

p-ISSN : 2708-2091 | e-ISSN : 2708-3586

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gsr  
DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gsr/.2024(IX)  
DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gsr.2024(IX.I)



www.gsrjournal.com

**GSR**  
Global Sociological Review

# GSR



**GLOBAL SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW**  
HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

**VOL. IX, ISSUE I, WINTER (MARCH-2024)**



Double-blind Peer-review Research Journal  
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Article title

Predictors of Islamic Religiosity in Youth who have Early Madrassah Education

Global Sociological Review

p-ISSN: 2708-2091 e-ISSN: 2708-3586

DOI(journal): 10.31703/gsr

Volume: IX (2024)

DOI (volume): 10.31703/gsr.2024(IX)

Issue: I (Winter-March 2024)

DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-I)

Home Page

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Volume: IX (2024)

<https://www.gsrjournal.com/Current-issues>

Issue: I-Winter (March-2024)

<https://www.gsrjournal.com/Current-issues/9/1/20234>

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Abstract

*The theory of lived religion proposes that people who are socialized by their early education system about religious beliefs have a stronger commitment to practice religion. At the same time, the integrative theory of peace argues that higher religiosity can play an instrumental role in peacebuilding within a nation. The aim of this study is to understand the relationship between early Madrassah education and Islamic religiosity in university students, measured under five domains of (i) beliefs, (ii) commitment, (iii) intellectual experience, (iv) intrinsic values, and (v) practice. Using a quantitative methodology, a sample of 152 youth were sampled from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. We found that that Pakistani youth show high Islamic religiosity in two sub-domains of beliefs and commitment, but that they show low Islamic religiosity in three sub-domains of intellectual experience, intrinsic values, and practice. The results also suggest that females and youth from KPK have greater Islamic religiosity, and that youth with greater spiritual values make higher financial contributions to the religious organization. The study concludes with key recommendations, some of which include the need for Madrassah.*

**Keywords:** Early Madrassah education, University Youth, Islamic Religiosity, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peacebuilding.

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**Pages:** 35-56

**DOI:** 10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-I).04

**DOI link:** [https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2024\(IX-I\).04](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-I).04)

**Article link:** <http://www.gsrjournal.com/article/A-b-c>

**Full-text Link:** <https://gsrjournal.com/fulltext/>

**Pdf link:** <https://www.gsrjournal.com/jadmin/Author/31rv1olA2.pdf>



Citing Article

04	<b>Predictors of Islamic Religiosity in Youth who have Early Madrassah Education</b>						
	<b>Author</b>	Muhammad Farhan Sara Rizvi Jafree	<b>DOI</b>	10.31703/grr.2024(IX-I).04			
<b>Pages</b>	35-56	<b>Year</b>	2024	<b>Volume</b>	IX	<b>Issue</b>	I
Referencing & Citing Styles	<b>APA</b>	Farhan, M., & Jafree, S. R. (2024). Predictors of Islamic Religiosity in Youth who have Early Madrassah Education. <i>Global Sociological Review</i> , IX(1), 35-56. <a href="https://doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-I).04">https://doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-I).04</a>					
	<b>CHICAGO</b>	Farhan, Muhammad, and Sara Rizvi Jafree. 2024. "Predictors of Islamic Religiosity in Youth who have Early Madrassah Education." <i>Global Sociological Review</i> IX (1):35-56. doi: 10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-I).04.					
	<b>HARVARD</b>	FARHAN, M. & JAFREE, S. R. 2024. Predictors of Islamic Religiosity in Youth who have Early Madrassah Education. <i>Global Sociological Review</i> , IX, 35-56.					
	<b>MHRA</b>	Farhan, Muhammad, and Sara Rizvi Jafree. 2024. 'Predictors of Islamic Religiosity in Youth who have Early Madrassah Education', <i>Global Sociological Review</i> , IX: 35-56.					
	<b>MLA</b>	Farhan, Muhammad, and Sara Rizvi Jafree. "Predictors of Islamic Religiosity in Youth Who Have Early Madrassah Education." <i>Global Sociological Review</i> IX.I (2024): 35-56. Print.					
	<b>OXFORD</b>	Farhan, Muhammad and Jafree, Sara Rizvi (2024), 'Predictors of Islamic Religiosity in Youth who have Early Madrassah Education', <i>Global Sociological Review</i> , IX (1), 35-56.					
<b>TURABIAN</b>	Farhan, Muhammad and Sara Rizvi Jafree. "Predictors of Islamic Religiosity in Youth Who Have Early Madrassah Education." <i>Global Sociological Review</i> IX, no. I (2024): 35-56. <a href="https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-I).04">https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2024(IX-I).04</a> .						



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## Title

### Predictors of Islamic Religiosity in Youth who have Early Madrassah Education

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## Abstract

*The theory of lived religion proposes that people who are socialized by their early education system about religious beliefs have a stronger commitment to practice religion. At the same time, the integrative theory of peace argues that higher religiosity can play an instrumental role in peacebuilding within a nation. The aim of this study is to understand the relationship between early Madrassah education and Islamic religiosity in university students, measured under five domains of (i) beliefs, (ii) commitment, (iii) intellectual experience, (iv) intrinsic values, and (v) practice. Using a quantitative methodology, a sample of 152 youth were sampled from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. We found that that Pakistani youth show high Islamic religiosity in two sub-domains of beliefs and commitment, but that they show low Islamic religiosity in in three sub-domains of intellectual experience, intrinsic values, and practice.*

#### Keywords:

[University Teachers](#)

[Professional Ethics](#)

[Students](#)

[Achievements](#)

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## Introduction

Pakistan is a country known for its religious pluralism, but with a majority population above 96% of Muslims. It is also a nation known for instances of Islamic extremism (Yaseen & Muzaffar, [2018](#)). Muslim

youth is influenced by religion and encouraged to develop Islamic religious identity through primary social structures- starting from the family structure and reinforced by the education sector. Multiple scholars have agreed that religious extremism in Muslims comes from inability to inculcate realistic



principles of Islam in youth and the misinterpretation and influence of illegitimate religious scholars or instructors (Ullah, [2013](#)). Religious scholars and religious instruction in the country is offered to significant youth through the Madrassah education system. According to some research, Pakistani Madrassahs encourage terrorism and extremism, mainly because they were created and funded to prepare fighters for the Afghan-Soviet conflict and because they have no focus for peacebuilding curriculum (Amin et al., [2022](#)).

According to recent data, there are an estimated 30,000-37,517 Madrassahs functioning in Pakistan, which have an enrollment of an estimated 2.5 million students (Khan & Waqar, [2020](#)). Whereas majority Madrassahs are functional under the five central boards of the Ittehad-Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Pakistan (ITMP), around 9,000 are operating under different independent bodies which include Jamaat-ud-Dawa, Jamia Muhammadiyah Ghausia, Itihad-ul-Madaris, Wafaq Nizam-ul-Madaris, and Al-Huda International. Majority Madrassahs are operational in Punjab (13,798), followed by Sindh (10,033), KPK (3,579), Balochistan (2,959), and Azad Jammu Kashmir (1,404). In 2002 the Madrassa Regulation Ordinance was passed in Pakistan with the aim of registering Madrassahs and revising the curricula (Zaidi, 2017). However, supervision has remained inadequate with Madrassahs continuing to promote narrow sectarian worldviews and promoting extreme ideologies, all of which work counter to peacebuilding (Shafiq et al., [2019](#)). Post 2008, the government attempted to work with the ITMP to secure curricula revision, but they were unable to reach compromise or make any development to raise quality education and improve surveillance of Madrassahs. In this way, the Madrassahs of Pakistan remain closed and independent schooling centers which have little to no accountability or supervision for curriculum content or inclusion of peacebuilding curriculum.

### Theoretical background

The theory of lived religion is a theory under the sociology of religion, which emphasizes the

emergence of the lived religion approach of youth in contemporary times (Knibbe & Kupari, [2020](#)). The theory proposes that people who are socialized more strongly by the family and the education system about religious beliefs, develop a greater commitment to religious practices and ideology. Scholars from the Muslim world agree that youth who are brought up in schools and families that promote Islamic teachings as their primary goal, have higher likelihood of exhibiting Islamic religiosity (Laksana & Wood, [2018](#)). Such youth end up navigating religion in their daily lives and making efforts to keep religious practices central. They may also treat other religions with narrowness and rigidity and show less religious inclusivity.

It is thus that youth end up living religion and practicing 'lived citizenship', with religion not being separated from the experience of being a citizen. This has implications for individual identity, citizenship, and nationhood. This also has serious implications for countries like Pakistan and the need for careful monitoring of the role of families and education sector in how they are shaping Islamic religiosity, and also the monitoring of Pakistan's Madrassah system for curriculum content or inclusion of peacebuilding curriculum. What is also to be considered is that religiosity can be a positive tool in promoting peace and overall national harmony and solidarity. The integrative theory of peace argues that religion and religious education can be used for developing a culture of peace, tolerance in society, mainly through inclusion of peacebuilding curriculum (Danesh, [2006](#)). It also argues that different religious groups of a society can unite to develop peacebuilding curriculum to promote humanitarianism, spirituality, and unity within communities. In fact, religious affiliation and sentiments can also become a catalyst for greater charity and financial contributions in poor and underdeveloped nations, driving not just peacebuilding, but also economic growth (Yen & Zampelli, [2014](#)).

### Aim and significance of study

Though it is assumed that youth attending university and studying curriculum approved by the Higher

Education Commission of Pakistan is not influenced by the Madrassah system, what is less known is that many University students in Pakistan have attained early Madrassah education (Zaidi, 2013). This study aims to sample university students who have attained early Madrassah education in order to understand Islamic religiosity in youth of Pakistan. The term Islamic religiosity for this study is defined as the extent to which a person believes in Islam, practices the relevant teaching, and participates in activities related to the religion. The study research questions include: 1. Is there a relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of youth and Islamic religiosity; 2. Are there any comparative differences in the five domains of Islamic religiosity between youth of KPK versus Punjab, and between male and female youth; and 3. Is there a relationship between preference in youth for spiritual values over material things and financial contributions to religious organizations.

The study has several significant implications. First, the research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of Madrassah education on Islamic religiosity of youth in Pakistan, which has not been considered before. Second, based on socio-demographic findings, we will be able to ascertain which youth population groups have greater Islamic religiosity. Third, we would be able to identify if religiosity and spiritual values have an association with financial contributions to religious organizations. Based on the study findings we would be able to make recommendations for more prudent policy to monitor Madrassahs, monitor Islamic religiosity, and also develop curriculum to promote religious tolerance in Pakistan.

## Literature Review

Madrassahs are an integral part of the education system in Pakistan, particularly for those who come from impoverished backgrounds and have limited access to quality education (Fair, 2008). But as mentioned above a lot of University students from middle and lower class backgrounds are also exposed to early Madrassah education. The Madrassah system focuses on providing education about the Islamic

faith, and emphasizing religious studies such as the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence. The primary aim of Madrassah education is to provide students with an in-depth knowledge of Islam, its principles and values; and to ultimately shape practices of the adult population.

Madrassah education is particularly prevalent in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Punjab provinces, the two regions we have collected data from. The reasons for this are multi-faceted, with historical, social, and economic factors all playing a role. Historically, Pakistan has been the site of many religious movements, with predominant people having a strong attachment to Islamic religious education. Many parents send their children to Madrassahs to learn about their faith and remain close to their traditions, values, and culture. In addition to this, the region has also been plagued by poverty, underdevelopment, and political instability. This has led to a lack of educational opportunities for the population, particularly in rural areas, with the low-cost Madrassah system being a preferred option for parents who cannot afford to send their children to conventional schools (Looney, 2003). Madrassahs often provide students with free education, accommodation, and food, making them an attractive option for families who struggle to make ends meet. Despite the prevalence of Madrassahs, early religious education's impact on student's Islamic religiosity is a subject of much debate. Some argue that Madrassahs promote religious extremism and intolerance, while others argue that they provide valuable education to students with limited access to educational opportunities (Zaidi, 2013; Khan & Hussain, 2019).

A study by Ali and Azam (2017) explored the reasons for the prevalence of Madrassah education in Pakistan. The study found that poverty, lack of access to formal education, and cultural values were the primary reasons parents send their children to Madrassahs. The authors noted that Madrassahs were particularly prevalent in areas with high levels of poverty and underdevelopment, where families could not afford to send their children to traditional schools. The study highlights that many parents opt for Madrassah education to provide their children with

basic education and Islamic teachings. Another study by Ahmed and Ahmed (2018) explored why parents in rural Pakistan send their children to Madrassahs. This study also found that lack of access to formal education, poverty, and the religious value attached to Islamic education were the primary reasons parents chose Madrassahs over conventional schooling. The authors noted that Madrassahs were often the only option for families living in remote and impoverished areas. This finding underscores the importance of providing alternative education options in remote and underdeveloped areas to reduce the reliance on Madrassah education or then monitoring Madrassah education and supporting expansion to a more holistic curriculum for students.

Khan and Hussain (2019) conducted a study to explore the impact of Madrassah education on the attitudes and beliefs in youth. The study found that youth with a Madrassah education were more likely to hold conservative religious beliefs, show high Islamic religiosity, and were less tolerant of other religious beliefs. The authors argued that Madrassahs should focus more on providing a well-rounded education that includes secular subjects and promotes religious tolerance. This finding suggests that Madrassah education has the potential to instill extremist ideologies in youth and may lead to a lack of tolerance towards other religions. Contrary to the above finding, Ali, Ahsan, and Rahman (2019) found that Madrassah education positively impacted the social and moral development of youth. The study found that students with a Madrassah education were more likely to engage in charitable activities, volunteer work, and other forms of community service. The authors argued that Madrassahs could be valuable in promoting social responsibility and moral values among youth and sustaining this practice in adult years. This finding highlights the potential of Madrassahs to create well-rounded individuals with strong ethical and moral values and higher practices of charity and financing to religious organizations which provide relief for the disadvantaged.

Hameed and Shakil (2020) conducted a study to examine the impact of Madrassah education on university students. The study found that students

with a madrassah education were more likely to have conservative religious beliefs and show higher Islamic religiosity. The study also found that students with a Madrassah education were less likely to engage in co-curricular activities, such as sports and social events, compared to students who did not have a Madrassah education. This finding highlights the potential limitations of Madrassah education in preparing students for a diverse and multicultural society. The literature suggests that Madrassah education is a complex issue that is influenced by a variety of social, economic, and cultural factors (Ali & Azam, 2017; Ahmed & Ahmed, 2018; Ali, Ahsan, & Rahman, 2019; Hameed & Shakil, 2020; Khan & Hussain, 2019).

A study suggests that there are two reasons why Madrassah education in students of KPK versus Punjab is different, leading to less conservative religious beliefs and Islamic religiosity in Punjab (Ahmed, 2018). The Madrasah students from KPK have more conservative beliefs because first, the region has faced more conflict and instability, with conservative families turning to religious centers for stability and peace. Second, religious bodies have more influence and control over society and the schooling of young children. Third, compared to a more developed province like Punjab, KPK has fewer central government interventions in monitoring religious bodies, Madrassah education, and syllabus content, leading to religious leaders and administration in Madrassahs having more power, control and administrative capacity within communities.

Evidence suggests that more males are enrolled in Madrassahs compared to females, and that due to patriarchal and conservative norms it is preferred that females gain their early education at home (Andrabi et al., 2006). At the same time differences in learning and attitudes for religiosity are seen between the genders, with females showing more religious tolerance and a more positive perspective towards equality and peace (Nazar et al., 2017). Other scholarship adds that females compared to males in Pakistan have higher adoption of religious coping and religiosity related to spiritual beliefs and intrinsic values (Ahmad & Jafree, 2023). The findings imply that we may find female

youth to have greater Islamic religiosity as they use religion as a catalyst to cope with life's problems, regain peace in their lives, and also promote equality in their house and the community.

### **Methodology: Ethics**

This Research has received ethics clearance from the Department of Sociology Ethics Committee of Forman Christian College University (FCCU) and the Institutional Review Board, FCCU. (Reference number: IRB-457/6-2023). All ethical considerations have been followed by the researcher, including confidentiality and anonymity of participants. An informed consent form was used to take approval from respondents before the start of the study (Appendix A). All participant information has been kept securely with the researcher. A standardized scale to measure religiosity has been used, which has no sensitive questions that can cause physical or emotional harm to any of the respondent (Appendix B). No one was compelled to participate in the study.

### **Research Design**

This study is cross-sectional research using a quantitative research design, and data has been collected through surveys administered to students from universities in KPK and Punjab.

### **Sample**

The selection criterion was students at university who have had a minimum of three months of early Madrassah education. We were able to collect data from the following universities which gave permission: 1. Universities in KPK: (i) Gomal University, (ii) University of Peshawar, and (iii) Agriculture University of Peshawar; and 2. Universities in Punjab: (i) Forman Christian College University, (ii) Punjab University, and (iii) Government College University.

### **Data collection**

Once universities had given approval, we approached student bodies or societies through their presidents and senior council members to circulate the questionnaire. Google survey forms were circulated

through WhatsApp groups of student bodies including society groups, council groups, and groups of students taking different courses. The two months of data collection were July and August 2023. Google survey forms were assigned settings to ensure no confidential information was used. Though we targeted to collect data from 100 students from KPK and Punjab each, we were unable to sample 200 students all together due to low response. We believe low response was because: (i) data was collected during summer holidays during which students remain inactive on student-related WhatsApp groups, and (ii) less interest or fear in answering questions related to religion. Our final sample consisted of 152 students- 85 students from KPK and 67 from Punjab.

### **Instrument**

The questionnaire consists of two sections (Appendix B). Section one had 12 socio-demographic questions and section B consisted of 24 questions from a standardized tool by Dali and colleagues (2019), which measures Islamic religiosity under five key domains of: (i) beliefs, (ii) commitment, (iii) intellectual experience, (iv) intrinsic values, and (v) practice. A 5-point Likert scale has been used to measure religious attitudes ('strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'), with a scoring of '1' for strongly agree to '5' for strongly disagree. The lower the scores of respondents, the higher the Islamic religiosity and the higher the scores the lower the Islamic religiosity. The scale was also translated in Urdu to support students who were bilingual and had greater preference or comfort answering in Urdu.

### **Data Analysis**

The hypotheses for this study include: H1. There is an association between socio-demographic variables and Islamic religiosity, with youth from KPK (Ahmed, 2018), poorer youth (Ali and Azam, 2017), and females (Ahmad & Jafree, 2023) showing higher Islamic religiosity; and H2. Youth with greater Islamic religiosity, specifically spiritual values, make higher financial contributions to the religious organization (Ali, Ahsan, and Rahman, 2019). SPSS 25.0 has been



used and a significance level of  $p < 0.05$  has been considered significant for this study.

Descriptive statistics have been used to present socio-demographic data, and mean analysis has been used to predict higher Islamic religiosity. In addition, independent sample T tests have been used to predict which domains of Islamic religiosity show association with provincial belonging and gender. Cut-off values were assigned to the scale of Islamic religiosity and its sub-domains to indicate high versus low religiosity. Finally, multiple linear regression was used to show

the association between spiritual values and financial contributions to the religious organization.

**Reliability Results**

Table 1 presents the reliability results for the sub-domains measuring Islamic religiosity. All five sub-domains show satisfactory reliability, (Beliefs  $\alpha = 0.815$ ; Commitment  $\alpha = 0.616$ ; Intellectual experience  $\alpha = 0.618$ ; Intrinsic values  $\alpha = 0.732$ ; and Practice  $\alpha = 0.776$ ) indicating that this scale can be used in Pakistan, in both the English and Urdu language.

**Table 1**

*Reliability results for the sub-domains measuring religiosity*

	Items	$\alpha$
Beliefs	9	0.815
Commitment	3	0.616
Intellectual experience	3	0.618
Intrinsic values	3	0.732
Practice	6	0.776

**Results: Descriptive results**

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic results. The majority of the respondents are male (80.4%), belonging to the age group of 21 to 23 years (71.2%). Considerable respondents have a monthly household income between PKR 150,000 to 200,000 (36.7%). The sample is fairly evenly distributed between youth from KPK (55.6%) and Punjab (44.4%); and youth from urban (59.5%) and rural (40.5%) areas. Majority

of the university students have mothers who are illiterate or have attained schooling below secondary level (58.2%); whereas near half of students have fathers who are either illiterate or have received schooling less than secondary years (43.8%). Majority of the youth have mothers who are unemployed (71.2%); whereas considerable number have fathers who are either unemployed or engaged in unskilled work (25.5%). Most youth live in families with 1-4 siblings (54.9%) and in joint family structures (54.3%).

**Table 2**

*Sociodemographic results of participants (N=152)*

	f (%)
Gender	
Male	123 (80.4%)
Female	29 (19.6%)
Age	
18-20	24 (15.7%)
21-23	109 (71.2%)
24-26	18 (11.8%)
26-29	02 (01.3%)

	<i>f (%)</i>
Monthly household income (PKR)	
20,000–50,000	27 (17.6%)
60,000–90,000	36 (23.5%)
100,000–140,000	34 (22.2%)
150,000–200,000	55 (36.7%)
Provincial Belonging	
Punjab	68 (44.4%)
KPK	85 (55.6%)
Regional Belonging	
Urban	91 (59.5%)
Rural	62 (40.5%)
Maternal literacy	
Illiterate	32 (20.9%)
Primary/Secondary	57 (37.3%)
Graduate or above	64 (41.8%)
Paternal literacy	
Illiterate	14 (9.2%)
Primary/Secondary	53 (34.6%)
Graduate or above	86 (56.2%)
Mother Occupation	
Unemployed	109 (71.2%)
Unskilled work	12 (07.8%)
Professional/skilled work	32 (20.9%)
Father Occupation	
Unemployed	21 (13.7%)
Unskilled work	18 (11.8%)
Professional/skilled work	113 (73.5%)
No of siblings	
1–4	84 (54.9%)
5–8	53 (34.6%)
9–12	10 (06.5%)
None	06 (03.9%)
Nature of family	
Nuclear	40 (26.1%)
Joint	83 (54.3%)
Single-parent	30 (19.6%)

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for high and low Islamic religiosity for youth from KPK and Punjab. With regards the sub-domain of ‘beliefs’ majority youth indicate high Islamic religiosity, with some items showing the following percentiles: (i) thank Allah for food and drink (90.2%), and (ii) relationship with God is extremely important (92.2%). Two of the three items measuring ‘commitment’, also

show high Islamic religiosity in youth: (i) making financial contributions to religious organizations (73.9%), and (ii) spending time to grow in understanding their faith (82.4%).

With regards the sub-domain of ‘intellectual experience’, majority of the youth indicate low Islamic religiosity: (i) do not make effort to avoid

minor and major sin (83.0%), (ii) do not follow Islamic junctions in all matters of my life (81.7%). Similarly, with the sub-domain of 'Intrinsic values', majority of the youth indicate low Islamic religiosity: (i) do not spend much time in private thought and prayer (76.5%), and (ii) do not try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs (79.1%). With

regards the last sub-domain 'practice', again majority of the youth indicate low Islamic religiosity: (i) do not regularly offer prayer five times a day (85.6%), (ii) do not regularly recite the Holy Quran (89.5%), (iii) do not fast regularly in Ramadan (72.5%), and (iv) do not go to places of worship/ masjid regularly (71.9%).

**Table 3**

*Descriptive statistics for high and low Islamic religiosity in youth of Pakistan (N=152), based on five domains (beliefs, commitment, intellectual experience, and intrinsic values, and practice)*

	High Islamic religiosity	Low Islamic religiosity
<b>Beliefs</b>		
I thank Allah for my food and drink	138 (90.2%)	15 (9.8%)
Spiritual values are more important than material things	129 (84.3%)	24 (15.7%)
My relationship with God is extremely important to me	141 (92.2%)	12 (07.8%)
I look to my faith as a source of comfort	135 (88.2%)	18 (11.8%)
I look to my faith as a source of inspiration	130 (85.0%)	23 (15.0%)
My faith impacts many of my decisions	56 (36.6%)	97 (63.4%)
Islam is a way of life	136 (88.9%)	17 (11.1%)
Quranic teachings are suitable and practicable in today's life	128 (83.7%)	25 (16.3%)
I follow the Sunnah in daily life	100 (65.4%)	53 (34.6%)
<b>Commitment</b>		
Religious observances are very important to me	90 (58.8%)	63 (41.2%)
I make financial contributions to my religious organization	113 (73.9%)	40 (26.1%)
I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith	126 (82.4%)	26 (17.0%)
<b>Intellectual experience</b>		
I always try to avoid minor and major sin	26 (17.0%)	127 (83.0%)
I have the basic and necessary knowledge about my religion	111 (72.5%)	42 (27.5%)
I always try to follow Islamic junctions in all matters of my life	28 (18.3%)	125 (81.7%)
<b>Intrinsic values</b>		
I need to spend time in private thought and prayer	36 (23.5%)	117 (76.5%)
I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs	32 (20.9%)	121 (79.1%)
My whole approach to life is based on my religion	50 (32.7%)	103 (67.3%)
<b>Practice</b>		
I go to a place of worship/masjid regularly	43 (28.1%)	110 (71.9%)
I regularly offer prayer five times a day	22 (14.4%)	131 (85.6%)

	High Islamic religiosity	Low Islamic religiosity
<b>Beliefs</b>		
I fast regularly during Ramadan	42 (27.5%)	111 (72.5%)
I regularly recite the Holy Quran	16 (10.5%)	137 (89.5%)

**Predictors for Islamic Religiosity**

Table 4 reports the mean results for socio-demographic characteristics of youth as predictors for Islamic religiosity. We find that the following population groups have higher Islamic religiosity: (i)

female youth (M=0.68; SD=0.470; p=0.021); (ii) youth belonging to KPK (M=0.62; SD=0.487; p=0.003), (iii) youth from rural areas (M=0.62; SD=0.487; p=0.016), (iv) youth who have illiterate mothers (M=0.75; SD=0.439; p=0.016); and (v) those belonging to nuclear families (M=0.72; SD=0.452; p=0.020).

**Table 4**

*Mean comparison of Islamic religiosity, based on socio-demographic characteristics of youth*

	M (SD)	F	P value
Gender			
Male	0.59 (0.493)	5.407	0.021
Female	0.68 (0.470)		
Age			
18-22 years	0.75 (0.442)	0.154	0.697
23 and above years	0.50 (0.707)		
Monthly household income			
PKR 20,000-50,000	0.62 (0.492)	0.074	0.785
PKR 60,000 and above	0.64 (0.487)		
Provincial Belonging			
KPK	0.62 (0.487)	5.731	0.003
Punjab	0.58 (0.495)		
Regional Belonging			
Urban	0.59 (0.493)	4.809	0.007
Rural	0.62 (0.487)		
Maternal literacy			
Illiterate	0.75 (0.439)	6.021	0.016
Literate	0.63 (0.486)		
Paternal literacy			
Illiterate	0.50 (0.518)	1.183	0.281
Literate	0.64 (0.484)		
Mother Occupation			
Unemployed	0.56 (0.497)	0.043	0.836
Employed	0.58 (0.514)		
Father Occupation			
Unemployed	0.47 (0.511)	0.136	0.714
Employed	0.55 (0.511)		
Family Structure			
Nuclear family	0.72 (0.452)	5.696	0.020
Joint family	0.56 (0.566)		

**Association between sub-domains of Islamic religiosity and provincial status of youth**

Table 5 reports the mean results for provincial status of youth as predictors for the five domains of Islamic religiosity- beliefs, commitment, intellectual

experience, intrinsic values, and practice. We find that youth from Punjab, compared to youth from KPK, show greater: (i) intrinsic values for Islamic religiosity (M=1.72; SD=0.460; p=0.002) and (ii) practice for Islamic religiosity (M=1.71; SD=0.461; p=0.000).

**Table 5**

*Mean comparison of KPK and Punjab students, based on study domains for Islamic religiosity*

	KPK	Punjab	F	P value
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Beliefs	1.56 (0.497)	1.51 (0.507)	1.223	0.271
Commitment	1.59 (0.493)	1.51 (0.503)	0.005	0.942
Intellectual experience	1.55 (0.498)	1.58 (0.514)	0.161	0.689
Intrinsic values	1.53 (0.500)	1.72 (0.460)	9.924	0.002
Practice	1.52 (0.501)	1.71 (0.461)	16.877	0.000

**Association between sub-domains of Islamic religiosity and gender of youth**

Table 6 reports the mean results for provincial status of youth as predictors for the five domains of Islamic

religiosity- beliefs, commitment, intellectual experience, intrinsic values, and practice. We find that female youth, compared to male youth, show greater practice for Islamic religiosity (M=1.93; SD=0.257; p=0.000).

**Table 6**

*Mean comparison of male versus female youth, based on study domains for Islamic religiosity*

	Males	Females	F	P value
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Beliefs	1.76 (0.426)	1.82 (0.384)	2.485	0.117
Commitment	1.50 (0.502)	1.51 (0.508)	0.104	0.747
Intellectual experience	1.91 (0.274)	1.93 (0.257)	0.198	0.657
Intrinsic values	1.87 (0.328)	1.89 (0.309)	0.314	0.576
Practice	1.76 (0.426)	1.93 (0.257)	25.007	0.000

**Relationship between spiritual values and financial contributions to religious organizations**

Table 7 reports the multiple linear regression results for independent variables predicting financial contributions to religious organizations. A significant regression equation was found (F (8,141) =4.704,

P=0.000), R2 of 0.211. We find that two variables significantly predict higher financial contributions to religious organizations: (i) higher spiritual values, which are considered more important than material things (T=4.687; p=0.000); (ii) higher monthly household income (T=2.857; p=0.005); and (iii) mother having an occupation (T=1.920; p=0.039).

**Table 7**

*Regression results for independent variables predicting financial contributions to religious organizations*

	<i>B</i>	Std Error	Beta	<i>T</i>	P value
Spiritual values are more important than material things	.445	.095	.366	4.687	.000
Gender	.246	.182	.111	1.354	.178
Age	.171	.123	.111	1.392	.166
Monthly HH Income	.184	.065	.237	2.857	.005
Province	.151	.150	.085	1.003	.318
Region	.018	.144	.010	0.127	.899
Mothers Occupation	.077	.084	.172	1.920	.039
Fathers Occupation	-.037	.097	-.031	-0.384	.702

*F= 4.704, P=0.000*

**Discussion**

This study aimed to understand Islamic religiosity of University students in Pakistan who have a history of gaining early Madrassah education in Pakistan. We used a scale to measure Islamic religiosity (Dali et al., 2019), which to the best of researcher’s knowledge has not been used in the country before. We found good reliability of the scale and its five domains, and can confirm that this scale can be used in Pakistan in the English and Urdu languages. However, this scale would need to be translated in other provincial languages based on need and reliability tests would have to be repeated for each language.

We found that that Pakistani youth show high Islamic religiosity in two sub-domains of beliefs and commitment, with majority thanking Allah for good things in their life, believing that their relationship with God is important, and spending time trying to understand Islam. However, we also found that majority youth indicate low Islamic religiosity with regards three sub-domains of intellectual experience, intrinsic values, and practice. Many claim that they do not make an effort to avoid minor and major sins or follow Islamic injunctions in all matters of my life. Similarly, many do not spend much time in prayer, recitation of the Holy Quran, or regular fasting. Even international scholarship confirms that younger people spend more time trying to understand their religion than observing rigid practices (Collins-Mayo, 2012). Furthermore, in contemporary times there is

greater work pressure and social media engagement which requires youth to spend more time in activities that prevent them from observing time-consuming religious practices such as praying daily or reading religious books on a daily basis (Cnaan et al., 2004).

We found that predictors of high Islamic religiosity include youth who come from KPK and females. This confirms our first hypothesis partially and previous scholarship in that females (Ahmad & Jafree, 2023) and youth from KPK (Ahmed, 2018) have greater Islamic religiosity. However, we find no significant relationship between household income and Islamic religiosity. We must consider that in Pakistan early Madrassah education, or partial study years in Madrassahs is popular in families of all wealth classes, as it satisfies the preference and desire in parents and families to keep their children connected to Islamic values. Our study findings have implications for studying the female population and those belonging to KPK in more depth to understand other correlated behavior related to Islamic religiosity such as attitudes and practices of tolerance, interfaith harmony, and religious conflict.

We also found association between high religiosity in youth from rural areas, those with illiterate mothers, and those belonging to nuclear families. Our findings confirm other scholarship from the Muslim world that people from rural areas have greater affiliation with Islam due to greater commitment to maintain their traditional lifestyle and

preference to stay close to their cultural roots (Krauss et al., 2006). Other scholarship suggests that illiterate mothers may be coping with their disadvantaged backgrounds by keeping their youth closely associated with faith and spirituality (Trzebiatowska & Bruce, 2012). It may also be that youth with illiterate mothers who have played a less nurturing and constructive role in their lives find greater comfort in religion and spirituality (Magan & Elkhaoudi, 2023). Similarly, it may be that smaller families have greater affiliation with religion as the transmission of religious values is better and more concentrated when there is interaction between two adults and their children, as opposed to larger or single parent families (Vermeer, 2014).

Regression results show that three youth groups make greater financial contributions to religious organizations- youth with higher spiritual values, who have higher monthly household income, and whose mothers are employed. In this way, our second hypothesis is confirmed which suggested that youth with greater spiritual values will make higher financial contributions to the religious organization (Ali, Ahsan, and Rahman, 2019). Expectedly, youth from a higher income bracket will make greater financial contributions as they have more financial capacity (Lazar & Hatos, 2019). Furthermore, youth who have employed mothers with independent incomes, also have more finances to contribute to their religious organizations as they face less pressure to give money or save money for their unemployed mothers.

### Limitations

Like any research, this study has some limitations. First, the study is limited to KPK and Punjab provinces, so the findings may not represent other provinces in Pakistan. We recommend future researchers to also sample Sindh and Baluchistan as they have considerable youth enrolled in Madrassahs. Second, our sample included university students who are fluent and bilingual in the English language and Urdu language; thus this scale would still need to be tested in other local or provincial languages to ascertain reliability.

### Concluding Recommendations

Developed regions have a characteristic of making successful efforts in monitoring religious communities and informal religious schooling centers which contribute to nation-building and peacebuilding (Khalfaoui & Guenichi 2021). Pakistan also needs to make sincere and collective efforts to monitor the role of the Madrassah educational system in the country and its influence on youth ideology and practices. Since Pakistan's independence, Madrassahs have played a significant role in not only providing religious education, but also offering free board and lodging to many of the country's poorest children. Pakistan is in need of the support of the Madrassah system in supporting the poor and marginalized members of society, for education and accommodation. In fact, the Madrassah system can play a vital role in reducing religious fallacies, reducing inter-sectarian and inter-religious conflict, teaching comparative religious studies to improve tolerance, and improving interfaith harmony for nation-building (Khan & Waqar, 2020; Naqvi et al., 2023).

The findings of this study has significant implications for Pakistan's policymakers and the education sector. There is critical need to amend and improve the Madrassa Regulation Ordinance and to closely coordinate with ITMP for improvement in Madrassah curriculum content. The existing curriculum of the Madrassah system needs to be monitored closely, with some standardization polices related to inclusion of content to promote religious tolerance and interfaith harmony, and secure youth commitment to national solidarity and humanitarianism. Given that Madrassah education provides free living accommodation, there is also need to monitor the centers through social workers and social protection officers for additional issues such as the hidden curriculum, living conditions, and the possibility of violence. We also recommend that seminars and awareness programs should be held across communities in the country to make parents and families mindful about the limitations of Madrassahs, until they are monitored and certified by relevant boards, such as the Board of Intermediate &

Secondary Education, the Higher Education Commission or similar bodies, including the Federal Ministry of Education. It is also recommended that once Madrassahs come under formal licensing and certification of the national and provincial educational boards, graduating students who meet the requirements of a holistic education must be provided equal job opportunities in the employment sector- both private and public (Naqvi et al., 2023).

The government must also expand its plans for conventional public school access with quality education in rural, remote and semi-developed urban areas, so that parents who prefer contemporary schooling options for their children are not deprived and forced to send their children to Madrassahs that remain unmonitored. Local research has already confirmed that teachers and administrators at Madrassahs are not willing to learn or teach modern education to students and this negatively affects Madrassah student learning outcomes and youth ability to gain equal opportunities for advancement in the future (Iqbal et al., 2023). Other research confirms that Madrassah learning outcomes for students are very poor and that not only do students receive low quality education, but that they gain no skills in English language, which is the official working language for Pakistan (Siddiqui, 2019). It is thus also recommended that there is need for initial certification, monitoring, continued training, and skill development of Madrassah teachers and administrators in the country.

The Madrassah system in Pakistan has remained steadfast in providing religious instruction without allowing interference or input from the government or other stakeholders. This is why some scholars assert that immense political will and commitment is

required to engage the Madrassah leaders and administration in a partnership and incentivize them to deliver reforms in curriculum so that students can contribute to the development and stability of Pakistan (Tahir, 2022). At the same time, the government of Pakistan has been criticized for its lack of commitment in funding and providing support to Madrassahs for curriculum improvement, with some scholars arguing that if government attention and funding is increased, the Madrassah administration would be compelled to align with conventional schooling and a standardized curriculum, and also permit surveillance by central bodies (Iqbal et al., 2023). In fact, Madrassahs have no sponsorship and financing from the government or private NGOs for resources such as adequate infrastructure, laboratories, computer equipment, and recreational and co-curricular space or equipment (Hashmi & Nadeem, 2023). The implication being that apart from curriculum amendment and expansion, if Madrassahs are funded for co-curricula's and holistic education, students would be more likely to learn about and contribute to nation-building and peace-building.

We also need strict sectarian and religious harmony laws, such that if any institute, including the Madrassahs and other educational institutes are found to promote conflict and abuse against a religious group, in their overt or hidden curriculum, they would be duly penalized with permanent closure and license revocation. Finally, since there is harassment and abuse found in Madrassahs at a higher rate compared to conventional schools (Lys, 2006), we need much more research on this and the possibility that students facing abuse and violence, may show more religious and spiritual coping.



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## Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Participants,

You are invited to participate in a study which aims to understand Islamic religiosity in University students who have had a Madrassah education in their early years. This study will help us to identify and advise better policy for religious education in the country. The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to answer. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any kind of known risk. Your names are not required for participation and none of your data will be disclosed or shared. The data will remain with the researcher and be analyzed without compromising confidentiality or anonymity. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from answering the survey at any point. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you have read the above information and are indicating your consent to participate in this research study.

Thank you!

Researcher: Muhammad Farhan

BSc. Hon Student, Department of Sociology, Forman Christian College

[241555607@formanite.fccollege.edu.pk](mailto:241555607@formanite.fccollege.edu.pk)

Signed consent of the participant: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Appendix B: Questionnaire

### Section A: Sociodemographic characteristics

1.	Gender	Female	Male	Other
2.	Age			
3.	Monthly Household Income			
4.	Province			
5.	Urban/Rural belonging			
6.	Maternal Literacy	Illiterate	Primary/ Secondary	Graduate or above
7.	Paternal Literacy	Illiterate	Primary/ Secondary	Graduate or above
8.	Mother Occupation	Unemployed	Unskilled work	Skilled/ Professional work
9.	Father Occupation	Unemployed	Unskilled work	Skilled/ Professional work
10.	Number of Siblings			
11.	Family Structure	Nuclear Family	Joint Family	Single-parent family
12.	Major/ Area of study			Other

### Section B: Measuring Religiosity (Dali et al., 2019)

	Beliefs	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
12	I thank Allah for my food and drink					

- 13 Spiritual values are more important than material things
- 14 My relationship with God is extremely important to me
- 15 I look to my faith as a source of comfort
- 16 I look to my faith as a source of inspiration
- 17 My faith impacts many of my decisions
- 18 Islam is a way of life
- 19 Quranic teachings are suitable and practicable in today's life
- 20 I follow the sunnah in daily life

#### Commitment

- 21 Religious observances are very important to me
- 22 I make financial contributions to my religious organization
- 23 I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith

#### Intellectual experience

- 24 I always try to avoid minor and major sin
- 25 I have the basic and necessary knowledge about my religion
- 26 I always try to follow Islamic junctions in all matters of my life

#### Intrinsic values

- 27 I need to spend time in private thought and prayer
- 28 I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs

29 My whole approach to life is based on my religion

Practice

30 I go to a place of worship/masjid regularly

31 I regularly offer prayer five times a day

32 I fast regularly during Ramadan

33 I regularly recite the Holy Quran

34 I believe that I am obliged to perform Hajj if I meet the prescribed criteria

35 I perform voluntary fasting other than Ramadan

ضمیمه ب: پوښتنلیک

برخه: ټولنیز ډیموگرافیک ځانګړتیاوې A

نور	نارینه	شخړینه	جنډر	1.
			عمر	2.
			دکورنۍ میاشتنی عاید	3.
			ولایت	4.
			بشاري/ کلیوال تراو	5.
فارغ یا پورته	لومړني/ ثانوي	بې سواده	د میندو سواد	6.
فارغ یا پورته	لومړني/ ثانوي	بې سواده	د پلرونو سواد	7.
مهارت لرونکی/ مسلکی کار	بې مهارته کار	بې کاره	د مور مسلک	8.
مهارت لرونکی/ مسلکی کار	بې مهارته کار	بې کاره	د پلار دنده	9.
			خویندو شمیر	10.
د واحد پلار کورنۍ نور	گډه کورنۍ	اتومي کورنۍ	د کورنۍ جوړښت	11.

(Dali et al., 2019) ب برخه: د مذهب اندازه کول

(5) په کلکه بې ردوم	(4) اختلاف	(3) بې طرفه	(2) موافقه وکړه	(1) په کلکه موافق یم	باورونه
					زه د خپل خوراک
					او څښاک لپاره د
					الله شکر ادا کوم
					معنوي ارزښتونه
					د مادي شیانو په
					پرتله ډیر مهم دي

- د خدای سره زما
- 14 اړیکه زما لپاره  
خورا مهمه ده  
زه خپل باور ته د
- 15 آرامۍ سرچینې په  
توگه گورم  
زه خپل باور ته د
- 16 الهام سرچینې په  
توگه گورم  
زما باور زما ډیری
- 17 پریکړې اغیزه  
کوي  
اسلام د ژوند لاره
- 18 ده  
قرآني تعلیمات په  
ننني ژوند کې
- 19 مناسب او عملي  
دي  
زه په ورځني
- 20 ژوند کې د سنت  
پیروي کوم

#### ژمنتیا

- زما لپاره مذهبي
- 21 مراسم خورا مهم  
دي  
زه په خپل مذهبي
- 22 سازمان کې مالي  
مرستې کوم  
زه د خپل عقیدې
- 23 په پوهیدو کې د  
ودې په هڅه کې  
وخت تیروم

#### فکري تجربه

- زه تل هڅه کوم  
چې د کوچنیو او
- 24 لویو گناهونو  
څخه ډډه وکړم

- زه د خپل دين په  
25 اړه اساسي او  
ضروري پوهه لرم  
زه تل هڅه كوم  
چې د ژوند په  
26 ټولو چارو كې  
اسلامي احكام  
تعقيب كړم

#### داخلي

- دا زما لپاره مهمه  
27 ده چې وخت په  
شخصي فكر او  
دعا كې تير كړم  
زه خپل ټول ژوند  
د خپلو ديني  
28 عقيدو سره سم  
ژوند كولو هڅه  
كوم  
زما د ژوند ټوله  
29 تگلاره زما په  
مذهب ولاړه ده

#### تمرين

- زه په منظم ډول د  
30 عبادت  
ځاى/مسجد ته  
ځم  
زه په منظم ډول د  
31 ورځې پنځه وخته  
لمونځ كوم  
زه د روژې په  
32 مياشت كې په  
منظمه توگه روژه  
نيسم  
زه په منظم ډول د  
33 قرآن كريم تلاوت  
كوم  
زه په دې باور يم  
34 چې كه زه مقرر  
شوي معيارونه



پوره کرم نوحج  
فرض دی  
35 زه د رمضان پرته  
نور روژه نیسم

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