# Diversification in Islamic Seminaries: An Approach to Integrated Education System

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## Abstract

*This qualitative study aims to investigate the need for diversification of Islamic seminaries. The inclusion of contemporary sciences is needed not only to benefit society but to improve and widen the scope of the seminaries. The acceptability of the seminaries graduates to the employer would become extensive and they could be merged into the mainstream of the public sector. Phenomenology was used as an inquiry technique for which purposive sampling was employed. The sampling size of this study was comprised of six respondents, each two were purposively selected from the Madrasas students who had quit school education for joining Madrasa in class 9th, two were selected from the public sector high school principals, and the remaining two were selected from the Madrasas Mohtamin (HoDs). The data was collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews and then thematically analyzed. The findings of the study showed the infrastructure of the seminaries is shabbily cramped and is not up to the mark. Some administrators were also reluctant to accept the diversification, as they considered it an onslaught on the very culture of Madrasas. Moreover, the government is also spending very little amount in this sector of education. This study recommends that the government enlarge its budget for the improvement of seminaries and the administrators of the Madrasas also ought to be flexible in the diversification of Islamic seminaries.*

**Keywords:** Madrasa, Education, Diversification, Science and Technology, Society

## Introduction

Diversity is the very nature of this universe and colorfulness is the need for pleasant existence in this world. Similarity and stagnation are naturally disliked in this system of the universe. Through diversification and inclusion of verities,

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the tastelessness and despicable trend can be minimized. Adherence to an obsolete system can lag a nation socially and economically behind. Ijtihad (innovation) in Islam is a source of acceptance of new trends in the light of Islamic injunctions. When Ijtihad is not done, then going with the various changes of the time becomes impossible (Aflisia & Suhartini, 2021).

On the other hand, it is also feared that the influx of modernization will be accompanied by other negative trends like fashion and obscenity, which ultimately attack perennial Islamic values. Therefore, this trend of diversification is opposed by certain spheres of Islamic seminaries. However, some Islamic seminaries are there in the country and overall the world they have incorporated all the contemporary sciences in their education system

For instance in Pakistan, Jamia-Alrasheed Karachi, Akora Khattak Nowshehra, Jamia-Usmania Peshawar, and so many other seminaries are completely in consonance with modern education and their organizers are of the view, that the inclusion of the modern sciences will help to improve and benefit the society (Ashraf, 2018). Madrasa, or Islamic religious schools, play a significant role in the education of Muslim communities around the world. However, Madrasa education has been criticized for its narrow focus on religious studies and a lack of diversity in the curriculum. As a result, there is a growing need to diversify Madrasa education to meet the needs of diverse communities and promote more inclusive, equitable, and effective education.

Diversification of Madrasa education, with a focus on understanding the challenges and opportunities associated with this process to provide skilled people to fulfill the need in today's job market. Another way to diversify Madrasa education is to promote critical thinking and analytical skills. This can be done by incorporating more discussion-based learning and encouraging students to question and challenge traditional ideas. By fostering a culture of critical thinking. Madrasa can prepare students to be engaged citizens who can contribute to society in meaningful ways. The purpose of this study is to bring a convergence between the traditional Islamic seminaries and contemporary sciences to enable the citizens to be acceptable to all spheres of the stockholders.

**Review of Related Literature**

A literature review is a critical analysis of existing literature on a specific topic and provides context and background information, helps to identify research gaps, guides research methodology, and validates research findings (Kannan, 2017; Meena & Sahu, 2021). The researcher studied various research dissertations, theses, journals, and newspapers and also participated in so many conferences, symposiums, and workshops for an in-depth understanding related to the area of the study.

**1.      To Diversify the Religious Education in the Modern Perspectives**

Islamic education can be diversified by incorporating modern knowledge and disciplines into the curriculum. This can include subjects such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), social sciences, economics, and management sciences by integrating Islamic education (Suyadi et al, 2020). Islamic education needs to encourage critical thinking and research skills among students to properly analyze and interpret Islamic texts in a modern context (Ahmed, 2018). To emphasize social justice and community service in Islamic education, including the courses of social justice, ethics, and community service, and by encouraging students to engage in volunteer work and community service projects (Rosyad, 2020).

**2.      The Need of Information Technology for the Students of Seminaries**

In Islamic seminaries, the adaptation of modern teaching methods is the dare need of the time including the usage of modern technology, multimedia, and interactive learning tools which make learning more engaging and effective, and will better prepare students for the modern world (Mannan, 2015). In today's world, computer literacy is a basic requirement for almost every job. Therefore, Madrassa students need to learn how to use computers and other digital devices for jobs, research, and other educational purposes (Siddique, 2011). Madrassa students who received training in digital communication skills showed significant improvement in their ability to communicate through email, social media, and other digital platforms (Khan, 2017).

**3.      The Opposition of the Administrations of Seminaries about Modern Education**

Modern education is seen as a threat to traditional Islamic values and teachings. It emphasizes secular knowledge over religious knowledge and can lead to a loss of faith in Islam (Tariq & Adil, 2020). Modern education promotes a globalized, Westernized worldview that is incompatible with Islamic culture and traditions and is seen as a form of cultural imperialism that threatens to undermine the unique identity of Islamic societies (Kusaeri, & Ridho, 2019). Some seminaries administrators argue that the teaching method of modern education is overly focused on rote memorization and testing, rather than critical thinking and creativity (Syar'i, Hamdanah & Akrim, 2020).

**4.      The Role of Sectarianism in Inhibition of Diversified Education**

Sectarianism or factionalism leads to the formation of educational institutions

that provide only to a particular religion or cultural group, thereby limiting exposure to diverse ideas which results in a lack of understanding and appreciation for other cultures, and finally hinders the development of a well-rounded education (Ashraf, 2018). Sectarianism creates an environment where people are discouraged from exploring new ideas or engaging in critical thinking, where the individuals are taught unquestionable beliefs and dissenting opinions which effect in a stifling of intellectual curiosity and a lack of openness to new ideas (Yousafzai, Mushhood, & Zulfiqar, 2017). The politicization of education is often caused by sectarianism where certain ideologies or political agendas are prioritized over the pursuit of knowledge, so the narrowing of the curriculum and a lack of exposure to diverse perspectives and ideas are opposed (Marshall, 2018).

## 5.      Bigotry and Narrowmindedness as Ordeal to Diversification in Madrasa Education

Bigotry and intolerance towards other religions, cultures, or ways of life are the ordeals to diversify madrasa education on modern lines because some administrators hold negative attitudes in this context (Rafiq & Khan, 2021). The available educational opportunities for students are limited by bigotry and the narrowmindedness of religious stockholders and hinder their ability to engage with the broader world (Tariq & Adil, 2020). Some madrasas administrators are unwilling to bring new ideas or approaches because they hesitate to challenge traditional practices or beliefs, and they may be resistant to incorporating new subjects into their curriculum (Burhani, 2018).

## 6.      Infrastructure Needed for Islamic Seminaries to be Diversified

Many seminaries operate in cramped and overcrowded buildings, which can lead to health and safety hazards for students (Angeles, & Aijazi, 2019). Inadequate ventilation, poor lighting, and the absence of some basic facilities like clean drinking water and sanitation pose serious risks to the health and well-being of the learners (Hamid & Ali, 2021). The lack of resources like textbooks, and educational materials may cause to limit the scope and quality of education provided in some seminaries (Farooq, Feroze & Kai, 2017).

## 7.      Barriers to Diversification of Islamic Seminaries from the Government Side

The government's efforts to reform madrasas' education may be met with resistance from teachers, students, and parents who are comfortable with the current system and may not see the value in diversifying the curriculum or incorporating secular subjects (Noraiee, 2017). Due to a lack of financial support,

the government may not prioritize the modernization and diversification of Madrasa education (Rehman, 2019). Government officials do not interest in the diversification of the Madrasas system as a low priority or be reluctant to take on conservative religious groups who oppose modernization efforts (Hanif, Ali, & Shaheen, 2021).

The present study naming diversification in Islamic seminaries- an approach to integrated education needs to be included new subjects and disciplines (Noraiee, 2017; Burhani, 2018; Suyadi et al, 2020), critical thinking and research skills (Ahmed, 2018), volunteer work and community service projects (Rosyad, 2020), modern teaching approaches (Mannan, 2015), use of computers (Siddique, 2011), training in digital communication skills (Khan, 2017), traditional Islamic values and teachings (Tariq & Adil, 2020), Islamic culture and traditions (Kusaeri, & Ridho, 2019), rote memorization and testing (Syar'i, Hamdanah & Akrim, 2020), particular religion or cultural group (Ashraf, 2018), unquestionable beliefs and dissenting opinions (Yousafzai, Mushhood, & Zulfiqar, 2017), politicization of education (Marshall, 2018), Bigotry, narrowmindedness and intolerance (Rafiq & Khan, 2021; Tariq & Adil, 2020), cramped and overcrowded buildings (Angeles, & Aijazi, 2019), absence of some basic facilities (Hamid & Ali, 2021), lack of resources (Angeles, & Aijazi, 2019), lack of financial support (Rehman, 2019) and oppose of modernization efforts (Hanif, Ali, & Shaheen, 2021).

The purpose of this study was to explore the diversification of seminaries, with a focus on the challenges like new subjects and disciplines, critical thinking and research skills, volunteer work and community service projects,  modern teaching approaches, use of computers, training in digital communication skills, traditional Islamic values and teachings, Islamic culture and traditions, rote memorization and testing, particular religion or cultural group, unquestionable beliefs and dissenting opinions, the politicization of education, Bigotry, narrowmindedness, and intolerance, cramped and overcrowded buildings, absence of some basic facilities, lack of resources, lack of financial support and opposition of modernization efforts to prepare students, who can contribute to society in meaningful ways. The following Figure 1.1 presents it as bellow:

Fig. 1.1

## Statement of the Problem

The integration of modern education into Islamic seminaries in Pakistan is a complex issue that presents several challenges. One of the main challenges is the lack of resources available to Islamic seminaries in Pakistan. Many of these institutions operate on shoestring budgets and do not have the necessary resources, such as textbooks, computers, or internet access, to provide modern education to their students. This can make it difficult to attract and retain qualified teachers and their training, and can also limit the scope and quality of the education provided to students. Another problem is the resistance of some Madrasa administrators and teachers. Some of them oppose the inclusion of modern education as a threat to the traditional Islamic curriculum. There is also the issue of social stigma attached to madrasa education in Pakistan. This can make it difficult for students to transition from madrasa education to mainstream education or to find employment outside of traditional religious settings. All the mentioned problems cause a formidable hindrance to the convergence of Islamic seminaries in the traditional education system and resultantly they are poles apart.

## Research Objectives

1.       To find out the barriers to the integration of modern education into the curriculum of Madrasas in Pakistan, and further to know how these barriers could be overcome

2.        To identify the attitude and beliefs of Madrasa administrators, teachers, and students towards the integration of modern education into the curriculum.

3.        To understand the possible benefits of integrating modern education into Madrasa curricula, both for individual students and Pakistani society as a whole.

**Research Questions**

1.        What are the barriers to the integration of modern education into the curriculum of Madrasas in Pakistan, and how can these barriers be overcome?

2.        What are the attitude and beliefs of Madrasa administrators, teachers, and students towards the integration of modern education into the curriculum?

3.        What are the possible benefits of integrating modern education into Madrasa curricula, both for individual students and for Pakistani society as a whole?

**Significance of the Study**

The integration of modern education into Islamic seminaries is a topic of increasing interest and importance in Pakistan that continue to focus exclusively on religious education. There is increasing appreciation of the need to incorporate modern subjects into the curriculum of these religious institutions. This has been driven by a variety of factors, including the lack of job opportunities for Madrasa graduates, as well as concerns about the spread of extremist ideologies in some Madrasas. The problem that this research seeks to address is the challenges and opportunities related to the integration of modern education into Islamic seminaries in Pakistan.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theory of diversification is provided based on the current study, actually, this theory is an economic principle, and it does not have a specific founder. The idea of spreading out investments to reduce risk is a fundamental principle of modern portfolio theory, which was developed by Harry Markowitz in the 1950s. However, this theory can also be applied to education, particularly in the context of Madrasas. Madrasas are Islamic educational institutions that traditionally focus on religious teachings. However, there has been a growing interest in expanding content, instructional strategies, assessment, environment, and interaction, especially for students centered. The application of diversification theory to Madrasa education can help to prepare students for a wide range of opportunities in the job market which is given in figure 1.2.
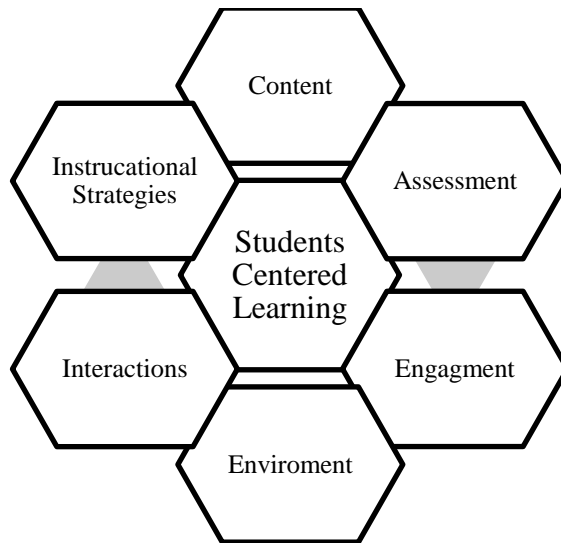
Fig. 1.2

**Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework for diversification theory in Madrasas education might include the elements such as integrated curriculum, innovative teaching methods, group projects and experimental learning opportunities, professional development for teachers, enhance creativity and research skills of students, use of modern technology in Madrasas, community involvement and collaboration with mainstream educational institutions. The proposed phenomenon is explained as bellow in figure 1.3
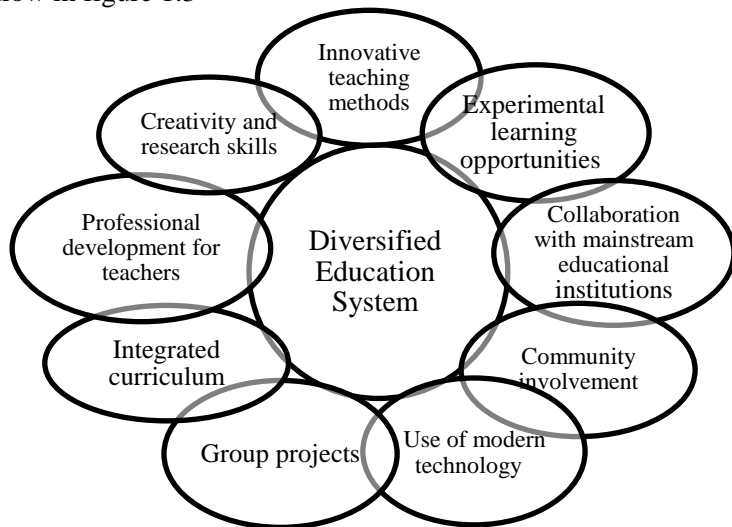
**Methodology**
Research methodology refers to the systematic approach or strategy employed by researchers to investigate and answer research questions or hypotheses. It involved the collection of data, analysis, and interpretation which are eventually employed for the findings of the research (Creswell, 2014).

**Nature of the Study**
A qualitative design was used in this study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the respondents who were most informed and experts in their field by open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on research objectives and a survey of related literature. Semi-structured interviews are often conducted for in-depth investigation from the respondents to gain rich information regarding the problem under study (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019).

**Sample of the Study**
The sample size of this qualitative study was kept small and smart. There were total six respondents, two schools' principals, two Muhtamim (HoDs of the Madrasas), and likewise two students who had experiences of both school and Madrasa education. The pseudonyms, designations, qualifications, and experiences of the respondents show in given table 1.1

| S. No. | Name | Designation | Qualification | Experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | M. Baseer | Principal BPS 18 | Ph. D (Education) | 27 Years |
| 2 | Shzad Khan | Principal BPS 18 | Ph. D (Education) | 24 Years |
| 3 | Sohail Ahmad | Muhtamim (HoDs) | Ifta and Ph. D (Islamite) | 30 Years |
| 4 | Safer Rehman | Muhtamim (HoDs) | Ifta and M. Phil (Arabic) | 28 Years |
| 5 | Jalal Khan | Student | Class 9th and 3th Daraja | 20 Years |
| 6 | Abu Zar Khan | Student | Class 10th and 4th Daraja | 21 Years |

*Table 1.1*

**Data Collection and Analysis Process**
The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews and focused on the points of importance which could guide to access an in-depth of the problem. All the interview processes were properly recorded on self-phone. The student respondents were not able to respond in English, so they were permitted to

respond in their mother tongue Pashto. The researcher repeatedly listened to the recorded interviews of each respondent and inscribed the main points on paper in the wake of which some themes emerged which were properly analyzed through thematic analysis techniques.

## Results

### 1.        Convergence of Religious and Mundane Systems of Education

When asked about the amalgamation of both systems of education the respondent shared his viewpoints that *"The unified system is best one for societies where intolerance prevails the product of this system of education will result in the homogeneity of the society"* (P-1). Likewise, another respondent stated that *"By convergence of the school and Madrasa, we can minimize the social stratification and tolerance could be brought in the society"* (P-2). Similarly, one of the respondents said that, *"Through the unification of Madrasa and school the religious teachers would become able to be assimilated in the contemporary system of education."* He added that, *"All segments of the society will benefit from each other, and in this way, social and national integration will be brought"* (M-1). Another respondent pointed out that, *"Through the process of convergence the religious scholars would have attractive jobs in the public sector, and the production of school would be balanced one. So, the so-called extremism will be eradicated"* (M-2).

The findings of this study revealed that through convergence and diversification of the seminaries, the capacity of the students will be homogenously built. Job opportunities for religious scholars will be produced, and extremism would nip in the bud through the boon of convergence.

### 2.        Divergence of Secular and Religious Education poses threat to Social Harmony

When asked about the status of Madrasa education, one of the respondents identified that, *"Sectarianism is the product of so many differences thoughts of the several schools, so, by unification the problem of factionalism will be reduced"* (P-1). Another respondent elaborated that, *"Through diversification, the culture will be essentially affected, modernism will be prevailed to some extent in the religious sphere"* (P-2). When enquired about it, another respondent stated that, *"Both schools of thought have antagonistic views about one another, on account of some dis-information, when they see each other closely. This stress could be minimized"* (M-1). *"Extremism and terrorism are associated with Islamic seminaries which is absolutely one-sided viewpoint; only seminaries are not responsible for this menace…"* (M-2).

The findings of this study revealed that when schools and Madrasa are poles at part; then the process of social intergradation and national harmony will be at stake. This study also reveals that a single national curriculum will be helpful in bridging the gap between two systems of education if implanted wholeheartedly.

### 3.      Provision of Infrastructure

During the course of the inquiry, it was investigated that the poor infrastructure in the institution has affected the learning capacity and the interest of the learners also. In this regard, one of the students explained that, *"When he was at school in class 9$^{th}$, the chairs, tables, computers, science laboratory, library, sports goods were abundantly available… while at seminaries due to lack of funds, all these things are not available. However, the mates, the seating arrangement, and food facilities are properly available in Madrasas despite the lack of resources"* (S-1). It was also stated by another student that, *"Due to computer lab, and computer teacher at school, we learned a lot regarding computer science but there is only one computer in the office of this seminary; but I see that a lot of charts, and writing work is done through this one computer which was not visible at school"* (S-2).

It was revealed in this course of study that schools are properly given a sustainable infrastructure, while seminaries are shabbily dressed in this regard. However, it was also found that the utilization of facilities at schools is improper, while at Madrassas, they are utilized properly, wherever available.

### 4.      Bridging the Culture Gap through Diversified Education

It was stated by the head of a seminary when he was asked about the diversification of seminaries, he pointed that, "I think every intuition is promoting its own way of culture. In schools and colleges, pantaloons and shirts are symbols of culture while in our institutions, the simple dress and turbine are the foundations of this culture, then tell me, how they can be unified…? Maxing both will create problems… I suggest every person is born for his own job…" (M-1). Another respondent stated emotionally that, "you are mixing the water and the fire." He also elaborated that, "Every child has some special gifts for which he accepts only that environment, where his guts are utilized" (M-2). When asked regarding this, a respondent from the school side shared his viewpoint, "it is an undeniable reality that our culture cannot be protected when we do not practically follow the culture and values of Islam, and the school must be rich from both point of view religious education and scientific education" (P-1). Another elucidated respondent from the same system of education pointed out that, "The school and college education is the standard bearer of western culture, while Madrasas are the claimant of Islamic culture. But in my view, both

are at the extremities, and both need to adopt both values. I mean the school must be religious and the Madras should be scientific also" (P-2).

The findings of this study revealed that obviously schools and Madrasa are at the dagger drawn but through the unification of religious and contemporary education the gap between the two could be reduced.

## 5.      Formation of Homogeneous Society Through Diversified System of Education

The respondents shared their viewpoints, regarding the diversification of the Islamic seminaries one of them stated, "The needs of the modern era are multi-dimensional, to live in this age is really a challenge, as one will have equipped himself on so many aspects… I mean his knowledge should be diversified" (P-

1). It was also stated by another interviewee that, "The student of modern era remains unaware of the religious know how they are unaware even of the basic and fundamentals of religion. Therefore, the inculcation of religious subjects is the need of the day. Therefore, I suggest that Madrasa and school should be unified, or in the other words the seminaries should be diversified; there must be all subjects for the fulfillment of the needs of the modern era… I mean, Mullah and Mr. should be the same person. The educational institutes should produce a complete personality, not the half or broken personality" (P-2). When asked about diversified schooling, the respondent from the seminary stated that, "This diversification will ultimately change the environment of Madrasa, as every system wants its own dominancy. Therefore, I am not in the favor of diversification. Every system should import education according to its own free will and social needs. The results of diversification may lead to the production of confused personalities. So, every system should mind his own business and the others should not meddle in the affairs of those who do not know the system completely" (M-1). Another respondent from the seminary explained that, "It is good to equip the students with both types of sciences. Our doctors and physicians should be complete scholars of religion too. Dr. Israr and Dr. Zakir Naik are obvious examples. They are impressive and appealing to society" (M-

2).The finding of this study revealed that diversification is a dire need of the modern era, and a homogeneous society could be produced if both systems are incorporated into one single system of education. However, some problem regarding the harmony of thoughts is to be properly addressed through the production of qualified teachers for the diversified system of education.

**Discussion**

This qualitative study aimed to investigate those factors, which may help in the

diversification of Islamic seminaries for an integrated education system. The collected data revealed that the interpolation of contemporary sciences may widen the scope of Islamic seminaries which can further improve the image of Islamic Madrasas and the cleavage between the two parallel systems could be lessened. The data of the study showed that a harmonious system of education could be emerged by the amalgamation of the worldly and religious education systems.

The literature survey of this study also suggests that the timely needed skills are not included in the curricula of the seminaries. The study of Mannan (2015) found that the inclusion of contemporary subjects would equip students for almost every kind of job. As various studies have revealed that the curriculum of Islamic seminaries is devoid of social and natural sciences.

The study of Khan (2017) supports this finding that digital communication skills have improved the ability of students, on the other hand, it is feared that present-day modern schooling is deprived of moral values and national culture which causes an unbridgeable gulf between the two systems of education, while the nation is in the need of an integrated and unified system of education, so the extremities of worldly education and religious education could be mitigated.

The data of this study also revealed that opposition from the administrators of the seminaries is a hindrance to the way of diversification of Madrassas. The administrators of the seminaries has have some reservations regarding the demerits of Western education which may cause great devastation to the prevailing culture of the Islamic seminaries.

The study of Tariq and Adil (2020) is in consonance with this finding which states that modern education is a threat to the culture of Madrasas. As stagnation and status quo repel the new influx of modern education on account of the clash of thoughts. The panacea of diversification of Madrasa education and the reproduction of an integrated school system may solve the problem.

It is also derived from the findings of this study that the standard bearers of sectarianism also dislike the influx of modern trends in Madrasa education, which is in consonance with the studies of Ashraf (2018) and study of Yousafzai, Mushhood, and Zulfiqar (2017) which state that the explosion of new ideas and critical thinking is discouraged, while the finding of Marshall (2018) also affirms this idea which states that limited curriculum and lack of exposure to diverse perspectives are disliked.

The data of this study showed that the infrastructure of the seminaries is shabby and poor compared to the public school. The study of Angeles and Aijazi (2019) coincidence with the findings of this study that the buildings of seminaries are cramped and shabby. Likewise, the study of Hamid and Ali (2021) supports the findings of this study that the buildings and other infrastructure are not suitable

for the student's health. Similarly, the lack of resources like provisions of free textbooks, and the availability of computer labs are the positive aspects of the public schools which have lessened the economic burden of the parents and have improved the tendency of enrollment in the public schools.

Finally, it is derived from the overall findings of this study that incorporation of modern sciences in the curriculum of seminaries, improvement of infrastructure, updation of the pedagogical skills, proper teacher's training, merit base appointment of the teachers, reasonable payment of salaries to teachers, eradication of bigotry, sectarianism, and narrow mildness through the inclusion of pure Islamic thoughts would surely improve and diversify the education system of Islamic seminaries.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The traditional Madrasa system, which was primarily focused on religious teachings, is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of modern society. Therefore, it is essential that Islamic Madrasas diversify their curriculum to include modern subjects such as science, technology, and mathematics to equip students with the necessary skills to succeed in the 21st century. Any efforts to diversify the Madrasa system should not undermine the core values and teachings of Islam. The integration of modern education should complement, not replace, traditional Islamic teachings. It is also important to ensure that the education provided in Madrasas is inclusive and promotes social harmony. This study recommends that:

1.     Islamic seminaries should collaborate with modern educational institutions and scholars to ensure that students receive a balanced education that includes both traditional Islamic teachings and modern subjects such as science and technology

2.     Islamic seminaries should develop teaching training programs for their teachers to enable them to teach modern subjects effectively

3.     Islamic seminaries should promote social and cultural integration by encouraging students from different backgrounds to study together

4.     Islamic seminaries should receive financial support from the government and other organizations to upgrade their infrastructure

5.     Islamic seminaries should emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving skills in their curriculum

6.     Islamic seminaries should be monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure that they are providing a high-quality education to their students

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