

## **MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF MADRASA EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper investigates Media portrayal of Madrasa education in Pakistan. Madras'a education faces tremendous challenges in today's world due to ongoing radicalism and terrorism. This paper explicates that after 9/11 incident Pakistan has been crossing through various social, economic, religious and political crises, which create a situation of quagmire for Pakistani citizens. In modern arena, Madaras are labeled only to produced Taliban, terror and radicalism. This paper is qualitative in nature, where the researcher has used library method for data collection. The data has been collected from various secondary and scholarly sources including books, articles, journals, websites. The data has been qualitatively presented with the help of thematic analysis, which concludes that after 9/11 incident Pakistan has been passing through a constant state of curse and evils, which is bringing catastrophe to its socio-economic, cultural, religious, political and developmental well-being.*

**Keywords**:- Madrsa education; Media; Militancy; Terrorism;

## **INTRODUCTION**

Madrasa education was the prime sources of learning in primitive societies. It played a dominant role in creating scholarly knowledge. However, with induction of modernization, globalization, and advance media Madrasa education lost its value and self-esteem. In the modern arena Madrasa's education is labeled with introduction of Taliban culture and terrorism. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a new wave of challenges in shape of extremism, militancy and terrorism acknowledged by the attack on World Trade Center is a hallmark towards terrorism and militancy in the modern world. The gloom in response to such incidence gave birth to a number of socio-economic, cultural, religious and political consequences in Pakistan.

The previous research of Ahmad (2013), Naz, et al (2012), Daraz (2012) highlighted the issue of 9/11 which reflect the socio-economic, religious and political impacts (Ziemke, 2006, and Ali, 2010). Resultantly, the overall social structure of the country was adversely affected where educational, health and economic institutions were targeted that hampered the daily routine activities like jobs, schooling, policing and business, which shuddered the standard of living (Rashid, 2002). In this regard, Kemp (2008) expounds the same issue that the rise of radicalization in Pakistan and Afghanistan has sprouted from disintegration between tribal and state in both countries that instigated the influence of religious orthodoxy and paved the way for foreign elements to take benefit of the situation especially in

Afghanistan followed by Pakistan (Fair, 2008, Hoffman, 1999; Dyer, *et al*, 2007; Hashmi, 2009).

The wave of terrorism and militancy has multifaceted impacts on the social, economic, political and religious aspects of the population across country (particularly atrocities and loss of lives) which brought changes in the social, political and psychological aspects of the country. The basic institutions of the country and lives of the people, property, businesses have been at stake for quite long time and has further weakened the social fabric to large extent (Nadeem & Paracha, 2010). A considerable rise has been there in the last nine years in suicidal attacks, bombing etc. by extremist organizations leading to many serious consequences as well (Abbas, 2007). The various studies on the mentioned issue indicate that the socio-political and security aspects of Pakistan's Tribal areas (adjacent to Afghanistan) have been in a constant state of flux since the Afghan Jihad of 1980s (Abbas, 2011).

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This research paper investigates the of media portrayal of madrasa education in Pakistan. It highlights the impact of militancy and terrorism in Pakistan in the name of Madrasa education. It produced various social-cultural, religion and political impact which severely affected the standard of life in Pakistan.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research article is aimed at figuring out the role of media portrayal of madrasa education in Pakistan. This research paper is library-research in nature where the researcher organized secondary information collecting from books, articles, journals etc. The study is not limited to any specific country or region, rather it is the article, covering the whole Muslim world and their madrasa education. There is huge literature and resource available on internet, research articles and books to gather the information discussing the topic and finding out relevant conclusions made by other researchers. To prepare this literature review, 45 resources have been used from primary and secondary resources. This paper has cited information from books, online sources, reports, case studies, international conferences, and news and journal articles. The topic would be provided with best possible insights from the available literature to lay the roadmap for future research. This paper is qualitative in nature and data analysis has been made with help of thematic analysis.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis is the mechanism and system of organizing and breaking-down the information and concepts into different parts for understanding and drawing results. It organized the collected information into presentable way for easy understanding. In this paper the researcher has presented the information in thematic analysis. The collected information from various sources (books, article, journals, and website) has been presented as below:

#### **Madrasa from Islamic Point of View**

Madrassa is an Arabic word primarily refers to an educational institute where both the religious and secular types of education are provided. In the modern world, especially in West, Madrassa is attributed with a specific type of educational institute for Islamic teachings and education. In other words, it is a seminary where students from different age groups learn the religious education. In the primitive world, madrassa was a formal institute where regular education was provided at elementary and higher level producing a variety of characters in society such as religious/Islamic scholars, leaders, preachers etc. for smooth running and functioning of society.

#### **Madrassa Education and Militancy**

In Pakistan since 9/11, conservative Muslim circles are attracted towards the debate on differentiation among the terms 'jihad', 'terrorism', 'violence' and 'militancy'. Most of the advocates in this context emphasize over the question that why these terms are interchangeably used because recently the same acts by students in Afghanistan and Kashmir were named as 'jihad'. In light of such debates, it has become a fact that such perception is common among the students of madrassa, administration and general masses in Pakistan that there is diversity in madrassas' role in propagation of militancy. At some aspects, it seems that the role of madrassa is intended towards local and regional issues including Afghan and Kashmir conflicts because at some instances it was found involved in Soviet-Afghan war.

The matter is thoughtful that the Mujahideen were recruited and trained for fights through Madrassas with Soviets, which gave birth to new Madrassas that were funded by Saudi Arabia and CIA (Central Intelligence Agency, U.S) encouraging the students to join Afghan war. On the other hand, it is presumed that most of the Taliban leaders were graduated from Pakistani Madaaris during the Taliban's emergence in Afghanistan. In this context, the relationship between Taliban and Haqqania Madrassa (located in Akora Khattak, KP province) was dominantly found because Mullah Omar and his colleagues were reportedly found for attending classes. In addition, the refugee camps were also equipped with Madrassas to train the Afghan migrants for jihad while some jihadi organizations were allegedly funded against Indian forces in Kashmir. In this context, the Madrassas' role has been under strong debate for breeding the jihadi culture since its existence.

The fact is evidently reflected through research that almost 77 Ahl-e-Hadith, 23 Barelvi and 200 Deobandi Madaaris had affiliation with jihadi organizations or supporting jihadi activities in Pakistan. Among all these Madrassas, the most active and largest jihadi-group was Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) established in 1993 and located in Muridkey Punjab (a military arm of Markaz-ud-Daawa-Wal-Irshad) was offering activities in Jammu and Kashmir. Some reports ascertain that almost 18 percent of the madaris had affiliations with other jihadi organizations like Jaish-e-Muhammad, Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. In this context, Christine Fair expresses in her book "The Madrassah Challenge", that the role of madrassa in extremist activities has either been declined or remained stable since 1991 by citing the studies that disagree with the direct association between militancy and

madrassas. However, she agrees to the point even the very less number of militants, coming from madrassas have the capability of producing students who might support and add to the militant wings. A report of Brookings Institution reflects that although madrassas are among the core causes of extremism yet the religious schools do not appear as a threatening risk factor because less than 10 percent of Pakistani students are madrassa attendants.

Management of the madaaris deny the association between madrassa and militancy, while in terms of jihad, they admit the fact that some madrassas are affiliated with jihadi organizations. In terms education (related to jihad), the madrassas seem in unanimous agreement that the jihadi education is compulsory and obligatory in Islamic context with the intentions to keep it continued. Although the madrassas do not favor to send their students for jihad yet they argue that the Westerners tend to alleviate the jihadi education, which is not acceptable to them. In this context, Maulana Yaseen Zafar, from Wafaqul-madaaris al-Salafia asserts that Madaaris should not be working-tools for jihadi or political organizations because waged-jihad might drag the country to a civil war. On the other hand, Maulana Raghieb Naeemi (vice president Tanzeem-ul-Madaaris) emphasizes that if the students of Madrassas are waged for jihad, then for what purpose the half million soldiers are kept in army.

Subsequently, Maulana Abdul Malik (President Rabita-ul-Madaaris) also reacted that students of Madaaris are not involved in any jihadi activity rather the government is playing a game to establish a waged-proxy-war against India. Resultantly, when its game faces the

failure, the government usually take actions against its own people who are trained for such specific task. In addition, Qari Hanif Jallandhary (Wafaqul-Madaaris Al-Arabia) states that Council of Islamic Ideology should shoulder the responsibility to deal with jihad related issues and the students' participation and shall focus on government's permission in terms of jihad. Relationally, the scholars of the Shia sect explicate that jihad shall be bound to permission of an Imam or in situation where the country's defense is at stake; while otherwise, it should be declared illegitimate.

### **Challenges to Madrassa Education**

Madrassas are confronted with numerous challenges throughout the globe, whereby the process of its registration has always been debated, criticized and a challenging stance. Although the exact statistics of Madaaris are rarely available yet the madaaris which are registered with wafaq might be counted. It is assumed that a huge number of Madarassas are functioning without having formal registration and affiliation with concerned bodies. Apart from its registration, the curriculum (taught in madrassas) is also under strong debate and criticism. Among the critics, one of the school of thought is of the opinion that the curriculum in Madrassas does not focus on the requirements of modern age. In this context, a number of observers believe that the course taught in Madrassa is usually subject to proliferate and reflect provocation that lead the students to develop extremist and militant ideologies.

It is also believed that during the Musharraf's regime (1999-2008), the Madrassas reforms were negotiated between wafaqs (madrassas administration) and government but still no development in this context is visible because neither the demands of madrassas nor governments acceptance to any of them are explicit. Besides, the fundraising is also one of the leading challenges to Madrassa. It is believed that madrassas are funded from across the Pakistani borders for promotion, strengthening and dissemination of their agendas and used as platforms for their vested interests. Another challenge to madrassas in Pakistani society is the education of foreign students because their educational modalities are debatable to the government's seats. In order to calculate and analyze the role of madrassas with logical debate in society; it is believed that Madrassas can play a vital role in stabilizing the social structures and promoting harmony and peace because they have a significant number of zealous and passionate followers, yet they utilize most of their attention on religion not society.

#### **Madrassa Curricula through Western Pens**

Foreign intrusion and interference in the systems of madrassas in Pakistan have very influential role in shaping the mechanism and system of its function. It is believed that madrassas in Pakistan is strong association with the Islamic fundamentalist and extremist groups. Factually, such link is a result of an attempt made by Western media, which perseveres to allegedly portray the madrassas as the hub of radicalized Islamic violence. Numerous studies tend to unveil the fact that the western media usually exaggerates the

original facts and figures, misinterprets and manipulates the curriculum, exploits the original history and dictates the political realities unauthentically about madrassas. In this context, the proper, appropriate facts-based role of Ministry of education in Pakistan is highly important because the Western media is paying high attention Madrassas and exploits the realities.

### **Portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the western Press**

The representation of mosque education is situated within a broader media portrayal of Islam and Muslims. Existing studies point out to a general tendency for negative representation of groups usually characterized as the 'others' of the mainstream society (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Erjavec, 2001; KhosraviNik, 2010). Islam and Muslim immigrants, in particular are structurally portrayed through negative imagery in many Western media outlets (Bullock & Jafri, 2000; Kabir, 2007; Poole, 2006; Shadid & van Koningsveld, 2002). Especially after 9/11, the media discourse on Islam has been dominated by associations with terrorism and essential 'otherness' of the Muslims (Morey & Yaqin, 2011).

The only study on portrayal of mosque education in the West is from Britain (Cherti et al., 2011). The British context is peculiar because via the project 'Islam and Citizenship Education' the government has introduced a curriculum of citizenship education in more than 300 mosques. The study has found that the storylines in the British press focus on child protection and extremism prevention through citizenship education in mosques. This suggests that the debates on mosque education are embedded within a discourse on

securitization of Islam. Securitization of Islam is not only portraying Islam as a source of threat, but also designing education or immigration policies based on that assumption (Cesari, 2010).

There are a few studies which analyzed the representation of Islam and Muslims in the Dutch press. A pioneering study by terWal (2004), for instance, compared the portrayal of Islam before and after 9/11 in the quality newspaper *De Volkskrant*. It showed that before 9/11 the coverage focused more on personal experiences of religiosity by the Muslims, while after 9/11 the focus shifted towards the relation between religious fundamentalism and integration. d'Haenens and Bink (2006), on the other hand, analyzed the Islam-related articles in the popular newspaper, *De Algemeene Dagblad (AD)*. Their results show that there is a significant increase in negative framing about domestic Islam after the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a radical from Dutch-Moroccan background in 2004.

More recently, van Drunen (2014) who studied the framing of Muslims in eight Dutch newspapers in an ordinary non-election period between September 2010 and March 2011, showed that the four most dominant frames with regard to Muslims are 'problematization', 'homogenization', 'otherness' and 'fear and threat'. The 'problematization' frame focuses on conflicts and problems caused by Muslims. The 'fear and threat' frame contains messages on perceived threats from Muslims. The 'homogenization' frame indicates generalizations regardless of the differences among Muslims. Lastly, the 'otherness' frame accentuates differences between Muslims and non-Muslims. It is expected that the unfavorable portrayal

of Islam and conceptual homogenization of Muslims would be reflected also in the portrayal of mosque education by the Dutch press.

## **CONCLUSION**

The postmodern era has excessively been dominated by media where media has become the most powerful tool of marketing, promoting, faming or defaming. Apart from these, media also play the anti-role to negatively project some situations. In simple philosophy, the today's world is equipped with a soft weapon in shape of media either to fame or defame any aspects in society. After the 9/11 incident, the Western media has solely focused on Islamic radicalism and has particularly tried to assassinate the character of madrassas. This role of the Western media was anti-madrassa because it failed to produce credible sources while disseminating the information, take positive and deeper look of curriculum and properly understand the evolution of madrassa and the contemporary political challenges. In order to regulate the stature of media, regulation might be crucial because it includes undercutting deep-seated Islamist political parties, which should be diplomatically and altruistically approached.

Based on these facts, the current study does not oppose the ideology that madrassa has been triumphant to educate people in Pakistan. Although there are exceptions where some of the madrassas are falling short and cause some serious threats at global level yet these are not the representatives and exemplars of all the madrassas. In the current scenario, most of the

revelations in terms of madrassas are confounding and critical while less attention has been paid to address the fact that the overall Pakistani educational system is struggling and needs improvement. In the nutshell, the basic aim of this study is to hope that Western media initiates the aid not only for the purpose of national security but to respect the equality, humanitarian ideals and cultural sensitivity as its primary goals. In order to achieve such goal, the Western media would utilize its influence to improve the standard of living of masses especially the Pakistani children, political leaders, spiritual and religious scholars, government representatives and parents, whom will be capable enough to play a vital role in production of positive and lucrative relationship of Pakistan with the western world.

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