



Secular Attitude: A Study of Madarsa Teachers

KEYWORDS

Secular Attitude, Madarsa, Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Despite religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity in India, there was hardly any tension between different religious communities for a very long time. 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. To educate their children, Madaras have been established by the Muslims but, generally, it is alleged that religious schools (like Madrasas) promote extreme values and attitude and hence, increase friction and intolerance in the society and the teachers of these institutes contribute most into it. To examine the allegations in an academic way, the present study aims to investigate into the extent to which the madarsa teachers exhibit secular attitude. The results reveal that all selected madarsa teachers possess secular attitude.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Unity in diversity has been a unique characteristic of Indian society. Many religions are flourishing here since long back, which have their own traditions and beliefs. Despite religious, cultural, and linguistic heterogeneity there was hardly any tension between these different groups for a very long time. But, later on, a new threat had born in the Indian society that is called communalism. Though, in India, the seeds of communalism were sown by the British rulers (Das, 1991), but, even after independence, communal forces are still active and creating problems for both, the government and the society. This communal ideology leads in many cases to communal violence and riots (Chandra, 2008). As a solution, scholars like Agarwal (1984) have found that education level affects the attitude towards communalism.

Now, after communal incidents at global level too, 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 and this can be accomplished by the teachers with secular attitude only.

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 (Wikipedia, 2011). 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, madaras 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). Very few studies have been conducted on focusing the various issues related to madarsa. 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. Chopra (1984) in his study found that, the students expressed concern over communal disharmony. Development of religious tolerance and reforms in politics was suggested by the students. Religious education was supported more by the pupils coming from government and Muslim minority school, but very little by convent school pupils. Ahmed (1985) in his study found that, Muslims had shown a strong affinity for religion than for anything else. It was

realised that, national education programme was not possible without the assimilation of minorities in national mainstream. 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. Raghuvansh (1992) in his study found the majority of the respondents believing that secularism means equal respect for all religions. The respondents also said that secular thoughts should find a place in the school curriculum and immediate secularization of the whole education system and improvement of textbooks is needed. Ellis (2007) in his special report writes that, Madrasas have historically been centres of learning in the Muslim world and continue to be so today. It was also written that the West generally has a negative view of madrasas. Raikwar (2008) in his study on secular attitude of teachers found that the teachers 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) in her study found that, madrasas are an essential and intimate part of the Muslim culture and the education they impart is undeniably unique. Madrasas add to the cultural heterogeneity of the country and form an integral part of our diverse socio-ethnic traditions and problems related to it cannot be ignored.

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 madrasas and madarsa teachers in spreading the idea of secularism. Dearth of studies, conducted in keeping the madarsa teachers in centre, motivated the researchers to investigate into the extent to which the madarsa teachers, teaching in different types of madarsa exhibit secular attitude and if this attitude vary due the factors such as Sex, Category and Type of madarsa.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

For the study following objectives were formulated:

- To study the level of secular attitude of madarsa teachers with respect to various demographic variables.
- To study the difference in secular attitude of madarsa teachers with respect to-
 - a) Sex (Male, Female)
 - b) Category (General, O.B.C.)
 - c) 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 teachers with respect to-

- a) Sex (Male, Female)
- b) Category (General, O.B.C.)
- c) 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 madarsa teachers in Bilaspur and Raipur districts of Chhattisgarh were the population of this study. The sample of 80 madarsa teachers 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 teachers with respect to various demographic variables. For this, the researchers administered the Secular Attitude Scale (Mehra & Sinha, 1992) on the madarsa teachers and carried out the process of scoring. The details of means and SD of the obtained scores have been given in Table-1.

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

S.N.	Demographic Variables		Number of Teachers (N)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
1	Sex	Male	62	100.18	9.62
		Female	18	105.00	7.94
2	Category	General	51	100.41	8.89
		O.B.C.	29	101.00	10.50
3	Type of Madarsa	Govt-aided	41	101.41	9.47
		Private	39	101.10	9.55

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

The second objective of the present study was to study the difference in secular attitude of madarsa teachers with respect to their demographic variables. To realize the objective, the research hypotheses were tested with the help of three 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 Teachers)

S.N.	Demographic Variables		N	Mean	SD	t-ratio
1	Sex	Male	62	100.18	9.62	1.95
		Female	18	105.00	7.94	
2	Category	General	51	100.41	8.89	0.26
		O.B.C.	29	101.00	10.50	
3	Type of Madarsa	Govt. Aided	41	101.41	9.47	0.14
		Private	39	101.10	9.55	

It is clear from table-2 that, the t-ratios between the means of secular attitude score of male and female, general and O.B.C., and govt. aided and private madarsa teachers are 1.95, 0.26, and 0.14, respectively, and none of them is significant at the .05 level, for 78 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypotheses for these variables could not be rejected and thus, the research hypotheses H_0 , H_1 , and H_2 were not accepted.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

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

The madarsa teachers possess secular attitude of average

level.

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

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

The teachers of Govt. madarsas and Private madarsas 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. It reveals that madarsa teachers possess secular attitude. This finding of the study is in congruence with the findings of Raikwar (2008) in which, it was found that teachers under study were average secular.

The inferential analysis revealed that no significant difference existed in secular attitude of madarsa teachers with respect to the demographic variables (Sex, Category, & Type of Madarsa). The possible reasons for these findings may be that the madarsa teachers are well qualified in their field and possess that entire positive social attitude that is the need of present hour for peaceful co-existence of the humanity. Since, India has its own characteristics regarding unity in diversity and in the present scenario the whole humanity is seeking for harmonious co-existence. So, madarsa teachers as a builder of nation know this fact that it is only possible in a secular society and the factors like sex, category, and type of madarsa do not affect their maturity in this dimension. Therefore, they are very much influenced by the principle of secularism and possess secular attitude with respect to all selected demographic variables.

Based on the findings and conclusions it is clear that baseless stereotypes are prevailing against the madarsas and madarsa teachers in the society. The media and government should propagate such findings so that the misconceptions prevailing in this regard may be eradicated. Also, further in-depth investigations into curriculum and daily routine of madarsas will be more helpful in removing such delusions.

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