

## **Specific Deprivations of Youth in Madaris: A Reflection from Madaris in Lahore**

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### **Abstract**

At present, Pakistan houses the largest number of young adults in its history, whose capabilities must be analyzed to cope with the challenges of the future years. Especially with reference of education, it is important to tap their views about life. Madaris in Pakistan are playing a vital role in education system but socioeconomic background of madrassah students still needs more exploration. It is generally assumed that most of the students come from lower social strata. However, madrassah students have several intangible deprivations other than financial constraints. Hence, the term “specific deprivations” reveal intangible and non material poverty irrespective of their social class. This research attempts to explore the deprivations of students of Madaris with reference of their socioeconomic backgrounds. Drawing on 200 interviews with students of madaris, it was found that they suffer from multifaceted deprivations. These deprivations hinder their independent and collective modes of prosperity. Interview schedule was used to study various aspects of participants’ lives such as age, socioeconomic status, education, financial resources, residential conditions, psychological & emotional deprivations and interpersonal relationships with family members.

*Key words:* Education, Madaris, Poor segment, Specific deprivations, Youth.

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## **Introduction**

Present study aims to collect qualitative data on youth studying in madaris specifically with reference of specific deprivations and poverty other than the economic one. The ideals, passion and optimism of young generations play significant role in development of any country. In Pakistan, youth is defined as age group from 15 – 29 (Year Book, 2008) years of age. Pakistan, at present houses the largest number of young population in its history as 41.81 million representing about 27% of the total population of the country (National Youth Policy, 2008).

Madaris are the oldest seats of learning in Pakistan. They cater to a large segment of population since the time of independence. Especially in rural and remote areas where either people have no access to formal schools or are reluctant in sending their children (especially girls) in formal schools (Shaikh, 2006), such institutions have been a blessing. Therefore, madaris can be regarded as the fore most NGOs of Pakistan (Zaidi, 2013) and also serve for political and cultural socialization (Rana, 2009).

It is estimated that at the time of independence Pakistan had 137 madaris (Riaz, 2005). But it is not confirmed whether this number was for present geographical boundaries or for both wings of Pakistan. There is no authentic data available in this regard. Even at present, number of madaris cannot be identified even by the government reports as all of the Madaris are not registered. Total number of Madaris registered with all five boards of Ittehad-e-Tanzeemat-e-Deeniya exceeds from 31,000 (Zaidi, 2013). While unregistered madaris have different statistics from 7, 500 to 50, 000 (ICG, 2002; Coulsin, 2004; Looney, 2003; Singer, 2001; Riaz, 2005). At present, 1.7 million students study in madrassah educational system of Pakistan, which constitutes one third of total enrolments in schools (ICG, 2002).

## **Socio-economic background of students in madaris**

Madaris are a dominating contributor in education system of Pakistan (Singer, 2001). Usually madaris offer free education, boarding and lodging to their students and thus appeal to impoverished segments of society (ICG, 2002). On the whole, these religious schools are supported by private donations in terms of alms, khairat, etc. Researches on madaris, especially after 9/11 depict that major factors contributing to engagement of students in madaris are the deprivations of parents so that they can get food, shelter and security for their off springs with no costs (Singer, 2001).

Poverty does not merely mean to have low income or absence of basic necessities. Rather people especially youth of upper-upper class can also be poor if they are segregated into segments because of certain stratification, which further causes biases and limited mobility. Therefore, by deprivations of extremely poor segments of youth means a destitute section of Pakistani youth, deprived not only of tangible facilities but also with rights of expressions, quality education and intellectual capacities which they deserve.

Therefore, in present study, powerlessness, inferiority complexes, social exclusions and fears of uncertain future are tried to capture with term of specific deprivations. Besides it is tried to explore that which factors cause inferiority complexes among madrassah students other than financial miseries.

### **Materials and methods**

Using interview schedule as tool of data collection, 200 students of both sexes between ages of 15 – 29 years were interviewed. Using purposive sampling, only ten madaris in Lahore were included in sampling frame which provide facilities of boarding and lodging. However, respondents were selected from these institutions through simple random sampling method.

To assess the deprivations of students questions about socio-demographic characteristics, family profile, monthly income, educational and professional profiles, residential conditions and facilities, diet routine, clothing and health matters were asked. Besides, to tap their views about their own quality of life, life perception, psychological and emotional satisfaction level and leisure time activities were added. The tool was translated in Urdu language and all interviews were conducted in aforesaid language. However, few respondents were more familiar with Punjabi language; therefore Punjabi was used as supported language for convenience and to probe.

### **Ethical considerations**

Interviews were conducted in madrassah premises after ensuring privacy. Written permission was gained from madrassah management and oral consent was gained from each respondent before starting interview. Respondents were also informed about the purpose of research and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

### **Findings**

Mean age of the sample was 20 years (ranging 15 – 27years). Majority of respondents 92 (46%)

were of the ages between 14 - 18 years. Marital status of the respondents was taken as constant as all of the respondents were single (however, 1% respondents have been married once, and are now single). More than half of the respondents 110 (55%) belonged to rural areas and reported their monthly familial income between 6000 – 10000PKR (Table #1).

Mostly respondents 86 (43%) had formal education from 6 – 10 class and majority 84 (47%) miss the formal schooling to a great extent. A small segment of respondents (11%) had no formal education and major reason for that were less financial resources (46%). Of 200 respondents, 66 (33%) have been living in hostel up to one year, 68 (34%) visited their family only once a month and 53 (27%) respondents were studying Dars e Nizami course. Devotion to Islam was the main reason to join madrassah for mostly respondents 86 (43%) (Table # 2). A total of 164 (82%) respondents were getting some pocket money from family, 58 (35%) were getting even less than 100 rupees and were utilizing this amount for personal use (52%) (Table # 3).

Majority respondents 180 (90%) had no previous employment record. However, 20 (10%) respondents had been doing jobs before joining the madrassah for most of them 12 (60%) low financial status of the family was the main reason. More than half of students 108 (54%) were not aware of the possible career opportunities as madrassah students. 125 (58%) preferred teaching in future as being madrassah students, similarly in case of not being madrassah students 116 (50%) respondents preferred teaching field. Mostly respondents 68 (74%) viewed that youth have to face hindrances in availing the opportunities due to lack of resources (Table #4).

A total of 168 (84%) respondents had their own houses and 59 (30%) respondents had accommodation of 2 rooms. Majority of respondents 94 (47%) lived in houses of unbaked bricks outer walls. 130 (65%) respondents reported proper piped system for water in their houses, 102 (51%) had shared kitchen, half of the respondents 100 (50%) had Suigas as cooking fuel at home and separate bathrooms in their houses (Table # 5).

Before joining the madrassah mostly respondents 126 (63%) were taking meal thrice a day. Mostly respondents 68 (34%) were taking meat in meals once a week. 162 (84%) respondents declared that they had suitable clothes according to the weather and half of them 84 (50%) were using all new.

Majority of the respondents 142 (71%) reported that their family members were generally healthy, 112 (56%) respondents had easy access to medical aid and 158 (79%) were getting

treatment from doctor. From remaining, 20 (48%) respondents described family preferences for treatment from hakeem or peer sahib. Whereas mostly respondents 112 (56%) reported reading books as leisure time activity (Table # 6).

Lack of sufficient privacy at home was most annoying factors for most of the respondents 86 (43%). Mostly respondents 84 (42%) described normal community attitude towards their family. 50 (25%) respondents revealed inspirations to have air conditioner in home appliances, 80 (40%) respondents felt themselves deprived to some extent and 90 (45%) of them perceived no formal education as their major deprivation.

Mostly respondents 118 (59%) were satisfied about their food and clothing and described that non availability of basic necessities effect personality to great extent 102 (51%). Majority of the respondents 126 (63%) viewed that all the important things were being provide to them. 80 (40%) respondents had perceived life hard, 119 (59%) reported no abuse or violence by parents and 62 (54%) of remaining experienced verbal abuse by parents. 87 (43%) respondents felt hesitations in sharing their feelings with others sometimes and 99 (50%) respondents described extent of satisfaction by parents in your confusion and tension to great extent.

Mostly respondents 86 (43%) considered educational deprivations as major difficulty of extremely poor youth. 156 (78%) were of the view that poor people had been exploited in society to great extent and 85 (42%) suggested that financial resources must be enhanced for them.

**Table#1: Socio – demographic characteristics of Respondents (n = 200)**

Variables	f (%)
Gender	
Male	100 (50%)
Female	100 (50%)
Age (in years)	
14-18	92 (46%)
18 – 22	86 (43%)
222 and above	22 (11%)
Residential area	
Rural	110 (55%)
Urban	90 (45%)

Marital status	
Never married	198 (99%)
Divorced / seperated	2 (01%)
Familial family income (in PKR)	
< 5,000	76 (38%)
< 10,000	110 (55%)
> 10,000	14 (7%)

**Table#2: Educational Backgrounds of Respondents (n = 200)**

Variables	f (%)
Educational qualification before joining madrassah	
No formal education	22 (11%)
Class 1 – 5	78 (39%)
6 – 10	86 (43%)
11 and above	14 (7%)
Extent of missing formal school educationa	
To great extent	84 (47%)
To some extent	56 (31%)
Not at all	28 (16%)
Duration of stay in madrassah (in years)	
Up to one year	66 (33%)
Two years	53 (27%)
Three years	43 (21%)
Four or more years	38 (19%)
Frequency of visiting home	
Once a week	38 (19%)
Fortnightly	47 (24%)
Once a month	68 (34%)
After two months or more	47 (23%)
Courses taken by respondents	
Nazira Quran	33 (16%)
Hifz e Quran	45 (22%)
AalimFazil/la course	38 (19%)
Dars e nizami	53 (27%)
Tafseer o Tarjuma	18 (9%)
Other	13 (7%)

Reasons for joining madrassah	
Devotion to Islam	86 (43%)
Family tradition	52 (26%)
Poverty	33 (16%)
Non availability of formal schools in native town	22 (11%)
Other	7 (4%)

*a Applicable to only 178 respondents*

**Table # 3: Availability & Utilization of pocket money(n = 200)**

Variables	f (%)
Distribution of the respondents regarding having pocket money.	
Yes	164 (82%)
No	36 (18%)
Amount of pocket moneys (in PKR)	
Less than 100	58 (35%)
101 – 300	52 (32%)
301 – 600	30 (18%)
601 – 1000	24 (15%)
Utilization of pocket money	
Madrassah fee and books	68 (42%)
Personal things	96 (58%)

*a Total number of respondents was less than 200*

**Table # 4: Previous Job Profile(n = 200)**

Variables	f (%)
Past employment record	
Yes	20 (10%)
No	180 (90%)
Nature of joba	
Teaching	4 (20%)
Shop keeping	6 (30%)
Working in fields	2 (10%)
Skills	4 (20%)
Other	4 (20%)
Reasons of doing jobb	
Family tradition	8 (40%)
Poverty	12 (60%)
Awareness regarding possible career possibilities	
Yes	92 (46%)
No	108 (54%)

Preferred career as madrassah students.	
Teaching	125 (58%)
Religious scholar	40 (18%)
Imam Masjid	42 (19%)
Other	12 (5%)
Desired future career if not being madrassah student.	
Teaching	116 (50%)
Technical field	79 (35%)
Law	15 (6%)
Other	20 (9%)
Opinion about hindrances in availing opportunities for youth	
Lack of resources	68 (74%)
Class discriminations	07 (8%)
Family traditions	12 (13%)
Gender disparities	05 (5%)

*a , b Total number of responses was less than 200*

*c , d Accumulative responses of 200 respondents*

*e The table was applicable to only 92 respondents*

**Table # 5: Living conditions (n = 200)**

Variables	f (%)
Possession of house	
Own house	168 (84%)
Rented house	32 (16%)
Construction material of house	
Outer walls made of unbaked bricks / earth bounds	94 (47%)
Outer walls made of baked bricks / blocks/ stones	93 (47%)
Other materials	13 (6%)
Number of rooms in respondents' houses	
One room	57 (28%)
Two rooms	59 (30%)
Three rooms	42 (21%)
More than three rooms	42 (21%)
Source of water	
Pipes	130 (65%)
Hand pumps	58 (29%)
Well	10 (5%)
No source of water inside house	2 (1%)
Type of kitchen	
Shared	102 (51%)
Separate	78 (39%)
No kitchen in house	20 (10%)



Type of fuel for cooking	
Sui gas	100 (50%)
Wood	88 (44%)
Other	12 (6%)
Type of toilet / washrooms	
Shared	100 (50%)
Separate	94 (47%)
No toilet /washroom inside house	6 (3%)

**Table # 6: Diet routine, Clothing, Health and Leisure(n = 200)**

Variables	f (%)
Frequency of meals before joining madrassah	
Thrice a day	126 (63%)
Twice a day	68 (34%)
Once a day	6 (3%)
Frequency of taking meat in meals	
Daily	4 (2%)
Once a week	68 (34%)
Twice a week	31 (15%)
More than twice a week	22 (11%)
Once or twice a month	29 (15%)
Rarely	46 (23%)
Provisions of suitable clothes according to weather	
Yes	168 (84%)
No	32 (16%)
If yes, Sort of clothes	
All new	84 (50 %)
Some new and some second hand	72 (43%)
All second hand	12 (7%)
Access to medical aid	
To great extent	112 (56%)
To some extent	74 (37%)
Not at all	14 (7%)
Consultant in case of illness	
Doctor	158 (79%)
Hakeem	30 (15%)
Peer Sahib	12 (6%)

Leisure time activities	
Reading books	112 (56%)
Playing games	32 (16%)
Wandering with friends	28 (14%)
Gossips	18 (9%)
Listening music & watching movies	10 (5%)
Most annoying thing at home	
Lack of conducive environment	66 (33%)
Lack of sufficient privacy	86 (43%)
Lack of home appliances	38 (19%)
Other	10 (5%)
Community attitude towards family	
Welcoming / favourable	78 (39%)
Normal	84 (42%)
Unconcerned	12 (6%)
Hostile / unfavourable	26 (13%)
Inspirations / desires about home appliances	
Television	36 (18%)
Air conditioner	50 (25%)
Fridge / Refrigerator	26 (13%)
Music player	42 (21%)
Computer	40 (20%)
Other	6 (3%)
Feelings of deprivations	
To great extent	70 (35%)
To some extent	80 (40%)
No comments	50 (25%)
Major deprivations	
Poverty	60 (30%)
No formal education	90 (45%)
Social degradation	18 (9%)
Emotional / psychological dissatisfaction	24 (12%)
Other	8 (4%)
Satisfaction about food and clothing	
To great extent	59 (29%)
To some extent	118 (59%)
Not at all	23 (12%)
Effects of non availability of basic needs on personality	
To great extent	102 (51%)
To some extent	70 (35%)
Not at all	28 (14%)

Access to all necessary / important things	
Yes	126 (63%)
No	74 (37%)
Pleasant Feelings about life	
Yes	74(37%)
No	126 (63%)
Experience of violence / abuse by parents	
Yes	81 (41%)
No	119 (59%)
If yes:	
What kind of it was? (please ratify if more than one option)	
Dejection	20 (17%)
Ridiculing	16 (14%)
Calling names / verbal abuse	62 (54%)
Beating/physical aggression	15 (14%)
Hesitations in sharing feelings with others	
Yes	165 (83%)
No	35 (17%)
Problems of youth of extremely poor segments in society	
Social stratification & degradation	85 (42%)
Educational deprivations	86 (43%)
Lack of political empowerment	20 (10%)
Other	9 (4%)
Extent of exploitation of poor people in society	
To great extent	156 (78%)
To some extent	37 (18%)
Not at all	7 (4%)
Suggestions to decrease the deprivations of youth in Pakistan	
Revised government policies	28 (14%)
Youth empowerment	31 (16%)
Quality education	46 (23%)
Enhanced financial resources	95 (47%)

## Conclusion

The present study explores the socio economic background of the madrassah students in Lahore, Pakistan. Main objective of the study was to analyze the specific desires, deprivations and aspirations of madrassah students. Consistent with the prior studies, it was found that mostly students belong to low social strata and marginalized segments of the society (ICG, 2002). Poverty, religious background and economic constraints were major reasons of admission in

madrassah for mostly students (Zakar 2001, Nelson 2006).

Especially in rural areas, madrassah are the only source of welfare of masses as these provides facilities of boarding and lodging with no cost. And this phenomenon is common in most of the developing Muslim countries of the world (ICG, 2002). However, mostly students deny this fact and claim their love for religion as major contributing factor (Singer, 2001; Butt, 2012).

Results reveal that the madrassah students had limited orientation about career, and they have limited professional opportunities in society. That's why it is justified to say that madrassah graduates are not capable to compete with graduates of formal schools. And this was true for all respondents irrespective of their gender and residential backgrounds. The main reason of the social exclusion of madrassah students may be the curriculum. Almost all Madaris in Pakistan follow the curriculum of Dars – e – Nizami, a curriculum proposed by Indian expert Maulana Nizamuddin Siyalvi (d. 1747AD).

This syllabus was the most appropriate curriculum when proposed; however, it is not in accordance with the present requirements of the country. Especially with reference of English language and modern sciences, madrassah syllabus does not meet the criteria of market. Madaris do not impart any technical education or skill to their students (Fair, 2008; Brookings, 2009). Rather, they instruct students for religious roles and in fact that is expected by the society itself (Butt, 2012). Therefore, madrassah students are not capable to compete with graduates of formal schools in financial activities. Therefore, it can be concluded that madrassah students have specific inferiority complexes irrespective of their residential backgrounds and cultural values.

These complexes are virtually caused by their family set up as a considerable segment of children in lower-lower classes of society experience various types of abuse, exploitation and violence in their home premises. Mostly, their parents have no resources to feed them; therefore they have no choice other than madaris. Besides, madaris along with mosque have much significance in Pakistani society (Zakar, 2011; Haddad, 1986), as people have great trust on these religious institutions and these have been centers of social and educational activities (Butt, 2012). Especially for disadvantaged people especially in rural areas these madaris work as a safety net and security shell from exploitation of other segments of society (Bergen and Panday, 2006; Khalid, 2008; Bano, 2009).

Like all other researches, this study has also some limitations. First limitation is that results of this research cannot be generalized to all students of madaris in Lahore. There is no authentic data available about number of students in madaris and the sample of the study does not sufficiently represent the whole population. Secondly, madaris were selected through purposive sampling which has major issues of low validity and biasness for researchers (Carrl, 1994). Systematic selection of madaris may reveal more authentic or may be totally different results.

Third limitation is also about selection procedure. Mostly madaris are registered with Ittehad-Tanzeemat-e-Deeniya which represent all five boards of major sects in Pakistan. However, madaris were not selected with respect of number of student enrolled in all five schools of thought. Therefore, findings do not represent views of madaris of all major sects and this can be considered as limitation of the study. Further research is needed to cope with these limitations.

In the end, it is suggested that all madaris should be registered with government and government must ensure this registration process so that best policy can be formulated to mainstream this education system. Besides, curriculum of madaris must be revised to use the potential of these young adults can be used in our Pakistani economy. The curriculum should be a combination of religious, scientific and cultural knowledge.

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## **Notes**

1. Ittehad -e-Tanzeemat-e-Madaris-e-Deeniya is a collective board of five main schools of thought or sects of Pakistan as Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahl e Hadees, Ahl e Taseeh and Jamat e Islami.
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