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# Analysis of Madrasa Education in Pakistan through the Lens of Media

Sumera Imran[1]

**Abstract:** This paper explores the media's depiction of Madrasa education in Pakistan. Madras education is confronted with significant challenges in the modern world as it grapples with the persistent issues of radicalism and terrorism. This paper explores the challenges that Pakistan has faced since the 9/11 incident, including economic, religious, social, and political crises. These challenges have created a complex situation for the citizens of Pakistan. In the modern arena, Madaras are often associated with the production of Taliban, terrorism, and radicalism. This paper adopts a qualitative approach, with the researcher utilizing the library method for data collection. The data has been gathered from a wide range of secondary and scholarly sources, such as books, articles, journals, and websites. The data was presented thoughtfully using thematic analysis. It reveals that Pakistan has experienced a continuous state of adversity and challenges since the 9/11 incident. These difficulties have had a detrimental impact on its socio-economic, cultural, religious, political, and developmental aspects.

**Key Words:** Media, Pakistan, Madrasa Education, Social, Challenges

**Correspondence Author:** Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Women Sub Campus, University of Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: sumeraimransst@yahoo.com

## Introduction

During the prehistoric period, madrasas were the primary educational institutions that people attended (AHMED, 1987). It had a significant role in the process of scholarly material being compiled. Madrasa education, on the other hand, has lost its value and respect as a result of developments such as globalization, progress, and improved media. In today's world, the education provided by madrasas is associated with the propagation of Taliban culture and terrorism. There have been new challenges that have emerged in the 21st century, including extremism, militancy, and terrorism. Within the context of the modern world, the attack on the World Trade Center is considered to be a watershed moment for terrorism and militant activity (Hummel, 2021). The misery that was brought about by this occurrence had a wide range of repercussions in Pakistan, including those that were social, economic, religious, and political in nature.

The problem of 9/11 and its consequences on society, the economy, religion, and politics have been brought to light by previous research conducted by many social researchers (Jalal et al., 2021). These contributions have attracted attention to the topic. As a consequence of this, the general social structure of the nation was injured as a result of the attacks that were done against the economic, educational, and health institutions. A decrease in the standard of living because it became more difficult to deal with day-to-day activities such as jobs, school, police work, and business. To a similar extent, the breakdown of the link between tribal and state in both Pakistan and Afghanistan is the root cause of the surge in radicalization that has been observed in both of these countries. Due to this, religious extremism was able to get a foothold, and outsiders were able to take advantage of the situation, initially in Afghanistan and then in. Many people's lives, including their religious, social, political, and economic

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[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Women Sub Campus, University of Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

lives, have been impacted by the wave of terrorism and militancy that has been sweeping the nation, particularly via the number of deaths and crimes that have occurred. Because of these repercussions, the social, political, and psychological life of the country has seen significant transformations. The fact that institutions in the country, as well as people's lives, property, and businesses, have been in danger for a considerable amount of time has resulted in society becoming even less stable. There has been a significant increase in the number of suicide attacks, bombings, and other violent acts committed by extremist groups over the course of the past nine years, which has resulted in a multitude of negative consequences. The social, political, and safety aspects of Pakistan's tribal areas (near Afghanistan) have been changing all the time since the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s, according to many studies on the issue. These changes have been occurring since the beginning of the movement (Siddiqa, 2009).

## The objective of the Research

- To conduct a thorough analysis of how Madrasa education is depicted in Pakistani media, evaluating its influence on the general public's perception and comprehension of religious educational institutions.

## The rationale of the Study

The justification for this scholarly article is rooted in the acknowledgment of the substantial influence that the media has on the formation of public sentiments and perspectives regarding Madrasa education in Pakistan. Considering the widespread prejudices and misunderstandings that surround these religious educational establishments, it is imperative to conduct a thorough examination. Through an analysis of the media's portrayal of Madrasa education, our objective is to expose the implicit narratives, prejudices, and consequences that shape the collective consciousness of society. The primary objective of this study is to provide policymakers, educators, and the public with significant contributions that will lead to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Madrasa education and its significance within the Pakistani setting.

## Methodology

The objective of this research paper is to ascertain the effect of media portrayal on madrasa education in Pakistan. The researcher in this bibliographic study methodically combed through secondary sources like books, papers, and journals to compile the information for this research report. Without limiting itself to any particular country or area, this study covers the entire Muslim world and the education it provides through madrassas. Research articles, books, and other materials abound online that not only introduce the subject but also go deeply into it, presenting the findings and insights of other experts in the field. In gathering information for this literature study, a comprehensive set of 45 sources, including primary and secondary sources, was consulted. Books, websites, reports, case studies, international conferences, news pieces, and journals have all been cited in this study. In order to set a solid course for future research, the subject will be investigated in depth utilizing the most exhaustive information available in the literature. A thematic analysis was used to undertake the data analysis in this study, which is qualitative in nature.

## The Madrassa from an Islamic Perspective

From an Islamic standpoint, the Madrassa plays a vital role in fostering the growth of spirituality, morality, and intelligence. Madrassas are educational institutions that focus on the transmission of Islamic teachings and the cultivation of a profound comprehension of the Quran and Hadith, reflecting a longstanding commitment to the pursuit of knowledge. These educational facilities prioritize not only religious studies but also have a comprehensive approach to education, integrating courses such as law, ethics, and Arabic language. The primary objective of the Madrassa is to cultivate individuals who possess a comprehensive understanding of Islam and actively contribute

to the betterment of their communities. It functions as a platform for cultivating a robust feeling of community self-control and a link to the abundant legacy of Islamic erudition. Although historical practices and contemporary interpretations may differ, the primary objective remains consistent: to offer a thorough and equitable education based on Islamic values, fostering intellectual inquisitiveness, moral behavior, and a profound religious affiliation.

## The Misuse of the term Madrassa Education and Militancy

There has been a growing interest among orthodox Muslim circles in Pakistan in discussing the differences between the terms "jihad," "terrorism," "violence," and "militancy" since the horrible event that occurred on September 11, 2001 (Helfstein, 2009). Considering that recent actions carried out by students in Afghanistan and Kashmir have been referred to as "jihad," the advocates in this context are principally concerned with the question of why these terms are used interchangeably. It is now commonly understood among students, administrators, and the general public in Pakistan that there is a variation in the extent to which madrassas contribute to the development of militant ideology. This is due to the ongoing discussions that have taken place. It would appear that the job of madrassas is to focus on things that are local and regional in nature, such as the conflicts that are taking place in Afghanistan and Kashmir. In several instances, it has been established that madrassas were involved in the conflict between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. It is important to take into consideration the fact that the Mujahideen were recruited and trained for combat through Madrassas in order to protect themselves from the Soviets. This resulted in the establishment of new madrassas, which were established with the intention of encouraging students to take part in the Afghan conflict. Saudi Arabia and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States provided financial support to these madrassas at the same time (Weinbaum & Khurram, 2014). The majority of Taliban leaders, on the other hand, are said to have obtained their education from Pakistani Madaaris throughout the period of time when the Taliban were climbing within Afghanistan. This is a truth that is commonly accepted. It was largely seen that there was a strong connection between the Taliban and Haqqania Madrassa, which is situated in Akora Khattak, which is situated in the province of KP. This particular setting was the primary venue for this observation. According to reports, Mullah Omar and his friends were seen attending classes at the madrassa. This was the key cause that led to the establishment of this connection from the beginning. Additionally, in order to give Afghan refugees the knowledge they required in order to be ready for jihad, madrassas were included in the refugee camps that were established. Furthermore, with the purpose of competing with Indian soldiers in Kashmir, it is reported that certain jihadi organizations were provided with financial support. Madrassas have been the subject of a substantial amount of debate within the context of this conversation, namely about the role that they play in the formation of the jihadi culture.

Over seventy-seven Ahl-e-Hadith, twenty-three Barelvi, and two hundred Deobandi Madaaris in Pakistan are either connected to terrorist organizations or actively help jihadi operations, as demonstrated by the findings of the research (Naveed et al., 2011). This is abundantly clear. Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT), which was founded in 1993 and has its headquarters in Muridkey, Punjab, was the most prominent and largest jihadi group among all of the Madrassas. It's also the name of the organization. According to the LeT, which is a military branch of the Markaz-ud-Daawa-Wal-Irshad organization, Jammu and Kashmir were the locations where actions were carried out. Over eighteen percent of the madaris were connected to other jihadi organizations, such as Jaish-e-Muhammad, Sipah-e-Sahaba, and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, according to the findings of a number of investigations that were conducted throughout the course of the probe. In order to provide evidence in favor of her thesis, she cites research that rejects the idea that there is a direct connection between madrassas and militant groups (Andrabi et al., 2006). Nevertheless, she agrees that even a small number of militants emerging from madrassas hold the potential to develop kids who may endorse and contribute to the militant groupings. It has been determined through research conducted by the Brookings Institution that madrassas are regarded as one of the primary elements that contribute

to extremism. Nevertheless, due to the fact that fewer than ten percent of Pakistani students are enrolled in these religious institutions, they are not considered to be a big problem. Although the administration of the madaris denies that there is any relationship between madrassa and militancy, they do concede that a significant number of madrassas are, in fact, associated with jihadi organizations in terms of terrorist activities. When it comes to education about jihad, the madrassas are unanimous in their assertion that jihadi education is obligatory and necessary within the framework of Islam, with the intention of ensuring that it continues. In spite of the fact that madrassas do not actively push their students to take part in jihad, they argue that Westerners have a tendency to undercut the teaching that is associated with jihadi actions, which is something that they consider absolutely unacceptable. Maulana Yaseen Zafar, who is representing Wafaqul-madaris alSalafia, contends that Madaaris should not be used as instruments for jihadi or political parties (Khan, 2018). He claims that this is because engaging in armed combat may potentially lead to the country entering a state of civil war. On the other hand, Maulana Raghib Naeemi, the vice president of Tanzeem-ul-Madaaris, brings up the point that if students from Madrassas are paid to take part in jihad, then what is the point of keeping an army that is half a million strong?

In addition, the President of Rabita-ul-Madaaris, Maulana Abdul Malik, answered by claiming that students of Madaaris are not involved in any activities that are considered to be jihadi (Ghani et al., 2021). Instead, he is of the opinion that the government is consciously planning and executing a campaign with the intention of waging a proxy war against India. As a consequence of this, when the objectives of the government are unsuccessful, they often take action against their own citizens who have already received the appropriate education for that particular duty. Furthermore, Qari Hanif Jallandhary, who is affiliated with Wafaqul-Madaaris Al-Arabia, asserts that the Council of Islamic Ideology ought to take on the responsibility of addressing issues concerning jihad and the participation of students, with a specific emphasis on obtaining the authorization of the government to engage in jihad. The experts of the Shia sect stress that in order for jihad to be authorized, it must be sanctioned by an Imam, or it can only be permitted when the defense of the country is in danger. In every other circumstance, it is regarded as completely unlawful.

## Obstacles to Madrassa Education

Around the world, madrassas face many problems, and the process of registering them has always been a source of debate, criticism, and a difficult position. As exact numbers on Madaaris are rarely available, it is possible to count the ones who have registered with Wafaq. A lot of Madarassas are thought to be running without being officially registered or connected with any groups that need to be. When it comes to madrassas, the syllabus is also the subject of a lot of debate and criticism. One school of thought among critics is that the lessons taught in madrassas don't focus on what teens and adults need today. A lot of people who follow this situation think that the lessons taught in Madrassa are often influenced by outside forces that cause students to develop extreme and violent ideas. People also think that during Musharraf's rule (1999–2008), reforms to madrassas were talked over between wafaqs (madrassas administration) and the government. However, there has been no progress in this area because neither the madrassas' demands nor the government's agreement to any of them are clear. Also, one of the biggest problems for Madrassa is getting money. A lot of people think that madrassas get money from outside of Pakistan to push their own causes and use the schools as platforms for their own goals. Madrassas in Pakistan also have to deal with the problem of teaching foreign students whose learning methods are up for debate in government (Bhattacharya, 2014). To figure out and discuss the role of madrassas in society, using logic is important. Many people believe that madrassas can help keep society stable and promote peace and harmony because they have a lot of dedicated followers who focus on religion rather than society.

## Western Perspectives on Madrassa Curricula

The construction of the mechanism and system that controls the running of these institutions is significantly influenced by the acts of foreign interference and incursion into the systems of madrassas in Pakistan. This is a crucial role. Madrassas in Pakistan are often believed to have a substantial association with Islamic fundamentalist and extremist groups. This notion is common. This connection is the result of an endeavor made by Western media, which continues to purportedly portray madrassas as the heart of radicalized Islamic violence. According to the facts, this connection is the manifestation of this attempt. The Western media frequently exaggerates the original facts and data, misinterprets and manipulates the curriculum, exploits the original history and dictates the political realities relating to madrassas in a manner that is not authentic. This has been proved in a number of studies, and it has been demonstrated that these things are commonly done. It is of the utmost importance that the Ministry of Education in Pakistan plays a role that is correct, suitable, and founded on the truth in this context. The Western media is giving madrassas a great deal of attention and taking advantage of the realities, which is the reason why this is transpiring.

## Western Media's Representation of Muslims and Islam

The image of mosque education can be found within this framework, which is located within the context of a more comprehensive media picture of Islam and Muslims (Bassiouni, 2012). There is a general tendency for negative representation of groups that are typically labeled as the "others" in mainstream culture. This tendency has been observed in a number of different contexts. This is especially true in the case of the former. The discourse on Islam in the media has been significantly impacted by the linkages between Islam and terrorism as well as the basic 'otherness' of Muslims, particularly in the aftermath of the events that occurred on September 11, 2001. The only study that has been carried out that focuses on the portrayal of mosque education in Western countries. More than three hundred mosques in the United Kingdom have adopted a citizenship education curriculum as part of a program that is being carried out by the government and is being referred to as "Islam and Citizenship Education." This exemplifies the distinctive characteristics of the environment seen in the United Kingdom. The findings of the study indicate that the narratives that are published in the British news center on the protection of children and the prevention of extremism through the teaching of citizens in mosques. This is the case because the narratives are centered on extremism prevention. Consequently, this lends validity to the idea that the discussions on mosque education are intertwined with a discourse on the secularization of Islam. Securitization of Islam not only requires portraying Islam as a source of threat, but it also involves developing policies such as education or immigration based on the premise that Islam inherently constitutes a threat. In other words, the securitization of Islam incorporates both of these aspects. A few studies have been carried out to explore the manner in which Islam and Muslims are portrayed in the Dutch journalistic environment. To give one example, terWal (2004) carried out a breakthrough study in which he compared and contrasted the depiction of Islam in the high-quality daily De Volkskrant before and after the events that occurred on September 11, 2001. The data revealed that prior to the events of September 11, the coverage mostly focussed on the personal experiences of Muslims who were devout, yet after the attacks, the attention switched to the relationship between religious fanaticism and integration.

On the other hand, an investigation into the articles that were published in the widely read newspaper known as De Algemeene Dagblad (AD) and that were associated with Islam (Sözeri et al., 2017). Their findings indicate that there has been a significant increase in the negative framing of domestic Islam since the assassination of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004, which was carried out by a radical of Dutch-Moroccan origin. Theo van Gogh was murdered in 2004. In light of the fact that the assassination was carried out by a radical, this was the situation. According to van Drunen (2014), who conducted a study on the framing of Muslims in eight Dutch newspapers during an ordinary non-election period between September 2010 and March 2011, the four

most dominant frames with regard to Muslims are "problematization," "homogenization," "otherness," and "fear and threat." This research was published in 2014. These are the four frames that are the most successful. Specifically, the Netherlands served as the setting for the execution of this investigation. Within the concept of 'problematization,' the primary focus is on the disagreements and difficulties that are brought about by Muslims. Regarding the perceived dangers that Muslims present, the "fear and threat" framing contains a number of different signals that are all related to the perceived dangers that Muslims present. Importantly, the term "homogenization" alludes to generalizations that neglect the differences that exist among Muslims. This is something that should be taken into consideration. As a last point of discussion, the 'otherness' frame draws attention to the differences that exist between Muslims and individuals who do not follow the Islamic faith. It is projected that the negative image of Islam and the conceptual homogenization of Muslims would also be reflected in the manner in which the journalistic community in the Netherlands presents the education that is offered in mosques.

## Conclusion

Media dominates the postmodern era, serving as a potent instrument for marketing, promotion, defamation, and more. Other than these, the media can also negatively portray certain events. Today, media can be used to glorify or denigrate portions of society according to simplistic ideology. Post 9/11, Western media has primarily focused on Islamic militancy and criticized madrassas. The Western media was anti-madrassa due to its lack of reputable sources, positive analysis of the curriculum, and understanding of its evolution and current political issues. Regulation of media may be necessary to minimize the influence of Islamist political groups, which should be treated delicately and altruistically. This study does not challenge the belief that madrassas have been successful in educating people in Pakistan. While some madrassas may pose worldwide risks, they are not the norm and not typical of others. While recent revelations about madrassas are concerning, the overall educational system in Pakistan is in need of change. The goal of this study is to encourage Western media to prioritize equality, humanitarian ideals, and cultural sensitivity while providing aid rather than just national security. To achieve this goal, Western media should improve the standard of living for Pakistani children, political leaders, spiritual scholars, government representatives, and parents. This will help Pakistan build positive and profitable relationships with the West.

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