

## ENGLISH ESSAY

### TOPIC : Challenges and Opportunities in Mainstreaming Madrasa Education in Pakistan

#### OUTLINE

#### 1. Introduction

##### Thesis Statement

Mainstreaming madrasa education in Pakistan offers significant opportunities for socioeconomic progress, national unity, and addressing extremism, but it faces critical challenges such as resistance to reform, resource limitations, and curriculum standardization. A balanced strategy that respects values while introducing modern education can transform madrasas into catalysts for positive change, contributing to Pakistan's development.

#### 2. Madrasa Education in Pakistan and their importance

#### 3. Challenges in Mainstreaming Madrasa Education

- (a) Resistance by religious section to Reforms
- (b) Lack of sufficient resources and infrastructure
- (c) Curriculum Standardization Issues
- (d) Perceived Politicization
- (e) Stigma and Stereotypes : extremism.

#### 4. Opportunities in Mainstreaming Madrasa Education

- (a) Enhancing Socioeconomic development
- (b) Promoting Social harmony
- (c) Strengthening National Identity
- (d) International collaboration and funds
- (e) Addressing social concerns.
- (f) Improving literacy rates



(g) Encouraging Gender Inclusion

## 5. Recommendations

(a) Policy and Governance

(b) Curriculum Reform

(c) Teacher Training and capacity building

(d) Funding and Infrastructure Development

(e) Awareness Campaigns

## 6. Conclusion



## TOPIC : Challenges and Opportunities in Mainstreaming Madrasa Education in Pakistan.

Madrasas in Pakistan have for long been part of the informal education sector of Pakistan and are the traditional centers of Islamic learning, playing a vital role in shaping religious and moral education in Pakistan. Historically, they have been instrumental in preserving Islamic teaching and fostering social cohesion. Mainstreaming madrasa education in Pakistan offers significant opportunities for socioeconomic progress, national unity, and addressing extremism but it faces critical challenges such as resistance to reform, resource limitations, and curriculum standardization. A balanced strategy that reflects religious values while introducing modern education can transform madrasas into catalysts for positive change, contributing to Pakistan's development.

Mainstreaming madrasa education is essential for achieving equitable access to education and for fostering national cohesion. Under Article 25(A) of the Constitution of Pakistan, education is a fundamental right for all children. According to UNICEF (2022), madrasas provide education to nearly 10% of Pakistan's school-going population, making their inclusion in the education system, imperative. Moreover, mainstreaming can bridge the gap between religious and secular education, promoting a unified identity among Pakistan's youth.



There are numerous challenges in mainstreaming the Madrasa education into the formal education sector of Pakistan. Resistance from madrasa leaders and clerics is one of the most significant barrier to reforms. Modernization of education is considered as an attack to religious values. According to a survey by Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) 65% of madrasa leaders showed apprehension about inclusion of secular education, fearing it will dilute religious education. Prominent religious leaders have also shown resistance on the subject, making it a major hurdle in way of mainstreaming.

Another issue is the lack of resources and infrastructure needed to do this transformation. Madrasas in Pakistan operate on charitable funds, leaving them with limited resources and almost no access to teacher trainings. The World Bank (2022) states that Pakistan spends less than 2% on education and less than 1% of it goes to madrasa reforms. Without sufficient investment and funds, inclusion of modern education to madrasas are near to impossible.

On top of lack of resources, another challenge is the Curriculum standardization. Developing a standardized curriculum with incorporation of both modern and religious subjects is a complex task. Pakistan madrasas are divided along sectarian



lines; Deobandi, Shia, Sunni and many others.

Achieving consensus on curriculum considering so many different school of thoughts will require extensive consultation with stakeholders from all sects.

Another major hindrance is the perception that madrasa reforms are driven by external political or international pressures. A report by the United States Institute of Peace (2021) highlights that many clerics view these efforts as influenced by Western agendas, particularly in the post 9/11 context. Due to this skepticism, madrasa leaders have become wary of all government initiatives

Additionally, madrasas are often stigmatized as breeding grounds for extremism, a perception fueled by incidents involving a small fraction of these institutions. A research by Brookings Institution (2019) found that only 10% of madrasas are linked to extremist ideologies, yet this stereotype persists in public discourse. This stigma creates hurdles in way of reforms but also alienates madrasa students.

Mainstreaming madrasa education can bring with it many opportunities for Pakistan as a nation and improve many things. Firstly, it can significantly contribute to Pakistan's economic growth by equipping students with skills relevant to the



job market. According to a report by International Labour Organization (ILO), 64% of Pakistan's youth lack employable skills, a gap madrasa reforms can address through vocational training programs. The successful integration of modern education in madrasas, as seen in countries like Türkiye and Indonesia, demonstrates the potential for such initiatives to improve employment prospects for graduates.

Another benefit that the mainstreaming can bring is the promotion of social harmony with the education that emphasizes on tolerance and peaceful coexistence. This can significantly help reduce sectarianism and foster national unity. Pakistan has been subject to sectarian violence issues for far too long and including inclusive values and dialogue in madrasa curriculum can play a leading role in promoting social harmony.

Moreover, madrasas can also help strengthen the national identity by giving an inclusive education a common ground to spread a shared sense of national identity. Conflicts arise when there are differences of opinions and backgrounds, an inclusive education system can solve this issue. Madrasa students will then have a more balanced approach and perspectives contributing positively to society.



In addition to that, the mainstreaming can aid majorly in improving literacy rates by formalizing the madrasa education. Pakistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in South Asia, standing at 59% as per UNESCO (2022). Leveraging madrasas to provide basic education, especially in rural areas, can significantly improve literacy rates. Instead of shifting all the students to the formal/public schools, 3.5 million madrasa students can turn into a valuable resource for expanding access to education if madrasas are streamlined.

Considering all the challenges and the opportunities, if dealt with the right strategy, Madrasas can be a significant asset for Pakistan contributing to all the improvements on a bigger scale. Firstly, the government must create a collaborative framework involving madrasa leaders and address their concerns and build trust. Establishing regulatory bodies to oversee reforms and ensure compliance is essential.

Pakistan should also introduced a balanced curriculum with inclusion of religious, secular and vocational subjects. This curriculum shall help with the diverse sectarian affiliations concerns while meeting national education standards, presenting just the right solution for this query.



Another recommendation, going forward is the building capacity of teachers and training them to become a standard for all madrasas in line with modern education. Workshops and training programs should be conducted for madrasa teachers to familiarize them with modern teaching methods. This will equip the teachers to deliver a holistic education to the madrasa students.

To mainstream madrasa, Pakistan should also focus on allocating government and donor funds to upgrade madrasa facilities, providing resources for modern education. A transparent funding mechanism would ensure proper accountability from both sides.

To counter the social stigma associated with both, madrasas and mainstreaming them, public awareness campaigns should be launched. This will reduce the stigma and highlight the positive contributions of madrasas to education and social welfare.

To conclude, it can be easily said that mainstreaming madrasa education is a complex but essential undertaking. While challenges pose significant obstacles and hurdles, the opportunities outweigh these difficulties. By adopting a balance approach



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that respects religious values while introducing modern education, Pakistan can transform madrasas into powerful agents of positive change. With strategic planning, collaboration, and sustained commitment, mainstreaming madrasa education can pave the way for a more inclusive, educated, and harmonious society.