

Probing The Challenges of Modern Education in Madaris: A Qualitative Inquiry on the Perceptions of Madrasa Teachers and Students

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Abstract

The present research was administered at the grassroots level investigated the perceptions of madrasa teachers as well as the students about the challenges of modern education in madrasas. The researcher intends to examine their perceptions to explore the challenges in imparting the modern education and its possible suggestions which might be helpful in imparting better modern education and enhance the standard of modern education in madrasas of Pakistan. Qualitative method was used in the study. Multistage sampling technique was applied to select the desired sample. At the first stage, 3 madrasas were selected conveniently where modern education in being provided along with routine dars-e-nizami course. At the next stage, total 18 participates (9 teachers and 9 students of undergraduate level) were taken from 3 madrasas. The qualitative data were collected through two separate open ended interview questionnaires for madrasa teachers and students respectively. For the analysis of qualitative data, thematic analysis was

done. Thematic analysis revealed that majority of the madrasa teachers as well as the students inclined towards incorporating modern education into the madrasa curriculum. Major challenges were found as extensive syllabus, diversion of student's concentration, learning burdens, overburden stress, autocratic administration and it's attitude, insufficient learning resources, lack of teachers, inconveniences between madrasa and board/ university academic calendar. It was recommended that Integration of modern and madrasa education should be at the subject level. In regular darse nizami group, modern languages and subjects may be included by excluding unnecessary and very old subjects. The government should allocate some budget to promote modern education as well as to meet the shortage of learning resources and faculty of modern subjects in madrasas.

Keywords: Modern Education, Madrasa Teachers and Students, Challenges, Darse-Nizami

Introduction

The current study is an endeavor to explore the challenges and find suggestions that can effectively incorporate modern education in madrasas following a bottom-up approach. Historical flaws or shortcomings can also be best illustrated by taking into consideration the perceptions of madrasa stakeholders, which is one of the motives to conduct the present study.

The term "Madrasa" was derived from the Arabic word "درس" which means "to study or learn". So literally the term madrasa implies to a site where learning take place.¹ In a narrower sense, the term madrasa was typically associated with Islamic education.² In Moulton's opinion (2008), "Madrasa served as a private institutions where a religious instructor taught the fundamental beliefs of Islam and the Arabic".³ In South Asian countries such as India and Pakistan, madrasa is (NGO) Non Governmental

Organization and Islamic seminary that provide Islamic education as well as accommodations to the madrasa students free of cost.⁴ The primary goal of madrasa was to protect Islamic ideology identity and culture. Additionally, to educate the citizens Islamic sciences and to prepare experts of Shareah/ Jurisprudence who can guide people in accordance by the rules set by Allah Almighty's and the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

Modern Education in Madrasas: A Historical Overview

Since the establishment of Pakistan, different governments have been endeavoring to unify the education sector by Islamizing modern institutions and modernizing the madrasas throughout the country. Since 1947 to today, different efforts were made by different governments in this regard. The madrasa system underwent a turning point when the government enacted the ordinance as MEB Madrasa Education Board in 2001 and MRP Madrasa Reform Project in 2002.⁵ In large cities in the country, modern education was initiated in madrasas.⁶ In these madrasas, religious as well as modern education were provided. Some of the madrasas, in large cities, established modern schools and collages under their supervision.

In 2005, the Ministry of Education began an initiative titled "Madrasa Education Reform." This effort aimed to introduce modern education in madrasas. In the first step, 2,000 teachers of public sector institutions were assigned to 500 madrasas at the middle level. However, this effort was short-lived.⁷ As a result of the 18th constitutional amendment in 2010, the matter of madrasas was transferred to MORA (Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs) while educational affairs were given to provincial governments.

Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) won the 2018 general election and took power. One of the main manifestos of the PTI government was to unify the education system in Pakistan. As a result, they introduced the "Single National Curriculum" to bring uniformity to all educational institutions, including madrasas, public and private sector institutions, which were producing dispersed mentalities. It was a crucial step in reforming the

madrasa curriculum to meet the needs of the modern and digital needs of the time.⁸

Modern Education from Islamic Outlook:

Modern education has not been prohibited by Islam, rather has been encouraged its teaching and learning. The reality is, Islam does not divide religion and the world into two separate compartments. Therefore, the term for the division of knowledge into ancient and contemporary, religious and modern is baseless and misleading. All kinds of knowledge that is beneficial for humanity is equally important to Islam. Islam has divided knowledge into two types. A useful knowledge that is useful and beneficial for human beings. And the other is non-profit that has no benefit for humanity.⁹ Moreover, the holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) prayed for knowledge of profit and sought refuge in the knowledge of the unprofitable. Furthermore, Al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned that it is the duty (Farz-Kifaya) on Muslims to acquire all such skills and specializations, due to which Muslims continue to be in need of non- Muslims. It is the duty (Farz-Kifaya) on Muslims to Protect the Muslims from the intellectual slavery of non-Muslims and making them self-sufficient in all their religious and worldly affairs⁹ (Gazali, 2008, as cited in Khan & Jadon, 2014, p. 12).

Statement of Problem:

The teaching of advanced sciences and technical skills is an important requirement of time in every age. Acquisition of modern sciences is an indispensable requirement to meet the challenges of this digital era. Modern education in madrasas is at infancy stage and facing numbers challenges related to modern education in madrasas. The researcher endeavors in the study to explore the challenges and find suggestions that can effectively incorporate modern education in madrasas. Historical flaws or shortcomings can also be best studied by taking into consideration the perceptions of madrasa teachers and students, which is one of the motives to conduct the present study.

Objectives of the study:

1. To investigate of the perceptions of madrasa teachers and students about the modern education
2. To investigate of the challenges that madrasa teachers and students face towards the modern education in madrasas

Research Questions:

These research questions were formulated based on the above objectives:

1. What are the perceptions of madrasa teachers and students about the modern education?
2. What are the perceptions of madrasa teachers and students about the challenges towards the modern education in madrasas?

Significance of the Study:

In this study, the researchers intend to examine the perceptions of madrasa teachers and students regarding the challenges in way of imparting modern education in madrasas. This study would helpful to extract some educational implications which might be helpful in mitigating the hurdles in imparting modern education and enhance its standard in Madrasas of Pakistan. This might also support in encouraging the teachers and students to impart the modern education in Madrasas. This research is also a contribution to already available body of knowledge on madrasa education reform. The study's findings can also be useful to both educationists and policymakers. Additionally, it will serve as a guide and inspiration for next researchers to get insight about madrasa education. Moreover, this research might be helpful to bring uniformity in Pakistan's education system and bridge the gap between madrasa and modern educational institutions.

Research Design and Methodology

In this study, qualitative research was used to investigate the perceptions of Madrasa teachers as well as the students about the challenges of modern education in Madrasas. The data were collected with in-depth interviews by

interview guide. This method is considered very useful to get in-depth information of participants experiences.

Population and Sample

The population of the study were all the teachers and students of modern madrasas located in district Lahore. Multistage sampling technique was applied to select the desired sample. At the first stage, 3 madrasas were selected conveniently where modern education was being provided along with routine *Darse-Nizami* course i.e. Jamia Naeemiya, Gari Shahu Lahore; Jamia Islamia, Garden Town Lahore; and Jamia Ashrafia, Muslim Town, Lahore. At the next stage, total 18 participates (9 teachers and 9 students of undergraduate level) were taken from 3 madrasas. The teachers were chosen based on their seniority in teaching madrasas. Then the selected teachers were requested to assist the researcher by choosing the potential students for interviews. The number of participants included as a sample are sufficient according to the guidelines of Sandelowski.¹⁰ He illustrated that the sample size should be at least 10 participants for getting in-depth information on the topic.

Instrumentation and Validation

Qualitative data was gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews as the instrument. Probing questions were also asked from the participants to get more in-depth insights. After drafting the questionnaire, experts were discussed to improve the validity of the research instrument. They also evaluated the construct validity of the questionnaire. To increase the instrument's reliability, a mock interview was administered.

Data Analysis & Discussion

This section concerned with study's Analysis and interpretation. In qualitative research, the term "data analysis" refers to the process of making sense of the data and interpreting it.¹¹ The data was analyzed through thematic analysis technique using MS word (2016) to analyze the qualitative data. It was carried out by grouping the same responses of participants into one theme.

Viewpoints of participants and emerged themes were discussed in relation to several themes led by the study's objectives. Some important remarks of the participants were also quoted. From the research ethical concerns, identity of participants was codified and kept confidential.

Analysis of Teacher's Responses

Themes Were Generated from Interview Questions Responded from Madrasa Teachers.

<i>Sr. #</i>	<i>Teacher's Interview Questions</i>	<i>Themes</i>
1	In your opinion, should the modern education be integrated into the madrasa education system? If Yes/ Not, then HOW?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes! Modifications in existing curricula • Yes! Partial integration • Yes! By setting priorities for specialization
2	What problems do you face from your madrasa administration towards getting modern education in madrasa?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake of Accountability • Autocratic administration
3	What kinds of hurdles do you experience due to the madrasa curricular activities in provision of a modern education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthy Syllables • Shortage of time
4	What kinds of problems do you encounter on the part of students to obtain a modern education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student's focus diverts • Students become overburden • Academic Self-Efficacy
5	In your opinion, what is the topmost challenge in integrating modern education with the madrasa?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mismatch academic calendar • Deficiency of resources

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of faculty for modern subjects
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Madrasa Teacher’s Inclination Towards the Modern Education

Thematic analysis revealed that all the madrasa teachers favored incorporating modern education into the madrasa curriculum. In the response of the question on inclusion of modern education in madrasa education, two of the respondents agreed *“modern and religious education should be combined by modifying existing curriculum of madrasa. Madrasa curriculum is very massive and it should be revised. The subjects which don’t match today’s need should be replaced with modern subjects”* (T5 & T7). According to Nadwi, madrasa curriculum had been revised in every era. Strangely, the curriculum that demands the most change and revolution in educational history has the longest stop and stasis.¹² One of the respondents said *“There should be partial integration of modern and madrasa education system. Up to matriculation, there should be complete integration. But in further classes, it should be partial”* (T3). Another participant argued about the integration by adding *“Madrasas are the institutions that produce the specialized religious scholars the same as medical colleges produce specialized doctors not engineers and the vice versa. In madrasas, the concentration should be on religious subjects with basic education of modern subjects”* (T8).

Madrasa Administration and Challenges of Modern Education

In response of the question on problems they face from their madrasa administration towards getting modern education in madrasa, two of the respondents told that Autocratic Administration was a challenge with respect to management. *mohtamim* of madrasa is all in all in his decisions. They mostly impose their own liking in educational matters (T3 & T8). Another respondent added the similar view about madrasa administration. He said *“there is no proper channel of accountability of steps or decisions made by madrasa mohtamims”* (T2).

Curricular Activities in Madrasa and Challenges of Modern Education

Under this section, madrasa teachers were asked that What kinds of hurdles they experience due to the curricular activities in provision of a modern education. One of them uncovered the big challenge as “*there is a shortage of time to manage the academic activities- Time is shorter than the subjects taught*” (T2).

Madrasa Students and Challenges of Modern Education

One of them highlighted “*the focus of students divert while learning two different areas of education in one session. They fail to get proficiency in either of one*” (T1). Another teacher points out a challenge towards modern education as “*some students think that they can't learn modern subjects because of poor base in that subjects*” (T7). This response showed that academic self-efficacy of some students is low and cause challenge in way of getting modern education.

Teacher's Mindset Towards Challenges of Modern Education

Teachers were inquired the things that about the topmost challenges in way of imparting modern education in madrasas. Three teachers pinpoint **that lack of faculty for teaching the modern subjects is one of the upmost challenges towards modern education. Highly qualified teachers demand high salaries. But madrasas don't have ample financial resorces** (T3, 5 & 6). One of the respondents told about the deficiency of modern educational resources in madrasas like computers, laboratories and technological equipped classrooms for students (T2).

Analysis of Student's Responses

Themes Were Generated from Interview Questions Responded from Madrasa Students

Sr. #	Student's Interview Questions	Themes
I	In your opinion, should the modern education be integrated into the madrasa education system? If Yes/ Not, then WHY?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, increase opportunities • Yes, both are complement of knowledge • To align myself with modern needs • Yes! It is accordance to Qur'anic guidelines
2	What problems do you face from your madrasa administration towards getting modern education in madrasa?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary restrictions • Mind-set of madrasa Administration
3	What kinds of problems do you encounter on the part of teachers to obtain a modern education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative teaching method • Lack of teachers
4	What kinds of hurdles do you experience due to the madrasa curricular activities in provision of a modern education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of concentration • Overburden stress

5	What kinds of problems do you experience from the madrasa environment for getting a modern education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient learning resources • Clash in madrasa and mainstream Board examinations
6	What are the things that have made it difficult for you to succeed in modern education in madrasa?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language • Poor Academic Background of students
7	In your opinion, what is the topmost challenge in integrating modern education with the madrasa?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massive Syllabus • Time limitations • Financial expenses

Madrasa Student's Inclination Towards the Modern Education

Through thematic analysis, it was found that all the madrasa students inclined towards integration of modern education into the madrasa education. In the response of the question on inclusion of modern education and madrasa education system, one of the participants replied “modern and religious education should be combined because it will have more opportunities to serve Islam in a better way when I understand others. For example, the direct addresses of the holy Quran was Arabs, hence, the language, manner of talking was according to their local culture. Islam is the religion for worldwide people. Therefore, we should learn and understand their languages and cultures without adopting them” (S6). Two respondents said “learning modern education enable me to get more job opportunities” (S3 & S7). One of them was also agree on this integration by adding learning the modern education is not contradict to Islam rather it is complement of religious education (S2”).

Madrasa Management and Challenges of Modern Education

In response of the question on problems they face from their madrasa administration towards getting modern education in madrasa, one respondent shared the similar views that administration restrict the students unnecessarily. As he told he studied in different madrasas, most of madrasa administration restrict their students for using laptops, mobile phones even for learning purposes. There is no easy access to computer lab. No ever student has access to that (S1). A respondent shared about the mindset of madrasa administration. They give primary importance to religious subjects. Students are forced to perform well in religious subjects. But no proper check and balance for good performance in modern education (S3). **Another student described regarding the mindset of administration in the given words "madrasa administration assumes that the main objective of madrasa establishment is to preserve and impart religious education. Modern education has secondary place in madrasa syllables" (S7).**

Madrasa Teachers and the challenges of modern education

Four of the respondents shared the same response. They uncovered that lack of teachers for teaching the modern subjects is a big problem for us. madrasa management could not arrange the competent teachers of modern subjects with up salaries (S2, 4, 7 & 8). One student described about ineffective teaching methods as "the teacher in our madrasa teach English just translating English script. Mostly the lesson remains unintelligible" (S5).

Curricular and co-curricular Activities in Madrasa

According to Adewale, academic activities and environment affect the students' academic performance. Madrasa students were asked that what kinds of hurdles you experience due to the madrasa curricular activities in provision of a modern education.¹³ One of the participants argued "our course contains massive books and content, when combining, it become academic burden, that a person neither get excellence in madrasa subject nor in modern subjects" (S9). One respondent highlighted "the burden of extensive syllabus of dars-e-nizami and contemporary subjects increase the

tension. Then it is difficult to decide what is to do and what is to left" (S7). Three of them uncovered about inconveniences were faced due to the clash in examinations held by madrasa and contemporary board exams (S3, 4 & 8). Most the students described about the deficiency of learning resources in madrasas in terms of computers, full fledge laboratories and language labs etc.

Student's Mindset Towards Challenges of Modern Education

Students were inquired the things that have made difficult for them to succeed in modern education in madrasa. Two students shared the same views that English language cause problem to them for learning modern subjects (S3 & 7). Da Costa mentioned that the if students are instructed in a language as a medium of instruction which is not intelligible to them, cause a barrier in the way of their education.¹⁴ In short, madrasa students considered financial expenses, time limitations and massive syllabus as the topmost challenges in a question asked by the researcher.

Findings

The present research was administered at the grassroots level to investigate of the perceptions of madrasa teachers as well as the students about the challenges of modern education in madrasas. The following findings have been drawn by the researchers based on the discussion of the key themes that emerged from the thematic analysis:

Inclination:

Thematic analysis revealed that majority of the madrasa teachers as well as the students inclined towards incorporating modern education into the madrasa curriculum.

Challenges:

- **Lack of faculty for modern subjects:** Teachers play a role of backbone in educational process. Due to limited financial resources of madrasas, it is challenging to hire subject specialists to tackle two parallel systems.

- **Insufficient learning resources;** Learning resources such as libraries, computer labs, laboratories and educational technologies are significant for smooth and effective running of learning process. Despairingly, such resources are either dis-equipped or ill-equipped in madrasas.
- **Massive Syllabus:** Curriculum is regarded as the heart of education system. Madrasa curriculum is overlorded with old books of philosophy, logic and complex script. For example, the grammar book 'Kafia' and text of 'Zila'i' in fiqh. These should be replaced with well illustrated books written by contemporary authors.
- **Time limitations:** In Madrasas, there is very busy timetable from dawn to dusk in which students have to cover difficult and lengthy syllabus of Darse-Nizami. Therefore, insufficient time is left to study modern subjects.
- **Financial expenses:** The financial aspect is considered engine of any program. The same financial challenge is being faced by madrasas. Madrasa's finance is limited to donations. According to Rahman, in respond to the question to the madrasa administrators that if the budget of madrasa was increased, what projects they would launch.¹⁵ Majority of the respondents stated that they would establish department of modern education, commuter labs and language labs for their students, if the budget of madrasa was increased,
- **Diversion of Student's Concentration:** The curriculum of madrasa is already extensive with numerous books. By blending the modern education, students cannot longer concentrate on the two parallel systems. They can't perform well in either of one due to diversion of concentration.
- **Overburden stress:** According to Pascoe et al., academic burden increases the risk of depression or anxiety which consequently leads to poor academic performance.¹⁶ Extensive curricular activities in

madrasas cause psychologically dissatisfaction among madrasa students.

- **English language:** Madrasa students have poor base towards English language and modern subjects. Due to lack of intelligibility, they considered English language as barrier in way effective learning of modern subjects.
- **Autocratic administration** (Lack of Accountability) Madrasa administrators are called 'Mohtamims'. They implement policies according to their own mindset. Education system in any madrasa is a reflection of concerned mohtamim's mindset. Many mohtamims disfavor of imparting modern education in madrasas effectively.
- **Digital accessibility issues:** Utilizing modern technologies are very effective medium for meaningful teaching and learning. In many madrasas, androids and internet connectivity is disallowed (due to distractedness).
- **Attitude of madrasa administration:** Madrasa administrations do not prevent their students from receiving a modern education. On the other hand, they do not compel any student to receive a modern education. Moreover, they argued that the founding purpose of establishing madrasas were to preserve and spread of Islamic sciences and the mainstream institutions are present for impacting modern education.
- **Conservative teaching method;** The current age is revolutionary and advanced which brought change in every aspect of life. It required innovative teaching methods, virtual learning, cloud technology, mobile technology, artificial intelligence and digital readers in today's classrooms. Madrasas failed to provide a technologically well-equipped environment even for teaching modern subjects.
- **Inconveniency between madrasa and board/ University academic calendar:** Madrasa examinations are conducted under the concerned

madrassa wifaqs. On the other hand, examination of contemporary education are administered under boards or universities. Clash in madrassa and mainstream board examinations cause inconvenience among madrassa students.

Conclusion

In this study, the researchers intend to examine the perceptions of madrassa teachers and students regarding the challenges in way of imparting modern education in madrasas. Modern education in madrasas is at infancy stage and facing numbers challenges related to modern education in madrasas. In light of the findings, it was concluded that majority of the madrassa teachers and students had positive perceptions towards integration of modern education into the madrassa curriculum. Madrassa teachers suggested that this integration should be done by setting priorities for specialization, modifying existing curricula and Partially integration. They also highlighted the challenges due to integration e.g. lack of faculty for modern subjects, lack of student's concentration, learning burdens, autocratic administration and their attitude, digital accessibility issues, academic self-efficacy of students. On the other hand, the madrassa students uncovered the challenges due to integration e.g. insufficient learning resources, massive syllabus, time limitations, financial expenses, overburden stress, English language, conservative teaching method, inconveniences between madrassa and board/ university academic calendar.

Recommendations

Modern education in madrasas still has to be developed and improved. There are a number of challenges with this integration that need to tackled. As a result, the following important suggestions are provided for its improvement and success:

- The government should allocate some budget to promote modern education as well as to meet the shortage of learning resources and faculty of modern subjects in madrasas.

- Integration of modern and madrasa education should be at the subject level. In regular dars-e-nizami groups, modern languages and subjects may be included by excluding unnecessary and very old subjects. In this way, madrasa students may not be overburdened as well as their inconvenience in time limitations and clash of madrasa and formal board examinations may also be released.
- Government should establish a committee to bring uniformity and harmony in education system in country wide.
- Madrasa students should have access to internet and PCs, they should be trained in various online earning resources e.g. Fiverr, TaskRabbit, OfferUp, Up Work, blogging, Daraz and Amazon etc. in order to make them financially independent. Vocational education should also be the part of madrasa curriculum.
- Madrasa administration should launch teacher training and development programs in madrasas in order to practice modern techniques and methods of teaching.
- Madrasa curriculum needs to be revised in this most revolutionary era by excluding complicated, very old and useless subjects. It should not be cumbersome. Its interpretation should meet the modern needs.

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