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## AN ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL ROLE IN DEVELOPING CHARACTER STRENGTH AND RELIGIOSITY AMONG STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY AND MADRASSA SYSTEM

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### ABSTRACT

*The main purpose of this study was to examine how institutions contribute to the development of character strength and religiosity among students in universities and madrassas in Punjab, Pakistan. A mixed-method research design was employed in a convergent manner. The study population was university and madrassas teachers and heads of the departments of Punjab, Pakistan. The study sample comprises 256 teachers/heads of institutions, which includes (128 from universities and 128 from madrassas) selected by a multi-stage sampling procedure. A semi-structured interview schedule that included 14 open-ended questions on aspects of character strength and religiosity was composed. The views of teachers and heads of institutions were gathered through a semi-structured interview schedule in order to determine the role of these institutions in promoting character strength and developing religiosity among students. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures, such as statistical package for the social sciences version 21. The thematic analysis was applied for emphasizing meaning, coding and interpretation. The findings of the research investigation indicate a significant role of teachers/heads of institutions in promoting character strength and developing religiosity among students. The study results show that the curriculum of the Bachelor of Sciences program does not possess sufficient content on character strength and religiosity. It revealed, most university teachers try to interpret these abilities to students' minds during routine classroom activities. There is a need to revise the course outlines at the Bachelor of Sciences level, and sufficient contents will also include therein. This study was limited to public universities and madrassas of the Sargodha division, Punjab-Pakistan. Future researchers can conduct large-scale, comprehensive research covering both public and private universities and madrassas in the Punjab province.*

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**KEYWORDS**

*Institutional role, developing religiosity, promoting character strength, madrassa students, university students*

**INTRODUCTION**

Character building is one of the main objectives of education across the world. In the case of Pakistan, almost all education policies and plans emphasized not only the development of students' character but also their religiosity as well. The concept of character has long been known in the fields of education and philosophy. During recent years, ongoing interest has been witnessed in the concept of character among scholars and practitioners in the field of positive psychology (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004, Damon & Lerner, 2008, Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006, Peterson & Seligman, 2004, Shubert, 2018). The character consists of personal effects, thoughts, and positive characteristics in human behaviour. Numerous scholars in the field of social sciences have investigated the relationship of character strength with various factors. Some of them studied justice, honesty, compassion, self-sacrifice, teamwork, and work ethics as well as tolerance as indicators of character strength, and their association with other variables like life satisfaction, self-esteem, forgiveness, and religiosity. They particularly tried to establish a relationship between different indicators of religiosity as precursors to developing character strength among people (Ahmad, 2009; Berthold and Ruch, 2014; Wisker, and Rosinaite, 2016; Sukidin, 2019; Goddard et al., 2012; Burks and Sellani, 2008). Character strength is a positive personality trait that has a positive impact on a student's emotional, rational, and operational well-being (Niemic, 2013; Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Character strength is important in helping to promote the active development of youth (Ahmed, 2009; Park, 2004 ). Character strength is a valuable asset that can help improve one's life by using one's abilities to help others (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ruch, 2020 & Wagner et al., 2020).

The concept of religious belief first comes from the Western tradition that reflects people's religious phenomena. The etymology of the word religiosity means "religious", and their roots are related to the Latin word religio. Conceptually, he describes religiosity as spirituality, piety, and obedience. The aspect of religiosity is devoted to religious beliefs and religious activities in the frustrated world of people (Farhan and Rofi, 2021). The religiosity of a person teaches the important values of religion and for individuals to believe in the truth of ALLAH (SWT), (Farhan and Rofi, 2021; Olufadi, 2017). Islam is a religion of peace and it has been a source of prosperity for humans and other creatures. In Islam there are three essential elements for everyone, firstly the belief in ALLAH (SWT) as a means of prayer, and secondly the imam, which guides people to the knowledge system and provides support for belief in ALLAH (SWT). Finally, there is Ehsan, who represents the reality of ethical

principles and spiritual concepts (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 6, Book 60, Number 300, Hadith 47). Religious observance is a vital part of human life. Islam has been credited with influencing the moral values, positive habits, and better lifestyles of many people. Religion Islam is the most popular religion in the modern world, and it has fifty Muslim countries in the world. Moreover, there is a large Muslim population living in the Asia region, and people follow the religion of Islam with sincerity. Therefore, with more than two hundred million inhabitants, Pakistan ranks third among the largest Muslim country. The majority of Muslims in Pakistan are about 96% of the world's Muslims. This makes Pakistan one of the largest Muslim countries in the world (Niazi et al., 2019; Ullah and Hameed, 2021).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Teaching of Character in Higher Education**

A good character in university students is important to provide the skills and examples needed to handle the difficulties and challenges of social life (Stallions & Yeats, 2003; Silay, 2013; Hidayati & Winarni, 2020). Students at universities realize moral values in their daily life (Healea, 2006), make responsible for sound decisions (Novianti, 2017), and are good citizens of their nation (Hidayati & Winarni, 2020). Although, university students with good character are making efforts to improve their academic achievement (Park, 2004). This circumstance explains how much a good character will contribute to the development of the cognitive as well as socio-emotional aspects. Good characters are reflected in good behaviour and are realized in everyday life (Skaggs et al., 2006). These good characters are encouraged the person to identify positive characters. Consequently, a good character must have three indivisible aspects: moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral attitude (Lickona, 1991). Aspects of moral knowledge relate to the formation of moral awareness, knowledge of moral values, knowledge of the opinions of others, moral thinking, and considering morality in decision-making (Hidayati & Winarni, 2020). Integrating character education into teaching and learning begins with good teachers who set examples for students (Stallions & Yeats, 2003).

In Pakistan, previous research explored the designs of curriculum and how they can help students in developing character (moral and social values). The study surveys private institutions of District Lahore, Pakistan, and reviews the curriculum for teaching English from different grades students. Therefore, this study also focuses on the teaching staff and administration of all campuses within the institutions to find the role of English textbooks provide support in the character-building of students. There are 76 participants of the study on an elementary level. The findings of the study display a positive contribution of the English text (Grade classes) for developing character building in students (Sajid & Hanif, 2020).

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### **Teaching about Religion in Higher Education**

The study on university students with diverse beliefs found that; students view university as a comfortable environment for expressing their beliefs, some have declared intolerance and claimed that they do not belong to them (Fosnacht and Broderick, (2017); Baratta, & Smith, (2019). The lack of belonging emphasizes what is central to some people: the idea that religious beliefs must be hidden in some way (Larson and Witham, (1999), Weller & Hooley, (2017); Baratta, & Smith, (2019). Fraser, (2009) claims that first-year university students should integrate competitive and contrasting mindsets, which can be broadly applied to student expectations and contrasting attitudes in higher education. This applies to all students, both academic and religious higher education setup. Based on this evidence, there are two distinct but interrelated questions about on-campus beliefs and the character an individual may have as a student or member of the faith. Growing demand for more inclusive curricula, pedagogy, and assessments that reflect student diversity in the higher education system (Caruana and Spurling (2007); Hockings, (2010); Baratta, & Smith, (2019).

Buzdar and Nadeem, (2019) examined the influence of religious beliefs on the prevalence of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) among young people. Through self-report measures, the prevalence of three forms of Allport's religious orientation, these three forms of seeking religious orientation, and seven symptoms of NPD were examined. A total of 618 randomly selected Muslim students from four public universities in Pakistan participated in the study. The survey results show that the existence of internal, external religious social orientations among Muslim youth in Pakistan is relatively high. The proportion of participants with symptoms of NPD was also higher. The study concluded that religious orientation significantly explains the difference in the prevalence of NPD symptoms among Muslim college students and has a direct impact on internal and external personal religious orientation and an indirect impact on seeking religious orientation.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

1. Are universities/madrassas playing pivotal role for developing religiosity and building character strength among students?

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study focused on establishing the role of institutions in developing character strength and religiosity among Bachelor of Science and Shahadat ul Alia & Shahadat ul Almiya students of university and madrassa system in Punjab, Pakistan.

### **Research Design**

In the research literature, different research designs can be found in the fields of social sciences and pedagogy, e.g. experimental research design, correlation design, cross-

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sectional research, and comparative survey (Omair, 2015). The convergent mixed-method research design was considered most appropriate for this study.

### Population of the Study

The province of Punjab has been administratively divided into 9 divisions. Sargodha division is one of them which is situated at the centre of the province, and 41 public sector universities (see table, 1) are working for under the Punjab Higher Education Commission (PHEC, 2019). National Information System for Education Management (2018), there are 32,272 deeni madaris in Pakistan, of which only 3% belong to the public sector.

**Table 1: Public sector universities in the Punjab province**

S. No.	Divisions in Punjab	Division wise public universities
1	Sargodha	1
2	Lahore	13
3	Multan	5
4	Faisalabad	5
5	Bahawalpur	4
6	D.G Khan	2
7	Sahiwal	2
8	Gujranwala	4
9	Rawalpindi	5
10	Mianwali	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>

Source: [http://punjabhec.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PHEC\\_Annual-report\\_2019](http://punjabhec.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PHEC_Annual-report_2019)

**Table 2: Types of Madrassas by Sect**

S.No	Sectarian/ Academic	
1	Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Arabia (Deobandi)	16800
2.	Tanzeem ul-Madaaris (Barelvi)	8000
3.	Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Salafia. (Ahl-e-Hadith)	1400
4.	Wafaq ul-Madaaris al-Shia (Shia)	413

Source: <http://educarepk.com/madarisinpakistan.html>

### Participants of the Study

The participant of the study was 256 teachers/heads of institutions (128 from universities and 128 from madrassas) selected by a multi-stage sampling procedure.

### Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect information from the respondents.

### Semi-structured interview schedule

The semi-structured interview schedule comprising 14 open-ended questions on aspects of character strength and religiosity was developed for teachers and heads of the departments.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher himself visited the universities and madrassas and obtained permission from the heads of the institutions. After getting permission and planning meeting time, interview schedules were distributed among the teachers and heads of the institutions of both the university and madrassas systems. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures, such as statistical package for the social sciences version 21. The thematic analysis was applied for emphasizing meaning, coding and interpretation.

## FINDINGS

### Role of Universities in developing character strength

The results of interviews are given below on the identified indicators- 'justice', 'honesty', 'compassion', 'self-sacrifice', 'teamwork', 'work ethics', 'forgiveness', 'dutifulness', 'egalitarianism', 'social support', 'comfort', and 'self-esteem'. The coding/labelling procedure was applied to the interview participants for analysis. Table 3 below shows the number of respondents. It also displays the specific code number of participants.

**Table: 3 Details of the Participants**

Institutions	Participants	No of participants	Coded/labelled
Universities	Heads of Departments	32	Teacher 1 to Teacher 32
	Teachers	96	Teacher 33 to Teacher 128

The following lines show the analysis of teachers' perception of the inclusion of content in the curriculum related to the development of character strength among university students.

### Inclusion of Content on Character Strength in the Curriculum

The nature of the content determines the nature of students' behaviour. In this study,

the respondents were asked to respond on whether the adequate content on character strength was present in the curriculum of their institutions or not? In response to this question, the majority of the respondents (93%, 119 out of 128) stated that there is no specific content on character strength in the existing curriculum. They stressed the need for introducing specific courses on character strength in the curriculum. For example, one of the respondents opined that,

*“Character building has become the least important thing in the university. We should consider mandatory activities related to character building for students. Presently there are, no specific courses in the curriculum for character building, only Islamic studies compulsory course is not enough at this level, there should be proper workshops on character building during the semesters” (Teacher 121).*

### **The Teaching of Justice as a Moral Value**

Values are deeply rooted in our **hearts**. They reflect our past experiences and forms the basis of our actions in life and our reactions to the world and the people around us. The central way to impart character strength among students is to teach certain values to them. Justice is among the core values to incarnate character strength among students. The analysis of the teacher’s views on the teaching of justice is given hereunder.

While answering the question ‘to what extent does university teach justice as a moral value to its students?’, university teachers (96%, 123 out of 128) claimed that there is no proper program for imparting justice to university students in the scheme of studies to accordingly in the course outlines. However, in certain programs, for example, B.Ed, some courses exist like the teaching of Islamic studies and teaching of Pakistan studies that bear some content on justice. While teaching their regular classes university teachers try to teach the value of justice to the students. For example, one of the participants mentioned,

*“University teachers should try to inculcate the sense of justice and other related values in students, personally through their short-term interaction. The values of character such as fairness, equality, respect, equity, politeness should be addressed in students at this stage. There should be a proper training program to induce such values in teachers first, then they should be encouraged to inculcate them into students throughout their stay at the campus.” (Teacher125)*

### **Honesty**

Honesty is understood as the desire to seek the truth, to pursue it, and to stop the falsification of all facts (Asmani et al., 2011; Pambayuningsih & Sumarni, 2021). For the present study honesty is defined as characteristics of a person when he possesses

‘truthfulness’, ‘sincerity’, ‘virtuousness’, ‘dignity’, and ‘self-esteem’. University teachers were inquired that, “In what way this university inculcates honesty among the students?”. Most of the teachers (89%, 115 out of 128) reported that the university has not designed specific courses for imparting ‘honesty’ to their students and the course outline do not provide much evidence in this regard. These values as a subsidiary to the main theme ‘character strength’ is regarded as part of a hidden curriculum that is not usually formulated as formal educational activities. For example, one of the university teachers proclaimed that,

*“In some cases, the cheater has to resubmit his assignments, and in some other cases, his assignments are rejected. Additionally, he has to face certain penalties” (Teacher 118).*

### **Promoting Compassion**

Booker and Perlin, (2021) conceptualize compassion in three dimensions. a) Respond to stress by emphasizing comfort rather than self-criticism. b) feeling connected to others in pain recognizing that everyone is not isolated in failure; c) represents a greater awareness of the current problem rather than overidentifying or ignoring it. The respondents were asked to share their views on the role of the university in promoting a sense of compassion among its students. Most of them (89%, 115 out of 128) respondents viewed that the university has not introduced any special course to promulgate ‘compassion’ and to make it a part of the students’ behaviour. The university teachers however try to develop different sub-values of compassion among students in an informal way. They try to teach a sense of ‘empathy’ and ‘sympathy’ to students when they assign group tasks to them.

*“The students are supposed to have a sympathetic attitude towards their group fellows and help them out of any kind of problem they in completing their individual task”. (Teacher, 25) and “Universities provide opportunities for talent in special functions of sports gala, cultural mela, and drama, etc”. (Teacher, 78)*

### **Promoting the Sense of Self-sacrifice**

Self-sacrifice is defined as the psychological will to suffer and sacrifice life for a cause. This definition shows that self-sacrifice has a motivation component as well as an ideological component (Bélanger et al., 2018). The university teachers were asked to report on the ways and mean their university uses to promote the sense of self-sacrifice among students. The respondents (96%, 123 out of 128) refused to authenticate any kind of formal practices for promoting the sense of self-sacrifice in the universities they said,

*“Most of the time teachers assign group activities to their students. The students from different areas and with varied natures tend to achieve some common objectives. In pursuance of this goal, they*



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*utilised their potential, prefer liking of others on their own, and support those how are likely to be lagging. These practices create a sense of 'oneness', 'love' for others, and a sense of 'kindness' towards other team members among them as they work as a unit". (Teacher, 88)*

### **Teamwork**

Goffman, (1959) used the term "teamwork" to refer to a group of people who work together to organize collaboration. Group of students works as a team that has an important relationship with other fellows, so they perceive interdependence and bonding based on their closeness to each other Halldorsson et al., (2017). The university teachers were asked to respond to the question "what does your institution do to develop the spirit of teamwork in your students?" They (90%, 116 out of 128) were of the view that most of the students have to work in groups with other fellows i.e. while performing project activities, completing group assignments and playing different games in the playground.

Despite the fact that the universities do not offer any kind of formal courses for promoting these abilities as the complementary factors of students' character strength. Much of the work has to be done by the teachers along with their regular academic activities in this regard. For instance, university teacher, 63 was of the opinion that,

*"It is unfortunate that these days universities have been closed due to pandemic COVID-19 and all the academic activities are being carried out through online mode which has shattered the confidence of students. The physical interaction of students is vital in promoting the sense of unity among students." (Teacher, 63)*

### **Work Ethics**

Work ethics can be interpreted as an expression of character, temperament, personality, and belief in something. This aspect applies not only to individuals but also to groups, even the public. Ethics are based on customs, cultural influences, and belief systems (Tasmara, 2002; Sapada and Nujum, 2018). Graduates are the product of the universities that have to serve the nation after getting their degrees. Their performance with respect to work ethics solely depends upon the quality and the nature of training attained in their mother institutions. The respondents were asked about the efforts their institutions were making to impart work ethics in the behaviour of their students. The majority of the university teachers proclaimed that the universities mainly try to master their students in their relevant fields and much of the focus is drawn on this point. To promote the character strength of students particularly with respect to developing work ethics is not a matter of great concern for them. For example, one of them stated that,

*"Universities do not focus on the character-building of students. You*

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*can see they are producing doctors, engineers, educationists, and lawyers, etc. But do not try to make them an ethically strong human being who can serve and care for fellow mankind''. (Teacher, 68)*

### **Role of Universities in developing religiosity**

#### **Inclusion of Content on Religiosity in the Curriculum**

In this study, the respondents were asked to respond on whether the adequate content on religiosity (forgiveness, dutifulness, egalitarian, social support, comfort, self-esteem) was present in the curriculum of their institutions or not? In response to this question on the extent of inclusion of content, most of the respondents (89%, 114 out of 128) stated that there is no specific content on religiosity in the existing curriculum. They stressed the need for introducing specific courses on religiosity in the curriculum. For example, one of the respondents opined that,

*“Actually, universities are not meant to serve as a religious institution that is why there is no shared religion-specific content in the curriculum except the Islamic studies department are any compulsory course like the teaching of Islamic studies. However, universities try to instil basic religious values among their students indirectly.” (Teacher, 106)*

#### **Promoting the Sense of Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is about an individual's ability to conquer anger and drive out thoughts of revenge for what someone has done to him (Warsah, 2020). While answering the question ‘to what extent does university impart forgiveness as a religious value to its students?’ university teachers (92%, 118 out of 128) stated that there is no compulsory course for the students to teach them ‘forgiveness’ as a religious value. Talking about the sub-themes of forgiveness they said that the university promotes the sense of ‘self-worth’ in students through its product. For example, one of the respondents opined that,

*“When students qualify a certain degree, they feel themselves a worthwhile member of the society which resultantly brings harmony and peace into their minds and they are more likely to have the sense of forgives for others”. (Teacher, 108)*

#### **Developing Dutifulness**

Dutifulness has been defined as obedience and conforming to norms of impulse control, concentration, planning, and the ability to defer gratification and follow rules (Rashid et al., 2014). The university teachers were asked to share their views on the ways and mean their universities use to inculcate dutifulness among their students. The university teachers said (90% 116 out of 128) that the regular teaching-learning activities help students to impart these abilities in their minds. For example,

*“The time limit assignments helped them learn ‘control’ over their*

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*senses and practises. They are forced to be goal-directed and planful. This is the only way to meet deadlines and this process is guided by the 'norms' and 'rules' as part of the culture in the universities". (Teacher, 118)*

### **Promoting Sense of Egalitarianism**

Rizal and Amin, (2017) explain egalitarianism as equality of people to doctrine an equal distribution of intrinsic values. Simply it represents the character of a person who prioritizes others upon himself. Responding to the question 'what kind of role this institution is playing in developing the sense of egalitarianism among students?', the university teachers (88% 113 out of 128) argued that by its very nature the university is a universal institution which is meant to serve people of all kinds from all places of the world and having diverse cultural background. Although, it is a matter of fact that most of the universities are not establish on a religious basis except their religion-specific departments. At the same time, it cannot be denied that universities do not introduce any course on egalitarianism.

*"Universities provide an opportunity to learn egalitarianism through their culture as part of the hidden curriculum which is reflected in the form different events on national and international days" (Teacher 106)*

### **Social Support**

It can be broadly defined as a universal form of social action that supports an individual to achieve the desired goal. University teachers were required about the efforts of the university for teaching a sense of social support to its students. Most of the respondents (94% 120 out of 128) opined that the universities do not offer any particular course for the very purpose. These themes might likely be highlighted in the overall learning outcomes of a program or course objectives.

*"It is a sad fact that the universities are focusing on pumping experts and professionals in the society without equipping them with the social and moral ethics. They are mechanical working in society in a way for the sake of sucking money from society. They are not serving the society in real sense they were supposed to." (Teacher, 54)*

They further added that these are university teachers who try to train their students on ethical and religious lines, but this is not done as their priority.

### **The Spirit of Comfort**

Comfort can be a state of direct integration by satisfying the need for liberation, ease, and transcendence from various human aspects, i.e. physical, mental, sociocultural, and environmental experiences (Pinto et al., 2017). In response to this question, they (70%, 90 out of 128) said that they cannot find any evidence in the course outline of the BS program that focuses to teach these values to the students. Nonetheless, the

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university organizes religious activities on different occasions like Eid Milad Un Nabi, Shab e Barrat, Shab e Miraj etc.

*“On these days special congregations are organized and the students are encouraged to attend them. Moreover, Salah (prayers) is offered on regular basis in the university and every university maintains the grand Masjid in it for this purpose”. (Teacher 22)*

### Developing Self-Esteem

The term self-esteem can reflect an individual's overall emotional evaluation of one's worth. It is closely linked with psychological awareness and well-being (Augustad, 2017). The university teachers were enquired about the efforts that are being made in the university to impart self-esteem in the behaviour of students. In response to the question most of them (75%, 96 out of 128) that self-esteem and its subthemes are not formally taught to the students as part of their regular studies. The co-curricular activities that are practised in the university presences are the main source of teaching these abilities to students. For example, university teacher 102 narrated,

*“Course outlines of university programs particularly BS do not possess any specific content for teaching self-esteem to students. They learn it through co-curricular activities and from the academic environment of the university. Unfortunately, we are not focusing upon the spiritual side of the overall development of our students and we are badly lagging in this area. I fear that we will have to pay for this negligence in near future.” (Teacher, 102)*

### Role of Madrassas in developing character strength

The results of interviews are given below on the identified indicators- ‘justice’, ‘honesty’, ‘compassion’, ‘self-sacrifice’, ‘teamwork’, ‘work ethics’, ‘forgiveness’, ‘dutifulness’, ‘egalitarianism’, ‘social support’, ‘comfort’, and ‘self-esteem’. The coding/labelling procedure was applied to the interview participants for analysis. Table 4 below shows the number of respondents. It also displays the specific code number of participants.

**Table: 4 Details of the Participants**

Institutions	Participants	No of participants	Coded/labelled
Madrassas	Heads of Departments (Nazim)	32	Madrasa Teacher 1 to Madrasa Teacher 32
	Muallim (Teachers)	96	Madrasa Teacher 33 to Madrasa Teacher 128

The following lines show the analysis of madrassa teachers' perception of the inclusion of content in the curriculum related to the development of character strength among madrassa students. The analysis of teachers' perspectives on the role of madrassas in developing character strength and religiosity among students. The thematic analysis technique was used to analyze the views of teachers.

### **Inclusion of Content on Character Strength in the Curriculum**

In this study, the respondents were asked to respond on whether the adequate content on character strength was present in the curriculum of their institutions or not? In response to this question, the majority of the respondents (80%, 102 out of 128) stated that there is sufficient content on character strength in the existing curriculum of madrassas because the fundamental purpose of the madrassas is to nurture their students in the way they become strong in their character and rich in spiritual values. For example, one of the respondents opined that,

*"Teachers in Madrassas create a spiritual atmosphere to help students develop character. Teachers in Madrassas motivate their students. Teachers and all Madrassa workers are part of the moral education community and follow the same values that they teach". (Madrassas Teacher 65)*

### **The Teaching of Justice as a Moral Value**

While answering the question 'to what extent does madrassa teach justice as a moral value to its students?' madrassa teachers (96%, 123 out of 128) claimed that the curriculum of madrassa is abundant with the content on justice. It is evident in the Qur'anic commandments and the sayings of the last Prophet P.B.U.H. One of the names of ALLAH ALMIGHTY is A'dil and on several occasions, HE (ALLAH SWT) has ordered the man to keep justice in society and be fair with his fellow people. For example,

*"The life of our Rasool (SAW) is full of the occurrences where even the non-believers opted Him as the judge for their disputes and what HE (SAW) decided was heartily accepted by the rival parties." (Madrassas Teacher, 35)*

### **Honesty**

Madrassa teachers were inquired that, "In what way does this madrassa inculcates honesty among the students?". Most of the teachers (94%, 121 out of 128) reported that teaching honesty is one of the fundamental features of educational activities in the madrassas. The curriculum of Shahadat ul Aliya and Shahadat ul Almiya maintain maximum content on honesty and its supplementary values. For example, one of the respondents viewed that,

*"The curriculum of madrassa is rich in providing content on different*

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*moral values like virtuousness, truthfulness, and dignity. The books of Ah Hades and Islamic history carry countless examples of practising these values.” (Madrassas Teacher, 30)*

### **Promoting Compassion**

The respondents were asked to share their views on the role of the madrassa in promoting a sense of compassion among its students. Most of them (91%, 116 out of 128) respondents viewed that compassion is among the values that are deemed high in the eyes of our Rasool SAW. Commonly, madrassa teachers relate incidents of practising compassion by our Holy Prophet (SAW) and His dignified Companions who showed compassion not only with the human beings but with the animals as well. For example,

*“A very famous example among them is the incident of sparrow bird whose baby birds were cart by a Shahbi (Companion of the Rasool SAW). On being noticed he was ordered by Prophet PBUH to hand baby sparrows to their mother. Till that time our Rasool SAW remained restless.” (Madrassas Teacher, 75)*

### **Promoting the Sense of Self-sacrifice**

The madrassa teachers were asked to report on the ways and mean their madrassa uses to promote the sense of self-sacrifice among students. The respondents (90%, 115 out of 128) authenticated that all the educational activities with respect to ethical training and the character-building rest with the role model for all mankind, our Holy Prophet (SAW) who is the real embodiment of self-sacrifice for all the worlds. One of the madrassa teachers supported his dew point by narrating a Hadees. He said,

*“It is a very famous saying of our Prophet (SAW) which means that HE was sent by ALLAH ALMIGHTY with the purpose to take the ethical level to its climax. HE bore countless difficulties and misbehaves of the Non-Muslims, but we cannot find even a single example of taking revenge by his blessed personality.” (Madrassas Teacher, 127)*

### **Teamwork**

The madrassa teachers were asked to respond to the question “what does your institution do to develop the spirit of teamwork in your students?” They (90%, 116 out of 128) were of the view that most of the students have to work in groups with other fellows i.e. while performing project activities, completing group assignments and playing different games in the playground.

For instance, madrassa teacher, 72 was of the opinion that,

*“It is unfortunate that these days madrassas have been closed due to pandemic COVID-19 which has shattered the confidence of students.*

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*The physical interaction of students is vital in promoting the sense of unity among students.’’ (Madrassas Teacher, 72)*

### **Work Ethics**

The respondents were asked about the efforts their institutions were making to impart work ethics in the behaviour of their students. Most of the madrassa teachers (83%, 106 out of 128) stated that much focus of their institutions has been and should be on training their students in line with guidelines promulgated by Islam to make them ethically strong by making them cognisant of their ‘rights’ and ‘responsibilities’. Moreover, madrassas try to promote the sense of ‘wellbeing’ among them and strengthen their overall ‘conduct’ and ‘character’ according to the teachings of Islam. To promote the character strength of students particularly with respect to developing work ethics has always been a matter of great concern for them. For example, one of them stated that,

*“The students graduating from the madrassas are expected to be strong in their work ethics as they have been trained for several years on how to care for and consider their rights and responsibilities, and how to present themselves as an example for other people around them”. (Madrassa Teacher, 99)*

### **Role of Madrassa in developing religiosity**

#### **Inclusion of Content on Religiosity in the Curriculum**

In response to this question on the extent of inclusion of content, most of the respondents (89%, 114 out of 128) stated that the madrassas are simply meant for teaching religious commandments. In Pakistan, madrassas are established to teach and propagate Islam and to train the next generation how to live their lives according to the preaching of Islam. Islam is not merely a religion but a complete code of life. It follows that religiosity is at the core of the madrassa’s curriculum and all the educational activities revolve around religion in every respect.

### **Promoting the Sense of Forgiveness**

While answering the question ‘to what extent does madrassa impart forgiveness as a religious value to its students?’ madrassa teachers (81%, 103 out of 128) stated that maximum emphasis is laid upon the religious values like ‘acceptance’ of other people’s viewpoint and showing ‘affection’ for them by not taking revenge of the harm they have done to him. They argue that it is ultimate to teach the sense of forgiveness to the students as a religious value because our Rasool (SAW) was the torchbearer of promoting harmony and forgiveness to the society. One of the madrassa teachers (respondent 73) reported that,

*“Our religious books especially, the Sihah e Sittah are full of the events and occurrences of forgiveness demonstrated by our Holy Prophet*



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*P.B.U.H. The teachers refer to these acts of forgiveness to incarnate the sense of forgiveness in the minds of our students. And this is the best way to do so because the students idealise him (SAW) and feel honoured to follow him.” (Madrassa Teacher, 110)*

### **Developing Dutifulness**

The madrassa teachers were asked to share their views on the ways and means their madrassas use to inculcate dutifulness among their students. They (90% 116 out of 128) said that mainly there are three ways to implant dutifulness in the minds of our students i) by coating the commandments of ALLAH ALMIGHTY and His Prophet (SAW) ii) narrating the noble deeds of our religious personalities and iii) through the behaviour of madrassa teachers as a practical example of Islamic teachings. They said,

*“The world cannot find an example better than the character of our Rasool SAW Who was an embodiment of dutifulness. On the occasion of His last sermon on 9<sup>th</sup> Zil Hajjah, 10 A.D. He asked His companions, ‘have I completed my task; have I performed my duty completely?’ Then He pointed his finger to the sky saying ‘O, ALLAH, be my witness I have completed my duties honestly.’” (Madrassa Teacher, 119)*

### **Promoting Sense of Egalitarianism**

Responding to the question ‘what kind of role this institution is playing in developing the sense of egalitarianism among students?, the madrassa teachers (96%, 122 out of 128) were of the view that madrassas offer services to their students with diverse languages and cultures and having various social and economic backgrounds. Besides this, Islam is a universal religion and the last Prophet of ALLAH (SAW) were sent to the entire world till the end of this universe. His preaching guide as to believe in the oneness of mankind as the sons and daughter of Adam (A.S.). Respondent no. 49 said that,

*“While delivering His last address He stated that all the people on this earth are one mankind. They are the sons of Adam and Adam was made with clay. There is no difference between white and the black, and the Arab and Ajam (Non-Arab).” (Madrassa Teacher, 49)*

### **Social Support**

Madrassa teachers were inquired about the efforts of the madrassa for teaching a sense of social support to its students. The majority of the respondents (90%, 117 out of 128) opined that most of the madrassas offer their services free of cost even providing their students boarding and lodging facilities. There are no regular or hidden charges for additional facilities. In addition to it, there are a number of madrassas who offer

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academic courses to their students coupled with the monthly scholarships/honorarium.

### **The Spirit of Comfort**

The study intended to probe into the perception of madrassa teachers about the efforts their institutions are making to develop the spirit of comfort in their students. In response to this question, (78%, 99 out of 128) they said that Islam is peace and comfort by its very nature. The origin of the word 'Islam' is 'Salam' which means peace and tranquillity and avoidance of harm and violence. Islam not only safeguards the lives, honour and assets of Muslims but the Non-Muslims as well who chose to live in the premises of a Muslim state. The Muslim rulers are responsible for ensuring the basic human rights of their inhabitants. The madrassas organize religious activities on different occasions like Eid Milad Un Nabi, Shab e Barrat, Shab e Miraj etc.

*“On these days special congregations are organized and the students are encouraged to attend them. Moreover, Salah (prayers) is offered on regular basis in the madrassa and every madrassa maintains a Masjid in it for this purpose”. (Madrassa Teacher, 82)*

### **Developing Self-Esteem**

The madrassa teachers were inquired about the efforts that are being made in the madrassas to impart self-esteem in the behaviour of their students. In response to the question most of them (88%, 112 out of 128) that the self-esteem and its subthemes like 'self-respect' and 'self-evaluation' are heavily focused in the madrassas. Islam demands the man to surrender before the commandments of ALLAH ALMIGHTY and firmly believe that HE is the only and sufficient to fulfil his needs; HE is the Omnipotent and all the powers rest with HIM. HE only has the right to be worshipped and possess ultimate powers to do what HE wants.

*“The one who submits himself to ALLAH ALMIGHTY maintains that no one can increase or decrease his respect except ALLAH (SWT) who will not let an obedient slave down before the world. He also knows that one day he will have to answer for his deeds in the court of his Lord (THE ALLAH). This state of mind triggers him the undergo self-evaluation process on a regular basis before he dies.” (Madrassa Teacher, 98)*

### **CONCLUSION**

The objective of the study was to determine the role of the institutions in developing character strength and religiosity among students. It was explored through the interviews of university and madrassa teachers/heads of the institutions. Findings of the study revealed that no specific courses are introduced by the universities nor any particular content has been included in the curriculum to inculcate character strength and religiosity among students. Universities are not meant to focus on building character and religiosity rather they are to produce professionals for various fields of

life. Character strength and religiosity are usually taught to university students in an informal way. For example, they learn the sense of teamwork while performing group activities or completing time-bound assignments; checking of similarity in their assignments help them learn honesty, dignity, virtuousness, and self-worth. Madrassa teachers viewed that the madrassas are established to provide religious education to students. Islam focuses on strengthening the character and promoting religiosity among people and so is the purpose of madrassas. The curriculum of madrassas is full of content on moral and ethical values as well as religious beliefs. Commonly, madrassa teachers quote Quranic verses, the sayings of our Rasool (SAW) and the incidents from the Islamic history that pertain to character strength and religiosity to teach their students these values. The role of teachers is another source of learning for the students. In addition to it, various religious events in the madrassas allow the students to participate in and to learn numerous more and religious values like justice, compassion, self-sacrifice, tolerance, and social support etc. These findings are unique in their nature as there is a scarcity of research work on this topic in Pakistan.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study indicates the following recommendations based on conclusions.

1. There is a need to revise the course outlines at the Bachelor of Sciences level and sufficient content on character strength and religiosity should be added therein. For this purpose, the curriculum review committee of HEC may include renowned religious scholars that have deep insight into religious teaching and the national and international demands.
2. The present study was delimited to public universities and madrassas of the Sargodha division, Pakistan. Future researchers can conduct large-scale, comprehensive research covering both public and private universities and madrassas in the Punjab province.

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