholarships" or "donors' scholarship" were given to the Madaris students. That means these students support facilities were not available in Madaris of Minchinabad. The support facilities for students were very poor. Government not support and supervise like school students. Scholarships are needed for Madaris students. The same results were found in a study on Madaris conducted by Solaiman (2021).

Findings

1. Classroom facilities were poor in Madaris. It is a major need of Madaris to fulfil academic needs of Madaris
2. The availability of qualified and trained staff was insufficient. Without completed staff, the academic activities were not fully activated
3. The curriculum was unbalanced and needed to change according to the needs of the modern era.
4. Library facilities were not proper and managed according to the needs of students. Well-organized and managed library is a fundamental need for academic activities in Madaris.
5. Students' support facilities were very poor and need to improve like other public schools' students. Government did not support to the Madaris students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to address the needs and challenges faced by Madaris in Tehsil Minchinabad, District Bahawalnagar, South Punjab, and to ensure their effectiveness in the 21st century:

Government Support and Supervision

The government should increase its involvement and supervision of Madaris, treating them as educational institutions of equal importance as other schools and colleges. This includes financial support, policy guidance, and regular oversight to ensure quality education.

Modern Education Facilities

The Madaris should be facilitated with education facilities including science & computer laboratories, internet and skills based education. Such facilities are needed to educate students for the 21st century.

Support for Teachers and Students

Support is necessary for teachers and students. This even consists of programmes such as training and learning for teachers to learn new ways of teaching and to increase their skills. Students need an environment of conditions enabling them to learn.

Viable Financial Models

Work towards viable financial models for Madaris such as entrepreneurial ventures and partnerships with philanthropist organisations.

Special needs provision in Madaris

Madaris should be inclusive, provide facilities for the special needs children; ramps, toilers friendly for disabilities, etc.

The suggestions put forward can empower the Madaris of Tehsil Minchinabad and the like to cater to the educational needs of 21st century in true spirit. These steps may help sustain the success and vibrancy of

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Madaris in an increasingly complex education landscape.

Practical Implications

Hence, the implications of this study propose higher government participation and support, financial aid and policy initiatives for better facilities and resources in Madaris. This process is necessary for Madaris to sustain their pants-education, and to make necessary adjustments, accommodating the demands of modern education.

Ahmed et al. (2015) argued that Madaris should provide a broad and balanced curriculum that successfully combines secular learning with religious learning if respecting the religious heritage of Muslim children is to be achieved. These madrasas have a strong influence on the religious orientation of Muslim children. Government action required to revive, modernize these institutions to serve changing educational needs. This is called for that modern educational infrastructure has to be improved and that in rural areas there is insufficient number of such infrastructure available. Second, as Madaris are educational non-profit organizations and they do not charge fees, they should be financially supported. This funding would assist Madaris to better meet modern educational needs and standards and to improve the content and accessibility of the education they provide.

Conclusion

The study makes an analysis of educational institutions of Madaris in Tehsil Minchinabad, District Bahawalnagar, South Punjab in Pakistan and explores their educational situation in 21st century. Madaris have historically served the critical function of imparting religious education, ensuring character building, and transmitting traditional teaching methodologies to Muslims. However, with the education systems rapidly changing, the emergence of new trends, the different needs, and challenges that may have manifested in Madaris, it is deemed necessary to assess their needs to ensure their relevance and viability. The study highlights the importance of Madaris in providing free religious education in Islam. However, it is clear that they are fighting back against incessant criticism on their teaching mode, curriculum, and non-curricular activities.

One major realization of this study is that respondents have acknowledged the necessity for modern education infrastructure, in the form of educational materials and provision, in the Madaris. A well-qualified and trained full Staff, up-to-date curriculum as per the requirement of Islamic education and the modern era, classroom facilities according to supported learning environment based classrooms, library with all its requirements, and student services facilities were the indispensable academic need of Madaris. However, limited financial resources stand in the way of addressing them. The research paper highlighted that it is the responsibility of the state to support and regulate Madaris so that they are able to impart religious education at par with other educational institutions. Government facilitation of Madaris is crucial in enabling them to meet the evolving needs of their students and to remain competitive in the 21st century. In summary, this study contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding Madaris and their ability to address the educational requirements of the 21st century. By recognizing their importance and recommending measures to enhance their capabilities, it endeavours to promote the continued success and relevance of Madaris in the ever-changing educational landscape.

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