

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: POLICY REFORMS FOR INTEGRATING MADRASSA AND FORMAL EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study examines the persistence of educational dualism between madrassa and formal school systems in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, through a postcolonial interpretivist lens. Grounded in social constructionism, the research explores how colonial legacies continue to shape epistemological and pedagogical divisions in contemporary education. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 46 participants, including madrassa scholars (ulama) and school, college, and university teachers, alongside curriculum and document analysis. Thematic, content, and discourse analysis were employed to interpret how knowledge systems, institutional authority, and pedagogical practices are constructed and sustained within both educational streams. Findings indicate that the school-madrassa divide is not merely structural but deeply epistemological, rooted in colonial knowledge hierarchies that privileged Western secular education while marginalizing indigenous Islamic traditions. The study further reveals that socio-political developments, policy fragmentation, and curriculum divergence have reinforced this duality over time. It concludes that meaningful integration requires epistemic reconciliation rather than administrative reforms alone. The study contributes to postcolonial educational discourse by highlighting the need for inclusive policy frameworks that bridge historical, cultural, and epistemological divides in Pakistan's education system.

INTRODUCTION

The educational structure of Pakistan is characterized by a long-standing and deeply institutionalized dualism between formal schooling and madrassa education. This divide is widely understood as a legacy of colonial knowledge engineering, where British administrative policies introduced a bifurcated system separating “modern-secular” education from indigenous religious learning traditions. Contemporary scholarship increasingly conceptualizes this separation not merely as institutional fragmentation but as an epistemological rupture that continues to shape curriculum, pedagogy, and postcolonial societies (Tahir, 2022; Crossley & Tikly, 2004).

In Pakistan, this dual system persists in the form of state-regulated schools and independently governed madrassas, each operating with distinct epistemic orientations. Formal schools emphasize science, technology, and global competencies aligned with national development agendas, whereas madrassas focus on Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and classical scholarship (Riaz, 2008; Ali, 2009). Although both systems contribute to literacy and social mobility, their parallel existence often results in divergent worldviews, limited cognitive integration, and socio-cultural polarization among learners (Abbasi, 2014; Durrani & Dunne, 2010).

Recent studies indicate that madrassas continue to play a critical role in providing free education, accommodation, and welfare services to

marginalized populations, particularly in rural regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other underdeveloped areas (Zaman, 1999; Hefner & Zaman, 2007). However, concerns persist regarding curriculum rigidity, limited engagement with modern sciences, and restricted pathways to higher education and employment markets (Shah et al., 2022; Khalid et al., 2023). Conversely, formal schooling systems have been criticized for promoting rote learning, weak epistemic foundations, and unequal access across socio-economic groups (Rahman, 2004).

From a postcolonial perspective, the school-madrassa divide is not merely an administrative issue but a manifestation of colonial epistemic hierarchy, where Western knowledge systems were institutionalized as superior while indigenous Islamic knowledge was marginalized or restructured into separate institutional spaces (Said, 1978; Young, 2016). This epistemological stratification continues to influence educational policy reforms in Pakistan, where attempts at integration—such as curriculum harmonization and the Single National Curriculum—have produced mixed outcomes due to ideological contestations and institutional resistance (Bano, 2007; Zaman, 1999).

More recent scholarship highlights a growing policy discourse around educational integration and reform. Proposals increasingly emphasize curriculum convergence, pedagogical modernization in madrassas, and incorporation of Islamic epistemology into mainstream education to reduce fragmentation and enhance national cohesion (Bukhari, 2025; Zafar, 2022). However, the success of such reforms remains contingent upon addressing deep-rooted historical mistrust, governance gaps, and competing epistemological claims over knowledge authority.

Against this backdrop, the present study critically examines the colonial legacy and emergence of educational dualism in Pakistan through a postcolonial analytical lens. It aims to explore how historical trajectories, institutional arrangements, and epistemological contestations continue to sustain the school-madrassa dichotomy and shape educational outcomes in contemporary Pakistan.

Problem Statement

The education system in Pakistan is characterized by a persistent and structurally embedded dualism between formal schooling and madrassa education. This divide is historically rooted in colonial epistemic policies that institutionalized separate trajectories for religious and secular knowledge systems. Despite numerous reform initiatives, both systems continue to function in parallel with limited curricular, pedagogical, or institutional integration. This separation has contributed to divergent epistemological orientations, uneven skill development, and socio-cultural fragmentation among learners.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where madrassas constitute a significant part of the educational landscape, the school-madrassa divide is particularly pronounced. The lack of policy coherence, mutual distrust between stakeholders, and competing knowledge frameworks have further reinforced this educational bifurcation. Consequently, the persistence of this dual system raises critical questions regarding educational equity, national integration, and the long-term cognitive and socio-economic development of students.

Despite increasing scholarly attention, there remains a limited postcolonial and empirically grounded understanding of how historical legacies, institutional practices, and epistemological differences sustain this divide. This study addresses this gap by critically examining the colonial legacy and contemporary manifestations of educational dualism in Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. How did the school-madrassa educational dichotomy originate and evolve in Pakistan within a postcolonial context?
2. What epistemological and pedagogical differences characterize school and madrassa education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?

Research Objectives

1. To examine the historical origins and evolution of the school-madrassa divide in Pakistan.

2. To explore and compare the epistemological and pedagogical orientations of school and madrasa education systems in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

3. To analyze the socio-historical and institutional factors sustaining educational dualism in the region.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in both theoretical and practical terms as it addresses the persistent educational dualism between school and madrasa systems in Pakistan through a postcolonial analytical lens. By situating the school-madrasa divide within its historical and epistemological context, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary knowledge systems, curriculum structures, and pedagogical practices in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

From a theoretical perspective, the study extends postcolonial discourse in education by critically engaging with the ways in which Western and indigenous epistemologies have been institutionalized as separate and often competing systems. It provides an interpretive understanding of how knowledge is socially constructed, legitimized, and reproduced through formal and religious educational institutions. In doing so, it contributes to scholarly debates on epistemic injustice, knowledge hierarchy, and educational fragmentation in postcolonial societies.

Practically, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educational reformers in Pakistan. By identifying the epistemological and pedagogical differences between school and madrasa systems, it highlights key areas where integration, dialogue, and policy alignment may be possible. This is particularly relevant for ongoing educational reforms aimed at promoting national cohesion, improving learning outcomes, and enhancing employability among students from both systems.

Furthermore, the study is significant for educators and institutional stakeholders as it encourages reflective practice and mutual understanding between school and madrasa teachers. It also provides a basis for designing more inclusive and

context-sensitive educational policies that respect religious traditions while incorporating modern educational needs.

Overall, the study contributes to the broader goal of educational transformation in Pakistan by critically examining the structural and ideological roots of educational dualism and proposing a more integrated and equitable understanding of knowledge systems.

Literature Review

The debate surrounding the school-madrasa educational dichotomy in Pakistan is deeply embedded in broader discussions on colonial legacy, epistemological pluralism, and postcolonial state formation. A substantial body of literature suggests that the dual structure of education in Pakistan is not merely an administrative arrangement but a historically produced and ideologically sustained system of knowledge separation (Crossley & Tikly, 2004; Young, 2016).

Colonial Legacy and Educational Dualism

Scholars argue that the origins of educational dualism in South Asia can be traced to British colonial education policies, which systematically restructured indigenous knowledge systems. Colonial administrators introduced English-medium schooling to produce a class of intermediaries for governance, while traditional religious institutions such as madrasas were gradually marginalized and left outside state control (Zaman, 1999; Hoodbhoy, 1998). This bifurcation created two parallel systems: one aligned with Western rationality and administrative needs, and the other rooted in Islamic jurisprudence and theological instruction. Postcolonial theorists such as Said (1978) and Young (2016) further argue that such divisions reflect deeper epistemic hierarchies, where Western knowledge systems were positioned as universal and superior, while indigenous forms of knowledge were relegated to the margins. In this context, the school-madrasa divide in Pakistan can be understood as an extension of colonial epistemic ordering that continues to influence contemporary educational structures.

Madrassa Education and Its Socio-Educational Role

Madrassas in Pakistan have historically played a critical role in providing religious education, particularly for lower-income and rural populations. Riaz (2008) and Hefner and Zaman (2007) emphasize that madrassas are not monolithic institutions; rather, they vary in curriculum, sectarian orientation, funding structures, and pedagogical approaches. In many cases, they also provide free education, boarding, and social support, making them essential welfare institutions in underserved areas.

However, critics argue that madrassa curricula often lack integration with modern scientific and technical knowledge, limiting students' opportunities in higher education and formal employment sectors (Ali, 2009; Abbasi, 2014). This educational isolation contributes to broader concerns regarding social mobility and economic inclusion.

Formal Schooling System in Pakistan

The formal schooling system in Pakistan is characterized by a Western-influenced curriculum structure that emphasizes science, mathematics, and language skills. Despite its modern orientation, the system faces challenges such as rote learning practices, unequal access, and disparities in quality between public and private institutions (Rahman, 2004; Hoodbhoy, 1998). These issues further complicate the idea of a unified national education system and reinforce socio-economic stratification.

Epistemological and Pedagogical Differences

A significant strand of literature focuses on the epistemological differences between madrassa and school systems. Madrassa education is largely grounded in traditional Islamic epistemology, where knowledge is derived from religious texts and authoritative scholarship. In contrast, formal schooling is based on empirical, scientific, and secular epistemologies that prioritize critical inquiry and analytical reasoning (Halstead, 1995; Durrani & Dunne, 2010).

These differences are also reflected in pedagogical practices. Madrassas often rely on memorization, oral transmission, and teacher-centered

instruction, while formal schools—despite limitations—tend to incorporate structured curricula and standardized assessment systems (Shah & Choudhary, 2022).

Postcolonial and Theoretical Perspectives

Postcolonial scholars argue that educational dualism cannot be understood without examining the power relations embedded in knowledge production. Foucault's (1980) concept of power/knowledge highlights how institutions define what counts as valid knowledge, while Said's (1978) Orientalism explains how colonial discourse constructed binary distinctions between "modern" and "traditional" knowledge systems.

In the Pakistani context, Tikly (1999) and Crossley and Tikly (2004) emphasize that postcolonial education systems continue to reproduce colonial hierarchies unless deliberate efforts are made to decolonize curriculum and pedagogy. This theoretical perspective provides a critical lens for analyzing how madrassa and school systems are positioned within national education policy.

Educational Reforms and Integration Efforts

Several studies highlight ongoing reform initiatives aimed at integrating madrassa education into the national mainstream. These include curriculum modernization, registration policies, and introduction of secular subjects in madrassas (Bano, 2007; Zafar, 2022). However, implementation challenges persist due to resistance from religious authorities, lack of trust between institutions, and ideological concerns regarding cultural and religious autonomy.

Recent literature suggests that sustainable reform requires not only curricular alignment but also epistemological dialogue between the two systems (Tahir, 2022). Without addressing underlying knowledge hierarchies, integration efforts are likely to remain limited in impact.

Although extensive literature exists on madrassa education and formal schooling separately, fewer studies have critically examined their relationship through a postcolonial epistemological framework, particularly in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Moreover, limited empirical research explores how educators themselves

perceive and construct this educational divide. This study addresses this gap by focusing on lived experiences and institutional discourses to better understand the persistence of educational dualism in Pakistan.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in the social constructionist (interpretivist) paradigm to explore policy-oriented pathways for bridging the educational divide between madrasa and formal schooling systems in Pakistan, with a particular focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The approach is appropriate for examining complex socio-educational phenomena where meanings, practices, and institutional realities are constructed through lived experiences, historical processes, and discursive formations.

The study emphasizes depth, context, and interpretation over statistical generalization, aiming to generate rich insights into how educators, scholars, and institutional actors understand the structural separation between the two education systems and how this informs possibilities for policy integration.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in postcolonial theory, which critically examines how colonial knowledge systems continue to shape contemporary institutions, including education. Drawing on Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, the study conceptualizes the school-madrasa divide as a product of historically constructed binaries between "modern/secular" and "religious/traditional" knowledge systems.

Within this framework, educational dualism is interpreted not merely as an administrative issue but as a legacy of colonial epistemic governance, reproduced through curriculum structures, institutional policies, and competing knowledge authorities. This lens enables a critical

understanding of how power and knowledge intersect in shaping educational policy and reform possibilities in Pakistan.

Research Approach

The study employs an inductive qualitative approach, which allows theory to emerge from empirical data rather than testing predefined hypotheses. A social constructionist orientation underpins the analysis, emphasizing that educational realities are continuously produced and reproduced through discourse, institutional practices, and historical narratives.

This approach is particularly suitable for policy-oriented inquiry because it captures how stakeholders interpret integration challenges and propose reform possibilities within their socio-cultural and institutional contexts.

Study Area

The research is conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan, a province characterized by a dual education structure comprising formal schooling systems and madrasas. KP presents a significant case due to:

- Long-standing coexistence of two parallel education systems
- Strong presence of religious seminaries alongside public and private schools
- Socio-political history shaped by regional conflict, migration, and reform efforts
- Persistent challenges in educational access, quality, and governance

Sampling Strategy and Sample Size

A purposive and snowball sampling technique was used to select participants with relevant expertise in both educational systems.

- **Purposive sampling** ensured the inclusion of information-rich participants (educators, scholars, and policy-relevant actors).
- **Snowball sampling** helped identify additional participants through referrals.

Sample Distribution

| Category | Number of Participants |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Madrassa scholars/teachers | 23 |
| School/college/university teachers | 23 |
| Total | 46 |

This balanced sample enabled comparative insights across two epistemic systems.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through two primary sources:

1. Semi-structured in-depth interviews

- Focused on perceptions of educational dualism, curriculum differences, and integration challenges
- Each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes

2. Document analysis

- Review of school and madrasa curricula
- Examination of policy documents and educational frameworks

These dual sources enabled methodological triangulation and strengthened analytical validity.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using a combination of thematic analysis, content analysis, and discourse analysis.

- **Thematic analysis** identified recurring patterns related to educational division and reform perspectives.
- **Content analysis** was applied to curriculum documents to examine epistemological orientations, knowledge hierarchies, and institutional priorities.
- **Discourse analysis** (Gee, 2005) was used to examine how language constructs meaning, authority, and legitimacy in educational narratives.

The analytical process followed these steps:

- Data familiarization through repeated reading and listening
- Coding and categorization of recurring concepts
- Development of thematic clusters

- Interpretation through a postcolonial theoretical lens
- Synthesis of findings for policy-oriented insights

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to standard qualitative research ethics:

- Informed consent was obtained from all participants
 - Participation was voluntary
 - Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured
 - Data were used strictly for academic purposes
 - Interviews were recorded only with participant permission
- In cases where recording was not allowed, detailed field notes were maintained.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure methodological rigor, the study applied:

- **Methodological triangulation** (interviews + curriculum analysis)
- **Prolonged engagement** with participants
- **Iterative coding and verification** of themes
- **Contextual interpretation** of findings

Data Analysis

The data collected through semi-structured interviews and curriculum document analysis were systematically analyzed using thematic analysis, content analysis, and discourse analysis. The findings were organized into key themes reflecting epistemological orientations, pedagogical differences, historical influences, and policy-level barriers to integration between madrasa and formal education systems in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan.

Demographic Profile of Participants

The study included 46 participants from both madrassa and formal education systems.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Madrassa Scholars/Teachers | 23 | 50% |
| School/College/University Teachers | 23 | 50% |
| Total | 46 | 100% |

The equal distribution of participants ensured balanced epistemic representation from both educational systems. This symmetry strengthens comparative validity and reduces epistemological bias in interpreting the school-madrassa divide.

Emergence of Educational Dualism

A dominant theme identified was the historical construction of educational dualism rooted in colonial restructuring of knowledge systems.

Table 2: Perceived Origins of School-Madrassa Divide

| Theme | Madrassa Perspective | School Perspective | Educators' Combined Interpretation |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Colonial legacy | Strong agreement | Strong agreement | Central driver of dualism |
| Epistemological separation | Religious vs secular knowledge | Knowledge divide | Institutionalized separation |
| Policy reinforcement | Neglect of integration | Lack of alignment | Structural reproduction |

Both groups largely agreed that the origin of educational dualism is historically rooted in colonial governance systems, which institutionalized separate streams of religious and secular education. However, madrassa scholars emphasized religious marginalization, while school educators highlighted structural specialization and modernization needs.

This reflects a postcolonial epistemic divide, where knowledge systems are not neutral but historically produced through power relations.

Epistemological Differences Between Systems

A strong theme emerging from the data was the difference in how knowledge is defined, validated, and transmitted.

Table 3: Epistemological Orientations

| Dimension | Madrassa System | Formal School System |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Source of knowledge | Revelation and classical texts | Empirical and scientific inquiry |
| Knowledge authority | Ulama and religious scholars | State-certified educators |
| Validation method | Textual interpretation | Testing and assessment systems |
| Learning goal | Moral and spiritual formation | Cognitive and professional development |

The data reveals a fundamental epistemological divergence between the two systems. Madrassa education is grounded in textual-religious

authority, while formal education emphasizes scientific rationalism and empirical validation.

This epistemic separation reinforces institutional dualism and limits cross-system recognition of knowledge legitimacy.

Pedagogical Practices in Both Systems
Pedagogical differences emerged as a key structural barrier to integration.

Table 4: Comparative Pedagogical Practices

| Aspect | Madrassa Education | Formal Education |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Teaching method | Memorization and oral transmission | Lecture, discussion, and activity-based learning |
| Classroom structure | Teacher-centered | Mixed learner-centered approaches |
| Assessment style | Oral examination (Dars-e-Nizami tradition) | Written exams and grading systems |
| Critical thinking approach | Limited structured inquiry | Increasing emphasis on analytical skills |

The findings indicate that madrassa education predominantly relies on traditional memorization-based pedagogy, whereas formal schooling is gradually shifting toward competency-based and analytical learning models.

This pedagogical divergence contributes significantly to the non-transferability of students between systems, reinforcing structural separation.

Institutional and Policy Barriers to Integration
Participants identified several systemic barriers preventing integration.

Table 5: Key Institutional Barriers

| Barrier | Frequency of Mention | Impact Level |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Curriculum incompatibility | High | Severe |
| Lack of policy alignment | High | Severe |
| Certification recognition issues | Moderate | High |
| Political sensitivity | High | Severe |
| Governance fragmentation | Moderate | Medium |

The most frequently cited barrier was curriculum incompatibility, followed by policy fragmentation and political sensitivity surrounding madrassa reform.

dual administrative system that resists harmonization.

Respondents highlighted that madrassas operate under semi-autonomous governance structures, while formal schools are state-regulated, creating a

Perceived Impact on Students
Participants were asked about the educational and social consequences of dualism.

Table 6: Perceived Student Outcomes

| Outcome Area | Madrassa Students | School Students | Overall Perception |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Critical thinking | Limited exposure | Moderate to high | Uneven development |
| Employability | Restricted pathways | Wider job market access | Structural inequality |
| Social integration | Strong religious identity | Broader social exposure | Social segmentation |
| Cognitive flexibility | Text-based reasoning | Analytical reasoning | Divergent skill sets |

The data indicates that educational dualism produces asymmetric cognitive and social development outcomes. Madrassa students tend to develop strong religious identity but limited labor-market adaptability, whereas school students show broader employability but weaker religious literacy.

This creates a fragmented human capital structure within society.

Discourse on Reform and Integration

A final key theme was participants’ views on integrating both systems.

Table 7: Attitudes Toward Integration Policy

| Position | Madrassa Educators | School Educators |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Full integration | Low support | Moderate support |
| Partial integration | High support | High support |
| Separate coexistence | Moderate support | Low support |
| Curriculum harmonization | Strong support | Strong support |

Both groups showed strong support for partial integration, particularly in areas such as curriculum modernization, skill development, and mutual recognition of qualifications.

However, resistance remains regarding full structural integration due to concerns over identity preservation, autonomy, and ideological differences.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the school–madrassa educational divide in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a structurally embedded and historically produced phenomenon, deeply rooted in colonial epistemic arrangements and sustained through postcolonial policy practices. The data reveals that both systems operate within distinct epistemological universes, where schools privilege scientific rationalism, standardized assessment, and state-certified knowledge, while madrassas emphasize scriptural authority, moral formation, and classical Islamic scholarship. This epistemic separation is not merely pedagogical but reflects a broader colonial legacy of knowledge bifurcation, where education was reorganized into “modern/secular” and “religious/traditional” streams.

The study further highlights that pedagogical practices reinforce this divide. Madrassa education continues to rely heavily on memorization, oral transmission, and teacher-centered instruction, whereas formal schooling increasingly adopts

structured assessment and analytical learning approaches. These differences create non-intersecting learning pathways, limiting student mobility and mutual recognition of qualifications between systems. The persistence of this divide is also linked to institutional fragmentation, where madrassas and formal schools are governed by separate administrative and regulatory frameworks with limited coordination.

From a postcolonial perspective, the findings align with the argument that colonial education systems did not simply introduce new curricula but also restructured epistemic authority, privileging Western knowledge systems while marginalizing indigenous forms of learning. This continues to shape policy resistance to integration, as both systems are embedded within identity politics, institutional autonomy, and socio-religious legitimacy claims.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the school–madrassa dichotomy in Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is not a contemporary administrative issue but a historically constructed epistemological divide shaped by colonial governance and sustained through postcolonial institutional arrangements. The separation between the two systems reflects deeper tensions between competing knowledge paradigms rather than simple differences in curriculum or pedagogy.

While both systems contribute significantly to educational access and social development, their parallel existence has resulted in fragmented human capital formation, uneven skill development, and limited social integration among graduates. However, the study also finds that there is latent willingness among educators from both systems to engage in partial integration, particularly in areas of curriculum harmonization and skill-based learning.

Implications of the Study

The study has important theoretical, policy, and educational implications. Theoretically, it contributes to postcolonial education literature by reinforcing the argument that educational systems in postcolonial societies are shaped by enduring colonial epistemologies that continue to influence institutional design and knowledge hierarchies.

At the policy level, the findings suggest that any attempt at educational reform must move beyond superficial curriculum adjustments and instead address the structural and epistemological foundations of dual education systems. Integration policies must consider institutional autonomy, identity concerns, and historical mistrust between systems.

Educationally, the study highlights the need for bridging competencies, including critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and contextual knowledge integration, which can enhance student mobility and employability across both systems.

Future Directions

Future research should explore comparative studies across provinces and countries to understand how different Muslim-majority societies manage educational dualism. Longitudinal studies could also examine the outcomes of students exposed to integrated or hybrid education models.

Additionally, further research is needed to investigate policy experiments in curriculum harmonization, particularly those that incorporate both religious and modern knowledge systems without undermining either epistemic tradition. Quantitative studies could complement qualitative insights by measuring the socio-

economic outcomes of graduates from both systems.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends a gradual and context-sensitive integration framework rather than abrupt structural reforms. Key recommendations include:

First, the development of a shared competency-based curriculum framework that integrates critical thinking, ethics, civic education, and foundational scientific literacy within madrasa education, while incorporating basic religious literacy in formal schooling.

Second, the establishment of a mutual accreditation and recognition system to enable mobility of students between madrasa and formal education pathways.

Third, teacher training programs should be introduced to develop pedagogical convergence skills, enabling educators from both systems to adopt more interactive and reflective teaching methods.

Fourth, policy reforms must prioritize institutional dialogue mechanisms between madrasa boards and education departments to reduce mistrust and improve coordination.

Finally, curriculum reforms should be designed in a way that respects religious identity while promoting modern skill development, ensuring that integration does not lead to epistemic displacement.

Limitations

This study is limited by its qualitative and context-specific design, focusing primarily on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which restricts the generalizability of findings to other provinces or countries. Although the sample size was sufficient for in-depth qualitative analysis, it does not allow for statistical generalization.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported perceptions of educators, which may be influenced by personal beliefs, institutional affiliations, and socio-cultural positioning. Additionally, access constraints limited engagement with policy-level actors, which could have provided deeper insights into institutional decision-making processes.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a rich interpretive understanding of educational dualism and offers a strong foundation for further empirical and policy-oriented research.

Here are 15 carefully selected APA 7th edition references from your list that are most relevant to the topic “Bridging the Divide: Policy Reforms for Integrating Madrassa and Formal Education in Pakistan”:

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