

Islamic Education and Identity Construction: A Comparative Study of Madrasa and Secular School Students in Pakistan

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Abstract

In Pakistan's complex socio-political context, the parallel existence of madrasas and secular schools (both public and private) plays a central role in shaping how young people understand themselves and their place in society. This study explores how these different educational settings influence the development of religious, national, and civic identities among students. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the research is based on a comparative cross-sectional survey of 400 students aged 15–18 from Punjab and Sindh, along with semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were collected through validated Likert-scale instruments and analyzed using statistical methods, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. The findings point to clear differences in how identity is formed across the two systems. Students in madrasas tend to express a stronger sense of religious identity, whereas those in secular schools show comparatively greater alignment with national identity and civic values. At the same time, the qualitative data suggest that these identities are not simply separate; rather, students negotiate and combine them in different ways depending on their educational environment. Overall, the study highlights the influential role of educational institutions in shaping identity. It suggests that future curriculum reforms should aim to bring religious, national, and civic dimensions into better balance, with the broader goal of strengthening social cohesion in Pakistan.

Keywords

Islamic schooling; madrasa; secular schooling; identity making; Pakistan; religious identity; comparative schooling

Introduction

The education system in Pakistan is a unique and intricate environment with two parallel learning streams co-existing. On the one hand, there are over 35,000 registered and unregistered madrasas that offer religious education to a significant part of the population, whereas on the other hand, there is a large network of government and privately-owned schools that offer secular curricula based on national and global standards (Government of Pakistan, 2018; Rahman, 2004). These parallel systems are not just different in terms of curriculum but are indicative of larger ideological, social and epistemological stands that define the way young people perceive themselves and their societal role. The issue of the role of education institutions in identity formation is especially acute in a country in which religion is a key concern in both the personal and social life of the population, where the controversy over the role of national identity, citizenship and social cohesion

is still quite topical. Educational institutions are not simply neutral environment; more likely they serve as strong means of socialization, in which they pass values, norms, and worldviews, which shape the ways students form religious, national, and civic identities.

This issue is made even more topical by the socio-political situation in Pakistan where the conflict between tradition and modernity, religion and state, and local and global forces remains a topic of discussion. Madrasas were traditionally considered to be the guardians of Islamic knowledge and moral education whereas secular school is commonly linked to modernization, economic mobility, and civic engagement. Nevertheless, these differences are often simplified and there has been an increasing acceptance that both systems play roles in intricate ways that make identity. The Pakistani education system as contended by Tariq Rahman generates two parallel sets of consciousness which can result in the perception of religion, nationhood and citizenship in a different way (Rahman, 2004). Knowledge of these differences is crucial not just to academic investigation, but policy-making and social cohesion.

Although this issue is crucial, there is still a considerable gap in empirical studies. Although some studies have been carried out to look at madrasas or secular schools separately, not many studies have been done to look at how the institutions form identity in a systematic and comparative way through standardized measures and mixed-methods. The current literature usually utilizes qualitative case studies or descriptive narratives but these are only insightful and not generalizable or comparable (Hefner and Zaman, 2007). Furthermore, a lot of the studies have been on ideological or political consequences of madrasa education, but not on the experiences and identity formation of students. Simultaneously, the current policy controversies in Pakistan, especially on madrasa reform, standardization of the curriculum and integration of religious and secular education, highlight the importance of strong empirical evidence (Nayyar and Salim, 2005). Policy makers, teachers, and researchers still discuss whether and how these parallel systems could be reconciled to facilitate a unified national identity and at the same time respect the diversity in religious views.

It is against this background that the current study aims at filling this gap by offering a comparative study of identity construction among students of madrasa schools and secular schools in Pakistan. The paper narrows down on three dimensions of identity, namely the religious identity, national identity and civic values. Through a mixed-method approach, the study will focus on obtaining measures of differences and the meanings which students attach to their identities, which are difficult to measure.

The research objectives of the study are:

- (a) To evaluate the strength of religious identity in madrasa and secular school students;
- (b) To analyze the role of institutional curricula and learning settings in identity development;
- (c) To examine the differences in national identity and understanding of citizenship by students in both systems;
- (d) To examine how socioeconomic background and identity construction relate in the learning environment.

In line with these aims, the research questions of the study are as follows:

What are the differences between the construction of religious, national, and civic identity by madrasa and secular school students?

How do learning environments and curriculums contribute to the development of these identity aspects?

The question is how students in each of the systems perceive the connection between religious identity and national belonging?

This research is of significance both theoretically and practically. In theory, it adds to the greater body of literature discussing identity construction by analyzing the workings of established paradigms, including those

forwarded by Erik Erikson and Henri Tajfel, in a non-Western, predominantly Muslim society. A lot of the available studies on identity formation have been developed in a western context and there is a necessity to experiment and apply the theories to other cultures. This study contributes to the expanding literature that attempts to contextualize the identity theory in various sociocultural and institutional contexts by attempting to give emphasis on Pakistan.

In practice, the study has significant policy and reform implication in education. Thoughts on the way various educational systems form identity can be used to inform discussion on curriculum development, integration of religious and secular education, and actions to encourage social cohesion. With the ongoing debate regarding madrasa reform and the standardization of the educational process, empirical data on the results of students becomes more valuable. Knowledge of perceptions of students as Muslims, Pakistanis and citizens would assist policymakers to come up with inclusive and effective educational systems that eliminate divisions and not strengthen them.

The rest of this paper is organized in the following way. The following paragraph summarizes the existing literature on identity construction and educational systems, which offer a theoretical and empirical background of the study. This will be followed by the methodology that will describe research design, sampling strategy, instruments, and data analysis procedures. The quantitative and qualitative findings are then discussed in the results section, which then gives an interpretation of the findings in the context of the existing literature. Lastly, the paper ends with implications, limitations and future research recommendations.

Literature Review

Madrasas based Islamic education systems have traditionally been at the center of religious knowledge and religious identity in Muslim societies. Although commonly linked to South Asia, madrasas are found world over, with some differences in the structure, curriculum, and the pedagogical approach. Madrasas in South Asia are traditionally based on the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum, which focuses on classical Islamic sciences including Quranic exegesis, Hadith and jurisprudence. Religious and modern subjects are combined into a more hybrid model of education in institutions like Al- Azhar University in the middle east. Pesantren in Indonesia in Southeast Asia are a combination of Islamic education and vocational and civic education.

The diversity and change of madrasa systems in the modern world has been pointed out by scholars like Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman. Hefner and Zaman (2007) believe that madrasas are not rigid institutions but are undergoing major changes due to globalization, state policies, and demands of the society. They observe that discussion of the modernization of the curriculum is usually characterized by a discussion about a balance between religious authenticity and the necessity of scientific and civic knowledge. They are as they witness that, Muslim educational institutions are currently undergoing a broad based discussion concerning the nature of knowledge and the aims of education (Hefner and Zaman, 2007, p. 3).

Madrasas tend to be pedagogically focused on memorization, disciplining the moral and teacher-centered teaching, which might lead to a high level of internalization of religious values. Critics however believe that exposure to secular subjects is limited, which can restrict more extensive civic participation. In contrast, reformed madrasas and hybrid institutions indicate that there is no necessity to single-handedly oppose religious education with the integration of modern subjects, as simplistic binaries between the traditional and modern systems.

Dual Education System in Pakistan

The education system of Pakistan is defined by a two-tier system composed of religious madrasas and the secular school system, which is influenced by historical, political and ideological issues. This duality can be traced back to the colonial policies of the British rule where the traditional religious institutions were left

relatively independent at the time the western-style education was introduced. This bifurcation continued in the post-independence period and in certain instances, it only intensified.

According to scholars like Tariq Rahman, the education system in Pakistan has been stratified on socioeconomic and ideological ground whereby different students have been structured to have different worldviews (Rahman, 2004). Likewise, A. H. Nayyar and Ahmad Salim have discussed how curriculum, specifically Pakistan Studies textbooks, contributed to the formation of national identity. According to Nayyar and Salim (2005), textbooks have a tendency to propagate a homogenous and ideological version of nationhood that tend to focus on Islamic identity at the expense of diversity. They observe that the curricula have the tendency to develop a selective and exclusive idea of nationalism (p. 6).

To a certain extent, madrasas in Pakistan are not unified but rather structured in sectarian terms, such as Deobandi, Bareilvi, Shia, and Ahl-e-Hadith. Every one has its curriculum, its own network of institutions, making the madrasa sector diverse. Meanwhile, there are many differences between the quality and orientation of government and private schools, with elite private schools tending to foster globalized identities and government schools focusing on national ideology.

The implication of this dual system to identity construction is immense since students are socialized into varying epistemological systems and value systems based on their educational trajectory.

Education and Identity Building

An increasing empirical evidence has been published to determine the interrelation of education and identity formation, especially in Muslim-majority and post-colonial societies. The research in multiple countries, including Bangladesh, Turkey, Egypt, and Indonesia, demonstrates some general trends and significant differences.

In Bangladesh, Asadullah et al. (2010) established that madrasa students portrayed greater religious pledges but less civic activeness than those in secular schools. Research on Imam Hatip schools in Turkey indicates that religious education may be compatible with high level of national identity which is an indication of state-controlled curricula (Yavuz, 2003). Herrera (2006) in the case of Egypt found that education institutions are important in the development of youth about citizenship and religion, which often supports the state narratives. Research on pesantren in Indonesia emphasizes their contribution to moderate and pluralistic understandings of Islam, and refutes the belief that religious education must result in exclusivism (Hefner, 2009). These results indicate that religious education to identity is a context-specific and curriculum, pedagogy and state policy mediated relationship.

Throughout these studies, it is a consistent finding that educational institutions serve as major arenas of identity formation, to the extent that they influence knowledge, but also values, attitudes and social affiliations. Yet, complexity and hybridity are also present in that students tend to negotiate between various identities and not have one fixed identity.

Literary Shortcomings

Although there is a vast amount of research on education and identity, a number of gaps exist. To begin with, a lot of the existing literature is based on qualitative or limited case studies, which restrict the generalizability. Although such studies can be very useful in elucidating lived experience, they are not necessarily statistically rigorous enough to be able to draw general patterns.

Second, the literature on the use of validated quantitative measures to assess identity constructs among Muslims is limited. In a significant number of studies, the descriptive or narrative methods are used without standardized scales; hence, cross-study comparisons become challenging.

Third, there is a paucity of studies that directly compare madrasa and secular school children with the same methodological framework, especially in Pakistan. Current studies have a tendency to consider a single sector of education in isolation, and thus they lack a chance to compare.

Lastly, quantitative and qualitative methods are not well integrated in this area. The mixed-methods research, promoted by John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, is a comparatively uncommon research design on Islamic education and identity.

These gaps show the necessity of a sophisticated mixed-methods research that will involve both strong quantitative and qualitative analysis, directly comparing the students of madrasa and secular schools in the modern Pakistani environment. The current research aims at mitigating these shortcomings through the use of validated scales, a large enough sample as well as a combined analytical framework.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is informed by a combined theoretical framework of Social Identity Theory (SIT) by Henri Tajfel and John Turner and Ecological Systems Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner. These frameworks are chosen intentionally and complement each other since both have strong accounts of how identity is constructed around social environments, especially institutional contexts, like schools, and madrasas.

The leading theory to consider the way individuals gain a sense of self through membership in a group is the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). SIT states that identity is not personal only, but also social, developed as a result of identification and comparison with others. Madrasa and secular school students are different social groups that have different norms, values, and belief systems and in the context of this study. SIT is especially pertinent since it describes the reason why madrasa students are likely to have higher levels of religious identity: they are immersed in the settings, where religious belonging is the main organizing principle of group membership. On the same note, less diverse but more heterogeneous secular school settings can promote wider identity facets like national affiliation and civic ideals. In this way, SIT assists in interpreting variations in identity strength and salience as a result of group-based socialization.

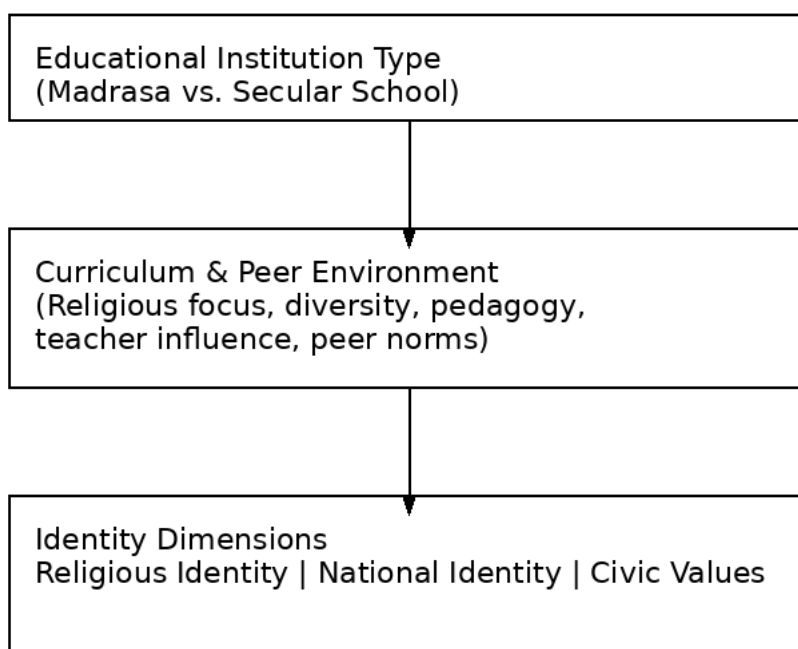
Nonetheless, SIT in itself is not a comprehensive explanation of how the multidimensional layers of environment impact on identity formation. This is why the Ecological Systems Theory created by Bronfenbrenner will be included to offer a more detailed model. Bronfenbrenner theorizes human development as a process that takes place within nested systems, with the nearest environments (microsystem) and the larger societal systems (macrosystem) being the farthest. The schooling contexts serve as the main microsystems in this research, with everyday experiences with teachers, peers, and the content covered in school defining who one is. Simultaneously, it is the case that these institutions are affected by more significant systems, such as cultural norms, religious traditions, and state policies. The incorporation of the Ecological Systems Theory into the study brings about the recognition of the fact that the construction of identity is not just a result of belonging to a group but also a rather of a stratified environmental contribution.

The SIT plus Ecological Systems Theory is especially suited to juxtaposing madrasa and secular school settings as it both accounts for the group-based aspect of identity and involves the processes that occur within the environment that shape identity. SIT describes what identity is (i.e. strong religious vs. balanced identity), whereas Bronfenbrenner describes how and where these identities are created. They both offer a multidimensional approach to examining identity construction in education.

Conceptual Model

The theoretical framework is operationalized through the following conceptual model:

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Identity Construction



According to this model, the nature of educational institution determines the kind of curriculum delivery and interaction with peers, which consequently affects identity dimensions of the students. The religiously oriented curriculum and relatively homogeneous peer groups in Madrasa environments should promote religious identity. Secular schools, on the contrary, have more varied programs and exposure to peers, and are predicted to foster national identity and civic values in addition to religious identity.

The model is representational and testable, which is in line with the quantitative nature of the study. It lends itself to empirical study, by statistical comparison (e.g., t-tests, MANOVA) and offers a systematic method by which to incorporate qualitative knowledge. The framework provides an analytical route to describing the influence of education on identity construction by connecting the context of institutions and identity outcomes with mediating factors.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research design is a comparative cross-sectional survey design with a qualitative component (semi-structured interviews) therefore making it a mixed-methods research design. The quantitative component allows a systematic comparison of the madrasa and secular school students on the main identity constructs at one point in time and the qualitative component is detailed in that, it supports the subjective interpretations and lived experiences of the participants. The mixed-methods design is especially suitable to study identity construction, which is both quantifiable using standardized instruments and interpretive. Mixed-methods research, as explained by John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, enables researchers to realize the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative research methods and offers a more profound view of research issues compared to any of the methods applied separately (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, p. 5). The design of the study is convergent parallel, the strands are collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and then they are combined. This type of design is appropriate since the study aims not only to establish the presence of differences in identity among educational systems but also to learn the dynamics by which the identities are built. The idea of quantitative comparisons would be a dangerous oversimplification and the idea of qualitative insights without any statistical underpinning would limit extension. The combination of the two makes the study complementary methodologically and triangulate to enhance validity.

Setting and participants of the study

The research is carried out in chosen areas of Pakistan with major concentration on Punjab and Sindh since these areas offer a good representation of madrasa system and secular schooling systems. Cities like Lahore and Haiderabad, as well as semi-urban districts, are also covered to include variation in socioeconomic and cultural contexts. The population is comprised of male and female students aged between 15 and 18 years who are pursuing secondary education in registered madrasas and government/ private secondary schools. This age group is especially important as adolescence is a crucial period in identity development. According to Erikson (1968), identity formation in this stage is the focus of psychological and social maturation and Erikson termed it as a stage when people struggle to answer the question of who I am (p. 128). The inclusion of madrasa and secular school students makes it possible to make an important comparison of institutional effects on identity formation during the same stage of development.

Multi-stage sampling method is used in order to achieve representativeness. The sampling is carried out, first, to include institutions that are diverse in madrasa affiliation (e.g., Deobandi and Bareilvi) and school types (government and private). The stratified random sampling is followed by stratified random sampling within institutions to provide proportional representation on gender, socioeconomic status and academic streams. This is a needed procedure since the educational environment in Pakistan is very heterogeneous and simple random sampling can not be used to measure significant subgroup variations. The purposive and stratified methods will combine to ensure that there is both diversity and comparability between the groups and this will boost the strength of findings.

Sample Size

The size of the sample is calculated with the help of the power analysis based on G*Power software (Faul et al., 2007). In the case of an independent samples t-test, with a medium effect ($d = 0.50$) and a significance level of 0.05 and a power of 0.80, the minimum sample size is about 128 participants per group. The study however aims at a larger number of 200 students in madrasas and 200 in secular schools to increase statistical strength and enable more complex statistical tests including MANOVA and regression that will enable this study to have a more robust sample of 400 students. Such an increased sample size also covers the possibility of non-response or incomplete data. According to Cohen (1988), sufficient sample size is required to identify significant effects and prevent Type II errors, and he states that power analysis offers a rational rationale of establishing the sample size (p. 56). Moreover, bigger samples make parameter estimates more stable when conducting multivariate analyses (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). In this way, the selected sample size is both feasible and statistically rigorous so that the research can be confident that it will be able to identify group differences.

Instruments and Data Collection Tools

The data are gathered with the help of a combination of standardized scales and semi structured interview guide. The initial tool is a Religious Identity Scale, which is based on the existing measures of religiosity and identity, such as those created by Koenig et al. (2012). This scale will have about 15-20 questions where the respondent will be required to respond on a 5-point Likert scale which will be strongly disagree, strongly agree. Products are adjusted to suit Islamic values and practices that are pertinent in the Pakistani setting to be culturally appropriate. The second measure is a National Identity Scale of between 10-15 questions that assess attachment to national identity such as pride in being Pakistani and sense of belonging. They are based on the civic identity models, like the one suggested by Huddy and Khatib (2007) who explain the concept of national identity as a psychological attachment to a country (p. 64). The third tool is a Civic Values Questionnaire containing 12-18 items that measure the attitudes to civic responsibility, tolerance and pluralism.

Besides these quantitative measures, a semi-structured interview guide is created, which aims to delve deeper into the views of participants. The guide contains 8-10 open-ended questions on themes of personal definitions

of identity, education in forming beliefs and perceptions of citizenship and religious belonging. This qualitative aspect enables the participants to describe their experiences using their own words, giving subtle information that can be added to the survey data.

Validity and Reliability

In order to make measurement rigorous, various approaches are used to make a validity and reliability. Cronbachs alpha is used to evaluate the internal consistency of the scales and a value of alpha 0.70 is acceptable (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). To refine items and make their clarity, pilot testing is carried out. The content validity is determined by the expert review of scholars in the fields of Islamic education, sociology, and psychology, who determine the relevance and applicability of items. Construct validity is determined using confirmatory factor analysis (where applicable) to determine the underlying factor structure of the scales.

In the case of the instruments that are to be administered in Urdu and English, forward-backward translation process is undertaken (Brislin, 1970). This will entail going through the instrument and translating it to Urdu and subsequently to English so that the semantics remains the same. These are necessary steps that are taken in cross-cultural research as well to ensure that the measurement is taken seriously. Brislin (1970) adds that back-translation particularly helps in the identification of inconsistencies or ambiguities (p. 186), thus increasing reliability and validity.

Data Collection Procedure

A systematic fieldwork is conducted to collect data. Data collection is preceded by institutional approvals being obtained by school administrations and madrasa authorities. The participants are aware of the study purpose and both students and, in some cases, their guardians are informed of the purpose of the study and provide informed consent. Questionnaires are conducted in a group environment in the classroom as a way of providing standardization and respondents are provided with clear guidelines on how to fill in the questionnaires.

Participants are purposively sampled to be interviewed in a subset, to bring diversity in the responses. The interviews are carried out in a conducive and calm environment, tape recorded with permission and transcribed to be analyzed. Due to the sensitivity of the issues concerning the religious identity, the questions are formulated neutrally and respectfully. The participants will be guaranteed that there will be no correct or incorrect answers and their answers will not be disclosed. This method assists in reducing social desirability bias and promotes truthful responses.

Data Analysis

The SPSS (Version 26) is used to analyze quantitative data. Mean identity scores between students in madrasa and secular schools are compared by using independent samples t-tests. In case there are more than two dependent variables, MANOVA is employed to evaluate the differences between the groups at once. Regression analysis is used to test the predictors of identity scores including the type of institution, gender, and socioeconomic background. Before analysis, normality, variance homogeneity and independence assumptions are checked.

The thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) is used to analyze qualitative data. This includes getting acquainted with the data, creation of first codes, identification of themes and refining of those themes. According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis can be defined as a way of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) in data (2006, p. 79). NVivo is a computer program that eases the process of coding and sorting qualitative information.

Combination of the quantitative and qualitative results is done at the interpretation level. Intersections and differences between datasets are analyzed to give a holistic view of identity building. Such triangulation promotes the credibility and richness of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Study is provided with ethical approval of a known institutional review board. The participation is voluntary and the participants can withdraw at any time without a penalty. Informed consent procedures will guarantee that the participants are aware of the nature and purpose of the study. Data are anonymized to ensure confidentiality and all information that identifies anyone is deleted.

The culturally sensitive nature of the research topic is paid special attention to. Religious identity questions are addressed respectfully and neutrally to prevent discomfort and offence. Caution is also taken to avoid the stigmatization of either madrasa or secular school students by taking a balanced and non-judgmental position. According to the American Psychological Association, researchers should make sure that the participants are not harmed and their dignity is upheld (APA, 2017). With these ethical considerations, the research will be conducted in a responsible manner.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The sample demographic (N = 400) was analyzed to make sure that the students of madrasa and secular schools could be compared. The sample divided into 200 madrasa students and 200 secular school students who were selected in Punjab and Sindh. Participants ranged in age from 15 to 18 years (M = 16.52, SD = 1.01). The balance of gender was general although madrasa institutions had a greater number of male students which is in line with the enrollment trends according to Pakistani education statistics (Andrabi et al., 2006). Parental income and occupation were used to classify socioeconomic background into low, middle and high and parental education as no formal education, primary/secondary, and higher education.

Table

1

Demographic Characteristics of Madrasa and Secular School Students (N = 400)

Variable	Madrasa (n = 200)	Secular Schools (n = 200)	Total (%)
Age (Mean, SD)	16.61 (1.02)	16.43 (0.99)	—
Gender (Male %)	68%	52%	60%
Gender (Female %)	32%	48%	40%
Socioeconomic Status (Low %)	55%	28%	41.5%
Socioeconomic Status (Middle %)	35%	47%	41%
Socioeconomic Status (High %)	10%	25%	17.5%
Parents' Education (No formal %)	48%	20%	34%
Parents' Education (Primary/Secondary %)	38%	42%	40%
Parents' Education (Higher %)	14%	38%	26%

Note. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Descriptive statistics for identity dimensions were computed for both groups. Madrasa students demonstrated higher mean scores on religious identity, while secular school students scored higher on national identity and civic values.

Table

2

Means and Standard Deviations for Identity Dimensions by Group

Identity Dimension Madrasa (Mean, SD) Secular Schools (Mean, SD)

Religious Identity	4.32 (0.51)	3.68 (0.62)
National Identity	3.41 (0.58)	3.89 (0.55)
Civic Values	3.22 (0.60)	3.76 (0.57)

Note. Scores are based on 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Quantitative Findings

Inferential statistical analyses were conducted to examine differences between madrasa and secular school students across identity dimensions.

Independent samples t-tests revealed statistically significant differences between groups. For religious identity, madrasa students scored significantly higher than secular school students, $t(398) = 11.21, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.12$, indicating a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). For national identity, secular school students scored higher, $t(398) = -8.54, p < .001, d = 0.85$. Similarly, for civic values, secular school students had higher scores, $t(398) = -9.17, p < .001, d = 0.92$.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine group differences across all identity variables simultaneously. The results indicated a statistically significant multivariate effect of institution type on identity variables, Wilks' $\Lambda = .71, F(3, 396) = 53.67, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .29$, suggesting that approximately 29% of the variance in identity scores was associated with educational setting.

Follow-up univariate ANOVAs confirmed significant group differences across all three identity dimensions. Regression analysis further indicated that institution type was a significant predictor of religious identity ($\beta = .52, p < .001$), while socioeconomic status and parental education were significant predictors of national identity and civic values ($\beta = .31$ and $.28$ respectively, $p < .01$).

To analyze the difference between madrasa and secular school students in terms of identity dimensions, inferential statistical tests were used. Statistically significant group differences were found between groups with independent samples t-tests. In the case of religious identity, the score of the students attending madrasas was much higher than the students attending the secular schools, $t(398) = 11.21, p < .001$, Cohen $d = 1.12$, which is a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). For national identity, secular school students scored higher, $t(398) = -8.54, p < .001, d = 0.85$. Similarly, for civic values, secular school students had higher scores, $t(398) = -9.17, p < .001, d = 0.92$.

To identify the differences between groups in all the identity variables at once, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used. The findings showed that there was a statistically significant multivariate impact of institution type on identity variables, Wilks' $\Lambda = .71, F(3, 396) = 53.67, p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .29$, which implied that about 29 percent of the variance of identity scores could be attributed to educational setting. Significant group differences in all three identity dimensions were confirmed in follow-up univariate ANOVA. Regression analysis also showed that institution type was a strong predictor of religious identity ($.52, p < .001$), whereas socioeconomic status and parental education were a strong predictor of national identity and civic values (0.31 and 0.28 respectively, $p = .01$).

Table*Independent Samples t-Test Results for Identity Dimensions*

Variable	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Religious Identity	11.21	398	< .001	1.12
National Identity	-8.54	398	< .001	0.85
Civic Values	-9.17	398	< .001	0.92

3

Note. Positive t-values indicate higher scores for madrasa students.

Qualitative Findings According to thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006), four major themes were obtained that showed how students construct identity in various educational contexts. Theme 1: The Essence of Identity: Religious Duty. Madrasa students always identified religious identity as a core of self. According to one respondent, her identity was that of a Muslim and everything was second to that (Madrasa student, 17, Punjab). The other observed, when she said, we are taught that our role is to follow Islam in all life aspects (Madrasa student, 16, Sindh). This theme emphasizes centrality of religion as an organizing principle of identity. Theme 2: The National Identity as Secondary yet Significant. Although madrasa students recognized national identity, it was usually in terms of being subordinate to religious identity. Secular school students, in contrast, stressed a more balanced or integrated identity. According to one secular student, the fact that we are Pakistani and Muslim is important yet we also learn about our duties as citizens (Secular student, 17, Punjab). Theme 3: Civic Awareness and Pluralism. Students of secular schools displayed more interest in the civic ideas of tolerance and diversity. One respondent commented, “We are taught to respect other individuals with dissimilar backgrounds and beliefs (Secular student, 16, Sindh). Although not denying these notions, madrasa students were more likely to put these ideas in a religious context. Theme 4: The Tension between religion and modern knowledge as perceived. One common theme in both groups was the perceived tension between Islamic and modern/secular knowledge system. A student of madrasa wrote, Sometimes they feel that modern education is making you out of religion (17, Punjab), a secular student wrote, We try to make a compromise between modern education and our religious values but it is not always easy (16, Sindh). Mixed-Methods Integration Quantitative and qualitative findings converge and complement each other when integrated. The quantitative findings revealed that religious identity was much greater in madrasas students and national and civic identity among secular school students. Qualitative data can justify these findings, with madrasa students pointing at religion as the main identity anchor, and secular students expressing more general civic and national views. Meanwhile, the qualitative results complement quantitative findings by providing insights into how students subtly navigate between various identities. As an example, national identity scores were found lower in madrasa students, but interview data indicates that there is not no national identity, it is simply structured below religious identity. This provides interpretive richness to numbers.

Table

4

Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Integration

Quantitative Finding	Supporting Qualitative Theme	Interpretation Link
Higher religious identity (Madrasa)	Religious duty as identity core	Strong alignment
Higher national identity (Secular)	Balanced identity narratives	Convergent
Higher civic values (Secular)	Civic awareness and pluralism	Reinforcing
Moderate national identity (Madrasa)	Identity hierarchy (religion first)	Expanding insight
Variability across groups	Tension between knowledge systems	Complementary

Note. Joint display illustrates convergence and expansion between datasets.

Altogether, the mixed-methods design exhibits methodological rigor by triangulation of the statistical trends with the lived experiences. Integration enables the researcher to create a more comprehensive vision of an issue than both databases because, as Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) note, the former offers a more comprehensive approach to a problem. The results herein reported give a complete empirical basis of the discussion to be made in the discussion section.

Discussion

The results of this research offer valuable information on the impact of the dual education system in Pakistan on identity formation in adolescents. Instead of just pointing out statistical distinctions, the findings imply the

active construction of religious, national, and civic identities by the institutional settings. The identified tendency of tighter religious identity in madrasa students and relatively higher national and civic identity in secular school students can be effectively explained within the frames of the existing theoretical concepts of identity formation and socialization.

In the view of the Social Identity Theory of Henri Tajfel and John Turner (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), these results indicate the influence of group based contexts on the development of self-concept. The type of environment that Madrasa institutions offer is generally very cohesive and homogeneous with a central focus on common religious beliefs, practices, and power structures. These conditions enhance in-group identification and operate to strengthen religious identity as the primary axis of self-definition. Tajfel (1981) stresses that social identity is obtained through knowledge of belonging to a social group along with the importance and emotional meaning attached to that belonging (p. 255), which can be used to explain the role of religion in the identity discourses of madrasa students.

Conversely, secular schools, especially government and privately-operated schools, provide a more heterogeneous and diverse environment that introduces students to a variety of knowledge systems such as civic, national and global views. This plurality seems to contribute to a more multidimensional identity formation, in which national belonging and civic values co-exist with religious identity. This is in line with the psychosocial theory of Erik Erikson who developed the identity as a composite of varied roles and influences in adolescence (Erikson, 1968). The results indicate that secular education does not always lessen religiosity but reshapes identity in various fields.

The qualitative results support this understanding by showing the internalization of institutional values by the students. The focus on religious obligation as the fundamental element of identity among madrasa students can be considered a manifestation of the institutional construction of reality, which Berger and Luckmann (1966) interpret as the legitimation of certain worldviews through repetitions and teachings. Religion in such situations does not just appear as a system of beliefs but as a complete system of interpretation of life. On the other hand, the accounts of the secular school students of balancing between religious and national identity are pointing to a more negotiated and pluralistic process of identity formation.

Placed in the context of existing literature, these findings confirm and extend previous studies. Madrasa students are more religious, and secular school students are more civically engaged, which is in line with Asadullah et al. (2010). On the same note, the pluralism focus among school students, who are secular, is a similar result as that of Indonesia, which found Islamic education institutions that incorporate modern education courses to encourage civic-oriented identities (Hefner, 2009). These similarities indicate that the connection between educational context and identity is not exclusive to Pakistan but is part of the general trends in Muslim majority societies.

Nonetheless, the current study also provides significant shades which go beyond previous literature. In contrast to the studies that depict madrasa students as having no sense of national identity, the results here show that the national identity exists but it ranks second to the religious identity. This difference is essential, as it raises the question of binary assumptions and shows the stratification of identity formation. Moreover, although Tariq Rahman (2004) depicts the education system in Pakistan as giving rise to parallel streams of consciousness, this research work offers empirical findings that indicate the ways in which these streams are demonstrated in measurable identity aspects.

The paper is also a complement to the paper by A. H. Nayyar and Ahmad Salim (2005), who suggest that the state curricula foster a certain national identity. The better scores in national identity of secular school students would indicate that the standardized curricula (especially the Pakistan Studies) might contribute to the strengthening of national narratives. Meanwhile, the results also suggest that institutional culture and peer interaction are also important in defining identity construction, not only the content of the curriculum.

This research paper theoretically has a number of contributions to literature on identity construction. First, it empirically contributes to the Social Identity Theory by showing that the in-group contexts like madrasas are stronger in a non-Western, Muslim-majority setting and that identity salience is heightened in these settings.

The findings, however, also make SIT complex in that a strong religious identity does not always mean that an individual rejects other identities; identities can be hierarchically organized. Second, the paper brings about the importance of institutional homogeneity versus diversity in influencing the outcomes of identity. Heterogeneous environments seem to promote multidimensional identity integration whereas homogeneous environments seem to support singular dimensions of identity.

Also, the results dispel the belief that secular education undermines religious identity. Rather, they propose that secular education promotes a wider identity paradigm without necessarily superseding religious adherence. This subtlety adds to both psychological and sociological theories as it points out that identity formation is not competitive and mutually exclusive but a multidimensional process.

On policy level, the results directly apply to the education reform activities in Pakistan, especially concerning the Government of Pakistan National Education Policy Framework 2017/2025 (Government of Pakistan, 2017). The policy stresses on the fact that a cohesive education system is required that fosters social cohesion. The current work indicates that to reach this objective, structural integration is necessary but it is also important to consider the way in which identities are formed in school settings.

To reform madrasa, the evidence-based approach is to adopt programmes to incorporate civic and national education in religious education. Nevertheless, these reforms have to be carried out in a manner that does not compromise the centrality of religious identity in these institutions. The policymakers need to be concerned with complementarity as opposed to trying to substitute the religious systems, instead, integrating the civic values in a manner that does not contradict the Islamic teachings.

In secular schools, it is necessary to make sure that religious identity is not sidelined but rather integrated into more comprehensive identity discourses. Since religion is a core part of the Pakistani society, omitting religion in the educational discourse could cause identity dissonance instead of cohesion. An inclusive curriculum that incorporates religious, national and civic aspects can prove to be more effective in making citizens more inclusive.

Another area that comes out as a problem area of intervention is teacher training. Professional standards can be established by institutions like the National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education. The teachers should be introduced to skills on how to resolve identity-related problems, facilitate critical thinking, and foster dialogue across the lines in training programs. This is especially given that education can either drive divisions or be a source of social cohesion in a given context.

The results also apply to civic education. The increased civic values found among the students of secular schools indicate that civic awareness could be boosted by exposing students to a variety of views and more participatory learning conditions. To foster common civic values within the education streams, policymakers ought to look at the ways in which similar factors could be integrated into madrasa education.

In spite of the contributions, the study has a number of limitations. To begin with, the cross-sectional design does not allow making causal inferences; though the relationships between educational setting and identity can be seen, causality cannot be established unequivocally. Second, the self-report measures imply the risk of social desirability bias, especially in the answers concerning religion and citizenship. This was alleviated by anonymity and neutral wording of questions, but cannot be completely eradicated.

Third, the geographic concentration on Punjab and Sindh cannot be generalized to other areas where educational settings can be different. Fourth, some selection bias might have been caused by access constraints, especially to more conservative madrasa institutions, although this was attempted to be mitigated by incorporating a variety of types of institutions.

Overall, this paper has indicated that the institutions of learning in Pakistan are at the centre of the identity construction process and specific trends are evident in the madrasa and secular systems. Through the combination of both quantitative and qualitative evidence, the results offer a subtle insight of the process of how identities are constructed, structured, and negotiated in various institutional levels. These insights are added to both theoretical discussions and practical policy ones, pointing to the necessity of educational methods that will help develop not only a religious commitment but also a sense of inclusion in a nation.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the way in which the dual education system in Pakistan influences the construction of identity among madrasa and secular school students in terms of religious identity, national identity and civic values. Based on a mixed-methods design, the results show that madrasa students have more prominent and centralized religious identity, and secular school students have more prominent national identity and civic engagement. Qualitative data also indicated that these differences are not antagonistic but they are framed differently—madrasa students are organized around identity hierarchies where religion is the central core, and secular students work out various identity dimensions more holistically. These results underscore the importance of school as a strong socializing agent that influences the way young people perceive themselves and their roles in the society.

The research has a number of contributions to the area of comparative education, religious studies, and Pakistani education policy. It is empirically one of the few systematic and comparative studies of the students of madrasas and secular schools, based on both quantitative and qualitative data, in the same context. It theoretically applies identity construction theories, and especially those related to Henri Tajfel and Erik Erikson, to a non-Western, Muslim-majority context, showing how institutional settings mediate the saliency and structure of identity. In practice, the results provide the evidence-based information applicable to the current discussions regarding the reform of curriculum, the integration of the educational systems, and the fostering of social cohesion in Pakistan.

This study can be developed in future studies in a number of ways. To begin with, longitudinal designs are required to monitor the progress of identity with time in various educational contexts and enable more causal conclusions. Secondly, the study of madrasas of female-only (Darul Uloom of females) would yield valuable gendered data that are under-researched. Third, comparative research in cross-national settings with other Muslim society countries, including Bangladesh or Indonesia, may assist in determining how the policy frameworks and models of education contribute to identity construction in Muslim societies.

To sum up, this paper highlights that education is not simply a means of transfer of knowledge but one of the primary drivers of identity and social belonging. With Pakistan still grappling with issues of unity, diversity and reform, education has a part to play in the future in terms of building cohesive and pluralistic identities.

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