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Understanding the Role of Madrassas in Pakistan's Educational Landscape: A Data-Driven Perspective from Google Trends

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Abstract

This study explores the evolving role of madrassas within Pakistan's educational landscape through a data-driven analysis of public engagement with religious education and reform discourse. Using a quantitative descriptive research design, Google Trends data from January 2020 to October 2025 were analyzed to assess relative public interest in five search terms—*Madrassa*, *Religious education Pakistan*, *Islamic education system*, *Islamic school*, and *Education reform Pakistan*. The analysis examined temporal and regional patterns of online engagement, linking variations to sociopolitical and educational developments. Results indicate that the term *Islamic school* consistently generated the highest search interest, while *Madrassa* maintained moderate but stable engagement with notable peaks in 2021 and 2023. Reform-oriented terms such as *Education reform Pakistan* and *Islamic education system* received comparatively low attention, reflecting limited public involvement in policy-level discussions. Regionally, traditional education terms were more prominent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, whereas reform-related interest was concentrated in urban centers like Lahore and Karachi. Overall, the findings reveal a sustained preference for traditional religious education over modernization narratives, illustrating the enduring cultural and social significance of madrassas. The study concludes that while reform efforts continue to emerge at policy and scholarly levels, public engagement remains anchored in traditional frameworks, and digital analytics tools such as Google Trends offer valuable insights for understanding societal attitudes toward education in Pakistan.

Keywords: Madrassa Education, Religious Education, Education Reform, Google Trends Analysis, Pakistan

Introduction:

The ancient Islamic educational institutions known as religious schools have played a significant role in Pakistan's academic landscape, teaching millions of students across the country in religious education (Sattar, 2023). Recently, there has been growing recognition of the need to

modernize and broaden the madrassa syllabus to adequately prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century (Sattar, 2024). The community, especially the Muslims, is also actively joining organizations to share their knowledge about the basic principles of Sharia/Islam, and to create awareness in other aspects of life. Impact the perception of contemporary institutions, such as colleges that originated from madrassas (Dr. Fazal Rabbi). Reforming mosques in Pakistan is not a simple task with many implications for education, social cohesion, and national security. Madrassas and Islamic religious institutions have historically constituted a fundamental component of Pakistan's educational framework, providing religious instruction to thousands of students throughout (SATTAR, 2024 -b). In reality, madrassas in Pakistan were established as educational institutions for future Islamic scholars and clergy. Parents allow their children to study in the Madaris to gain diverse knowledge. Numerous Madaris are supplementary. Madaris offer youngsters accommodation, sustenance, educational materials, and teaching. The main reason for placing a child in a madrassa is often ignored. Madrassa gives a reason for instilling beliefs in their children. Many parents place significant value on their sons being pious Muslims. Parents typically aspire to impart ethical principles to their children. Parents of Madaris students are optimistic that their children will learn to respect their elders and develop an interest in life. Children are instructed on how to engage and communicate with individuals of varying ages and statuses, as well as how to converse respectfully with grandparents and others (Mehmood et al., 2020).

2. Literature Review

Madrassas in Pakistan have long played a vital role in providing religious education and shaping their students' values and moral principles. However, in recent years, these traditional institutions have faced increasing scrutiny over their management practices, curriculum relevance, and overall educational standards. To address these challenges, madrassas in the country are adopting management innovation in order to become more effective and sustainable, and improve their contribution to society (SATTAR, 2024 -a). Despite these analyses, the analysis suggests that these institutions of Islam will positively contribute to Pakistan's education system, social cohesion, civic engagement, and holistic human development. (Djamdjuri, 2021) defines Islamic culture as the Quran's guidance for all Muslims, emphasizing that it does not distinguish between male and female individuals. Male and female, these were one soul, moral persons in

Spirit. Women are entitled to associate, inherit, trade, and even learn (Dr. Safdar Rehman Ghazi, March 2011). This other group of scholars believes that madrassas play a productive role in society, such as promoting education, teaching morals and ethics, rehabilitating downtrodden people, and controlling criminal behavior to enforce social order, etc (Butt, 2012). In addition to religious education, Madaris function as legitimate shelters for the children enrolled, offering food, clothing, and accommodation (Munir et al., 2021). The Islamic world has its own values, customs, and educational system, which do not conform to Western secularism. The very first school, established by the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), is called, naturally enough, Suffah, and played a key role in building up such moral force that inspired the followers of the Prophet. Currently, in Muslim societies worldwide, a similar tradition has been instituted to establish religious schools where students receive instruction in the Quran and Sunnah from religious scholars (Muhammad Iqbal Khan, 2021). It is not just a matter of the internal administration and decision-making of these institutions, but their wider societal role in enhancing social cohesion, interfaith harmony, and cultural responsibility diversity. Community involvement in madrassa management is critical to nurture trust and encourage the sharing of responsibilities, involving a range of actors from parents, community leaders, and religious scholars to external partners (SATTAR, 2023).

2.1: Historical Role and Social Significance of Madrassas in Pakistan

Engaged in efforts to advance education. In Dar Al Aram, upon the advent of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) constructed the inaugural school at the base of Mount Safa. The inaugural students of the initial school of study in Islam included Abu Bakr RA, Omar RA, and other companions of the Prophet (Sattar, 2002). Following the Hijra to the sacred city of Medina, the Prophet appointed Ibn-e-Umm Maktum and Mosaab-bin-Umar to educate and disseminate Islam. Muslims, in their effort to disseminate knowledge, captured 60-70 captives of war from the Battle of Badr and, in return for their freedom, committed to educating 10 Muslim children. Acquiring knowledge is a fundamental principle in Islam. From the inception of the Prophethood of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), the sacred verses of the Quran were transmitted orally (Shahab, (2021)).

2.2: Curriculum and Management Challenges in Madrassas

The foundational reference for the transdisciplinary course is Islamic values. All instructional materials are centered along this axis (core) of Islamic beliefs. Education in reading, writing, language, natural sciences, and social sciences is conducted exclusively to teach children to adhere to God's commandments. Malawi believes this can be accomplished by integrating the teachings of His words and those of the Prophet Muhammad, which were revealed for our practice and adherence. If culture and science emerge from this significant objective, then diverse Islamic societies will join into a singular community. Moreover, the essence in every Muslim child becomes coherent, with their many impulses, demands, and concepts harmonized, as they derive from a singular origin and are directed towards a same purpose(Welsi Damayanti, March 2024). The survey participants expressed significant worry with the curriculum taught in Madaras, although they failed to propose any solutions to this issue. The syllabus implemented within these madrasas is obsolete. A lack of research culture results in the predominance of literature that are over five centuries old in the curriculum. Ahmad (2004) contends that the texts utilized date back to the eleventh century, with the most recent originating from the seventeenth century. Both students and teachers express worry; yet, there is a lack of enthusiasm in revising the syllabus. A further significant issue with the books and disciplines lies in the fact that not all facilities are accessible inside a single madrasa, necessitating students to attend another institution to complete their coursework. Troubles with the syllabus are among the causes that madrasas are unable to standardize their curriculum (Muhammad Asad Habib, 2021).

2.3: Madrassas as Social Welfare Institutions

The quality of individuals is not the sole factor influencing the extent of learning; it is also closely connected to the overall well-being of society, the nation, and the state. In the book by Abdullah Idi (2011), Jalaludin emphasized that humans, as inherently social beings, require specialized education. The purpose of special education is to nurture and develop human potential in a way that is harmonious with the social environment (Basinun). It is vital to advance special education within a well-defined conceptual framework, which includes: (1) familial learning; (2) institutional education comprising: (a) formal institutions, including religious

institutions or Islamic boarding schools, up to the degree stage; as well as (b) unconventional organizations, such as majlis ta'lim, held in mosques and other venues.1) Academic Institutions Educational institutions are crucial entities in society, serving as vessels for the dissemination of ideal values (Endah Kesuma Dewi). According to the research paper, some madrasa instructors have the ability to bring about constructive change within their institutions. Others, on the other hand, oppose such changes because of the difficulties that might arise from the lack of proven beneficial changes. The curriculum is not just the administration's responsibility; teachers also have a role to play. The teacher is the only person aware of pupils' fundamental needs and knows approaches that may facilitate their comprehension of the lecture. Pakistan's Madrasas do not reduce social activities; they concentrate solely on students' education. Madrasa educators eschew activities that foster individual confidence and robust citizenship within society (Khalida Naaz, 2023). A research gap shows that Researchers haven't sufficiently studied how Pakistani madrassas can incorporate modern subjects, such as science, alongside social studies, into their customary religious curriculum without compromising their core Islamic values. Studies on madrassas' social contributions are scarce. These studies should explore improved governance along with greater community participation to increase social welfare, community engagement, and interfaith harmony. Also, we have a research question: can Pakistan's madrassas modernize their curricula by incorporating contemporary subjects while preserving their religious and ethnic foundations?

3. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design, using publicly available Google Trends data to explore patterns of public interest in Madrassas and religious education in Pakistan (Hamid & Nadeem, 2020; Nuti et al., 2014). It was possible to conduct a data-driven analysis of the frequency of searches for particular terms pertaining to religious and educational themes over a specified time period by using Google Trends, which reflected online discourse and public attention. The approach was chosen to complement traditional qualitative perspectives on Madrassa education with empirical evidence derived from digital search behavior.

The information was taken straight from Google Trends, a web-based analytics tool that offers normalized indices of search interest (<https://trends.google.com>). According to Google

Trends data, a search term's peak popularity within a specific time period and geographic area is represented by a number between 0 and 100 (Verma et al., 2018). The data are appropriate for comparative analysis of public attention because they reflect relative popularity rather than absolute search volumes. The study's timeframe was from January 1, 2020, to October 21, 2025, and its geographic focus was restricted to Pakistan (geo = "PK"). This five-year period was chosen to document changing search trends and possible connections to policy discussions, media coverage, or more general social and educational advancements pertaining to madrassas and education in Pakistan.

Based on their applicability to the subject and their ability to capture important facets of religious and educational discourse, five search terms were chosen (Mavragani et al., 2018). "Madrassa, Religious education Pakistan, Islamic education system, Islamic school, and Education reform Pakistan" were among them. In order to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the public interest in religious education, the selection was made to include both traditional and reform-oriented facets of education. Instead of restricting the data to images, news, or YouTube trends, the "Web Search" category was used to include general online searches, and each keyword was entered precisely as specified.

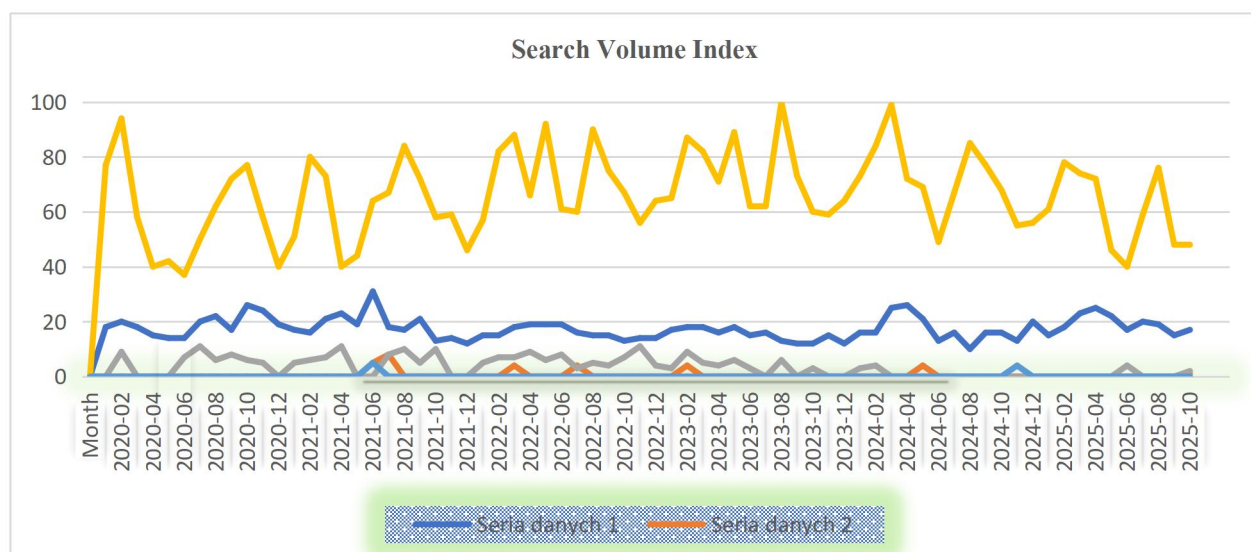


Figure 1. Search terms between 2020-2025

The Google Trends chart illustrates the comparative search interest for five selected terms — *Madrassa*, *Religious education Pakistan*, *Islamic education system*, *Islamic school*, and *Education reform Pakistan* — in Pakistan between 1 January 2020 and 21 October 2025. Each term is represented by a distinct color for visual clarity: blue for *Madrassa*, dark blue for *religious education in Pakistan*, grey for the *Islamic education system*, yellow for the *Islamic school*, and orange for *Education reform in Pakistan*.

The graph shows monthly averages of search interest for each of the five selected terms, normalized to 0-100. These values were analyzed to identify temporal fluctuations in public interest, compare relative popularity among search terms, and observe any notable spikes or declines corresponding to sociopolitical or educational events during the study period. The data were visualized using line and comparative charts in Excel to highlight both long-term trends and short-term variations. Through this approach, the study aimed to illustrate how public engagement with topics related to Madrassas and education reform evolved over time in Pakistan. While Google Trends offers a valuable lens for examining patterns in online search behavior, it has certain limitations (Rayhan). The data represent relative interest levels rather than absolute measures of participation or opinion, and they may be influenced by factors such as media coverage, public debates, or linguistic preferences (for instance, differences between Urdu and English search terms). Therefore, the findings derived from Google Trends should be interpreted as indicative of digital engagement and public attention rather than as direct evidence of broader societal attitudes or behaviors.

4. Results

In an evaluation of the Google trend data of the five selected search terms, Madrassa, Religious education Pakistan, Islamic education system, Islamic school, and Education reform Pakistan, apparent public interest trends were established based on the data of the Google trend analysis of the selected search terms between January 2020 and October 2025. Figure 1 illustrates the monthly dynamics of the search interest during this period. The term Islamic school, according to Google Trends, normalized and peaked as the most frequently searched term over the past five years. This implies that there is continued public interest in Islamic education in general, rather than in specific policies. The periodic changes in search interest for Islamic Schools do indicate a cyclical trend, which could be related to the academic year or seasonal religious holidays. Conversely, Madrassa consistently received follower-level interest, averaging 10 to 25 points on the Trends index. It increased in the short run in 2021 and 2023, which could have been driven by public debate or reform announcements in the field of religious education. The relative stability of this term also reflects the unchanging baseline engagement that stems from its substantial presence in Pakistani educational and spiritual discourse. The frequency search of the words Islamic education system and religious education in Pakistan was

lower, and the frequency usually remained at a low level of less than 15 on the index. This trend means that the idea of Islamic education in its entirety receives some coverage, but the overall population is less inclined to be interested in the formal and policy-related language. It is important to note that a slight increase in the Islamic education system occurred in the middle of 2022 and the end of 2024, which coincided with the resurgence of national debate on curriculum integration and madrassa reforms.

Lastly, compared to traditional or religious education terms, "Education reform Pakistan" showed intermittent, low-intensity search interest, indicating that the public pays less attention to policy reform narratives. The modest but discernible peaks in 2021 and 2023 might coincide with media coverage of madrassa modernization projects or national education conferences. In contrast to current reform-oriented or systemic discussions (E.g., Education reform in Pakistan, Islamic education system), the Google Trends analysis clearly demonstrates the public's preference for traditional, religiously framed educational topics (e.g., Islamic school, Madrassa). These results imply that, although there are discussions of modernization at the scholarly and policy levels, the general public's online participation remains more anchored in traditional frameworks for religious education.

Search Term	Trend Level (Jan 2020 – Oct 2025)	Peak Periods / Observations	Notes / Interpretation
Islamic school	High (frequently above 80)	Multiple peaks throughout five years; cyclical pattern	Strong, sustained public interest; possibly linked to academic calendar or religious seasons
Madrassa	Moderate (10–25)	Spikes in 2021 and 2023	Consistent baseline interest; reflects entrenched role in education/religion.
Religious Education Pakistan	Low (generally below 15)	Minor fluctuations	Policy-related term; less public engagement
Islamic education system	Low (generally below 15)	Peaks mid-2022 and late 2024	Minor public attention; linked to national curriculum/reform discussions
Education Reform Pakistan	Sporadic, low-intensity	Peaks in 2021 and 2023	Limited public interest; reform-focused narratives less engaging

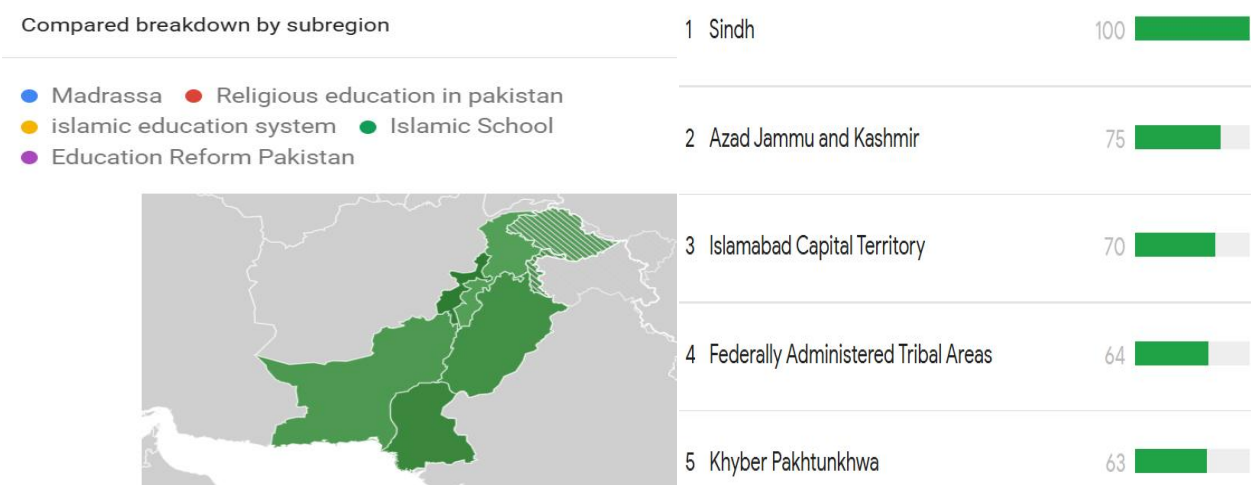
Table 1: Public Interest in Islamic and Education-Related Terms in Pakistan (Google Trends, 2020–2025)

5. Discussion

The Google Trends analysis of public interest (Tijerina et al., 2019) in Islamic and education-related search terms in Pakistan from January 2020 to October 2025 provides valuable insights into regional variations and the evolving dynamics of educational discourse. The data contains localized issues, culture, and the impact of regional policies, where various patterns of engagement are observed between the provinces.

5.1 Regional Variations in Search Interest

Islamic School: Across the country, the term "Islamic school" consistently generated the most search interest, with notable peaks in major cities like Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad (Figure 2). Given the variety of Islamic educational options available and the existence of both public and private sector institutions, these cities—which are distinguished by a blend of traditional and



modern educational institutions—probably see an increase in interest.

Figure 2: Search interest for “Islamic School” by province

Madrassa: In most of the areas, the eagerness toward "Madrassa" remained average but constant. The higher search volumes for madrasas in the historically and culturally important provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan (Figure 3) might be explained by the

historical and cultural significance of madrasas in these areas. Conversely, the term was less



widespread in urban areas with formal education systems

Figure 3: Search interest for “Madrassa” by province

The Islamic Education System and religious education in Pakistan had the lowest search frequency, with scores usually below 15 in the Google Trends index. It is also worth noting that regions with higher densities of religious institutions, e.g., Sindh and Punjab (Figures 4 and 5), were slightly more interested in these terms. It means there is a niche market that seeks religious education in specific locations, compared to the general population, which is less likely to be



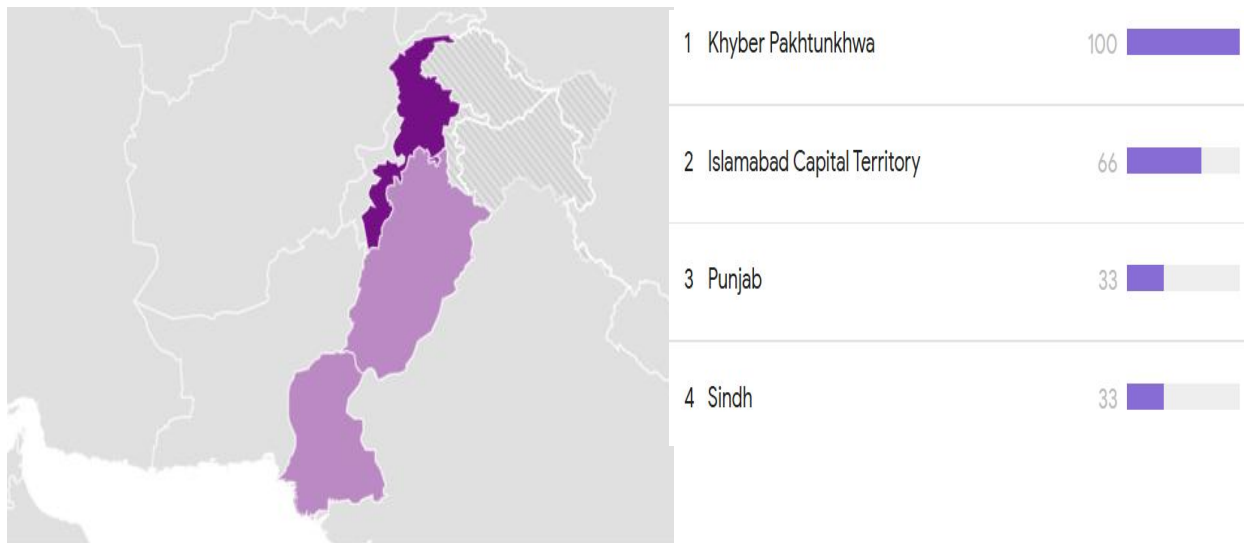
interested in formal or policy-based deliberations on the same topics.

Figure 4: Search interest for “Religious Education Pakistan” by province



Figure 5: Search interest for “Islamic Education System” by province

Pakistani Education Reform: This was a term that created periods of low intensity search in the country. There was, however, a short-lived rise in search interest in areas where education reforms were in progress, e.g. in some Sindh and Punjab districts (Figure 6). These fluctuations can be seen to influence localized campaigns to engage people with educational reform, which



may reflect regional education conferences or news on the modernization of madrassas.

Figure 6: Search interest for “Education Reform Pakistan” by province

5.2 Implications of Regional Disparities

The regional differences in search interest observed highlight the crucial role of context in understanding how the public interacts with educational subjects. There is also increased interest in terms such as Islamic school, which indicate wider societal involvement in the issue of Islamic education, and in urban centers with greater access to a wider range of educational resources and media with higher coverage. The term Madrassa, on the other hand, elicits great curiosity in other regions such as KP and Balochistan, which have had a long history of madrassa education, highlighting the importance of traditional religious education in these areas.

The fact that interest in terms such as Religious Education Pakistan and Education Reform Pakistan, which relate to policy-oriented or formal discussion, has decreased indicates a lack of connection between general awareness or involvement and policy-related measures. This gap might be due to a lack of awareness campaigns and media coverage, or to the perceived complexity of these subjects.

6. Conclusion

Using Google Trends data, this study examined public interest in madrassas and related educational subjects in Pakistan between January 1, 2020, and October 21, 2025. The study identified patterns of online engagement by analyzing five search terms: "Madrassa, Religious education Pakistan, Islamic education system, Islamic school, and Education reform Pakistan." These patterns show both chronic interest in traditional religious education and sporadic interest in educational reform. The persistent importance of religious schools in shaping social and educational norms is demonstrated by the term "Madrassa," which has consistently shown high search interest. On the other hand, search activity for terms related to reform varied in response to media coverage, policy announcements, and broader sociopolitical events, suggesting that public interest in educational reform is event-driven.

The findings lead to the observation of duality in madrassas in Pakistan, where religious and moral teaching and discourse are presented in the public domain on modernization and

reform. Also, this study provides a valuable understanding of the role of digital instruments such as Google Trends in supplementing traditional studies because it provides real-time data on how society can be perceived. The trends are a valuable tool to understand how the population is interested in social and educational matters, despite the fact that the data does not reflect the real attitude, but rather indicates the use of online search. These results can be used in conjunction with a survey, interviews, or field study in the future to get a more comprehensive picture of the effects of madrassas on social and educational norms in Pakistan.

Authors Contribution:

Sohaib Ullah conceptualized the study, designed the research framework, and led the data analysis and interpretation. Azmat Ullah contributed to the literature review, data collection, and methodological refinement. Philogene Manirahari assisted in data visualization, result validation, and the drafting and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors reviewed, edited, and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

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The study did not involve human participants or animals; therefore, ethical approval and informed consent were not required.

Data Availability Statement:

The data used in this study were obtained from publicly available Google Trends data (<https://trends.google.com>).

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Conflict of Interest:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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