



Family versus school effect on individual religiosity: Evidence from Pakistan



Masooda Bano^{a,*}, Emi Ferra^b

^a Oxford Department of International Development, Oxford University, 3 Mansfield Road, Oxford, OX1 3TB, UK

^b Department of Economics, IMT Institute for Advanced Studies Lucca, Piazza San Ponziano, 6, 55100 Lucca, Italy

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Madrasa and secular schools
Mother's education
Religious belief
Practical faith
Pakistan
South asia

ABSTRACT

This paper presents an empirical analysis of the impact of school type on students' levels of religiosity. We use a new dataset on female students of registered madrasas (Islamic schools) and secular schools from urban parts of Pakistan. On most counts of religious behavior the students from the two groups record broadly similar results. However, our probit analysis shows that when we control for students' socio-economic profile and attitudes, on few counts of religiosity madrasa effect does emerge but it disappears as soon as we control for parental level of education. Our findings support the hypothesis that parental education, especially mother's education, is key to modernising religious and cultural norms in conservative societies.

1. Introduction

Since September 11, in international security debates madrasas (Islamic schools) have been associated with Islamic militancy. This concern has been particularly strong about madrasas in Pakistan as many Taliban leaders were schooled in madrasas on the borderland of Pakistan and Afghanistan (Haqqani, 2005; Rashid, 2010; Ahmad, 2015). Consequently, many development agencies have attempted to invest in madrasa modernisation programmes.¹ Survey based studies aimed at comparing students from madrasas to those in modern schools and colleges in terms of their socio-economic background, attitudinal differences and the level of trust they have on their peers as well as the broader society have also grown (Mwaura et al., 2008; Asadullah et al., 2015; Delavande and Basit, 2015). The starting assumption guiding such interventions, and also many media reports, is that madrasa enrolment leads to heightened levels of religiosity (Falak, 2013; Ahmad, 2015). This assumption, however, is often not properly tested or is at best measured through very simplistic questions about participation in ritual practices. The results presented in this paper question such assertions.

Drawing on survey data on girls in final years of madrasa and modern colleges in urban Pakistan, we show that it is difficult to argue that levels of religiosity between the two groups record statistically significant differences. On most counts of religious behavior the stu-

dents from the two groups do not show statistically significant differences. In fact, even college girls show very high levels of religiosity, which is understandable in a society with high level of religious prevalence. Further, our probit analysis shows that when we control for students' socio-economic profile and attitudes, on few counts of religiosity madrasa effect does emerge but it disappears as soon as we control for parental level of education. Within the broader literature on sociology of education regarding school versus family effect in shaping individual religiosity, the findings of this study thus weigh in favour of the latter.

Traditionally drawing on evidence from Catholic or Jewish schools in the West, academics have been keen to demonstrate the effect of religious schools on students' social attitudes including their levels of religiosity (Tritter, 1992; Barrett et al., 2007). Competing evidence instead emphasizes the effect of household religiosity levels both in shaping the preference for religious schools (Cohen-Zada and Sander, 2007) as well as the levels of religiosity (Hill, 2011). Religious beliefs are transmitted from parents to children in both direct and indirect ways (Benson et al., 1989). Yet other studies have shown even broader societal factors have an impact on one's religiosity. One of them is the nation itself (Kelley and De Graaf, 1997) with its traditions and customs. Such factors tend to remain similar over the years and therefore reinforce people's way of living and thinking. Outside the nuclear family there are many figures that can also exercise influence such as

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: masooda.bano@qeh.ox.ac.uk (M. Bano).

¹ United States, for instance, provided an aid package to General Musharraf's government soon after September 11 for implementation of a madrasa reform program. Due to major distrust of the religious community on the United States as well as on General Musharraf the program failed to enlist most madrasas with the result that the program was closed in 2007 (Bano, 2007).

friends (Spilka et al., 2003) and classmates and teachers inside a school environment (Benson et al., 1989). Instead of finding any madrasa effect we find that mother's education has a positive effect on allowing girls to adopt more liberal religious norms.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 presents the context of Pakistan and the core features of the madrasa and the regular schooling system. Section 3 outlines the survey design. Section 4 presents some basic statistics. Section 5 presents the probit model and discusses the key results. Finally, section 6 concludes.

2. Background: secular schools and madrasas in Pakistan

Madrasas, Islamic schools, are a centuries old institution of learning in the Islamic world. Traditionally, madrasas were places for training the socio-political elites in Muslim societies covering modern as well as religious subjects (Hefner and Zaman, 2007). However, with the establishment of western educational institutions in Muslim countries during the colonial period, madrasas became marginalized and came to focus purely on study of religious subjects. Having lost its socio-economic significance, madrasas in the colonial and post-colonial period failed to attract the socially and economically more affluent classes drawing more and more children from lower income groups. In all Muslim countries, today some kind of madrasa network (formal or informal) aimed at imparting specialized Islamic knowledge runs in parallel to the state schooling system. The graduates of these institutions are trained mainly to take on a position as religious teachers, mosque imams, etc. However, in some countries, such as Pakistan, madrasas have become focus of international attention since September 11 because of an alleged association between madrasas and Islamic militancy.

Such concerns mainly stem from evidence that many of the Taliban leaders had studied in madrasas in Pakistan (Haqqani, 2005; Rashid, 2010; Ahmad, 2015). Actual profiles of militants in Pakistan, however, show that a very small number come from madrasas (Bano, 2012). There are also other concerns about madrasa education: focused purely on religious subjects, it is argued to breed sectarianism and intolerance and reinforce a patriarchal value system (Grare, 2007; Falak, 2013; Ahmad, 2015). Such concerns are also expressed about female madrasas, which unlike the male madrasas are normally not associated with militancy.² It is assumed that girls in madrasas absorb conservative Islamic norms, which restricts their well-being, such as allowing men to have four wives at any given time when women must secure a divorce before remarrying; women inheriting half the share of men; or need of two female witnesses against one male witness in matters of commerce. Girls in madrasas are argued to imbibe these restrictive religious norms and thereby limit their well-being.

Madrasas in Pakistan thus present a good case to test how participation in a religious versus secular school affects an individual's level of religiosity. A country of over 180 million, Pakistan shares many features common to developing countries. Despite rapid urbanization an estimated 62 percent of the population still residing in the rural areas. GDP per capita income during 2012–2013 was US\$ 1368 (Ministry of Education, 2014). State has traditionally prioritized spending on building military defense over investment in human capital. Education sector has thus consistently underperformed due to lack of adequate resources as well as poor governance. While there are many private institutions of excellence from primary to tertiary level, the state education system at the primary and secondary level is severely underperforming. Consequently, the education landscape in Pakistan is highly mixed. The overall literacy rate is only 58% and an estimated 6.7 million children remain out of school (Ministry of Education, 2014).

² One exception was Jamia Hafsa, a female madrasa in Islamabad that in 2007 supported an armed resistance against General Musharraf's government for the latter's unqualified support of US 'war on terror'.

The poor education standards in state schools have in turn made many parents even from poor families to send their children to low-fee private schools (Andrabi et al., 2006a). Accordingly to UNESCO Institute for Statistics, close to 35 percent of children in Pakistan³ are now going to private schools many of them catering to children from poor families (Andrabi et al., 2006a). Madrasas education is yet another alternative to the poor state schooling system. Starting from primary level, the bigger madrasas run all the way to providing specialized degrees in Islamic subjects, which are equivalent to a master degree in Islamic Studies from a government university. The actual number of madrasa students as share of total population is estimated to be relatively small (Andrabi et al., 2006b). However, their influence in the society through becoming religious teachers and preachers is much greater than reflected in the numbers. Female madrasas primarily offer a four-year specialized Islamic Studies program for girls in the age range of 16–20 years. The secular educational institution equivalent to female madrasas is female colleges, which offer a four-year bachelor degree program to girls of similar age. Girls come to both these institutions after completing their matric (Grade 10) in a high school thus having similar educational background.

The expansion in demand for female madrasas in recent years has been particularly strong. Female madrasa system started operating in Pakistan only in mid to late 1970s whereas the male madrasa network has operated in South Asia since the twelfth century. Yet within forty years, female madrasas have come to constitute 20 per cent of the total madrasa population in Pakistan. Given their growing numbers, it is thus important to assess concerns that madrasa education can restrict female agency by making women endorse restrictive gender norms.⁴ This paper thus focuses on comparing the religiosity between students of madrasas and college girls to see if being in a madrasa indeed increases girls' religiosity and their preference for absorbing more conservative religious norms that restrict their own agency.

3. Research design

The survey was implemented in Lahore and Rawalpindi, two important cities of Punjab, the most populated and politically resourceful province in Pakistan. Lahore is the provincial capital and Rawalpindi is twin city to Pakistan's federal capital, Islamabad. A leading madrasa and a leading college were selected in both the cities. The selected institutions were from among the most prominent institutions representative of their school type in each city. Delavande and Zafar (2015) in their study of trust levels between madrasa and college students in Pakistan use very similar rationale for selecting Lahore and Rawalpindi as the field sites and for focusing on the most prominent institutions of each type to develop their student sample. Students were selected randomly from the two school types using the school register. A total of 282 girls were selected from the two colleges and 195 girls were selected from the two madrasas. In each institution, the survey was implemented by seating all the sampled girls in large hall, normally made available by the participating school. The questions were read out aloud by a research assistant and students were required to mark their response directly on the questionnaire. It took on an average an hour to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire had six main sections: individual characteristics, family profile and socio-economic background, state of health, locus of control, levels of religiosity, and future aspirations.

Special thought was given when developing questions aimed at measuring religiosity. There is a rich literature, especially within sociology of religion, dedicated to identifying the various components of

³ Data available online, accessed on 11 December 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.PRIV.ZS>

⁴ For a discussion on how religious or cultural norms can make women form self-confining preferences see Kabeer (1999).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6841139>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6841139>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)