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REFRAMING MADRASSA EDUCATION: INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Madrassa education is arguably contentious in Pakistan because it is both an instrument of religious education and is perceived as a part of the exclusivist perception of the world, as well as the concept of violent extremism. Structural issues with the taught curriculum and rote methods, poor regulation, and insufficient integration with mainstream education have a negative influence, despite several state-driven reforms. This research aimed to investigate how educational changes can enhance the aspect of inclusion and curb the extremist orientation in madrassas. They employed a quantitative research design, utilizing 350 respondents who represented various madrassas in Pakistan. Five independent variables were measured using a structured questionnaire consisting of curriculum reform, teacher training, state oversight, integration, and civic education (in relation to inclusion and the reduction of extremism). Internal consistency was also established to be very strong (Cronbach's alpha values between 0.79 and 0.86 as a result of the reliability test). Regression analysis demonstrated that commercial analytics successfully met the criterion of being statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.507$, $F = 71.35$, $p < 0.001$), with curriculum reform ($b = 0.321$) and civic education ($\beta = 0.305$) having the largest emphasis. As these findings suggest, madrassas may be repositioned as all-inclusive institutions through reforms based on a diversified curriculum, participatory pedagogy, collaborative governance, an integrated approach, and interfaith civic education. The article suggests changing the policy of securitization to collective and education-based reforms in an effort to promote tolerance and national unity.

Keywords: Madrassa Reform, Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), Inclusive Education, Critical Pedagogy, Social Cohesion.

Introduction

In Pakistan, religious education plays a highly centralized role in shaping social and cultural orientations, thereby influencing ideological perspectives. Madrassas, or Islamic seminaries, have traditionally been a source of learning and character development, through which the needs of underprivileged groups have been addressed. They still offer free education, housing, and meals to thousands of children from low-income families, providing them with sustenance (Ahmad & Bano, 2021). Nevertheless, with their constructive influence, madrassas have been subject to

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increasing scrutiny as they could lead to exclusivist views of the world, and in some instances promote extremist tendencies (Naseem & Arshad, 2022).

After the events of 9/11, the international community and the Pakistani state have exerted more debate on the change of madrassas, connecting them with the larger agendas of countering violent extremists (CVE). Despite empirical studies indicating that not every madrassa is an agent of radicalization, the loopholes in curriculum design, teaching practices, and alignment with mainstream schooling raise concerns about their potential to generate socially inclusive citizens (Shah, 2023). Of importance is balancing the religious authenticity and the need to inculcate pluralism, critical thinking and civic responsibility in madrassa students.

Recent policy proposals, including the Single National Curriculum (SNC) and the reforms to madrassa registration, suggest the government's efforts to modernize religious education. However, these arrangements are bitterly opposed by religious boards (wafaqs), political interests, and scarcity (Khan, 2021). Meanwhile, international development agencies pay close attention to the inclusive education process and interfaith learning as key elements of peacebuilding in conflict-prone societies (UNESCO, 2023). This emphasis generates the necessity of an empirical framework, within which madrassa reform can be situated in the context of critical pedagogy theory, social identity theory, and inclusive educational theory.

Rationale of the Study

This research has several reasons. To begin with, reforming madrassas used to be one of the most disputable and least researched educational policies in Pakistan. While policymakers focus primarily on security-related narratives, there are limited studies that explore how education can be integrated into peacebuilding and inclusion models (Rahman & Siddiqui, 2020). Second, the fact that Pakistan faces an increasing number of young people, and due to a lack of other opportunities, Madrassa education is still unlikely to align with mainstream education or the employment process (World Bank, 2022). Third, by analyzing the reforms of madrassas, critical pedagogy and social identity theory become important in understanding the ability of education to perpetuate exclusivism or build pluralistic identities.

The study bridges these gaps, thereby contributing to the field of discussion and policy reform. It lends importance to the ways in which well-organized educational material in madrassas could become an ally in the construction of a social fabric, attitude, and national integration.

Problem Statement

After failed attempts at reform, madrassa education in Pakistan remains determined to resist the mainstream education system and still relies on traditional pedagogies, focusing on rote memorization of information. Some madrassas have also adopted more reformist approaches; however, systematic opposition, the absence of oversight, and inadequate teacher training hinder the institutions' progress (Malik, 2022). As a result, a few madrassas continue exclusivist ideologies that could lead to intolerance and, in rare cases, violent extremism.

The issue is that it has not implemented a holistic and contextually based reform agenda, identifying a means to balance the authenticity of religion and the contemporary educational requirements. Unless there is any substantive change with regard to the curriculum, pedagogy, and regulation, madrassas may continue to propagate social exclusion, sectarian micro-division and low socio-economic empowerment of their students. The research thus aims to fill the gap of discussing how pluralism in the madrassa system of Pakistan can be initiated by using inclusive educational strategies to counter the effects of violent extremism.

Research Questions

- What is the effect of curriculum reform and diversification in terms of extremist tendencies among students of madrassas?
- How do teacher training and pathological modernization influence the students' social inclusion and tolerance?
- How effective is state policing and control in reducing the possibility of madrassa extremism?
- What are the impacts of integrating madrassa education into mainstream education on the civic turnout rates and employability of students?
- How can interfaith and civic education modules be utilized to promote pluralism and decrease sectarian intolerance among students in madrassas?

Research Objectives

- To assess how curriculum reform and curriculum diversification contribute to a decrease in the level of extremist attitudes.
- To examine how the teacher training and the pedagogical modernization can encourage inclusion and tolerance.
- To explore the role that state supervision and regulation would play in reducing violent extremism. To determine that the higher the integration with mainstream education, the higher the civic participation of madrassa students and their employability.
- To explore the way in which interfaith and civic education facilitate pluralism and lessen sectarian intolerance.

Theoretical Framework

There are three theoretical perspectives that the study is based on:

Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970): It suggests that education should move away from and let go of rote memorization in favor of cultivating a sense of critical consciousness. This theory prioritizes and focuses on dialogic instructions, learner

agency, and questioning, as opposed to surface-level, absolute narratives in the madrassa setting (Shah & Ali, 2021).

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979): This theory explains the effect of high ingroup identification that may lead to out-group prejudice. In madrassas, sectarian-based identities tend to support exclusivism. With the incorporation of civic and interfaith education, the identity of students will be expanded to wider inclusiveness (Saeed, 2020).

Inclusive Education Framework (UNESCO, 2017, 2023): Ensures equity, diversity, and inclusion in learning environments. The implementation of this model in madrassas demonstrates the capacity of the educational system to foster both exclusion and peace and tolerance (UNESCO, 2023).

Collectively, these theories provide the analytical resources to discuss how current educational changes can transform madrassas into spaces that help overcome violent extremism.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables (Educational Reform Strategies):

- Curriculum Reform and Diversification (H1)
- Teacher Training and Pedagogical Modernization (H2)
- State Oversight and Regulation (H3)
- Integration with Mainstream Education (H4)
- Interfaith and Civic Education (H5)

Dependent Variables (Educational Outcomes):

- Reduction in extremist attitudes and behaviors
- Enhanced social and civic inclusion
- Increased pluralism and tolerance
- Improved civic participation and employability

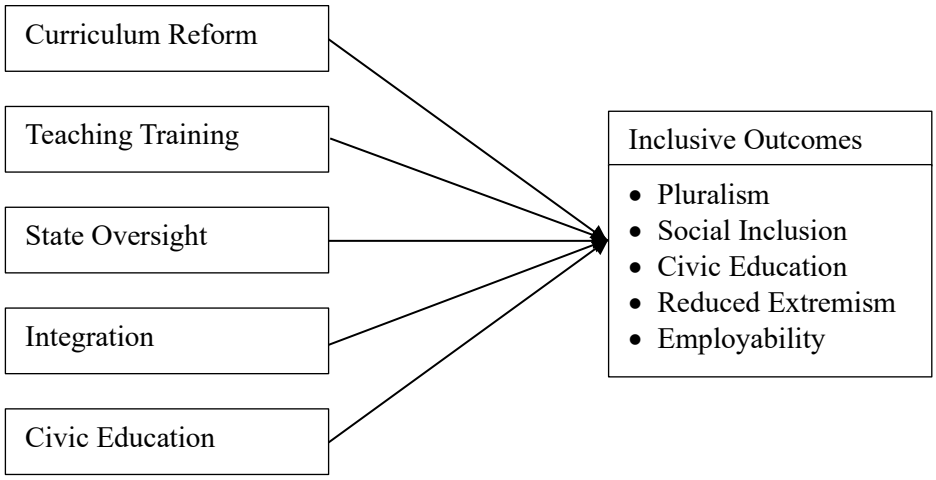


Figure 01: Conceptual Framework

Study Hypotheses

H_1: There is a significant impact of curriculum reform and diversification on the decrease in extremist attitudes in madrassa students.

H_2: Teacher training and modernization of the pedagogy have a significant impact on the social inclusion of students and their tolerance of madrassas.

H_3: The role of state control and institutional regulation plays a major role in reducing the risk of violent extremism in madrassa schools.

H_4: The inclusion of madrassa education in mainstream education has a significant impact on civic participation and employability among students.

H_5: The inclusion of interfaith and civic education modules will have a significant effect of boosting pluralism and decreasing sectarian intolerance in madrassas.

Literature Review

Madrassa Education in Pakistan: Historical Background.

Madrassas have traditionally played a role as religious educators and providers of social charity in South Asia, where students, including those from low-income families, receive free education and lodging. Based on the curriculum of Dars-e-Nizami, which was introduced during the Mughal era, madrassas were institutionalized under colonial rule and subsequently expanded in Pakistan after gaining independence (Metcalf, 2020; Perveen, 2025). They were important both for passing on Islamic knowledge and filling the gap created by the under-resourced public education sector (Bano & Kalmbach, 2021). Nevertheless, the low levels of secularization in curricula ultimately put madrassa graduates at a disadvantage in the mainstream education and job opportunities (Ahmad & Bano, 2021).

Madrassas and the Radicalization Debate

Madrassas and violent extremism have been a topic that has been hotly contested in the scholarly and policy arenas. Some initial post-9/11 scenarios painted madrassas as nurseries of jihad because of the exclusivist nature of the curricula and the alien source of financing (Singer, 2001). Nevertheless, according to more recent empirical investigations, a non-deterministic, complex relationship between the two appears to exist. Arguing that a negligible percentage of madrassas promote exclusivism, Fair et al. (2019) specify that socio-economic deprivation, political discontinuity, and identity crisis are in a stronger position in contributing to radicalization. Likewise, Malik (2022) points out that madrassas cannot be viewed as uniform, and they vary in terms of the sect they are affiliated with, location, and their capacity to implement changes. The trends in this body of literature indicate that it is necessary not to settle on securitized discourses, but to adopt a more nuanced approach to madrassas as a diverse range of institutions where students learn.

Reform and Policy Initiatives

Over the last 20 years, several reform efforts have been proposed in Pakistan to modernize the madrassas. The Madrassa Reform Project (2001), the National Education Policy (2009), and the Single National Curriculum (SNC) (2019) were programs that aimed to establish secular curricula, balance finances, and make madrassas state-funded (Khan, 2021; Bukhari, 2025). Throughout these efforts, there have been weak implementations, including political compromises with religious boards, a lack of monitoring mechanisms, and opposition from madrassa leaders (Shah, 2023). Notably, as Naseem and Arshad (2022) observe, in most madrassas, the state-initiated change is perceived as an act of interference that undermines their independence and religious integrity. Thus, the reform agenda is disorganized, with only limited success in integrating madrassa education into the mainstream system.

Restructuring of the Curriculum and Instructional Ideals

People have criticized the prevalence of rote memorization as a means of propagating dogma instead of fostering analytical thinking, as it is often taught in madrassas (Shah & Ali, 2021). According to scholars, the cognitive development of students and tolerance for diversity could be facilitated through the diversification of the curriculum and the introduction of civic education, ethics, and comparative religion (Rahman & Siddiqui, 2020). This is also dependent on teacher training. According to Malik (2022), teachers in madrassas do not receive formal instruction in pedagogy, which restricts the use of participatory teaching methods. NGOs that taught madrassa teachers dialogic pedagogy and conflict resolution through pilot programs with children reported positive results in classroom relationships and student willingness (Chaudhry, 2020). Such results imply that the reform measures should go beyond changing the content of teaching and also shifting the teaching methods.

The Protection of the Ministry of the State

Regulation of madrasas by the state has been a long-standing challenge. These have been generally opposed by attacks from wafaqs (religious boards), which protect their independence in the face of attempts to organize and oversee madrassas. Hussain

(2021) posits that the imperial subjugation through the main mobilization undermines trust and reinforces the confirmation of antagonism at the state level towards religious education. Increased collaboration, through collective regulation and in cooperation with religious scholars and civil society, has been suggested as a more sustainable approach (Iqbal, 2020). These forms of participatory regulation align with best practices in other countries, where the success of educational reforms is achieved when they are perceived as legitimate and contextually relevant by the key stakeholders (UNESCO, 2023).

Integration with Mainstream Education and Employment

Pakistan has a dual system, which creates an obstacle for students of madrassas to access higher education and secure formal jobs. Research shows that the completion of madrassa graduates in securing sources of equivalence and entry qualifications to universities and the professional world is very imposing (Ahmad & Bano, 2021). Saeed (2020) emphasizes that such restrictions not only hinder socio-economic mobility but also exclude people from a sense of marginalization, which extremist trainers can further manipulate. The problem of attempting to bring the madrassa system up to the same standards as national education, while also establishing accredited qualifications, is thus a crucial issue in ensuring limited exclusion and increasing civic engagement.

Interfaith and Civic Education

The importance of civic education and interreligious education in enhancing pluralism and social cohesion is increasingly being pointed out in the literature. As Aziz (2021) argues, the students of madrassas do not create openness in religion and aspects of intolerance because they were exposed to other religions and other historical eras. At the grassroots level, the introduction of the system of civic rights, interfaith dialogue and peace education in the curricula of madrassas has proven to yield good results (Rahman & Siddiqui, 2020). One more important argument that is associated with the idea of inclusive education, as promoted by UNESCO (2023), is that to prevent the ideologies of exclusion and embrace democratic citizenship, this kind of system must be applied even in societies related to conflict.

New Ideologies and Horizons

Despite all the information published about the problems of madrassa reform, the full framework that will combine the results, employ the methods of education, and implement the theories of critical pedagogy, social identity, and inclusive education is not yet present. Most reforms that are currently in place are either policy-based, where they have a dysfunctional implementation, or donor-based, where they lack sustainability (Shah, 2023). Most research investigating ways madrassas reforms can be produced in cooperation with stakeholders to increase their validity and sustainability is very minimal. It seals this gap by hypothesizing that a multidimensional strategy to reform should be adopted, which includes diversifying the curriculum, empowering teachers, participatory regulation, and interfaith civic education as remedies in combating violent extremism and fostering inclusiveness.

Research Methodology

Research Design

In his study, the researcher will use the quantitative and cross-sectional survey design to examine the linkage between the madrassa educational reforms (independent variables) and outcomes regarding factors of including and countering violent extremism (dependent variables). This option of a survey methodology was made possible by the fact that it was possible to gather justified, standardized data from a relatively large sample of respondents that could subsequently be analyzed through statistical techniques such as regression analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Nevertheless, quantitative design is the most appropriate to establish the forecast of the attitudes related to pluralism, tolerance, and inclusion in the background of socio-political pluralism among students subjected to particular educational interventions, such as curriculum reform, teacher education, and civic education (Bano & Kalmbach, 2021).

Population and Sampling

The population that will be involved in this research will be the students of registered madrassas in Pakistan. Madrassas vary in the degree of sectarianism (Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahl-e-Hadith, Shia), and distribution across the regions (urban and rural). As a result, stratified random sampling was used to guarantee equal representation of these groups. The sample size included 350 people who were picked in madrassas in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta and had a mixed geographical and sectarian mix. This is a suitable sample size to use in regression analysis that requires a minimum of 15-20 respondents of each predictor variable to get a statistically valid measure (Hair et al., 2019).

The scales were then calculated to find out Cronbach's alpha to ascertain construct reliability. All the variables showed a decent level of internal consistency (0.70), and it is in accordance with the number (reliability threshold) recommended by Hair et al. (2019). The content validity was ratified after the review of the content by two education scholars and one policy practitioner who had experience in madrassas reform. Construct validity was measured through the application of factor analysis, which was the loading of items to their respective constructs.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were supposed to be filled in during direct interviews with the assistance of the local representatives who were oriented towards the madrassa. Ethical approval was given by the Institutional Review Board. Informed consent was given by all the participants, and the study was anonymous and voluntary. The respondents said that the information they were giving was confidential and that they would not publicly publish or release it in one way or another.

Data Analysis

- SPSS (Version 26) was used to code and analyze the survey results. The analysis was done in a number of steps:

- The Determination of the Descriptive Statistics was done to report demographics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations).

- Reliability analysis was done to ensure the internal consistency of the scales with Cronbach's alpha.

- Through the Multiple Regression Analysis, the hypotheses were tested through which the predictors are curriculum reform, teacher training, state oversight, integration and civic education, which showed the results to be the reduction of extremism and inclusion.

- To determine the overall relevance of the regression models, the study examined them with ANOVA.

- The strength of the predictor and direction was reported by means of regression coefficients, standardized beta values and p-values derived ($p < 0.05$).

Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitivity of madrassa education and violent extremism, ethics played the most important role in the research. The objectives of the study were made known to the participants in advance, and informed consent forms were given to them. Respondents have participated at their own free will and were not expected to remain throughout the whole participation. To preserve adequate confidentiality, data anonymization and the absence of names or initials of madrassas and respondents were applied. The study was performed in an ethical way and according to the needs of the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2019).

Analyses and Interpretations

Table 01: Demographics of Respondents (N = 350)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	210	60.0
	Female	140	40.0
Age	20–29 years	120	34.3
	30–39 years	150	42.9
	40+ years	80	22.9
Education Level	Bachelor	100	28.6
	Master	180	51.4
	PhD	70	20.0

Demographic profile of the respondents indicates that out of the total sample number, 210 (60) were male and 140 (40) were female, meaning that there is a male majority in the enrollment in madrassas. The age distribution shows that the highest number of participants fell within 30-39 years (42.9%), then the 20-29 years (34.3%), and the remaining 22.9% participants were 40 years and older. This implies that students of the madrassas are not limited to early childhood learning, but they are also adult learners. Regardless of their levels of education, 28.6% were bachelors, 51.4%

were master's, and 20% were doctoral, which is quite an educated sample population when compared to the stereotypical considerations regarding madrassa students. Such numbers demonstrate that the participants of the madrassa are evenly distributed by age and level of education, and this makes the analysis of their views on the reform and inclusion more plausible.

Table 02: Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)		
Scale	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Curriculum Reform	8	0.86
Teacher Training	7	0.82
State Oversight	6	0.79
Integration	5	0.81
Civic Education	6	0.84

The reliability analysis was done to determine the internal consistency of research instruments. The value of alpha of all constructs was higher than the acceptable value of 0.70, hence, high levels of reliability. Curriculum Reform had the greatest reliability value of 0.86, with a close second and third of Civic Education of 0.84 and Teacher Training of 0.82. The value under state Oversight was slightly lower, yet acceptable, at 0.79. These findings indicate that the measurement scales employed in this research were consistent and reliable, and thus the variables that were measured in this study represented the intended constructs without a major error of measurement.

Table 03: Model Summary (Regression Analysis)				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.712	0.507	0.498	0.412

The regression model summary shows that the independent variables collectively explain a substantial proportion of variance in the dependent variable. The R value of 0.712 indicates a strong correlation between educational interventions and outcomes of inclusion and reduced extremism. The R Square value of 0.507 suggests that 50.7% of the variance in inclusive outcomes can be explained by the predictors included in the model. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.498, which takes into account the sample size and the number of predictors, further confirms the robustness of the model. The standard error of estimate (0.41234) indicates a relatively small margin of error, strengthening the reliability of the regression results.

Table 04: ANOVA Results					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	45.672	5	9.134	71.35	0.000
Residual	44.328	344	0.129		
Total	90.000	349			

The ANOVA results provide evidence of the overall significance of the regression model. The regression sum of squares (45.672) compared to the residual sum of squares (44.328) demonstrates that the predictors explain more variance than is left unexplained. The F-statistic of 71.35, with a significance value of 0.000, indicates

that the overall regression model is statistically significant. This means that the combination of independent variables—curriculum reform, teacher training, state oversight, integration, and civic education—collectively provides a strong and meaningful prediction of the dependent variables related to inclusion and countering extremism.

Table 05: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.512	0.112	—	4.57	0.000
Curriculum Reform	0.241	0.045	0.321	5.36	0.000
Teacher Training	0.198	0.051	0.287	3.88	0.000
State Oversight	0.152	0.048	0.214	3.17	0.002
Integration	0.174	0.050	0.226	3.48	0.001
Civic Education	0.209	0.047	0.305	4.45	0.000

The regression coefficients table illustrates the contribution of each predictor to the dependent outcomes. All variables were found to be statistically significant at $p < .05$. Curriculum Reform ($\beta = 0.321$, $p = 0.000$) had the strongest standardized effect, indicating it is the most influential factor in reducing extremist tendencies and promoting inclusion. Civic Education also had a strong effect ($\beta = 0.305$, $p = 0.000$), emphasizing the importance of pluralism and tolerance in madrassa curricula. Teacher Training ($\beta = 0.287$, $p < 0.001$), Integration ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < 0.001$), and State Oversight ($\beta = 0.214$, $p < 0.002$) also contributed significantly, albeit with slightly lower effects. The constant value ($\beta = 0.512$) reflects the baseline outcome when all predictors are absent. These findings highlight that reforms across multiple dimensions are necessary, but curriculum reform and civic education are the most impactful strategies for reshaping madrassa education.

Discussion

Empirical data regarding the ways through which education programs in Pakistani madrassas can help to counter violent extremism (CVE) and promote an inclusion agenda will be provided by the research findings of this study. The results of the regression carried out demonstrate that the five independent variables, including curriculum reform, teacher education, state controls, integration with mainstream educational programs, and civic education, were all significant factors that explained the outcome of the five independent variables on the dependent outcomes, which are the elimination of extremist attitudes and better civic inclusion. The observations summarize the literature available and provide new knowledge on how madrassas may be turned into a source of positive peace-building and cohesion.

The Curriculum Reform: Civic Outcomes Relation.

The results have shown that reform of the curriculum ($\beta = 0.321$, $p < .001$) was the most predictive factor of the results included. Madrassa curriculum where secular courses, morals, and civics are applied seems to be the key to providing students with the means of analytical thinking and pluralism, which will help them oppose exclusivist ideologies. Similar results were described by Ahmad and Bano (2021), who

concluded that the diversification of curricula may make students more sensitive to the realities of society in general and less isolated in their intellectual field.

The current research also supports this argument, as it will show that curriculum reform is directly related to low extremist attitudes, as evidenced by statistical evidence.

Modernisation and Pedagogical Education of Educators.

Teacher training ($\beta = 0.287$, $p = 0.001$) had a strong influence on the openness of the students to pluralism, as the results indicated. This is consistent with the reflection of Shah and Ali (2021), who believe that memorizing silences inhibits critical thinking and suggest that collaborative learning can transform the classrooms into a place where engagement in conversation and questioning takes place. The fact that modern teachers receive pedagogical experience at madrassas implies that the opportunities to consolidate exclusivist messages are minimized, and students are exposed to other worldviews. This is in line with the fact that Malik (2022) argues that the teacher-centered approaches lead to conformity, as compared to the dialogic approaches leading to tolerance and critical consciousness.

Machinery of Control and Regulation by State.

State control ($\beta = 0.214$, $p = .002$) was also another factor observed in the final result of the regression to contribute to inclusive results. This means that in case the madrassas are put into administrative systems that encourage accountability and transparency, there will be less likelihood of the distribution of sectarian or extremist materials. However, securitized strategies where collaboration is central, tend to destroy trust (Hussain, 2021; Sattar, 2024). The findings of the study indicate that the regulatory intervention becomes effective due to its joint planning with the madrassa leadership and the civil society, which is consistent with the authors' suggestion that Iqbal (2020) and Tahir (2022) wants the participants of the redesign of madrassas to implement participatory governance.

Identification with Mainstream Education.

It also turned out that integration with mainstream education was a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.226$, $p = 0.001$). This is synonymous with Saeed (2020), who theorized about the segregation of higher education and employment opportunities for madrassa graduates as the driver of the continuation of the sense of marginalization (on which extremist organizations can thrive). Once academic equality and access to universities or the labor market are established by madrassa students, reform will help them develop careers and build national identity. These results confirm the assumption that a socio-political approach to the creation of inclusive citizenship is not only a requirement of an educational character but should be a need.

Interfaith Education and Civic Education.

Finally, the study determined that civic education and interfaith education ($r = 0.305$, $p < 0.001$) had a major role in promoting pluralism and tolerance among students. This finding coincides with that of Aziz (2021), who has demonstrated that

interfaith dialogue exposes the individual to the impact of lessening sectarian prejudice and promoting coexistence. The results also corroborate the fact that inclusive education is an important part of conflict-based societies that can enable the development of democratic participation and support of diversity (UNESCO, 2023). Civic and interfaith modules have the capacity, therefore, to process the madrassa education through reformation of the sectarian approach to service provision, thus facilitating citizenship and social harmony.

Theoretical Implications

The results were very strong in support of the theoretical framework of the study. Critical pedagogy describes the role of participation in teaching and curriculum diversification, which increases critical consciousness, making a person less disposed towards absolutist ideologies (Freire, 1970; Shah & Ali, 2021). Social identity theory explains why interfaith and civic education mitigate and sever in-group/out-group boundaries, while promoting inclusivity of identities (Saeed, 2020). The inclusion education theory also legitimizes the argument that the reforms are fair, participatory, and context-based, thereby fostering peacebuilding (UNESCO, 2023).

Comparison with the prior studies

The study's outcome is corroborated by other studies, which have demonstrated a deterministic correlation between madrassas and violent extremism (Fair, Naseem, and Arshad, 2019; Naseem & Arshad, 2022). Although it is acknowledged that a small percentage of madrassas develop exclusivism, the current results suggest that it is possible to transform madrassas into positive civic institutions through reform-based interventions. They involve providing quantitative evidence; thus, this study contributes to the literature by empirically demonstrating that educational strategies have the greatest impact in reducing extremist attitudes.

Practical Implications

These results have various implications for policymakers, teachers and civil society players. Elements that must be reformed first are curriculum diversification and teacher empowerment, as they have the most significant influence on these aspects. Second, the regulations must be implemented not by coercion but through working partnerships; they need to foster confidence between the state and the madrassa administration. Third, educational assimilation must be internalized so that madrassa graduates can access equal opportunities in higher education and professional jobs. Lastly, madrassas should be introduced to civic and interfaith education to establish pluralism, tolerance, and unity in the country.

Conclusion

As part of this study, the contribution of significant educational changes in transforming the madrassa system in Pakistan was to overcome violent extremism and enhance inclusion. These findings have established that predictors of inclusive outcomes include curriculum diversification, teacher training, state monitoring, and the integration of mainstream education and civic/interfaith training. The two, curriculum

reform and civic education, were the most effective in curbing the number of extremist attitudes and encouraging pluralism.

These results resonate with the already available literature according to which, with a proper transformation, madrassas may be the source of peacebuilding instead of exclusivism (Ahmad & Bano, 2021; Shah, 2023). The study confirms that change in education is an issue that must be dealt with in a multidimensional way. These interventions are to be based on security, and not only that, but reforms must include pedagogical innovation, participation of other stakeholders and policies to enhance the socio-economic mobility of graduates of these madrassas. In line with the social identity theory, the critical pedagogy and the organization of the inclusive education, this research explains the role of the madrassas as an inclusive school that supports tolerance, civic participation, and national identity.

Recommendations

The findings below can be recommended as follows:

- Diversification of the Curriculum: The state-provided and the board-of-madrassah-specified curriculum should be cooperative, which means that it provides an opportunity to choose the curriculum that would be more inclusive in regard to traditional Islamic sciences and express more modern topics, such as social studies, ethics, and civic education (Rahman & Siddiqui, 2020).

- Training of Teachers: There should be an institutionalization of regular capacity-building programs to impart the idea of participatory pedagogy and skills in critical thinking among madrassa teachers (Shah & Ali, 2021).

- Shared Governance: Regulatory models need to shift towards participatory regulation, involving state institutions, religious boards, and civil society (Iqbal, 2020).

- Integration Pathways to Academic Equivalence. Academic equivalency programs must be more extensive to enable madrassa students to access higher education and improve their career prospects, thereby decreasing socio-economic marginalization (Saeed, 2020).

- Civic and Interfaith Education: Courses on civic responsibility and interfaith harmony should be implemented to foster pluralism and tolerance among madrassas (Aziz, 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

Limitations

The study has drawbacks despite its aspects and contributions. To begin with, it selected only 350 interviewees in some of the madrassas, which might not represent the entire diversity of the sector in Pakistan. Second, there is the risk of social desirability bias, especially since the questions related to extremism were sensitive, and the data were gathered through a self-reported survey. Third, not only were cross-sectional data used, but longitudinal studies are also capable of providing better causal relationships. Lastly, the views of the madrassa teachers and administrators were not

included in the study, as their perspective would have further enlightened us about the problem of reforms (Malik, 2022; Munir & Sajjad, 2023).

Future investigations should employ mixed techniques, offer diversified sampling on a province-to-province basis, and utilize qualitative interviewing with individuals of primary concern to enhance situational knowledge.

Significance of the Study

This work makes significant contributions to both academic sources and politics. It is theoretically inclusive of critical pedagogy and social identity theory, as well as inclusive education, and attempts to align these three analyses of madrassa reforms into a single framework. It also gives some empirical evidence to decide on the best educational means to reduce extremist inclination and inclusion.

The findings for policymakers highlight the importance of dropping the securitized means in education and working on education-based reforms, which address means of enabling teachers, curriculum diversities, and the inclusion of madrassa servants in the mainstream system. The analysis suggests to the civil society and international organizations the opportunities of madrassas as vital stakeholders in the peacebuilding process when the reformation process is founded on the context and participatory.

The current paper finally shows that madrassas may be a threat and an opportunity to foster pluralism, tolerance, and civic responsibility in the Pakistani multifaceted society (Naseem & Arshad, 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

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