



## Secular Attitude: a Study of Madarsa Students

### KEYWORDS

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**ABSTRACT** *Cultural heterogeneity is a unique characteristic of Indian society. The harmonious coexistence of the humanity on the land of India is well known from its own history. In this harmony many religions have been flourishing here since long back, which have their own traditions and beliefs. But, unfortunately the phenomenon of communalism began with the establishment of British rule in India, which causes a lot of damage of property and life. Scholars and thinkers has realised that the peaceful survival of all the societies is possible only in a secular world, which can only be developed by the education, in which students have a vital role, because they are the future of any nation. To educate their children, Madaras have been established by the Muslims but since September 11, 2001, Madrasas have become the focus of international attention due to their alleged links with international militancy. It is alleged that religious schools (like Madrasas) promote extreme values and attitude and hence, increase friction and intolerance in the society To examine the allegations in an academic way, the present study aims to investigate into the extent to which the madarsa students studying in different madaras exhibit secular attitude and if these attitude vary due to the factors such as Sex, Class, Category and Types of madarsa. 'Secular Attitude Scale' developed by Mehra and Sinha (1992) has been administered on 100 madarsa students selected from Bilaspur and Raipur city of Chhattisgarh. The study shows that all selected madarsa students possess secular attitude.*

### Background of the Study

India is a land of religions, languages and customs. Many religions are flourishing here from centuries, which have their own traditions and beliefs. The harmonious coexistence of the humanity on the land of India is also well known from its own history. But, unfortunately sometimes, the harmony between these religions becomes imbalanced, and a new threat, communalism is born in the society. However, in India the seeds of communalism were sown by the British rulers (Das, 1991), with a view that Indians remain divided and unable to challenge British Colonial rule, for which they adopted 'divide and rule' policy. But, even after independence, communal forces are still active and creating problems for both, the government and the society. Communal ideology leads in many cases to communal violence (Chandra, 2008). On global level too, the social threat called communalism exists. So, the world has accepted that the peaceful survival of all the societies is possible only in a secular world. Since, the real development can take place only in secular atmosphere, by secular citizens, and the development of such citizens is a prime task of education, therefore, to develop the secular characters in our citizens is one of the major responsibilities of the education system.

Islam is one of the important religions of our country. Muslims constitute about 14% of our total population. Our country has third position in the world with respect to Muslim population which comes after Indonesia and Pakistan. Like others, education has its own importance in Muslim community. According to 'The Holy Quran', 'Education is the greatest duty of man'. Prophet Mohammad had said, 'Search knowledge though it be in China' (Miasahib, 1991). Therefore, for educating their mass Muslims has developed a system of education, which is known as 'Madarsa Education System'. Article 30 of Indian constitution also gives right to every minority group to establish its own educational institute to preserving and transferring its culture.

Madarsa, an Arabic word, literally means place of dars i.e. teaching. The dictionary meaning of the term 'Madrasah' is 'School' (Huges. 1988). As a conservative estimate, the total number of Madaras in India is nearly 35000 mainly concentrated in the state of Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (Chauhan, 2011).

The objective of madarsa education is to teach the fundamentals of the Islamic faith. In keeping with this objective, the teachings of the Prophet, recitation and rote learning of the Quran are the focal points. The aim of madarsa education is to train students so that they may become competent in following the path laid out by Quran and Shariah and to spread the knowledge and message of God to humankind for their physical, intellectual, and spiritual well being (Khan, 2002). Indian Madaras in the early 20th Century were diverse in the subjects they offered and some even secular, allowing Hindu's to attend their classes. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Dr. Sachdanand Sinha were all imparted elementary education at madaras (Soni, 2010).

Since September 11, 2001, Madrasas in the Muslim world have become the focus of international attention due to their alleged links with international militancy (Bano, 2008). It is alleged that religious schools (Madrasas) promote extreme values and attitude and hence, increase friction and intolerance in the society (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2006).

Studies on Madaras are very few. Ray (1978) in his study found that, the democratic spirit which was present in Muslim education became even more democratic when it threw its doors open to Hindus. Secular subjects had found a place in the curriculum. The cultural unity of India was an important achievement of Muslim education. Ahmed (1985) found that, Secularism and national integration were correlated in the pluralistic society of India. Education was considered the only potent tool to achieve

national integration as unity in diversity and national integration was possible through peaceful co-existence and mutual trust between the majority and minority communities. In a study conducted by Raghuvansh (1992), the majority of the respondents realized that secular thoughts should find a place in the school curriculum, modern values should be stressed. Raikwar (2008) in his study found that the teachers in schools were overall average secular, irrespective of sex. However, the Muslim teachers were found to be less secular than the Hindu teachers. The urban teachers were average secular, whereas rural teachers were less secular. When the attitude of teachers was examined on a criterion of category, it was found that O.B.C. teachers were average secular, where as general and SC teachers were less secular. Soni (2010) found that, Madaras are an essential and intimate part of the Muslim culture and the education they impart is undeniably unique. Madaras add to the cultural heterogeneity of the country and form an integral part of our diverse socio-ethnic traditions. Ellis (2007) in his special report writes that, the West generally has a negative view on Madaras.

All religions are based on the philosophy of peace and co-existence and no religion teach the doctrine of communalism and prejudice. Islam is the world's second biggest religion and Madarsa has its own importance in Islam. Since, Madarsa are being established according to the principles of Islam, which does not support communalism, so it is important to know the role of Madaras in spreading the idea of secularism. Dearth of studies, conducted in keeping the Madaras in centre, motivated the researchers to investigate into the extent to which the madarsa students, studying in different types of madarsa exhibit secular behaviors and if these behaviors vary due the factors such as Sex, Class, Category and Types of Madarsa.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

**For the study following objectives were formulated:**

- To study the level of secular attitude of madarsa students with respect to various demographic variables.
- To study the difference in secular attitude of madarsa students with respect to-
  - a) Sex (Male, Female)
  - b) Class (U.G., P.G.)
  - c) Category (General, O.B.C.)
  - d) Type of Madarsa (Government-aided, Private)

**HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

For the study following hypotheses were formulated:

There will be significant difference in secular attitude of madarsa students with respect to-

- a) Sex (Male, Female)
- b) Class (U.G., P.G.)
- c) Category (General, O.B.C.)
- d) Type of Madarsa (Government-aided, Private)

**METHODOLOGY**

The present research is descriptive in nature in which the 'Survey Method' was used to carry out the work. All the madaras students in Bilaspur and Raipur districts of Chhattisgarh were the population of this study. The sample of 100 madarsa students selected by convenient sampling method was taken for this study. 'Secular Attitude Scale' developed and standardized by Mehra and Sinha (1992) was used by the researchers as a tool to collect data. The authors of this tool has reported that those obtaining a score below 98 are considered to be less secular in attitude while those scores higher than 130 are considered to be more secular in attitude.

**ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The first objective of the present study was to study the level of secular attitude of the madarsa students with respect to various demographic variables. For this, the researchers administered the Secular Attitude Scale (Mehra & Sinha, 1992) on the madarsa students and carried out the process of scoring. The details of means and SD of obtained scores have been given in Table-1.

**Table: 1 (Means and SD of Secular Attitude Scores of Madarsa Students)**

S. N.	Demographic Variables	Number of Students (N)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	
1	Sex	Male	77	101.52	8.85
		Female	23	99.85	6.83
2	Class	U.G.	75	101.11	8.83
		P.G.	25	101.20	7.27
3	Category	General	79	100.91	7.39
		O.B.C.	21	101.95	11.75
4	Type of Madarsa	Govt-aided	54	99.98	7.24
		Private	46	102.48	8.43

It is clear from the table-1, that the means of secular attitude scores of madarsa students with respect to their all demographic variables (Sex, Class, Category & Type of Madarsa) are between 98 and 130, so it can be said that all the selected madarsa students possess secular attitude of average level.

The second objective of the present study was to study the difference in secular attitude of madarsa students with respect to their demographic variables. To realize the objective, the research hypotheses were tested with the help of four null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The details of these hypotheses testing have been given in Table-2.

**Table-2 (t-ratio between the Means of Secular Attitude Scores of Madarsa Students)**

S.N	Demographic Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	
1	Sex	Male	77	101.52	8.85	0.91
		Female	23	99.85	6.83	
2	Class	U.G.	75	101.11	8.83	1.94
		P.G.	25	101.20	7.27	
3	Category	General	79	100.91	7.39	2.03*
		O.B.C.	21	101.95	11.75	
4	Type of Madarsa	Govt. Aided	54	99.98	7.24	1.45
		Private	46	102.48	9.55	

\* p< 0.05

It is clear from Table 2 that the t-ratios between the means of secular attitude score of male and female, UG and PG, and Govt. Aided and Private Madarsa students are 0.91, 1.94, and 1.45, respectively, and none of them is significant at 0.05 level for 98 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypotheses for these variables could not be rejected and thus, the research hypotheses  $H_a$ ,  $H_b$ , and  $H_d$  were not accepted. However, the t-ratio between the means of secular attitude score of madarsa students having General and OBC category is 2.03 which is significant at 0.05 level for 98 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis framed for this variable is rejected and thus, the research hypothesis  $H_c$  is accepted.

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

On the basis of analysis given in previous paragraphs, it can be concluded that-

The madarsa students possess secular attitude of average level.

The male and female madarsa students do not have significant difference in their secular attitude.

The UG and PG madarsa students do not have significant difference in their secular attitude.

The General and OBC category madarsa students do have significant difference in their secular attitude.

The students of Govt. madaras and Private madaras do not have significant difference in their secular attitude.

The present study has yielded interesting results, which add volume of knowledge already present in this field of study. The descriptive analysis shows that madarsa students under study possess secular attitude. The inferential analysis revealed that, no significant difference existed in secular attitude of madarsa students with respect to Sex, Class and type of madarsa. However, significant difference was found between the secular attitude of the general and O.B.C. students. The O.B.C. category madarsa students possess significantly higher secular attitude than that of the general category students. The reason of this finding may be that the madarsa students from OBC background enjoy all the schemes and reservation benefits provided by the government for their upliftment. So, they think that government is looking after the peoples from all communities.

The present study also challenges the baseless stereotypes prevailing against the madaras. The media and government should propagate such findings so that the misconceptions prevailing in this regard may be eradicated. Also, the research projects on madarsa students should be sponsored by government and other funding agencies so that the real picture of these institutes may come out.

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