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Analysis of Contemporary Islamic School System in the Light of Quran and Sunnah

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the curricula of the contemporary Islamic school system in the light of the Quran and Sunnah. The research was designed in a qualitative paradigm so that an in-depth vision of the study concepts can be obtained. This was a triangulation study which included document analysis, observations, and interviews. A comprehensive exploration of the integration of religious and secular knowledge in Islamic education. The primary focus of the study was on character development and ethical education. After an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data, key themes and subthemes have emerged. It was recommended that a balanced approach to the integration of Islamic and secular knowledge should be adopted in Islamic schooling. Further, a need for continuous reflective practices is also required in the process.

KeyWords: Islamic Education, Quranic Teachings, Sunnah, Imam Ghazali, Qualitative Research, Ethical Education, Holistic Education, Pakistan

Authors:

Rabia Tabassum: (Corresponding Author)

Lecturer, Department of STEM Education, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

(Email: rgreat786@yahoo.com)

Javeria Saad: MPhil Scholar, Department of STEM Education, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Saira Taj: Assistant Professor, Department of STEM Education, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

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**Authors:****Rabia Tabassum:** (Corresponding Author)

Lecturer, Department of STEM Education, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

(Email: rgreat786@yahoo.com)

Javeria Saad: MPhil Scholar, Department of STEM Education, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Saira Taj: Assistant Professor, Department of STEM Education, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

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Title

Analysis Of Contemporary Islamic School System In The Light Of Quran And Sunnah

Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the curricula of the contemporary Islamic school system in the light of the Quran and Sunnah. The research was designed in a qualitative paradigm so that an in-depth vision of the study concepts can be obtained. This was a triangulation study which included document analysis, observations, and interviews. A comprehensive exploration of the integration of religious and secular knowledge in Islamic education. The primary focus of the study was on character development and ethical education. After an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data, key themes and subthemes have emerged. It was recommended that a balanced approach to the integration of Islamic and secular knowledge should be adopted in Islamic schooling. Further, a need for continuous reflective practices is also required in the process.

Keywords: [Islamic Education](#), [Quranic Teachings](#), [Sunnah](#), [Imam Ghazali](#), [Qualitative Research](#), [Ethical Education](#), [Holistic Education](#), [Pakistan](#)

Introduction

Religion has always been a point of serious concern

among mankind. Islam has a discrimination from the other religions because the Quran says:



Figure 1

Surah Kafiroon (Ayah: 1-6) with translation.

Sura Al-Kafiroon	سُورَةُ الْكَافِرُونَ
With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.	بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
1. Say, :O disbelievers,	قُلْ يَتَّخِذُهَا الْكَافِرُونَ
2. I do not worship that which you worship,	لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ
3. nor do you worship the One whom I worship.	وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَلِبُدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ
4. And neither I am going to worship that which you have worshipped,	وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مِمَّا عَبَدْتُمْ
5. nor will you worship the One whom I worship.	وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَلِبُدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ
6. For you is your faith, and for me, my faith.	لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

This was only the slogan of this discrimination, which forced Muslims to do their tireless and unforgettable efforts for the establishment of Pakistan. But today even after 77 years of independence, we including all Muslims of the world, have failed to establish Islamic society (Buzdar et al., 2015). Owing to this concern, efforts have always been made towards the establishment of Islam in letter and spirit.

Considering education as one of the more prominent change-inducing agents, the Madaris have been established all over the country. However, these Madaris were only aimed to impart religious education (Jesica Dwi Rahmayanti & Muhamad Arif, 2021). Therefore, an inclination of materialistic people remained towards the British or secular school systems to keep pace with the advancing world. To attract all people, another evolution in schooling was brought about a decade before i.e., the establishment of Islamic Schools that included Islamic subjects along with the English syllabus. They are meant for imparting Islamization as well as the contemporary advanced education systems. Thus, the thirst for Islam is quenched to a good extent among people

(Al-Juneid Al-Islamiyah et al., 2019). How much did they succeed in the purpose of Islamization of education? -is the point of discussion of this study.

Two terms i.e., Islamic Schools and contemporary schools are used simultaneously in this study. The term contemporary schools is used for the current secular education, where one book on basic ethics or Islamiat is used along with all other materialistic books (Muhtifah et al., 2022a). Whereas, the Islamic schools are aimed to represent teaching models based on the core principles of Islam. Their key goal is to impart knowledge based on the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah as well as to create experiences that are grounded in Islamic principles (Hartono, 2021).

In the pursuit of understanding the dynamic landscape of Islamic education, this study delves into the intersection of religious and secular knowledge, emphasizing character development, ethics, and practical applications. Qualitative research methodologies, including curriculum analysis, teacher interviews, and student observations, form the

backbone of the investigation, focusing on contemporary Islamic schools in Pakistan. The investigation follows the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah, paying particular emphasis to Imam Ghazali's viewpoint.

Study Objectives

Objectives of the study were:

- To explore the alignment of the current Islamic school system with Quranic teachings.
- To explore the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents on the quality of the Islamic education offered at these institutions.

Literature Review

Historical Development of Islamic Education in the Area

The article begins with a comprehensive overview, establishing the historical development of Islamic education in Pakistan. It examines the Arabic elements of Tarbiyah, Ta'dib, and Ta'lim, emphasizing the development of one's spirituality, social refrainment, and knowledge (Bahri, [2022a](#), [2022b](#); Rifki El-Faizal & Mulya, [2023a](#), [2023b](#)). The first summit towards the establishment of the education system in Pakistan was the 'All Pakistan Educational Conference 1947' where it was aimed to implement British curricula with some necessary basic modifications to incorporate basic Islamic principles in the curriculum of the mainstream schools (Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, [2017](#)).

Contribution of Islamic Scholars

The article honors significant personalities in Islamic education, including Imam al-Shafi'i, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Al-Farabi, and Ibn Khaldun, in recognition of the rich legacy of Islamic education. These individuals have had a significant impact on the area; a comprehensive understanding of knowledge is enhanced by the many works they have contributed, which are delicately woven into the fabric of Islamic education. Their contribution to the literature review attests to the persistent impact of these famous scholars (Hashim & Langgulong, [2008](#); Hussein, [2009b](#)).

Evolution of Secular Education in the Region

The essay highlights the shortcomings of mainstream education, especially the lack of emphasis on Islamic education and moral growth while acknowledging the

significance of madrasas in Pakistan's educational system. The essay advocates for the integration of Islamic teachings into the mainstream curriculum to achieve a coherent synthesis of intellectual and religious understanding. Navigating through the historical landscape of the Indo-Pak Islamic education system, the article sheds light on the emergence of Madaris as a response to colonial influences. Educational dualism, challenges in Pakistani education, Islamization of education, and the Qur'anic theory of knowledge are meticulously explored. The significant contributions of scholars like Imam Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun, Shah Wali Ulla, and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan are highlighted, each contributing to the rich tapestry of Islamic education.

Evolution of Islamic Schools

The development of Muslim schools reflects a long tradition of combining religious and secular education, which is important for building Islamic societies. The era in the subcontinent when there was the rise of Islam in the region, is considered as the pre-Islamic period. In this period, various Madaris flourished in all parts of the country (Tahir, [2022](#)). They were run by either supervision and funding of government, or by the cherished people. They were established in very magnificent buildings. These were almost boarding-type schools, where students learned Islamic punctuality in a very efficient psychological way (Rehman & Bhutto, 2020). These Madaris produced great scholars such as Imam Ghazali, Ibn Sina, Shah Wali Ullah, and Allama Iqbal. Although there was no proper system for synchronization of curricula in that period, still harmony and similarity of syllabi are observed among the Madaris system of that time. Their curricula incorporated Islamic theology as well as science and arts subjects for the all-round development of students' personalities (Khan et al., [2021a](#)). Five-time prayers a day, and learning the Quran at each stage, were major hallmarks of the curricula. There was no pass/fail system in the study levels, rather the students were promoted on completion of one stage according to their caliber. Curricula proposed by these Madaris and the great Muslim scholars are still taken as guiding stars for current Islamic schools. Therefore, the document analysis of their syllabi was also made in the present study (Rahman et al., [2021](#)).

However, the arrival of British invaders in the region changed all systems of the country. It affected the educational system as well. The British introduced the English language, and English literature as compulsory subjects in the schools.

They introduced a pass/fail system and made schools fund-generating institutes. Thus, education no longer remained free and accessible to all people. Islam and Islamic values were abolished (Aqsha Lubis, 2015; Rahman et al., 2021). Moreover, English literature had no connection with Muslim values. Therefore, Muslims made a boycott for the English/secular education (Surajudeen, 2019).

This agitation gave rise to a third wave of establishment of schooling by Muslim scholars such as Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband, and Breli Sharif, etc. However, the degree holders of these institutes have issues in gaining government jobs. A gap between the government and the public (especially Muslims) was created in the course of education (Muhammad Tahir Al Mustafa et al., 2023).

To fill up this gap and to establish a liaison between the government and Muslims, a fourth wave of schooling, which was a blend of secular English and Muslim education was started by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. However, this wave was partially accepted by Muslims in the region. Furthermore, the scholars of this institute lacked all-around Muslim personality features (Muhammad Tahir Al Mustafa et al., n.d.).

After gaining independence, the British constitution and British schooling were established with minor necessary changes according to Islam. As the system was British secular, Islam became limited to Islamiyat a book on the basics of Islam only. Again, this system took away from true Islam. To fill this gap, a second wave of Madaris was started in Pakistan. These Madaris revived Islamic education but, again the Madaris lacked up-to-date technologies. Thus, the Madrasah scholars remained limited to the Islamiyat teaching only (Hussain & Khan, 2020; Sheikh & Hussain, 2022). Thus, the popularity and scope of Madrasah education again declined which led to a decline in enrolment.

To quench Islam, a third wave of Islamization of education started in Pakistan in, the last decade i.e., the establishment of Islamic Schools which again introduced a blend of English, recent technologies, and Islam. This combined dedication to intellectual and spiritual growth continues to influence the development of Muslim education, producing graduates who are both well-informed and morally compliant. The rise of Islamic schools today, which combine traditional and modern teaching methods, demonstrates how Muslim educational establishments are still adjusting to the opportunities and difficulties of the modern world.

Research Implications

The study holds significance for all the stakeholders of the education system i.e., the students, their parents, teachers, the policymakers, and society at large.

Theoretical implications emphasize how important it is for Islamic teachings to be included in the curriculum for students to have a complete understanding of Islam. Aligned with the comprehensive educational approach of Imam Ghazali, focusing an extreme value on moral, intellectual, and spiritual development. Applications for direct education, supporting a curriculum that smoothly incorporates Islamic principles. A curriculum that smoothly incorporates Islamic values, employing a student-centered approach with modern teaching methods.

Moreover, results highlight a thorough assessment of students' growth, including character

recognizing the value of Islamic education, balancing it with secular knowledge, and encouraging teacher professional development are among the practical consequences for policymakers.

Overall, the research enables educators and decision-makers to design a curriculum that prepares children for success in the classroom, in the community, and in the world of spirituality.

Research Methodology

This was a qualitative case study research, which adopted methodological triangulation to gain insight into exploring Islamic and secular education systems in Lahore. The qualitative research method enables an in-depth understanding, aligning with the study's dual focus on Imam Ghazali's perspectives and the secular educational paradigm. Data collection methods included document analysis, observation, and interviews with teachers, ensuring comprehensive insights.

Document Analysis

Document analysis in the study was twofold i.e., historical analysis of old Muslim curricula, and analysis of contemporary curricula according to that. Qualitative content analysis is used to get the main points and patterns in the general sense (Kyngäs, 2020). Earlier different researchers have used this method (Jackson et al., 2019). In the Pakistani context, this method has been used in different relevant studies (Jamil, Mehmood, et al., 2024; Jamil, Yousaf, et al.,

2024; Jamil, Anwar, et al., 2024; Jamil, Bokhari, & Iqbal, 2024; Jamil, Aslam, et al., 2024)

So, the first stage involved the analysis of curricula proposed by the great Muslim scholars as made so that a most comprehensive curriculum may be set as criteria for the assessment of current Islamic Schools. For this purpose, the educational concepts of Ibne Khaldun, Shah Wali Ullah, Allama Iqbal, and Imam Ghazali, were selected. Out of them, it was revealed that the curriculum proposed by Imam Ghazali was the most comprehensive and had room to accommodate all technological advancements.

The second stage of document analysis comprised an analysis of curricula followed in contemporary Islamic Schools in the light of Imam Ghazali's criterion. This analysis involved a comparison of their stated educational aims and objectives with the actual practices observed. To gain insight into the connection between the curriculum and the respondents' aims and objectives, the books prescribed for primary-level education in the chosen schools were thoroughly reviewed.

Observation

Observation is a data collection technique that involves systematically watching and recording the status of a phenomenon, as defined by (Creswell, 2012). It can be considered both a research method and a technique for gathering data that is used in both qualitative and quantitative studies and fundamental and practical research. Observation is often preferred by researchers as a direct and accurate method of recording behavior (Ryan et al., 2007), as it involves first-hand observation and recording of participants' behaviors, rather than relying on self-reports. Detailed notations of behaviors, events, and contextual information are typically recorded during observations, which can focus on the frequency or duration of specific behaviors or events over a specific period (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The study proposes five dimensions along which observations can vary. The observations cover diverse aspects such as the external surroundings, interpersonal relationships, bodily activity, nonverbal cues, scheduled and spontaneous activities, and interactions. The spectator also considers non-occurrences, which are events that were expected to happen but did not occur during the observation process.

In line with the research questions, the researcher observed students in Islamic schools where Islamic education is

emphasized. An observational checklist was employed to assess classroom activities, teaching methodology, and student learning.

- Teaching methodology of the teachers.
- School management and students learning of Islamic Teachings.
- Students practice Islamic teachings in day-to-day life.

Interviews

Interviews serve various purposes in research, such as being the primary data collection instrument, testing hypotheses, suggesting new hypotheses, and gathering factual information during the exploratory stage (Johnson & Larry, 2003; Jones, 2004). They also help identify variables and relationships between them. Interviews are particularly effective in revealing complex or emotionally charged information, and visual aids can aid in presenting and recording intricate data.

In this study, four Islamic schools were selected as the target population for investigation using standardized open-ended questionnaires in the form of unstructured interviews. Each institution went through the same sequence of interviews. The aims and objectives were analyzed in the light of Islamic education as articulated by renowned Islamic scholars like Al-Ghazali.

Findings

The findings of the study revealed very interesting and notable aspects of the contemporary Islamic education system which are entailed in the following paragraphs.

Curriculum analysis revealed a good commitment to incorporate Islamic beliefs and ideas in the curricula. Moreover, the academic achievement and holistic development of the students in the vision and mission of the schools were given prime importance. Along with this, academic excellence and creativity were also focused on guaranteeing the all-round development of students as true Muslims.

Based on the observations of fifteen students, Study Three's findings show attempts to integrate information from the religious and secular domains. Character development, ethics, and opportunities for real-world application are prioritized. The emphasis on comprehensive development and a student-centered approach is reflected in the

curriculum design. Still, there are a few areas that may further be improved.

Observations and interviews revealed the practical outcomes of the curricular goals in the light of respondents' perceptions. In this case, the respondents acknowledged that secular and Islamic educational systems are two different lines, which cannot be compatible with each other. They also highlighted the need for inculcation of Islamic Principles in both teaching methods and teaching strategies. Thus, it was inferred that the respondents were aware of the importance of Islamic teachings for the practical implication of Islam over society. According to them, there is still a dire need for Islamic morality and spiritual growth of students. The inclusion of only an Islamic touch in the secular explanations was the major issue of today's education system.

From the interview sessions, it also became clear that the Islamization of education in letter and spirit is a dire need for an Islamic society. To reach this goal, the strategies that may foster the development of true-Muslim spirit among students should be incorporated into school curricula. Islam always encourages the use of the latest innovations and technologies in education as well as in whole life. But everything should be seen as the orders of Allah.

In general, the research results show that the observed Islamic schools have effectively developed students' character, ethics, and practical application abilities, while also highlighting areas for future improvement.

Discussion

The study findings led to an analysis of the efforts of Muslims towards the establishment of an Islamic Society in Pakistan and ultimately all over the world. Only one aspect i.e., education and school system were selected in the study. The study's findings reveal that a wide range of contemporary approaches and strategies employed in Islamic schools, adhere to the fundamental principles derived from the Quran and Sunnah. Similar researches in Muslim countries like Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, and Malaysia were made and found like results (Ismail et al., 2022; Sadiq et al., 2022; Sheikh & Hussain, 2022; Supriyanto et al., 2022; Sutrisno, 2023). All of them appreciate the efforts of Islamic Schools in the region.

However, the perception of students and teachers provokes that still there is room for much improvement in the character building of the students. Perhaps, the society and students' home environment may also play a role in this

regard. The research made by (Hussain & Khan, 2020; Hussein, 2009a) also affirmed these findings while evaluating the teaching about religion in Karachi, Pakistan.

The detail regarding these deficiencies included that blend of the modern and Islamic values might be not balanced. Or perhaps, the system includes complete Islamization and advances in technology in the light of the Quran and Sunnah. The studies made in other areas also demonstrated that the other influential elements, such as the implementation of Islam in Constitutions, parents, and society also need to play a role in the all-round development of an Islamic personality (Jamaluddin & Na'imah, 2024; Khan et al., 2021; Kittelmann Flensner, 2015; Muhtifah et al., 2022b; Rifai, 2022)

Conclusions

In summary, this article examined the operation or moderation of Islamic schools concerning the Quran, the Sunnah, and Imam Ghazali following current conditions to obtain a proper understanding of how contemporary Islamic schools adhere to the universals and values found in Islam as well as what perspective Imam Ghazali has given to these schools. These important results and their practical implications were arrived at after the study's goals were assessed.

The study's findings demonstrate that, despite the wide range of contemporary approaches and strategies employed in Islamic schools, adhering to the fundamental principles derived from the Quran and Sunnah remains essential. The schools acknowledge the significance of incorporating Islamic knowledge and principles into the educational process, although to different extents of success. Imam Ghazali offered a strong perspective that was grounded in Islamic morality and law; it was undoubtedly a useful lens through which to evaluate these institutions.

The stakeholders: which included parents, instructors as well and students admitted that they saw the importance of Islamic education and the impact it had on their students' cognitive mental, and spiritual growth. However, some areas needed to be refined, such as the emphasis on holistic development, introspective practice, and the reinforcement of Islamic teaching in daily life.

Based on research findings and Imam Ghazali's perspective, many practical recommendations can be established to reform the Islamic educational system in Pakistan. These recommendations are articulated as

implementing a student-centered approach to holistic development, developing deep how and application of Islamic teachings in daily life, and integrating ethical dilemmas or case study exercises to foster reflective practice

Directions for Future Researchers

The article underscores the significance of this research in Pakistan, offering insights to align Islamic schools with Quran and Sunnah teachings. Based on the viewpoint of Imam Ghazali, the paper provides helpful recommendations to enhance the Islamic educational system. These

recommendations seek to enhance students' comprehension of Islam and enhance Pakistani education.

Addressing the study's limitations, the article suggests the article offers several recommendations to mitigate the limitations of the study, including increasing the sample size, investigating the perspectives of other Islamic scholars, reducing the bias in self-reporting, investigating various cultural and regional contexts, conducting longitudinal studies, looking into parental and community involvement, and comparing curricula across various institutions.

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