



A Case Study on Pakistani Religious Institutions and their Policies Regarding Social Cohesion

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of madrasa education in building up a religiously cohesive society. The question which this research study addressed was: Do the Madrasa have any ideology/policies regarding social cohesion (open and hidden)? The study was qualitative in nature, an ethnographic case study was conducted to investigate the research problem in order to support and cross verify the results, and content analysis was also conducted of policy statements and relevant courses of all madrasa boards selected as a case. A total number of 5 respondents selected as case; semi-structured Interviews were carried out by Madrasa Policymakers, curriculum designers, and key administrators of Madrassas. Data were analyzed with the five-step process: 1) data managing, 2) coding and developing themes, 3) describing, 4) interpretation, and 5) representation.*

Key Words: Social Cohesion, Madrasa Policies

Introduction

Social cohesion is a term highly noticed by educationists from the last five decades. In history, it can be found that many sociologists and psychologists worked on experimentation because of that, Le Bon (1896) concluded his observations and findings that “Solidarity of the crowd is due to its uniformity of action which, in turn, is largely due to its anonymity and contagion. Antisocial motives are released through suggestion”. Educationists are showing concern for promoting peace through education and, therefore, institutional instruction controlling for achieving the objective of developmental and peace education. In 2003 Moody & White “Focused on the basic network features of social cohesion. They differentiate relational togetherness from a sense of togetherness. They believe cohesion is a property of relationships. They examined the paths by which group members are linked”.

At present, thousands of Madaris have been established in Pakistan since its creation, under the umbrella of five different boards, each madrasa following their own school of thoughts and ideology, which is different from one another; among these school of thoughts, five are the major one, Wifaqul Madaris Al-Arabiya Multan belongs to Deobandi school of thoughts, Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Lahore belongs to the Barelvi school of thoughts, Rabata-tul-Madaris Lahore belongs to the Jamat-e-Islami School of thoughts, Wifaqul Madaris Al-Shia Lahore belongs to the Shia School of thoughts and Wifaqul Madaris Al-Salafiya Faisalabad belongs to Ahl-e-Hadith school of thoughts. In fact, this division had created a sense of divergence, disturbance and disharmony among the followers and the general public at large; although these sects have been coming into existence after the period of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), it is an established fact that the followers of one school of thoughts never agree to follow the teachings/Fiqah and Sharia of the other, nor the follower of one school of thoughts pray in the other school of thoughts mosque; likewise, the follower of one school of thoughts does not agree to get admission in a madrasa, which is affiliated with the rival sect or group; as a result, this practice is harming the social bond between the members of the society, and social cohesion within the society,

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besides the fact that the Almighty Allah had clearly stated in the Holy Quran that “And hold firmly to the rope of Allah, all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you, when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together, and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus, does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided” Surah AL-Imran, 3:103? Keeping in view the teachings of the Holy Quran, the creation of sects within the Muslim had no justification and authenticity, but still, we are divided into so many sects and subsets in the name of religion.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this ethnographic case study is to know about the factors and hurdles responsible for social cohesion.

Objective of the Study

To know about the policies of religious institutions regarding social cohesion in Pakistan.

Research Question

Does the madrassa have any ideology/policies regarding social cohesion (open and hidden)?

Significance of the Study

The present study is an attempt to generate knowledge for the policymakers, curriculum developers, educational planners, administrators and other educational practitioners to help them appreciate and acknowledge the role of Madrassa education in promoting social cohesion.

Literature Review

Islam is a religion of peace and harmony. In Islam, creating social discord or disorder, breach of peace, rioting, bloodshed, pillage or plunder and killing of innocent persons anywhere in the world are all considered the most inhuman crimes. In this regard, there are several verses in the Quran that strictly prohibit the breach of peace. “Do not spread discord on Earth after it has been set in order” (Surah Aaraf, V. 56), again in the Holy Quran, Allah has stated that “When he (the mischief-maker) turns his back, his aim is to spread mischief everywhere on earth, to destroy crops and cattle but Allah loveth not mischief” (Surah Al-Baqarah V. 205), “And don’t spread discord on the (face of the) earth” (Surah Al-Baqarah V. 60).

The Quran clearly states that the killing of (even) one innocent person is equivalent to the massacre of all humankind because it’s like opening the floodgates that creates a situation beyond anyone’s control while saving one life is equivalent to the rescue of all humankind. Allah says, “On that account: We ordained for the children of Israel that if any one slew a person, unless it is for murder or for spreading mischief in the land, it would be as if he slew the whole people, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people” (Surah Maidah, V. 32), in another place it has been clearly ordered, “and do not kill anyone whose killing has been prohibited except in just manner”.

Historically Pakistan’s madrassas were founded as centers of learning for the next generation of Islamic scholars and clerics. Parents send their children to madaris for a variety of reasons. Many madaris are free. Madaris provide children with a place to sleep and meals as well as books and instruction. The most obvious reason for sending one’s child to a madrassa is often overlooked. A madrassa provides the opportunity to strengthen one’s children’s faith. It is important to many parents that their sons are pious Muslims. Parents also often want to teach their children Adab [manners]. Parents of madaris students express the hope that their children will learn to obey their elders and to be disciplined in life. Children are instructed in how to greet and converse with people of different ages and status and how to address family members and others respectfully.

The Pakistan Madrassa Education Board Ordinance, 2001, In the first instance, an Ordinance called “The Pakistani Madrassas Education (Establishment and Affiliation of Model Dini [Religious] Madaris

[Madrassas] Board Ordinance, 2001) was promulgated on August 18, 2001. The aim of this ordinance was to secure the registration, regulation, standardization and uniformity of curricula and standard of education of madrassa imparting specialized Islamic education in Pakistan with the general education system” ([Mumtaz Ahmad 2009](#)). The ordinance afforded representation of the different schools of thought in the board. To start with, a Pakistan Madrassa Education Board under the provisions of this ordinance was set up on 8 September 2001 under the control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The ordinance, however, could not be properly enforced, as religious circles did not cooperate with the government. In this backdrop, the government reviewed its policy and initiated additional steps in the context of registration of madrassas, rationalizing their syllabus and mainstreaming them.

Societies Registration Ordinance of 2005, this ordinance is also called the “Madrassas Voluntary Registration and Regulation Ordinance, 2005”. Under its provisions, “no Madrassa shall operate without getting itself registered, every Madrassa shall submit an annual report of its educational activities and performance to the registrar, every Madrassa shall cause to be carried out the audit of its accounts by an auditor and submit a copy of its audited report to the registrar, and no Madrassa shall teach or publish any literature which promotes militancy or spreads sectarianism or religious hatred” ([Zaidi 2013](#)).

Madrassa Reforms Project (MRP)

The Madrassa Reform Project (MRP) is a part of the comprehensive government program for the reform of religious institutions in the country “the aim of the project is to teach formal subjects such as English, Mathematics, Pakistan Studies/Social Studies, and General Science along with religious education. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the federal, provincial and regional educational authorities for executing a multi-million rupee’s project for reforming 8,000 madrassas within five years was a ground-breaking event” (Sabir et al. 2012).

Research Methodology

Research Design

As ethnography is the study of people, group of people and organizations that could be closely associated with cultural past, the status of present activities and future possibilities (Vanderstoep, & Johnston, 2009). Cewswell (2015) classified ethnographic research into three typologies, including realist, case study and critical. This research is a case study.

Population

Table 1

S. NO	Name	Religious Institution	Place	Established Since
1	Wafq-ul-Madaris-al-Salafia	Ahl-i-Hadith	Faislabad	1955
2	Wafaq ul Madaris	Deobandi	Faislabad	1959
3	Wafaq ul Madaris (Shia) Pakistan	Shia	Lahor	1959
4	Tanzim ul Madaris	Brevli	Lahor	1960
5	Rabta-tul-Madaris-al-Islamia	Jamat e Islami	Lahor	1983

Selection of the Cases

With a purposive non-random sample, the number of people interviewed is less important than the criteria used to select them. The characteristics of individuals are used as the basis of selection, most often chosen to reflect the diversity and breadth of the sample population. ([Amanda Wilmot 2005](#)). The cases were selected with non-probability purposive and criterion technique of collection.

Sample Size

To provide some idea of the scale of qualitative investigation, one might expect to achieve between 20

and 50 interviews for a one-to-one investigation and around 60 to 100 participants at group interview, depending on the research question. [Amanda Wilmot \(2005\)](#) I collected data from 20 participants.

Data Collection Strategies

According to Werner & Schoepfle, Ethnography then becomes a process of gathering systematic observations, partly through participation and partly through various types of interviews cited by Bruce L. Burge in qualitative research method for social science.

- a. Recording keywords and key phrases in the field
- b. Making notes about the sequences of events
- c. Time management in the field
- d. Time management for writing notes

Data Collection Instrument

The content analysis method was used for the analyses of policy statements and course contents of all the five Madrassa boards. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with Madrassa Policymakers, curriculum designers, and key administrators of Madrassas.

Data Analysis

It was an ongoing process of progressive focusing of data to identify and develop themes.

Policy Makers

Rabta-tul-Madaris-al-Islamia

Mulana Salman Sherpao is serving the organization since 2001; he is enrolled as PhD scholar in the School of Business Lahore and a Religious scholar as he had completed his Alamiya course from the same board. His research work was based on Islam and economics. He is looking after the related financial affairs too. Mulana Salman had a very clear understanding of policy matters of the board.

Tanzim-ul-Madaris Barelvi

Mulana Zaheer-Ul-Islam served as Director Academics and member of the board of governance (shora) since 2007. He himself a graduate of a religious institution of the same school of thought. Convener of the curriculum reviewing committees. He attended many national and international conferences on different religion-related topics.

Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Salafia

Mr. Muhammad Tyyab, is the leading administrator of Wafaq ul Madaris Al-Salafia. He is a Master degree holder from Punjab University in the Arabic language. He had joined Wafaq ul Madaris Al-Salafia in 2005. He is an expert in Islamic Education, Hadith and Arabic language. His area of interest was Ilm-Ul Hadith (Specialized education on Hadith). He was a graduate of renowned Seminary Banoria.

Wafaq-ul-Madaris Deobandi

Chief administrator Mulana Ata-ur-Rehman was serving for Wafaq since 1998 and was a graduate (Alim) from Karachi Jamiya Faroqia. He served as a member of the curriculum designing committee from 1998 to 2006, become a Wafaq discipline committee member afterwards.

Wafaq-ul-Madaris (Shia) Pakistan

Ayat-Ullah-Tahir Najfi is serving the Shia board since the year 2000. His all expertise was on Islamic theology. He also teaches Darse khaarij and other Islamic Durus in Jamia-tul-Muntazir. since he joined the Shia board, he was part of the curriculum setting committee. He is the key speaker of Majalis (seminars) and Dars (lectures).

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a broadly used qualitative research technique. Content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts” (Krippendorff 2004). “Ethnographic content analysis (ECA) may be contrasted with conventional, or more quantitative content analysis (QCA), in approach to data collection, data analysis and interpretation (David L. Altheide 1985).

Sample for the purpose of content analysis was selected according to the objectives of the study. A total 230 books were included in all madrasa courses. The manifesto containing mission statements and the core objectives of the organization and recommended course books were the sample. It took almost six months of time to select the appropriate content. Only Tafseer and Ahadid books were recommended by the key informants as master books which can be a source of cross verification many times, a sample book was selected, but the themes and coding proses results were not satisfying. Course contents mostly were similar in all madrasa boards. All those books were analyzed, which were related to the research objectives. The main purpose of content analysis in this study was to verify the responses of the key participants regarding tolerance and acceptance of other sects and vice versa.

Data Analysis

Through analysis, the researcher attempts to gain a deeper understanding of what he or she has studied and to refine interpretations continually (Basit, 2003). The researcher draws on the first-hand experience with the setting, informants, and documents to interpret the data (Bogdan & Bilkin, 2007, Merriam, 2009, Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Addressing Validity and Reliability Issues

The validity and reliability of the facts acquired through qualitative research are determined by analyzing the methodology and findings of the study. Internal validity is dependent upon how congruent the research findings are with reality.

“One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multi-dimensional and ever-changing” (Creswell, 2007). In qualitative research, it is participants view of reality that is determined. A human being is the instrument of data collection and analysis, the participant’s view of reality is accessed directly through there searcher’s interviews and observations.

Figurative Overview of an Interview Conducted for Research

Table 1. Key Informants Interviewed During Two Years’ Time Period

Polycymakers	Key informants	Pseudonym	Interviewed In the first phase	Interviewed In the second phase	Pages in Interview (typed/single spaced)
SHIA	Director Academic(Al-Muntazir Lahore)	Ayatullah Tahir Najafi	▲		10
DEOBAN DI	Director Academics	Atta-Ur- Rehman		▲	8
BARAILV I	Director Academic	Zaheer-ul- Islam	▲	▲	10
EHLE HADITH	Director Academic	Muhammad Tayyab	▲		13
JAMAT E ISLAMI	Director finance and Academic	Salman Sherpao	▲		8

Summary and Findings

Do you think madrassas have the policy to unite the Ummah? If yes, how? Are such policies in practice? If yes, where? Would you like to refer? If no? what do you think are the factors behind it?

Molana Hafeez-Ur-Rehman

Yes, but this policy is only restricted to the unity of all boards; during the Zia-ul-Haq era, he established five boards of all sects, the members of all these five boards are sitting together in meetings peacefully. This is correct that all these sects have their own board and separate curriculum; it is also correct that these sects do not agree on the uniformity of the curriculum; the government are struggling to find an in-between way for the uniformity of the curriculum. The biggest hurdle is the Deobandi sect because he is in the majority, I request the government to play a positive role in this regard, but at the same time, I request him to abstain from using force which will otherwise create the law and order situation within the society, it will be better if the government announces packages for the madrassas, but as far as I know, I am confirmed that the government is not with clean hands in the solution of this issue; therefore our leaders and elders are not ready to accept the demands of the government. In Islamabad, all the madrassas and Mosque are under the direct control of the Ministry of the interior, the government are paying salaries to the teachers of the Mosques, but the other expenditure is not paid by the government. In our madrassa there are totally 374 students are enrolled, among which 74 students are female, the government had engaged more than 30 staff members for a small school, and all their expenditure is born by the government, on the other hand, we bear the total expenditure of our madrassa himself, it is the responsibility of the government to facilitate us like other government institutions.

President Musharraf had introduced the model madrassa, engaged teachers on thousands of salaries, but unfortunately, it was failed, and all are closed because the teachers in those madrassas were not qualified from the madrassas himself; therefore, the students left those madrassas however the buildings and funds of those madrassas are still available. The decision of the government regarding the establishment of model madrassa was totally wrong there it could not achieve its goal; it will be more appropriate if the government could upgrade some madrassas from the existing model madrassas. To control further sectarianism and extremism within the society, the government should announce packages for madrassas like other government schools, college and university. If you look into the school, the children from all sect are getting education under the one roof, however there is no differences/issues are there between them, all are living with peace and harmony, the reason of this peace and harmony within the school/college are that it is controlled by the government, similarly if the government took the control of madrassa, then all this differences and issues will automatically come to an end.

Molana Ihsan Ullah

Yes, it is our policy to unite the Ummah; it is the teaching of Islam that all human are brothers, the teaching of the Quran and Hadid is full of brotherhood, unity and solidarity.

Molana Abdul Majeed

The basic objective of our madrassas curriculum is to propagate the importance of brotherhood, love, peace, unity and equality through the teaching of the Holy Quran. Furthermore, we thought sharia is a madrassa in which you will never ever find any topic regarding the teaching of religious sectarianism. We also thought some arts and practical skills like medicines, in Fiqah we thought, rights of God and rights of Humans, as Fiqah is the complete code of life, you will find each topic in it and its solution, the Fiqah is not only restricted to the issues of Prayers, Fast, Divorce and Marriage issues, in Fiqah we thought the system of government, the system of courts, the method of business etc. In short, our madrassas curriculum is full of the teaching of love, brotherhood, peace, equality and unity.

Molana Muhammad Younas

The madrassas had no policy statement, as it is not working under a uniform setup, but on the other hand, it is also a fact that there is no policy statement of the government colleges and schools, the

government is responsible for it, it is the duty of the government to unite us and make a uniform and detailed policy. If the government makes the policy with clean hands and fairly, then hopefully, we all will be agree with them; there is a need for a policy that is in the interest of religion and country. But to date, we don't see the fair attitude and response of the government.

Molana Molana Sami-Ul-Haq

I have no knowledge of this, for this, you need to meet with the chairman Wifaq-ul-Madris, he will clarify this question better, according to my knowledge efforts are being made to unite all the five major sects, for this purpose United Organization of Madris-e-Denia had been established with the intention to unite them and create peace and harmony within the sects.

Molana Niaz Hussain Naqvi

The basic objective of the whole curriculum of our madrassas is to teach unity. The teaching of Quran, Hadid and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) is full of the teaching of unity, peace, equality, harmony and justice

1. Two respondents, **A** and **D**, coded Quran, Hadid, Sharia and Fiqah, respondent **E**, we have a policy, but it is only limited to the unity of all five boards, while respondent **B** and **C** stated that we don't have any policy.

2. Majorities of the respondents **A**, **B**, **C** and **E**, pointed out, Quran, Hadid, Fiqah and Sharia having enough contents for Social Cohesion, while respondent **D** stated that we don't teach such contents in our curriculum.

Conclusions

Regarding the ideology/policies, most of the respondents were agreed upon that we taught and implement the true teachings of the Quran and Hadid in letter and spirit, the contents of which is sound enough in terms of social cohesion, furthermore there is no written ideology/policy, nor the madaris have any written contents/books regarding social cohesion. The sole justification which they provide for the implementation of the contents regarding social cohesion is the true teachings of the Quran and Hadid, which are the core subjects and had been incorporated in their syllabus; these subjects as compulsory in their curriculum and the students are bound to pass the subjects in the examination.

Recommendations

1. Besides the Holly Quran and Hadid rest of the curriculum is lacking the contents of social cohesion; hence it is recommended that the Ministry of Federal Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Higher Education Commission Islamabad, Pakistan, all Provincial Higher Education Departments, the leading Universities and all the five Wifaq-ul-Madaris Boards should develop a curriculum having the contents of social cohesion.
2. The Print and Electronic Media be restrained from negative propaganda against the madrassas, furthermore to control external involvement, a check and balance system should be introduced specifically for funding purpose.
3. The policy regarding the unity of the five boards at the top level are in the field; however, individually, the madaris is lacking the policy regarding unity, brotherhood and harmony; hence it is recommended that the government should take steps towards the development of a uniform policy.

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