

Education in Madrassa: Understanding the Motivation and Prospects of Passed out Students in Abbottabad, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Religious institutions have become a highly debated field especially after the incident of 9/11. A section of scholars held madrassa students responsible for growing unemployment and despair in the society. Besides the formal education in Pakistan hundreds of thousands of students are also studying in madrassas. The curricula being taught in madrassas is out dated and nonconforming with the contemporary needs of the society. The study analyzed the motivation behind student enrollments in the madrassas and socio economic role of the passed out students of madrassa. Primary data was collected from 143 respondents consisting of enrolled and passed out students, teachers and administration staff of madrassas through questionnaires followed up with in depth interviews and focus group discussion. The study revealed that high number of students (58% male & 52 female) joined madrassa due to the poverty. Overall 70% parents were found to be illiterate or less educated (illiterate 15%, & below matric 55%) whereas 78% students belonged from large and overburdened families. On the other hand, the unemployment ratio was found to low (10%) in male students and surprisingly high in female students (65%) due to various cultural factors. However, the employed respondents (85% male and 13% female) were found to be receiving very low income depicting a negligible economic role of the passed-out students of madrassa. On contrary the social and political role of the madrassa was revealed surprisingly significant.

Keywords:

Madrassa, islamic religious education, Abbottabad, Pakistan

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Introduction

The term “Madrassa” has multiple meanings. Generally, it is a term given in Arabic to any school (Riaz, 2008). However, in religious sense, Madrassas are schools whose primary goal is to deliver religious education. Usually a Madrassa system or Deni-Madaris are known as the religious educational institutes which focus on religious teachings, life of Prophet, literature and the Quran. There is no fixed course of study and the interpretation of the text and syllabus also varies from one school of thought to another (Fair, 2008). Madrassas existed for centuries in the Islamic world however their formation can probably be traced to be the early Islamic custom to meet in the mosques to discuss religious issues. As an institution of learning, Madarassas are century's long-standing tradition of Muslim society. One of the first established madrassas, called the “Madrassa Nizamiya” of Baghdad was built in 11th

century AD. At Nizamia, thousands of students would stay and enjoy the facilities of food, shelter and scholarship along with the education. Along with Nizamia and other renowned madrassas of medieval times hundreds of mudrasas were widespread in all around the Muslim world (Riaz, 2008).

1.1 Madrassa Education in Pakistan

Academy of Educational Planning and Management (AEPAM) reported that 22.8 million children in Pakistan are out of schools (Dawan, 2019). The literacy rate of children is only 40 per cent for 70 million children between the ages of 4 and 16 (Shami & Hussain, 2006). Non availability of government schools and limited capacity of private schools leaves masses with no other option but to send their children to religious schools (Zaidi, 1999). There is rapid increase in the number of students studying in Madrassas. There were three million students enrolled in Madrassas in

2004 (Andrabi, 2005). There are more than 24 thousand registered madrassas in Pakistan excluding the unregistered ones and number is still rising (Tribune, 2014).

In the 21st century where the education and educational system has crossed all the barriers of religion and ethnicity and factors of production have been revolutionized through immense development in industry and corporate culture, the growing number of students in orthodox religious institutions in Muslim countries have given birth to the various questions regarding compatibility of the religious class with the modern system (Andrabi, 2005). The knowledge economies of the modern world are based upon three tiered skill pyramid (Lanvin and Fonstad, 2009). Literacy and basic skills e.g. math, science, and IT literacy are placed in tier one, occupational skills such as programming, architecture, and e-business skills are placed in tier two, and global knowledge economy talents such as virtual team management skills, innovation, and digital entrepreneurship in tier three (Kumar and Van Welsum, 2013). The corporate sector needs skillful employees that are experts in these fields. A student from the Madrassa emerges from a separate set of value system and skill levels that are different from the contemporary needs of the modern society (Riaz, 2005; Haider, 2011; Imtiaz, 2011). Huge learning gap between State school students and madrassas students where school students are much better at academics and are better suited to fit in the society give rise to different class systems (Asadullah, 2009; Das, Pandey and Zajonc, 2006; Hetlend, 2008). Bukhari & Rahman (2006) probe that the educational role of madrassas is in dire need of rectification however the issues is sensitive and implementation of reforms is difficult due to resistance from clergy and different socio political pressure group from within the society. Despite of various plans to introduce reforms for madrassas by various state actors of Pakistan, a madrassa-modernisation programme was implemented only in 2002 as a result of official support from the USA (Bano, 2010).

The role of madrassas has been viewed with much suspicion, especially after 9/11 and American war on terror where madrassas have been viewed as a source of radicalization. Chandran (2003) noted that madrassas in Pakistan are the main sources of Islamization drives fulfill clergy recruitments and have a social and mental impact on public. Singer (2001) argued that the number of students in the madrassas is powerful enough to establish a threat of dislodgment of State education.

1.2 Social Inclination towards Madrassa

Free education is a gigantic motivation for madrassa students who come from the poorest segments of the society (Mazari, 2009; Nayyar, 1998). Madrasas offer free boarding and education to their understudies, an attraction good enough to engage bankrupted families and people (Hussain, 2007). Studies confirmed that many madrassa students were the drop outs of mainstream schools before joining the madrassas and poverty was the major reason of dropping out (Malik, 1996). There are some contesting arguments regarding primary motivation to join madrassas. Numerous studies highlight that madrassa students are neither from the most reduced salary bunches nor from country regions, free education is an appealing motivation however not the most critical component for enrolment (Andrabi et al., 2005). Although madrassas are filled overwhelmingly with poor people, but these are not the poorest of society (Ahmed and Stroehlein, 2005). Poor quality of education at government schools, religious inclination and non availability of any formal educational institute also contribute to increasing number of madrassa enrolments (Bano and Deneulin, 2009). There is a perception of growing westernization in the society that has affected educational institutes that teach secular modes of life. To counter this westernization, madrassa framework is growing with society's support, where parents seek religious education to be an important component of education modules (Eickelman and Piscatori, 2004; Nelson, 2008). Due to the increased level of poverty and cast

strapped citizens most the people opt for madrassas as educational institute for its free education, living and boarding system all around the country (Chris, 2003). The religious schools are upheld by private gifts from society through a procedure of donations given to them referred as Zakat and Sadaqaat in Arabic language. The act of zakat, one of the five main pillars of the Islamic discipline endorses that a settled extent of one's wage to be given to indicated neediest, and usually a bit of zakat has enriched religious education (Riaz, 2005).

1.3 Curriculum taught at Madaris

Majority of madrassas offer religion based educational modules, concentrating on their perspective of Quran and Sunna based on their School of thought and examination Board. Most Madrassas teach Islamic subjects such as memorization of the Quran, Tafseer (Interpretation of Holy Quran), Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad), Usul-ul-hadith (rules of hadith), Fiqh and Usul-ul-fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence and principles of Islamic Jurisprudence), Sarf and Nahw (branches of Arabic grammar), Arabic Language, Islamic Finance, Mantiq (Logic), Philosophy, classic Arabic literature and eloquence. Mastery of these subjects qualifies a student to become an Islamic scholar or cleric (maulvi or maulana). Only eight out of twenty subjects taught at madrassas are completely religious, other do include the contemporary educational modules but only few madaris offer these subjects. In the absence of well formulated monitoring system, most of the madrassas abandon mainstream subjects (Ahmad, 2004; Ali, 2009). The static traditional curricula and out dated pedagogical systems that focuses on remembrance, repetition, Dars¹ are mostly practiced as common teaching mechanisms which produce a work force that is least creative, unskilled and handicapped for cutting-edge workforce in the future. The research is rarely part of the whole studies. Shields of the

madrassa framework view its conventional pedagogical approach as an approach to save a true legacy of Islam rather than inculcating the life skills as per the demand of modern market. Most of madrassa graduates have admittance to a restricted sort of knowledge and references proposed by the theorists and scholars of the ancient times. Even the intellectual work of the modern day Islamic scholars and researchers is not part of curriculum of madrassas in Pakistan (Haqqanni, 2002).

The curriculum is generally perceived as promoting sectarianism, intolerance, and violent attitudes amongst its students. Sectarian politics has increased domestic feud among various Islamic sects, with considerable security implications for the country (Anjum, 2017; Qadri, 2018).

1.4 Problem Statement

The outdated curricula and ancient modes of pedagogy followed in madrassas of Pakistan produce the students that lack in intellectual capacity and technical skills to suit the contemporary job markets. The difference of ethical and moral codes also makes them belong to separate social class that makes it even difficult for them to fit in the society. Although numerous studies claim poverty as the main reason for parents who send their children to these schools, there is lots of ambiguity about what are the main motivations which compel parents to opt for these religious schools? Once graduated from these schools, what difficulties do these passed out students face to fit in the society both economically and socially? And what possible role do they play in the development of the country?

1.5 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The study aims to investigate following specific objective 1) To analyze the reasons and motivation of students for joining madrassa instead of formal educational institutions. 2) To have an insight of

¹ One of the instructional methods used in Islamic teachings. Generally students sit on floor in close circle with the mentor in the centre.

what sort of education do these students get at madrassas and how do they approach to different socio-political issues of the country and 3) to understand the role of madrassa students in socio-economic development of the country.

Materials and methods

2.1. Study Area

Known for its religious identity due to vast number of madrassas and informal religious institutions, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is one of the four provinces of Pakistan, located in the north-western region of the country. The province shares its international border with Afghanistan connected through Khyber Pass. The role of madrassa is very important in this province as Taliban have said to be originated from the madrassas of this province. The population of the province is roughly around 28 million as per an estimate by Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Among 7 Divisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Hazara Division is situated in the North-East of the province. It comprises six districts: Abbottabad District, Battagram District, Haripur District, Kohistan District, Mansehra District and Tor Ghar District. The study is conducted in the Abbottabad city, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan.

2.1. Data and sampling

To achieve the objectives of the study data was collected from three sources i.e. existing or currently enrolled students of madaris, passed out students who are engaged practically in different socio-economic activities in the society and the teachers (or muallims as they are called in Arabic) and managers (muntazims) of these madaris. Four mainstreams madrassas of Abbottabad were selected for data collection from Deobandi and Jamat-e-islami schools of thought where both male and females students are registered in different courses of “Dars e Nazami”², “Hifz e Quran”³ and “Tarjuma”⁴. All of these madaris are registered with their respective boards, one of the major

reasons of selecting them as target samples. The details of the madrassas are given in the table below.

Table 1. Details of Madrassas Data was Collected from

Sr. #	Name of Madrassa	Gender	School of Thought
	Darululoom		
i.	Anwar-ul-Islam(Makki Masjid)	Males & Females	Deobandi
ii.	Jamia Azizya Jhanghi	Males	Deobandi
iii.	Jamia Madnia	Males	Deobandi
iv.	Jamiatul Mukhsinaat	Females	Jamat-e-Islami

Mixed method approach was used to collect the data from registered students through questionnaires. Semi structured questionnaire was designed for the enrolled students in order get the information about their demographics and motivation behind joining madrassa. The questionnaire contained 40 open and close ended questions which were amended during the process of data collection. For the convenience of the students the questionnaire was translated into Urdu as most of the students were unable to comprehend and reply the questions in the English language. Data was collected from 96 students through stratified random sampling where strata were made on the basis of types of courses students were enrolled in. Passed out students were reached through alumni record of madrassas and snow ball sampling technique. In depth interviews were conducted to have an insight into the nature of jobs they were doing, monthly income and socio-political role of the passed-out students in the society. A total of 32 students were interviewed. Focused group Discussion (FGD) of the teachers

² Dars-i Nizami is a study curriculum or system used in traditional Islamic institutions (madrassas) and Dar Ul Ulooms, which originated in the Indian subcontinent in the 18th century and can now also be found in parts of

South Africa, Canada, the United States, the Caribbean and the UK (Van Bruinessen and Allievi, 2013).

³ Memorization of the whole Quran in Arabic

⁴ Translation of Quran

and “Muntazims” (Management persons) were conducted to get in-depth information about the last 5 years history of enrollment, education and prospects of passed out students. Two FDGs were arranged in Jamiatul Mukhsinaat and Darululoom Anwar-ul-Islam (Makki Masjid) where 6 and 9 participants were included in the discussion. The variables regarding educational, ideological and economic compatibility of the students of madrassa were the key focus of the FGD's. After FGDs, some new variables were added to keep in account the role of madrassa students, teachers and passed out students regarding their contribution in the society. Altogether, data was collected from 143 respondents.

2.3. Data analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using frequencies and bar charts with the help of SPSS. Thematic analysis was done for the qualitative questions.

Results and discussion

3.1 Nature of Madrassa Education

Madrassas are offering four types of registered and non-registered courses to their students including, 'Dars-e-Nazami', 'Takhasus-fil-fiqh' (specialization), 'Hifz-e-Quran' (memorization of Quran) and 'Nazira' (Arabic reading of Quran) depending upon the choice and qualification of the students. There is a positive annual growth rate in number of new admissions. Dars-e-Nazami is the most renowned religious course offered in the madrassas and successful candidates are considered equivalent to Master in Islamic studies by higher education commission of Pakistan. After completion, these students attain the status of a recognized Alim-e-Deen (religious scholar). The course contains eight years of regular studies including eight darjas (stages) where each darja (stage) is equivalent to one year of formal education. At least 8 grades of formal education is minimum eligibility criteria to get admission in the course. Students of every age and gender and school of thought can get admission in the course. Takhasus-fil-fiqh is highest degree in madrassa education offered after the dora-e-Hadith, the last

darja of Dars-e-Nazami. Only a few students go for the course and attain the status of Mufti which is considered as Islamic Jurists. The study revealed that the facility of the course is not yet offered in these madrassas that is why some students who were interested in Takhasus got admission in the madrassas of the other cities where the facility is available. Dars-e- Nazami (Dora-e-Hadith) is the prerequisite to get admission in the course.

Hundreds of students have passed out during five years from madrassas, however Nazira students are at the top of the list in terms of number of passed out students. In last five years' app 900 students of nazira have passed out from these madrassas, however the strength of registered courses like Dars-e-Nazami and Hifz-e-Quran is relatively lesser than Nazira students. As per our findings 168 males and 76 female students of Nazira have been successfully passed out from these madrassas. Unlike other courses 73 % of the Dars e Nazami were found to be the boarder students.

3.2 Socio-economic Profile of the Students and Motivation to Study in Madrassas

Most of the previous research conducted on the origins of madrassa students revealed that majority of these students belonged to rural or peripheral areas. The quantitative data collected from the enrolled students revealed that among the hostel elites, 55 percent male students and 50 percent female students belonged to rural areas. Among those coming from urban areas, majority was from urban slums or had been shifted recently to urban areas. In most of the cases where students come from nearby villages to join madrassas in cities, attachment of people with the mosques is very strong. After acquiring basic religious education from these rural mosques, coming to urban areas to join madrassa for higher religious degrees is often looked upon by villagers. In relatively poor households it also solves the problem of lodging and food as well. The provision of equivalence certificate for formal education after completing the religious education is another plus point that motivates more and more students to join these

madrassas. About one fourth of the respondents belonged to the affluent urban areas where primary motivation to join madrassas was not poverty. Same is true for some elderly students who were bearing the cost of their education by themselves and studying in madrassas was purely on personal motivation.

Data showed that most of the enrolled students belonged to joint family system with relatively larger family units. For male students, 78 percent belonged to joint family system with an average household size of 7 members, 22 percent had family size larger than 7. Surprisingly, the average family size of female students was quite small as compared to male students, with 80 percent of the students having 5 households per family. The remaining 20 percent students belonged to nuclear families where average family size was below 5 percent.

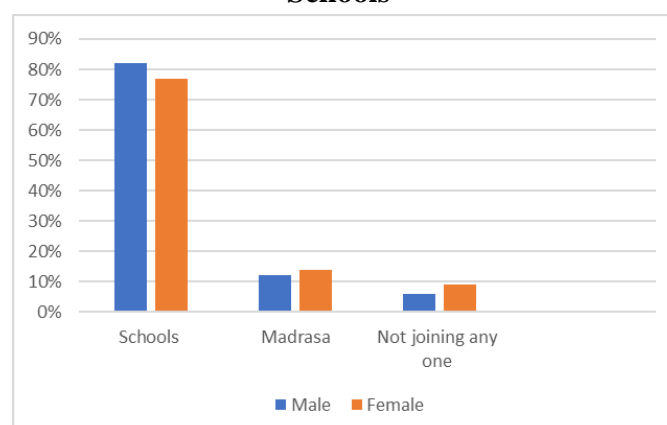
Data also showed that the education level of the parents is below average. 90 percent of the mothers of the enrolled male students were illiterate or below primary level. Matriculation or 10th standard was the highest educational standard for the remaining 10 percent. Although fathers had relatively better education but this too seemed inadequate as 15 percent were illiterate, 30 percent below the primary level, 43 percent had either middle or matriculation while 13 percent of the parents were up to secondary level of education. Only 5 percent had acquired bachelor or master level education. On the other hand parents of female students were relatively better educated where fathers all the respondents had some level of education and percentage of graduated fathers was also much higher 16 percent as compared to 5 percent of male students. It was noteworthy that not even a single student, neither male nor female, had working mother. All mothers of all the students were house wives. With larger average family sizes as mentioned above, more than 90 percent of the families had only one working member, mostly father or elder brother. Low level of education also meant ordinary jobs with fewer earnings. Most of them belonged to labor class, small scale farming,

shop keepers or low scale government servants. In female students, with better education level, a good number (43 percent) of parents were involved in government service. Since data was collected from the students, it was not possible to collect accurate data about average family income of the parents or households. It was even more difficult since most of the households, especially in case of male students, had not stable jobs. But it could be observed from the data that low level of education, ordinary nature of job, larger family sizes, and dependency on one earning member meant most of the family units had very less disposable income. Overburdened parents, unable to provide formal education and better living standards preferred to send their children to madrassas where they could get free education as well as free meals. However, weak economic back ground was not the only factor behind the enrollment in madrassa. Religious affiliation, trends in family and friends to send their children to madrassas, personal motivation of students were also among the reasons to join madrassas.

3.2.1. Inclination towards Madrassa Education in Close Families of the Students

Although not to a great extent but inclination in close family circuits does play a role in sending children to madrassas instead of formal educational institutes. Data revealed that 12% of the male students and 14 % of the female students had one or more cousins or family friends already studying in madrassas.

Figure 3.1: Trend for Madrassa and Formal Schools

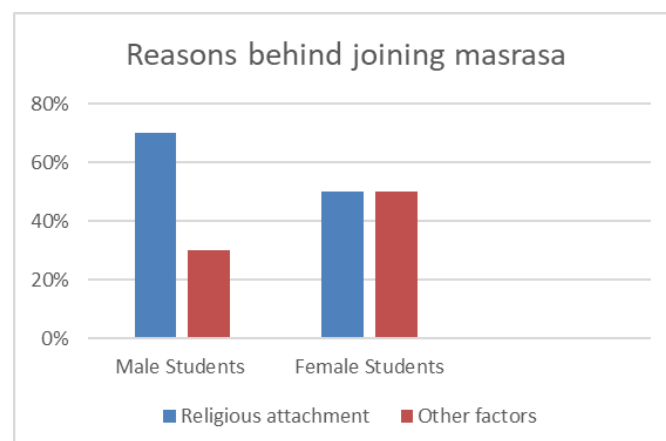


As it was revealed in the interviews and focus group discussions as well that these senior students help bring cousins or children of family friends to these madrassas. Presence of these senior students from family or friends also help build confidence of the parents about the safety of their children and in case of hostel elites, they will not have to accompany their children during travelling as their children would travel with their cousins or family friends already studying in madrassa. Although admission to madrassa may have been inspired by close family member and friends but none of the parents wanted their children to get religious education only. Besides the religious education, they wanted their children to continue the formal education as well. That is why they also expect the madrassa to facilitate their children to acquire the formal education from schools side by side. The figure also shows that there are a good number of families where children do not continue studies around or after grade fifth grade due to poverty or lack of awareness.

3.2.2 Personal Motivation of Students to Join Madrassa

As per the enrolled students were concerned the data revealed that 70 percent males and 50 percent female students expressed religious attachment as the core reason behind joining madrassa. On contrary, FGD with teachers and personal interviews with the passed out students revealed that poverty is the foremost reason behind the student's enrollment in madrassas. The response of enrolled students in favor of religious motivation as primary factor might have come out of pressure to give religion more importance although it seems and erroneous response.

Figure 3.2 Primary Reason of Joining Madrassa



It is quite possible that students could not comprehend the question properly as 31 percent of male students responded both poverty and religious affiliation as primary reason to join madrassas. To further elaborate the causes of preference of madrassa over formal education, students were asked a hypothetical question, “let’s suppose government offers you scholarship to continue your studies in the formal educational institutions of the country, will you avail the opportunity or not?” The answer of 90 percent male students and 77 percent female students was “yes”. This further strengthened that limited options available to these poor segments of society, force them to opt. madrassas. Availability and affordability of formal education will definitely help more of these students to get formal education.

3.3 Politics, Democracy, Radicalization and Political Change

Since madrassas are considered as the main source of radicalization and inculcate violence among its students (Zahid, 2018). It is important to have an insight of how does the teaching faculty and students approach the politics, democracy and use of force for political change. The FDGs and interviews revealed that there is no clear approach towards all of these. Majority of students did not believe in the current form of democracy and political structure. Most of them (87 percent) believed that there was no concept of democracy in Islam and it is totally unlawful and repugnant to the teachings of Quran and Sunnah. Despite of this disbelief in the current political system, most of

them favored active political participation to bring about necessary political change. They argued that at present when democracy is imposed on the Muslim societies, state of “Iztarar” is lawful as per the Islamic guidelines. “Iztarar” is an Islamic code where unlawful act is bearable if it is not a choice but imposed forcefully, as explained by the teachers of the madrassa. So a common man in Pakistan should take his/her part in the electoral

process for the obligatory selection of the fair leadership. On the other hand 5 percent took rather rigid stance and believed that it is obligatory for Muslim societies to react against the existing system of state and democracy, which is not lawful at all and people must not show any liteness and affiliation to democracy and should struggle against the prevailing system.

Table 3.1. Democracy and Political Change

Sr. #	Gender	Democracy in Islam		Political Change	
		Lawful	Unlawful	Through Force	Without Force
i.	Males	13%	87%	5 %	92 %
ii.	Females	48%	52%	3 %	97 %

It is note able that female students had starkly different view about the legitimacy of democracy in islam and 48 percent students believed that there is no conflict between islam and democracy. The percentage of students who believed in violence to bring Islamic rule was also less (only 3 percent) as compared to male students. Although the view point of the students doesn't mean that islam considered democracy as lawful or not but the mindset of the students studying in madrassas and how do they approach the state institutions. They referred Pakistan as an Islamic state of peace (Dar-ul-Aman) which is responsible for the dynamic implementation of the Islamic sharia laws and if state fails to do so it is the responsibility of every citizen to make it happen and struggle for that. A 32 years old student of Dars-e-Nazami argues; “Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated that it is the highest level of Muslim belief that do correct any wrong doing through force”

Although he was not clear what sort of force can be used and how will this force bring about change. On counter question of about the nature and mechanism of this political change he responded; “Once we need to be clear that this is the right way to go. God will guide us how to bring about that change then.”

Similar confusion about radical political change was observed in all those who believed in use of

force. Among passed out students, 5% believed in use of force to radicalize the society. Considering democracy as an unlawful act in Islam, they believed in leadership model of “Khilafat” and establishment of ideal Islamic state. Though bluntly proposing it as a solution to the problems of the humanity at large they were found impotent to define the structure and institutions of the proposed state under the Khilafat. This extreme stance is not present among the passed out student of Jamat-e-islami, who believe that though democracy is not recommended through the major sources of Isalm and Islamic history but as per Islamic jurisprudence it is permissible to be considered as Mubah (optional) under certain conditions. Also, the model of democracy proposed by these students is not the western model of liberal democracy, but the Islamic democracy of wisdom vote where only the wise, educated and righteous can contest the elections. This difference of opinion among the alumni of Deobandi and Jamat-e-islami students might be attributed to active participation of the later in national politics that may have transformed the approach towards politics.

The FGDs of teachers and interviews of the alumni showed that majority bear and propagate the same kind of undemocratic viewpoints theoretically but in practice they actively take part in politics and

have been passionate advocates of political parties, be it Islamic political parties or other mainstream parties. There is a huge gap between theory and practice of the religious class in Pakistan. It is interesting to know that those who out rightly reject liberal democracy in theory do play a key role to boost up even the liberal political parties of their country.

3.3.1 Da'waa (preaching) as a Tool of Political Change

Contrary to the deeply rooted highhanded mind set the 90 percent of the respondents were found deeply aspiring for Tableegh (Preaching) as the way out to give solutions to the problems of Muslims and humanity at large that is why they were found highly ruthless to be considering it as a sole mission of their lives. Their impression of religious role goes through the philosophy of Tablighi Jamat Pakistan, the nonpolitical religious movement of the country. 83% teachers were found to be propagating the nonpolitical philosophy of religious change which states the slogan "To transform the individual and transform the society the system will be reformed in the result through the moral reformation of the society" whereas the political or practical struggle finds no place in their theoretical manifesto. This philosophy and preamble of the dahwat was sought out from the thoughts of the renowned Debandi scholar 'Molana Hussain Ahmad Madani who was equally renowned through his mystical thoughts and contribution.

On the other hand, the students from Jamat-e-Islami madrasa believed in preaching as well as political struggle for the propagation of Islam. They believed that Islam is not just the system of preaching and believes rather it is the complete code of life with its own socio political and economic system, no reasonable favors can be done without the implementation of the Islamic system on the society. They believe for a paradigm change of system the religious movement must also struggle peacefully and politically to obtain the power of government. Getting deep into the inquiry it was revealed that these student's

thoughts were influenced by the renowned religious scholar Syed Abul Ahla Moududi who is best known for his theory of political Islam.

Likewise, 100 percent of the students and teachers from all segments believed that the society can only be reformed through the implementation of Islam however there was found difference in the approach and methodology. A big faction believed dahwat as a source of social change and others believed political democratic struggle as a compulsory way out as a source of social change in the society.

At large both segments despite of difference in approach are equally participating in their way of preaching. 58 percent of the passed-out students of the Deobandi madrasas have reported to be the regular visitor and team member of Tablighi Jamaat on different preaching campaigns. They have been found staunch believers in the model of tablighi Jamat however rest of them were also found partially admiring the model of tablighi jamat with showing some concerns. As for as the students of Jamat-e-Islami madrasa are concerned they are also found active in preaching their sort of ideology but they are found more flexible and diverse as compare to Deobandi student. They utilize unusual ways of preaching i.e. Seminars, clubs, leadership forums etc. They also blend the basic preaching of Islam with their political ideology and reach to vast number of different segments of population through their well-organized organization.

These enrolled and the passed-out students play their role as preacher, opinion maker and change agents. The teachers informed that that the largest events in the Pakistani society are the religious events like Annual Ijtima (Conventions) of "Tablighi Jamaat" at 'Raiwand', Lahore. It is all because of the effort of these students and alumni's where the millions of people every year participate in these kinds of events. Besides that, they conduct a hell of devout events in Abbottabad where thousands of people partake every year. It is all the credit of these students and alumni's who sensitize the society, campaign and conduct these imposing

events everywhere, every week, month and year in the city.

3.3.2 Women in Politics and as Workforce

Female participation in politics was highly criticized. 100 percent enrolled and passed out students responded that women are allowed to cast their vote in elections but the leadership of women is forbidden in Islam. They reasoned that women's wisdom and insight is not comprehensive or compelling that is why they do not merit to hold any key position in the leadership. They also believed that the man is created to lead and guide the women to the right path and women's interaction with the society should be limited. As far as the job is concerned, women are forbidden to work with men at workplace because they can work only with Mahram⁵ relations. They further expressed that the women in Islam is considered the most sacred that is why she should always be covered wearing hijab and avoid interaction with non Mahram men. They added that the women are only allowed to interact with men under specific terms and conditions when there is no other option for her other than to interact for a very important 'sharhee hahjat' (the genuine reason) concern.

3.4 Social Interaction and Involvement in the Society

Once passed out from madrasa, students seek jobs and have more direct interaction with the society. Majority of the students have some religious roles to play e.g. teaching Quran as a home tutor, mu'azzan (one who calls for prayers), imam masjid, assistant to imam, teacher at a madrasa or muntazim (administrator) at a madrasa. Since all these religious roles are scrutinized at some level by the common people and members of the society, the selection process is detailed one. The general conduct of the student, his/her academic as well as family background is considered while offering him a job. Most of the time senior teachers are the ones who recommended the better students for such jobs in a mosque or to common people of the

society for home tutors. Almost all the times, males teachers are recommended to teach Quran as home tutors, the people are very keen to be satisfied with the moral values and character of the teacher. It is only on the recommendation of the senior teachers of the madrasa that these newly passed out students get such jobs. Once appointed on such jobs, these passed out student are generally much respected in their new roles. As Bano (2007) pointed out in her study on Deobandi Madrasa in Pakistan that religious teachers are much more respected by students as compared to teachers of formal schools. The respect is shared generally beyond the students of home tuition to the common people of society who come to mosque for Friday sermons and take Fatwas (religious guidance) from these scholars to sort out daily matters in the light of Islam. This role not only helps develop deeper relations with families but also brings in added social responsibility. Active participation in social events like marriage, funerals, and birth ceremonies also adds on affiliation to the community and they are always aware of the concerns of their followers.

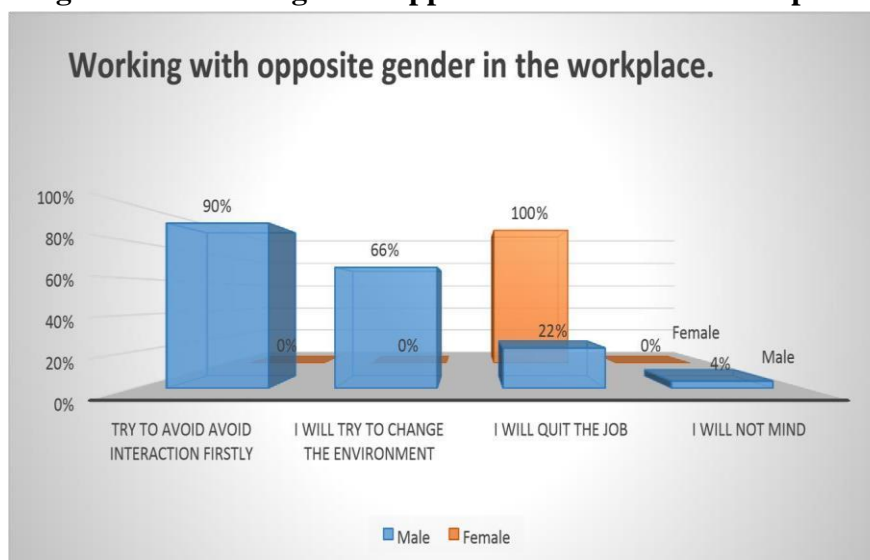
Another dimension of social interaction is the significance of these religious scholars in conflict situations as a mediator and arbitrator. Teachers revealed that people often come to the dar-ul-ifta and madrasa as an alternative of the formal judicial system to acquire the free and fast justice in the light of sharia law. In 'Dar-ul-ifta' every year hundreds of people register their cases, appear before the mufti and get the judgment in a minimum time. Although the verdict given is not binding but people trust them and generally obey their verdict because of their virtuous perception. Weak judicial system of the country where processes are too lengthy and expensive also increases the chances of people coming to these informal institutions for cheap and speedy justice. Since all of the students are not absorbed in the religious jobs, a good percentage of passed out

⁵ There are certain relations that are mentioned in detail in Quran with whom a woman can not marry. These relations are called as 'Mahram'.

students seeks more formal type of jobs where interaction with the community is much more as compared to religious nature of jobs. The dynamics of workforce have now been changed even in the remote areas where women are also taking part actively in the economic and cultural affairs of the country and workforce has become more diverse in terms of gender participation. Since popular Islamic teaching discourage the free interaction of males and females, it is perceived that students passed out from Madrasas will find it difficult to integrate in a work environment where men and women work together. To have an insight about how would they respond to such a scenario, they were asked a hypothetical question, "If you get a job in an environment where women also work, how will you confront the situation? They were

given four options i) Try to void interaction with females. ii) I will try to change the environment. iii) I will not accept the job or quit. iv) I will not mind working with women. The opinion of the enrolled students was taken in this respect where 90 % male and 100 % female students have showed their serious concerns regarding working with opposite gender at workplace. They expressed that they will not prefer such workplace environment where there is direct interaction with the opposite gender. They believed that Islam does not allow such workplace environment where male and female interact freely with each other. 22 percent males and 100 percent females did not want to work in an environment, where they had to interact with opposite gender during their job.

Figure 3.4: Working with Opposite Gender at the Workplace



Majority of males (66 percent) thought although it is forbidden in Islam and they will not like to work with women, they will continue doing the job or accept an offer but will put in their best efforts to change the environment. In response to subsequent question of what do they mean by transforming the mixed gender work environment? And what possible measure can be taken? They argued that each organization can divide the tasks on the basis of gender and work space should be divided in such a way that it avoids the contact of males and females. While working in the organization, they will try to convince the management to change the

work environment and make it more Islamic. Even if they fail to do so, they will try themselves not to mix with women until absolutely necessary. Only 4 percent males showed no concern and believed that they will be comfortable with the situation. It was ironic that most rigidity came from women and not even a single respondent wanted to work in a mixed environment with males. But it is interesting to note that not all the respondents put Islamic rule as the only reason as justification of their response. Many believed that since they have not studied or worked whole of their lives with men, they will not be at ease working in a mixed environment.

During focus groups discussion, the teachers reported that there is a difference in theory and practice, though most of students do not believe to work with opposite gender but in practice they do not reject any such offer. Most of the passed-out students join the conventional religious jobs which intrinsically doesn't allow the mixed gender work environment. The limited number of students who get an opportunity to work in the mainstream organizations where it is mixed gender working environment, they do accept the job and work without any problem. The only limitation that is of serious nature is accepting job in an organization that involves taking interest (e.g. banking sector) which is strictly forbidden and is considered haram (unlawful). Otherwise they never miss the opportunity to work in firms and companies like the students of any other background.

However, they generally lack in business and social skills as compared to other employs initially but with the passage of time get used to this new environment, on job learning helps get them settled and barriers of communication slowly start to fade away. So this resistance to work with opposite gender does not purely come from belief system, lack of exposure to this new environment and the fear of unknown may also be considered as an important factor while trying to understand the response of students to work in mixed environment. This is even truer in case of girls who generally are less exposed to the world outside their homes. Most of the female observe complete code of Hijab even after studies and do not prefer to work with men with a very few exceptions. The data also showed no evidence of any female passed out student working with opposite gender in workplace.

Conclusion

Data collected from the enrolled students, focus group discussion and interviews of the passed out students show that poverty and inaccessibility to formal schooling is the primary reason of enrollment in the madrassas. Although, trends of going to madrassas in close family and friends and religious motivation also plays important role.

Madrassas, not only provide free accommodation and education, the location of madrassas in urban area also makes government schools accessible. Well aware of the significance of formal education, majority of students get enrolled in these formal schools as well to complement their religious education. These students are enrolled both in private and public schools. It is understandable that students with religious motivation as the primary factor for getting enrolled in madrassas are mostly enrolled in private schools.

Most of the passed out students preferred some religious jobs as teachers or administrators in madrassas, home tutors for quranic education or imam in mosques. Others end up in doing small scale businesses or odd jobs for earnings. Very few are able to get mainstream jobs that can earn handsome amount and come close to graduates of formal education system. Although average income of the passed out students is very low, the unemployment ratio is very less (only 10 percent). Only 35 percent of passed out students reported doing jobs where rest of them were found to be unemployed mostly because of their limited jobs options.

Religious schools or madrassas have a different moral code, partially due to the same reason they are blamed for encouraging and harboring extremism. It was observed that most of the students believe democracy as unlawful and sharia law is the right way to govern but majority believes that change should come with argumentation and it should be gradual rather than pragmatic and abrupt. Majority of students also believe that men should not work in close proximity of women but most of the male students are willing to work with women as long as sharia law is not imposed. Female students on the other hand are more skeptical and not willing to work with men at all. This can partially be attributed to security concerns they might have while working in mixed environment. A clear divide can be observed between the madrasa students and students of formal educational institutes. The gap once created remains for life in job selection, work place

environment and overall integration of the society. There is a need to minimize the gap through reforms in madrassa education and bring in mainstream curricula modules and teaching methodologies in madrassa education.

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