



# An Inside View of Qawmi Girls' Madrasa in Bangladesh: An Anthropological Study

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Department of Economics and Social Sciences in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Social Sciences in Anthropology

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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## Approval

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## **Abstract/ Executive Summary**

This research paper provides an idea of Qawmi Girls' madrasa in Bangladesh, demonstrating the construction of Muslim womanhood based on moral guidance and the devoted lifestyles of the madrasa's female students. As a result of madrasa education, Muslim women's participation in religious institutions and forums increases, raising the possibility of a bigger impact on religious life. My focus for this paper is to present an in-depth examination of madrasa's impact on their female students' post-madrasa work choices; how madrasa education enlightens females about various social and state activities that occur at various times; and how these social events affect madrasa girls. For this research some former students and graduates have been interviewed with a number of current madrasa students to present a full picture of the madrasa transforming function in its students' socio-religious lives, highlighting the importance of the ties between the madrasa and social life. This thesis paper examines if ideology plays a more important role in the formation of the religious and denominational alignment of the female madrasa in Bangladeshi society, as well as the working-class status of the girls and their parents based on literature, in-depth interviews, and observations. With limited resources, the madrasa instills a fresh understanding of religious responsibilities and common obligations towards society in the female students, as well as their localities, larger communities, and careers.

Keywords: Female Madrasa, Religion, Ideology. Student, Muslim womanhood, Career, Job, Society.

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

The second decade of the nineteenth century marks the beginning of the advancement of women's education. At that time, numerous debates, initiatives, and activities were aimed at releasing women from the shackles of societal oppression, restrictions, practices, and backwardness, which were seen as the chains that bound women. As a result, women's social position and self-development were expedited. Currently, in Bangladesh, 9 million girls are enrolled in education, with around 3 million of them studying in madrassas. For those unfamiliar with madrasa education, these traditional Islamic institutions are frequently underfunded and situated in more rural areas. The general public often thinks that madrasas are backward, responsible for propagating extreme ideologies and a haven for terrorism in the nation. It is crucial to address the problem of girls' education within the madrasa system since the high enrollment of female students implies that many parents with strong religious convictions choose to send their daughters to madrasas over regular schools. Due to strict gender segregation and Islamic standards, discussions with parents and past studies have shown that parents frequently believe that madrassas are safer for girls. The primary focus of this research is on the graduates and present students of Qawmi Madrasah's ability to get employment in Bangladesh following graduation. To carry out this research, the study employed qualitative in-depth personal interviews. Based on participant opinion and the literature that is currently available, it has been discovered that Madrasa graduates encounter a variety of types of prejudice and barriers to managing employment in their particular sectors. The educational level of Madrasah graduates is also significantly lower than that of regular graduates. Also, the participation in different job sectors shows the limited number of Qawmi female students. Furthermore, the main motive of Qawmi madrasa is focused on Islam and the

afterlife; they do not show much interest in choosing a career for this life. Although, in Islam, women are permitted to work under specific restrictions. An appropriate scenario, for instance, is when a woman is in need of money and her work does not make her overlook her significant position as a wife and mother. It has been asserted that it is the duty of the Muslim community to organize employment for women so that they can do it in an environment that respects their rights as outlined in the Quran and is Muslim culturally. Islamic law, on the other hand, allows women to work as long as they do it in a way that does not conflict with Islamic law, such as by working in non-prohibited sectors and as long as they dress modestly while working outside the home.

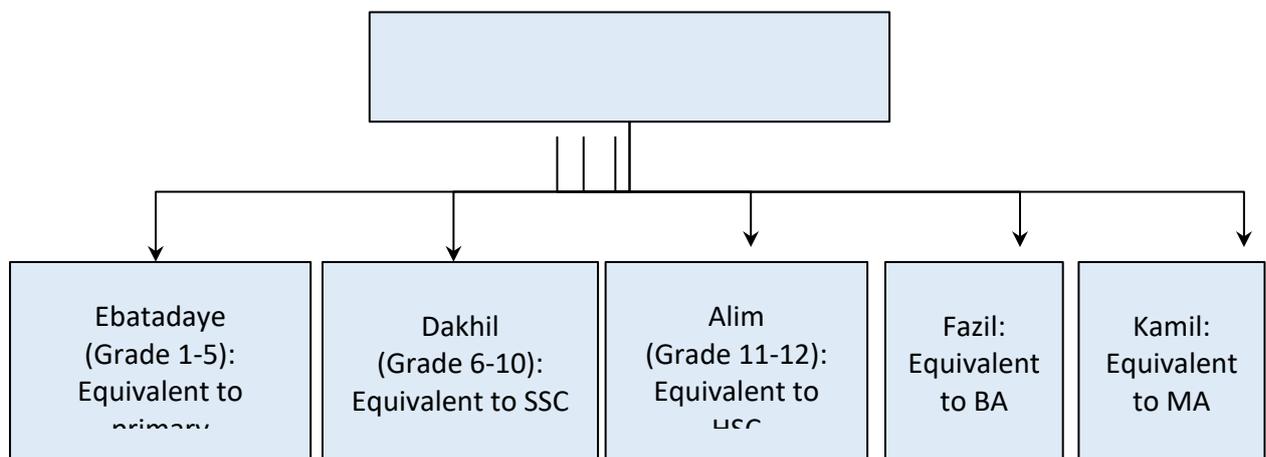
In Bangladesh, lower-middle-class or impoverished households make up most families, with girls enrolled in madrasas. If the girls had not attended the madrasa in such circumstances, their education might have ended. They now have access to other general courses, such as Bengali, English, and mathematics up to class 8, due to their affiliation with the madrasa. Additionally, families have to spend double, sometimes triple, what the government spends on a student in primary education. Unlike madrasas, especially Qawmi madrasas, do not have to bear any kind of expenses or a very small amount of expenses, especially for poor or poor families. It can be said to be forced or be an option for both parents and students. As well as religious thought on the one hand and low cost on the other-these are the two reasons he admitted children to madrasas, the children's parents.

In Bangladesh, there are mainly two kinds of madrasahs: i) Alia Madrasa & ii) Qawmi Madrasa.

## Alia Madrasa:

Alia madrasah is known as a government madrasa because it abides by the rules and regulations provided by the government. Though madrasas are typically used to spread Islamic knowledge, Alia Madrasa used to practice through General Education. Run by the government, they are known as “Government Alia Madrasas,” while those approved by and receiving grants from the government are called “Private Alia Madrasas”.

### *Degree-based classification of Aliya Madrasa:*



Alia Madrasa education is regulated by the Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board (BMEB), but Islamic University regulates Fazil and Kamil.

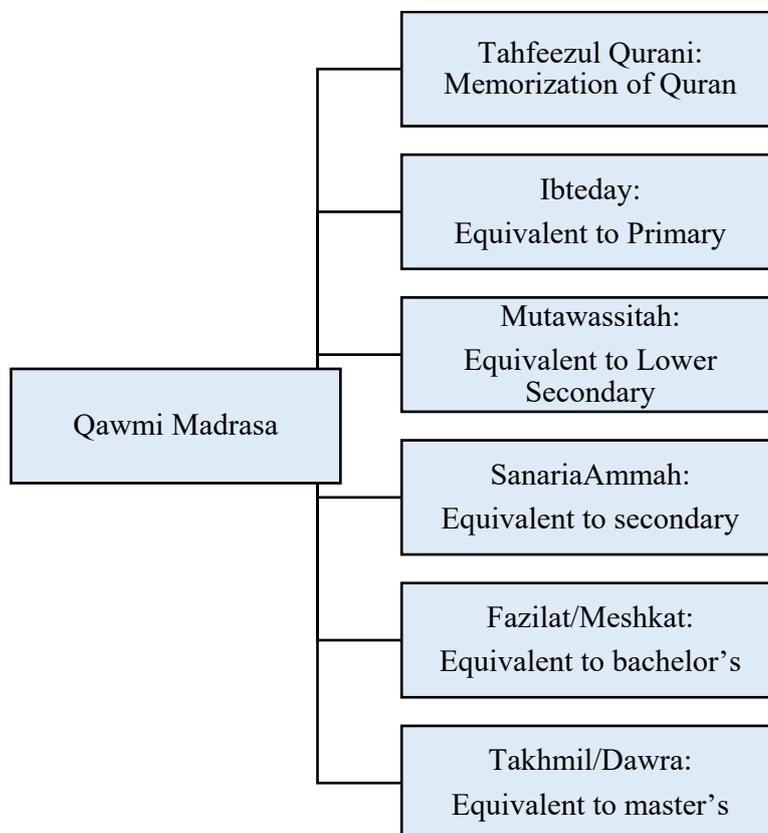
## Qawmi Madrasa:

Qawmi is from the Arabic word *qaum*, which means community. Due to the restricted character of their religious instruction, these Islamic seminaries in Bangladesh have historically been linked to the larger Islamic revivalist-reformist tradition in South Asia. Their caretakers are

ulema schooled either in local Qawmi madrasas of the Deobandi style or in the Deoband seminary in India, and they operate independently of the state's educational system (Begum and Kabir, 2015).

Qawmi Madrasa's education system practices the traditional Muslim education system of Bangladesh. Qawmi Madrasahs are non-governmental educational institutions. They represent a private system of Madrasah education in Qawmi Madrasas that has a duration of six years.

*A summary of the Qawmi Madrasa Education System:*



Moreover, the state funds alia madrasas with a modified Dars-e-Nizami curriculum that includes general education classes. This curriculum was developed in India by Mulla Nizamuddin Sihalwi and has since expanded throughout the Indian subcontinent and abroad. Alia madrasas, often referred to as mainstream madrasas, give their graduates an education

nearly similar to a general education, enabling them to compete for employment and admittance to universities. On the other hand, the Qawmi madrasas depend on contributions and charitable work rather than funding from and recognized by the government. We know very little about the range of graduates' access to higher education and the job market since Qawmi madrasas are not recognized by the state (Badrunnesha, 2015).

Madrasas have drawn a great deal of scholarly interest recently. However, the female Qawmi madrasa seeks to promote an idealized view of Muslim women. Muslim women's traditional roles as passive recipients of religious instruction are changed by such education into those of teachers and preachers. The gendered construction of Muslim womanhood in Bangladesh has only partially been undermined by Muslim women's increased engagement in religious realms (Begum & Kabir, 2012). However, this research will provide an ethnography of a Qawmi madrasa in Bangladesh, and the madrasa education to understand Muslim women's participation in religious institutions and forums will increase, raising the possibility of a more significant impact on religious life. My focus for this paper is to examine the madrasa's impact on female students' post-madrasa work choices.

The prospect of a broader influence on religious life is increased due to Muslim women's increased engagement in religious institutions and forums because of madrasa education. Bangladesh's current madrasa graduates' working circumstances, career prospects, obstacles, and potential inclusion strategies will be discussed here.

## **1.2 Research Question**

The focus of this paper is to present an in-depth examination of Qawmi madrasa's impact on their female students' post-madrasa work choices in Bangladesh, and the madrasa education to understand Muslim women's participation in religious institutions and forums increases, raising the possibility of a more significant impact on religious life. Hence, the research questions are:

1. How does the moral guidance and devoted lifestyle of the Madrasa affect or develop Muslim womanhood?
2. What is the role of madrasas in Bangladesh in their students' choice of post-madrasa Career?
3. How much is Madrasa education informing their female students about the various social occurrences that are taking place at different times and what is its impact on their viewpoint?

## **1.2 Methodology**

The reason I opted for this topic is to understand the transformational effect on Qawmi madrasa students during the educational process when students are subjected to a demanding religious life of education, discipline, and moral formation to become "good Muslims." Here, I've made an effort to learn more about the madrasa's ethos, academic tenor, and role in choosing post-madrasa careers.

In the time period of 2 weeks, interviews were conducted in person and lasted 30 minutes to 1 hour. Due to time constraints, it wasn't possible to meet with 2 of my interlocutors, hence the interviews were conducted through phone calls.

Hence, my research is exploratory research since it looks at how people interact with and interpret their surroundings. It is based on qualitative methods that incorporate interview data. In order to do this, I used my personal contacts to find research respondents, and the institutions were consequently selected using these connections. To expand on the main facts surrounding female madrasa students, a thorough search of publicly available information is going to be conducted, including published articles, journals, reports, news items, and press releases from various organizations. For the primary research, I used my personal connections to recruit participants for this research, and the institutions were chosen through these connections.

I approached 2 madrasas near Azimpur in Dhaka city. Also, Madrasa teachers and students, graduates, and parents of the students from Dhaka and Rajshahi were questioned as part of the research. This is the research's primary data source, and it will give firsthand knowledge regarding whether ideology plays a more critical role in the formation of the religious and denominational alignment of the female madrasa in Bangladeshi society.

The participants in the research were all from Dhaka except Samira Yasmin, but they were all connected to Qawmi institutions. My research focused mostly on women; the people I spoke with included current students, graduates, instructors, parents, and institutional administrators. I'll use pseudonyms to keep everyone's identities concealed because some participants want to remain private. Additionally, the interviews were recorded with my permission and are solely available to me.

**The table below shows my interlocutors' demographics:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Habib-ur Rahman	40	Dhaka	Madrassa Secretary
Firdousi Ara	45	Dhaka	Madrassa Director
Marufa Ahmed	30	Dhaka	Former teacher and graduate
Jannatul Mawa	27	Dhaka	Parent of student
Rafia Akhter	18	Dhaka	Student
Samira Yasmin	35	Rajshahi	Mother of student

Despite the fact that the people I spoke to were raised in various environments. Depending on the economic class an interlocutor belongs to, there are no noticeable significant differences in their experiences. They were exposed to somewhat diverse experiences growing up, nevertheless, because of the religiously based educational and social context in which they lived.

Every single interview was thoughtful and engaging. I learned about many viewpoints and obtained information on various individuals' perceptions of the Qawmi madrasa educational system and post-madrassa career objectives. However, time restrictions constrained the study because the number of participants had to be limited, which may have resulted in data bias and a lack of precision in my research.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

Numerous studies outline these institutions' historical, practical, and institutional functions concerning various social and political histories. Studies on the expanding trend of female madrasas, however, have not gotten as much attention. During the nineteenth century, social reform in the subcontinent focused on women's education. The discussion focused on the type and level of education that women should get rather than whether or not they should be educated at all. Madrasas have drawn much scholarly interest recently. A modern residential madrasa shows an example of how Muslim femininity is developed in Bangladesh for adolescent Muslim girls.

This madrasa's female students lead devout lives and exhibit ideals of moral direction. Muslim women are more likely to participate in religious organizations and forums thanks to madrasa education, which enhances the likelihood that their actions will have a broader influence on religious life. In Islam, women, like men, have a variety of obligations to the family and society since they are seen as one of the two main pillars of the community. Islam detests idleness, conceit, and idle people. In Islam, there is no distinction between men and women when it comes to work, and both are required to do it. In Islam, women have the choice to select their job, but they must be aware of specific limits related to their physical makeup when making that decision. Although women in Islam are free to choose their professions, there are some limitations because a married woman cannot pursue a career that would deny her husband the enjoyment of his conjugal rights or deny her children the love, care, and affection of their mother or the opportunity for a proper upbringing.

To explore madrasa education in modern and Islamic reformation in a South Asian context, I will use Francis Robinson's (2008) work. Here, he explains that in South Asia, particularly in India, women started to feel more empowered due to Islamic reform. However, they had to pay the cost of living with the struggle between their desire and capacity for action and the obligations of patriarchy and the symbolic requirements of the community.

The papers of Momotaj Begum and Humayun Kabir's Reflections on the Deobandi Reformist Agenda at a Female Qawmi Madrasa in Bangladesh have been utilized to support the paper's arguments. During the Colonial Period, Islamic scholars pushed for the establishment of separate Muslim women's religious education facilities. The Deobandi ulema's reformist rhetoric had a significant impact on madrasah education for women in South Asia. The research offers an anthropological description that shows how the concept of Muslim womanhood develops.

In addition to Usha Sanal and Farah's literature (2018) and Winckelmann's (2005) book, they illustrate the effects madrasah females' lives and careers have on both worldly and religious issues. Since the establishment of female madrasas, male madrasas have played a significant role in deciding the vocations of females in their post-madrasa lives.

Along with that, to explain the Madrasa students' view points on various events in the context of Bangladeshi Muslim women's nationalism, I would use Samia Huq (2021). We also discussed Huq's (2021) "*Gender and Islam: Obstacles and Possibilities*" for a better understanding of women in Islam.

Besides, I will use Talal Asad's theory of "practice" to indicate how an individual is positioned within social roles and determine their place within the social hierarchy with their religious practice, belief, and habit. Additionally, Asad contends that the ways in which these three elements are constructed from without, altered, or in any other way while embedded in social institutions are how identity building in communities occurs. This creation takes place as a result of demands from the social or academic environment, contextual practices in the classroom, and career path decisions.

Finally, in this paper, "habitus" theory is essential. Cultural contexts and situations are developed and replicated through habit. Internalized habit structures influence an individual's perception of the environment. They then transform into "subjects" who maintain and perpetuate the habit. In a diverse community, our cultural habits influence both our political choices and how we react to the outside environment. According to Bourdieu, habit is a conceptual framework in which norms compete with one another and vary in degree of explicitness (Bourdieu & Nice, 1977).

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is that it is research on the anthropological view on the career choice of Qawmi Madrasa students in the context of Qawmi Madrasa education in Bangladesh. This research was inspired by my own experiences, which led to the idea of studying the inside view of Qawmi Madrasa in Bangladesh. This research may be a benchmark for researchers studying both in the fields of education and anthropology in the context of Bangladesh.

## **1.5 Organization of the Study**

The research has been organized in the following way: In Chapter 1, the background context, the research questions, the theoretical framework, and the methodology can be found. Then in Chapter 2, the literature review section is positioned, where various articles, essays, and papers that have been helpful regarding this research are discussed. Chapter 3 deals with the findings discovered during fieldwork. Moving on to Chapter 4, which consists of the analysis and discussion section, the theoretical framework will be used to discuss the findings. Finally, Chapter 5 will consist of the conclusion section, which consists of the research summary, the recommendations section, the limitations section, and the further research section.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Anthropology of Education**

While Anthropology in Education is concerned with the development of theory in education, it is also concerned with the development of theory in Anthropology. These instances, like all other studies, are empiricist in character rather than isolated situations.

A framework used by the anthropology of education has roots in social, cultural, and linguistic anthropology and has a propensity to add to the body of information already present in these fields. According to Ashraf Alam et al. (2020), a framework used by the anthropology of education has roots in social, cultural, and linguistic anthropology and has a propensity to add to the body of information already present in these fields. Recent research has also looked at how educational settings affect children's socialization processes from the perspectives of

immigrant communities and mainstream ones; of a capitalist community and a socialist one; of individualist societies; and gender identities, among others. As places where many cultures meet, classrooms also serve to emphasize how some students are marginalized by these cultures while simultaneously emphasizing the agency that students can use to challenge them. Since language is the foundation of interaction, it holds a vital place in the scope of classrooms as cultures. The anthropology of education can provide types of information that are practical from a political and administrative standpoint. Critical policy appropriation can be of utmost relevance at a time when the corporate power goal of the neoliberal movement and the growth of markets for public resources pose the greatest danger to democracy.

With more than 3.9 million females enrolled in secondary school in 2005, up from 1.1 million in 1991, Bangladesh is one of the nations with the highest growth in the number of girls receiving an education globally. The increase and re-centering of madrasa education, or reformed madrasas, where girls are taught in accordance with Islamic law, is one significant but underappreciated factor driving this expansion. Madrasa education has become the preferred type of education for the most religiously inclined people in the country, with over 1.5 million girls in the country attending school in Alia (reformed) madrasas. Madrasas provide parents with peace of mind when it comes to worries about safeguarding their daughters' honor while in school by adhering to Islamic religious beliefs, such as those concerning girls and boys needing to be in separate areas. Madrasas, which provide both secular and religious education, provide these parents with a consoling counterbalance to the social effects of an increasingly globalizing society (Badrunnesha, 2015).

## **2.2 Madrasa of Ethnography**

Muslim civilizations have gone through phases of regeneration since the advent of the Islamic era (*tajdid*). Muslim societies all across the world have been undergoing a protracted and more

intense process of regeneration since the seventeenth century. This has been said in a variety of circumstances and ways. It has entailed attempts by political elites with pressing concerns to address Western problems to transform Islamic knowledge and institutions in light of Western norms, a process known as Islamic modernism. It has meant “the reconstruction of societies or the reform of individual conduct in terms of basic religious principles” among ulama and Sufis, whose social foundation may lie in urban, commercial, or tribal groups, a process known as reformism (Robinson, 2008).

Islamic reformers looked for methods to modernize tradition and revelation during the 20th century. The focus on individual will came about when Muslims realized that they could only establish an Islamic civilization on earth via their own will in a world without governmental authority. Islam’s justification from scripturalism to its development as an ideology reviewing the information passed down from the past to determine what should be utilized to enable them to function properly in the present was a primary issue for all reformers. At the Deoband school level, it only represented a change in the madrasa curriculum's emphasis away from religion and philosophy and the achievements of medieval Persian literature.

The will of women was just as important in the world after the reformation as the will of males. When non-Muslims came to dominate public space, women transitioned from their prior role as challenges to the conduct of Muslim society to that of the mistresses of private Islamic space. Introspective figures of Islam began to think that women should study Islam at the same level as males and do the same type of introspection. The will of women was just as important in the world after the reformation as the will of men. Under colonial control, women bore a disproportionately large share of the burden of creating a Muslim community. Women changed

from being dangers to the order of Muslim society to becoming the masters of private Islamic space when non-Muslims came to dominate public space (Robinson, 2008).

Robinson (2008) demonstrates that in South Asia, particularly in India, women started to feel more empowered as a result of Islamic reform, but nearly always at the cost of having to live with the struggle between their desire and capacity for action and the obligations of patriarchy and the symbolic requirements of the community. These conflicts have likely spread over time despite historically being most severe among women from wealthy families. The Deobandi women's madrasas on the Indian subcontinent allowed women in India and overseas to both become instructors in girls' madrasas and to establish their own madrasas, despite their emphasis on severe purdah and patriarchal authority. The goal is for them to become instructors, leaders, and independent religious authorities, in addition to becoming founders of madrasas or even practitioners of Unani medicine.

Nevertheless, men and women actively adopted some practices and ideas that they associated with 'true' Islam while discarding others that they could not. The shari'a had to be unified to rule on earth, according to this conception of Islam as a system, which is also often referred to as an ideology.

The education of Muslim women became a major concern for social reformers on the Indian subcontinent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Reformist Islamic intellectuals at the Darul Uloom Deoband in northern India were trailblazing figures who argued that Muslim women should receive religious instruction. The pedagogy of madrasa education in South Asia, particularly Bangladesh, was significantly influenced by a large number of Deobandi thinkers who also created standards for the perfect Muslim lady. During the nineteenth century, social reform in the subcontinent focused on women's education. Before 1857, a large number of

Muslim reformers believed that women's education had distinct advantages: first, women would improve as wives, mothers, and housewives; second, women would improve as Muslims and as role models for their children in terms of morality and ethics; and third, women would improve as they are more informed of their obligations under Islamic law. As they were concerned about eroding the holy, modernist Muslim authorities did not always encourage Muslim women to pursue an education outside the house (Begum & Kabir, 2012).

Madrasas have drawn a great deal of scholarly interest recently. Numerous studies discuss these institutions' historical, operational, and functional responsibilities in relation to various social and political trajectories. However, research on the expanding trend of female madrasas has not gotten as much attention. The function of madrasas in Bangladeshi society has only lately been explained by certain academics. The female Qawmi madrasa strives to create the ideal Muslim woman, the individual Muslim woman, as anticipated on the basis of moral instruction and Islamic precepts, whereby women would serve as the influencers of an Islamic ethos in the domestic sphere as well as within the confines of their limited mobility in the public sphere (Begum & Kabir, 2012).

The instruction of correct Islamic etiquette is thoroughly ingrained in the disciplinary policies and guidelines of the school, in addition to the advice books and manuals that describe Islamic precepts and rites. An essential source of '*adab*' is the madrasah's norms and regulations, which the students are required to observe. In accordance with Islamic etiquette, the madrasah's guidebook contains guidelines for female students on what to wear, who may accompany her outside or at home, how to walk in the street, and other considerations. Islamic guidelines for daily living are outlined in texts including the *Malabudda Minhu*, *Bihishti Zewar*, *Talimul Islam*, and the Hadith compendiums. These texts also reveal moral principles. Also, Madrasah

students are given idealized depictions of Muslim womanhood from the biographies of Muslim women who lived in the early era of Islamic history. Outside of the classroom, they are encouraged to read this literature (Begum & Kabir 2012).

While there is a lot of literature on South Asian boys' madrasas, there is hardly any on madrasas for females, a relatively new but growing issue. A thorough, scientifically supported examination of a particular madrasa, Winkelmann's (2005) work offers important ethnographic information and insights that are sometimes lacking in generalized portrayals of madrasas. The author connects this madrasa and the kind of "Islamic womanhood" it aspires to with conversations among Indian Muslim reformers troubled by the "backwardness" of Muslim women's education from the late 19th century onwards. These reformers, most of whom were men, insisted that Islam prescribed education for both men and women. As a result, the Muslim woman came to be seen as the first teacher of her children and a crucial component of the growth and destiny of the Muslim community in general. Initially, girls were trained in Islamic theology and jurisprudence in public, full-time, frequently residential madrasas. Winkelmann (2005) argues the founding and growth of girls' madrasas in India must be viewed in a broader context, reflecting the effect of previous Muslim reformist discourses as well as other complicated absorption or Hinduization, promoted in many ways by the state and right-wing Hindu organizations, and processes of upward social mobility reflected in the form of attempts by "low" caste Muslim communities to replicate the standards associated historically with the "Ashraf" class. The Tablighi Jamaat, which has a particular notion of conventional Islamic womanhood, was noted by the author. According to the author, the ideal Muslim woman must adhere to rigorous 'purdah' and refrain from speaking or acting in front of "strange" ('ghayr') males. Winkelmann (2005) places a strong emphasis on the need to teach students good manners, which develop morality, modesty, and respect for authority in them. For lower-class students from rural or underprivileged urban communities attending these madrasas, this

ideology and the language that supports it became a strategy for gaining social mobility and better marriage chances. According to Winkelman (2005), the notion of girls' empowerment at the madrasa is problematic because it is only made feasible by their willingness to learn. In this situation, empowerment must be viewed in the context of devotional and pious values.

According to the norms and guidelines outlined in Tablighi tracts and the widely-read book for women, the *Bahishti Zewar*, written by the Deobandi scholar Ashraf Ali, her major area is her house, and her primary function in life is being a good, devout mother and wife. However, the author aims to provide readers a glimpse into how people connected to madrasas perceive their own environment. Nevertheless, certain gaps still exist. The conversation would have been more grounded and relevant if Tablighi's writings that describe the perfect Muslim woman and the ideal Muslim male had been closely examined.

Moreover, the present research on South Asian madrasas, which examines the social dimensions of these religious institutions, is mostly centered on madrasas for male students, as I have already stated. In South Asia, madrasas are a separate educational system where students can study Islam. The Quran, Islamic theology, Islamic law, and Islamic worship practices are all available for study. In the past thirty years, women's madrassas have grown to be more prevalent than boys' madrassas, and the proportion of females enrolled in madrassas has dramatically increased in South Asia. The article "Discipline and Nurture: Living in a Girls' Madrasa, Living in Community" by Usha Sanyal and Sumbul Farah offers a thorough description of two madrasas for women, where they concentrate on the modified understanding and add a very important component to the research on madrasas. In order to become "pious subjects," students must submit themselves to a difficult and rigorous life of learning, discipline, and ethical formation.

Women's education, the domestic environment, and the community must all be considered when discussing the implications of Muslim women's religious education for social transformation. Women exercise their agency in a setting where gender norms restrict their options. This agency was earned via the acquisition of religious knowledge. After finishing their education, female madrasa graduates had to maintain a balance between their passion for teaching Islamic ideals and the cultural norms and requirements of their individual backgrounds with regard to age, gender, and responsibilities to their parents, in-laws, and spouses. As students gain more understanding of the shari'a, madrasas are seen as opportunities for them to advance. On the other hand, even while this education offers them agency, this agency is constrained by societal standards (Sanyal & Farah, 2018).

A useful approach to the author's description of the fieldwork results and an image that nicely portrays the actual experience of the female students and graduates. She details the numerous efforts made by the madrasa's male management and its devoted workers, which are frequently disregarded in studies. A thorough description of the madrasa's daily prayer and study schedule is given after that. Following these thorough field accounts, the authors go on to discuss how young South Asian women integrate the madrasa's teachings into their everyday lives and keep a balance between their roles in the public and private spheres. The author demonstrates how the incorporation of the madrasa's worldview among the students leads to a sense of duty to impart what they have learnt. The lessons they learn define the purpose of life for the graduates as well as their responsibilities and rights in society. The graduates highlighted, however, have taken quite diverse paths. For instance, some continued teaching in madrasas while others left these rigorous and underpaid teaching positions because they were too difficult. In both situations, madrasa graduates are conscious of the need to strike a careful balance between their desire to share what they have learned and society's expectations of compliance, the article notes, even if gaining Islamic knowledge is powerful. They must exercise caution not to

transgress societal norms and gender and age hierarchies. The process of change involves a long-term compromise between the community's expectations of a woman's position and the madrasa students' practice of text-based Sharia law knowledge. The research by Sanyal and Farah (2018) explains the subtle distinctions between male madrasas, which emphasize developing community profiles via discussion and competitiveness, and female madrasas, which use more controlled propaganda while displaying their social identity through devotion and tradition.

Also, Sanyal & Farha's (2018) assertion that no madrasa particularly addresses nationalism and national history is one of the most crucial points they make in their paper. They are therefore ignorant of the connection between citizenship education and history education. They are unaware of the connections between the nation and its people, how they relate to one another, and what their obligations are to the state as citizens. And from this perspective, the perception that madrasas cannot generate good citizens arises because Islamic history is given greater weight in madrasa education than national history, which is problematic. Many individuals believe that by teaching Islamic history rather than national history, madrasas are producing regional citizens rather than citizens of the country.

### **2.3 Women and Islam**

In Islam, both religious agents and numerous "secular" policies emphasize that the sanctity of the family is vitally essential. Families based on heterosexual monogamous partnerships have become the dominant norm in the majority of post-colonial Muslim countries, but orthodox groups continue to uphold the Qur'anic sanction of a limit of four marriages. These marriage and family beliefs, which elevate women, domestic duties, and strong parental power over children, are predicated on the male breadwinner paradigm (Huq, 2021).

Islam's need to reexamine tradition can be driven by a number of different aims and objectives. There is a sincere effort to prevent temporality from being shaped by the brief period of post-Enlightenment modernity. There are many realities that Muslims encounter in their daily lives, and these realities often include the boundaries of pain, pleasure, and spiritual growth rather than abstract conceptions of modernity and the Enlightenment (Huq, 2021).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Findings**

#### **3.1 Impact of Moral Guidelines and Devoted Lifestyles**

At the outset of my interview, I attempted to assess the impact of their “moral guidance” and “devoted lifestyle” on my respondent. I have tried to find detailed answers through the answers and life pictures of my respondents to understand how following the rules and dedicating one's life to the path of religion affects their outlook on life. How it started, how they are currently moving forward, and how it affects their outlook on life. One of my goals was to learn how firmly this way of life predominates among those who attend madrasahs, especially if doing so would require them to follow these rules more rigidly.

Four out of six of my respondents strongly believe that a madrasa's religious education may direct a girl toward religion in a way that is not achievable through any other means. When questioned how the madrasa environment is assisting females in their private lives, Firdousi-ara (50), who is known as ‘Boro Apa’ in her madrasa, said that their sole goal is to instruct

them in how to lead honorably in their in-laws and after life. Here, it is taught how a girl should develop and establish herself on the path of Islam. There is nothing more crucial than a woman having a solid understanding of her own religious subjects in order to properly raise her children. After hearing this from “Boro Apa,” it was obvious that the family had social prestige as a result of the daughter’s madrasa education.

Islamic doctrine also offers another instrument to support a Muslim in staying on a good path. This is the idea of ‘*taqwa*.’ The greatest way to characterize ‘*taqwa*’ is as “fear of Allah.” However, that does not imply that the Almighty should be feared or that he is dreadful. Instead, it needs to be seen as the dread of losing Allah’s love. Although Allah has unending affection for all His creations, a Muslim should be mindful that if she disobeys His instructions, she risks losing His protection and bounty. *Taqwa* must permeate all aspects of a person’s everyday life before they may be considered completely virtuous.

According to Jannatul (27), complete life guidelines are taught in the Hadith and the Quran. And maintaining them in life through everyday practice entails leading the finest possible life. She registered both of her daughters in a madrasa for them to learn the Quran properly and thoroughly. Jannat and her husband think their daughters can receive a broad education in the future, but they should reinforce their religious foundation now while they are young, because kids might not be as interested in this life choice as adults.

### **3.2 Influence of Religious Education While Choosing a Career**

Many Muslims lack proper knowledge about Islam, making assumptions based on their limited information. Muslim women, like Muslim men, are expected to perform various duties for the family and society since they are one of the two main pillars of society. Laziness, conceit, and idle individuals are not tolerated in Islam. Working is an obligation for both men and women in Islam, and there is no distinction between the two when it comes to it. In Islam, women are free to pick their professions, but they must be aware of specific absolute boundaries when making this decision. Being precious, delicate, and lovely individuals, they must be more aware before entering any career field. According to Shari'a, Muslim women are completely permitted to work or hold a job, and doing so has no negative effects. However, just as Islam has permitted a lot of things with certain terms and conditions, it has also permitted women to work, but with some norms and restrictions that women must adhere to. Some of the prerequisites include that ladies must obtain their husbands' consent before working and that if their husbands forbid it, the wives must comply. Furthermore, even if their spouses let them work, there are some roles that fall to women. For instance, women should take care of their bodies and the faith that their husbands have placed in them. In addition, women should carefully consider their job's nature to see if it supports or contradicts Islamic principles. As Rafia says, "women are like the pearl inside the oyster. Just as oysters protect pearls, purdah protects women." With this in mind, she believes that in the future she wants to have a job where she can be comfortable, and in that case, teaching at a madrasah seems to be the ideal fit for her. Rafia also asserts that it is crucial to have Allah's blessing on a person's career and income, regardless of the field in which they choose to work.

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variety of duties for the family and society since they are one of the two main pillars of society. Laziness, conceit, and idle individuals are not tolerated in Islam. Working is an obligation for both men and women in Islam, and there is no distinction between the two when it comes to it. In Islam, women are free to pick their professions, but they must be aware of specific absolute boundaries when making this decision. Being precious, delicate, and lovely individuals, they must be more aware before entering any career field.

According to Shari'a, Muslim women are completely permitted to work or hold a job, and doing so has no negative effects. However, just as Islam has permitted many things with certain terms and conditions, it has also permitted women to work, but with some norms and restrictions that women must adhere to. Some prerequisites include that ladies must obtain their husbands' consent before working and that if their husbands forbid it, the wives must comply. Furthermore, even if their spouses let them work, some roles fell to the women. For instance, women should take care of their bodies and the faith that their husbands have placed in them. In addition, women should carefully consider their job's nature to see if it supports or contradicts Islamic principles. As Rafia says, *"women are like the pearl inside the oyster. Just as oysters protect pearls, purdah protects women."* With this in mind, she believes that in the future, she wants to have a job where she can be comfortable, and in that case, teaching at a madrasah seems to be the ideal fit for her.

Rafia also asserts that it is crucial to have Allah's blessing on a person's career and income, regardless of the field in which they choose to work. Although women in Islam are free to choose their professions, there are some limitations because a married woman cannot pursue a career that would deny her husband the enjoyment of his conjugal rights or deny her children the love, care, and affection of their mother or the opportunity for a proper upbringing. Also,

one must fulfill parental responsibilities prior to marriage. As Rafia says, “I am working with the consent of my father and mother. They are happy with it, and I find peace in my work. I need to work with my parents' permission with the Purdah.” She is currently working as a part-time teacher in a madrasa.

On the other hand, many women believe they might not be able to continue the Quran in the same way every day if they chose any other career, which is one of the reasons they decide to teach at the madrasa. She can, however, instruct madrasa students in Quran recitation while continuing her regular practice. According to Marufa, most of the graduates think that if they get jobs in other areas, they will not have time to practice Quran regularly, and they will gradually forget. Also, if someone memorizes the Quran and forgets, they will be severely punished in the afterlife. That's why they don't want to take jobs in other areas. In addition, most of the girls from madrasas get married while they are still students in hefz khana because families in our country tend to think that girls from madrasas are good choices as someone's wife.

Moreover, along with learning the Quran, Qawmi madrasa girls are also given instruction in Bengali, English, mathematics, sociology, geography, and history. As modeled by Qawmi Madrasas, the Mahila Madrasah Syllabus Curriculum In the 1990s, the nation adopted the Mahila Madrasah system. People once believed that orphans and disadvantaged children would attend Qawmi Madrasas to study. According to Habibur Rahman, the curriculum for all madrasas used to be the same. Only Arabic, Urdu, and Persian were covered in class. It was not permitted to read English. They are now thinking differently.

When asked about the work space for female students, “There is less for female madrasa students. They are exclusively in charge of teaching in women’s madrasas. Their employment opportunities are growing along with the number of madrasas throughout the country,” said Habib-ur Rahman.

### **3.3 Viewpoint on Social and State Events**

In Islam, women have the right to vote, the ability to advise on governmental decisions, and the ability to correct bad decisions in politics. They must also be granted the liberty to express their opinions. Some academics claim that she is permitted to take part in all political activities with the exception of holding the office of head of state, top judge, or commander in chief of the armed forces. The right to oppose injustice; freedom of expression; freedom of conscience and belief; the right to the rule of law; the right to justice; economic security; security of one’s life, property, and dignity; preservation of one's personal freedom; lack of accountability for one's acts. Allah Ta’ala has decided every reasonable right of women, including the right to be free from sin, the freedom to organize and congregate, and the right to engage in political activities.

But the girls in the madrasa did not show much interest in this matter. In response to the question of whether state or societal contemporary concerns are covered in the madrasa, Firdousi said that the madrasa only covers textbooks and religious topics. When questioned why this was the situation, she responded, “Girls don't have time to think about any other issue after discussion of religion and memorizing the Quran; when will they debate state and modern affairs?”

People living in the nation are continually being impacted by the country’s present political and social climate. Parents are thus more dubious and concerned about their children’s

surroundings. Almost all schools and universities were formerly shuttered as a result of various political actions. Additionally, schools and universities were shut down for a considerable amount of time following the COVID-19 assault in 2020. The madrasas were shut down then. However, they reopened and started holding classes again after a while. The students of madrasas, particularly Qawmi Madrasas, continued their studies in areas where the nation's schools and institutions were shuttered. The government does not fund Qawmi Madrasas; therefore, Madrasa Committees are free to make their own decisions.

“We’ve kept our daughter enrolled in madrasa so that other political and social activities won’t influence her. That way, she can properly and uninterruptedly understand the guidelines of his faith and the Quran. Additionally, additional courses are taught there,” said Samira.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Most individuals in the discussion described these madrasas as encouraging for their religious education and practice. Their purpose is to demonstrate the transformational effects of the madrasa on the students during the educational process. The dedication and good morale of both the teachers and the students are evident in their descriptions of the madrasa’s culture, its academic tenor, and the students’ regular routine (Sanyal & Farah, 2018).

Also, the most valuable part of this institution was its inexpensive educational cost. Some students cannot pay their fees, but the madrasa provides free food and housing for those living

there. Besides, the tuition fees for each student varied depending on their family's income level. Students and parents acknowledged that the madrasa education is more encouraging when practicing religion compared to their home environment. The magnificent aspect of this is that religion plays the most prominent role in shaping their identities as individuals amongst the students and Madrasa.

But the interesting fact is that parents or students are not denying the necessity and importance of women's education. As Begum and Kabir (2012) state, they believe that education for women has some benefits: first, it would make women better as mothers, wives, and housewives; second, it would make women better as Muslims and as examples of moral and ethical behavior for their children; and third, it would make women better as they would be more aware of their legal obligations under Islamic law. As Jannatul said, it is essential to concentrate on specific things, as she mentioned for her daughters' madrasa education. Children will learn by watching their mothers.

After speaking with Qawmi Madrasah students, professors, and parents, I understood that many of the graduates believe that they do not need much practical knowledge in this world and that all they learn is geared toward the hereafter. So far as their career path is concerned, only religious teaching, preaching, and rituals are involved. Since a significant portion of these students' professional prospects are frequently confined to religious occupations, the work field for students who attended a madrasa is more restricted than for individuals who received a general education. And the majority of the women there want to work as teachers, and many of them do. The reason behind this is that madrasa students usually grow up in an environment with very limited scopes for exploring the world and the career paths they can follow in the

future. As a result, it gradually became the norm for female students to become teachers because they saw their seniors or fellow madrasa graduates do so. Alongside, families and societies create a notion that teaching is a woman's most respectable and safe profession. The girls' students also become accustomed to these ideologies. It happens because of the traditions in which their minds and bodies grow up and where they are shown teaching as the best profession society can offer to madrasa graduates, which closely relates to Asad's (1993) theory about practice, belief, and habits. Like in his theory, students are highly influenced by embodied traditions while choosing a profession.

In Islam, a woman can lawfully earn any amount of money before or after marriage. She didn't need anyone's approval to sell, rent, transfer, or give away her fortune as she pleased. The Quran and Sunnah have no prohibitions against women working. While wearing her headscarf, she is permitted to engage in all types of legal economic activity, including employment and raising goats. However, Allah Ta'ala makes someone responsible for additional duties (Baqarah, Verse: 285).

In this context, the idea and method of being a "good" Muslim require training the body in such a way that one is always conscious of the right Islamic behavior when going about daily tasks. In his research of the medieval Christian concept of moral discipline, Talal Asad (1993) notes that "outer behavior" and "inner motive" were related through the notion of a disciplinary process in his research. Talal Asad (1993) examines how some types of religious experience are predicated on human behaviors. However, madrasa discipline does not revolve around punishment. Taqwa is rather the result of an individual's determination to live a moral life. Instead, it grows via the internalization of a habit through the most important practice of daily

prayer. The prayer cycle regulates students' daily activities, which also serve as a foundation for their interpersonal interactions with others and with themselves. The "process of reconstruction" of the soul must be completed by each student independently, even while they must adhere to others in positions of power, as the Christian monks of the medieval era Asad describes. As the habit grew stronger, each student eventually evolved a "trained strategy to establish for himself a yearning for [God's] obedience."

As Lila Abu Lughod describes in her work (2013), the '*burqa*' (veiling/purdah) is made clear that the burqa was not a Taliban creation. In one area, Pashtun women dressed traditionally when they went outside. One of Afghanistan's many ethnic groups, the Pashtun, adopted the burqa as a standard form of clothing to represent women's modesty or respectability throughout the subcontinent and Southwest Asia. The ways that veiling has influenced political campaigns throughout the world should also not be understated. It is very foolish of the West to believe that Afghan women need any type of salvation, given the attitude of superiority and arrogance that such presumptions bring with them, supporting violent operations.

Eventually, the same way, by continuing the lifestyles the girls achieved from the madrasa is only their choice. It doesn't mean that the lifestyle is invoked on them; it's their choice to continue their lifestyle through guidance learned from madrasa. Because of all the opportunistic statements, what counts is how these people conduct their agency. That's why after leaving the institution, most females continue to live a madrasa lifestyle on their own initiative.

Additionally, if a neighbor, relative, or friend sends their child to a madrasa at an early age after the parents of another child do the same for their child, it is considered acceptable practice.

There are also situations where parents enroll their children in religious schools to receive a quality religious education since, they cannot read the Quran correctly. Here, Bourdieu's "habitus" theory works perfectly.

According to Bourdieu (1977) , "habitus" is the result of the motivational and adaptive work required for those collective historical products, unbiased structures that are successful in reproducing themselves more or less entirely in the shape of enduring qualities of language, economy, etc., in organisms that one may refer to as individuals who are excessively subjected to the same condition and are thus maintained in the same condition.

The habit might be viewed as a subjective, but not individual, set of internalized structures of perception, conception, and action shared by all individuals belonging to the same class or group and serving as the prerequisite for all internalization and belief. The interchangeability of distinct practices and beliefs as well as the standard for personality might serve as the foundation for the coordination of activities and the sharing of a worldview. Here, in order for children to learn the Quran and the Hadith in the proper way is their responsibility as a madrasa student. Unfortunately, most of the time they overlook the fact that by enhancing religious information, the children are deprived of the chance to develop their own practical knowledge. Many parents are unable or reluctant to comprehend the additional challenges their children encounter in life.

My final finding focuses on the lack of knowledge among female students in the madrasa of the nation regarding the liberation war of 1971 and different social events, how they relate to it, and their responsibilities as citizens. However, they are also taking their study of Islamic

history extremely seriously. None of my respondents had any interest in this subject when it was being addressed. This clearly implies that if madrasas do not teach the history of Bangladesh, students will not be fully informed about their country's civil duties, rights, and benefits. Madrasas are producing regional rather than national citizens by emphasizing Islamic history over the country's national history. Although it is a difficult subject that must be grappled with numerous committed engagements and critical assessments, going beyond political strategies to explore the possibilities of peace building through the flow and cross-fertilization of religious consciousness rather than national history can be helpful.

Nevertheless, according to Huq (2021) the way Islam has internalized political acquisition has resulted in such a profanation of religious beliefs, she says, limiting its capacity to respond to issues from beyond the realm of power. Women's discussion clubs called Islam classes, da'wa classes, or Tafsir classes, made an effort to rectify this by claiming to be apolitical and then using that position to religiously interpret politics. Islam's public reach rests between outward displays of religiosity and post-Islamist discourse. The understanding that motivates behind the dynamism of discussion groups established by and for women, as well as enabling such characteristics to flourish freely via conversation and exchange, will yield better outcomes for the rooting of Islam in the nation's mindset, which also explains the madrasa girl's lack of interest in participation in different state events.

Also, in madrasas, boys are interested in politics and social issues, whereas girls say nothing. Despite the fact that they believe these movements are supported by a large number of people, they are not very engaged in various national events, such as the Shahbag movement, the safe road movement, or the quota reforms. Since the girls at the madrasa place higher importance on the hereafter than on the present, they don't feel safe as a result, and neither the madrasa nor

their families give them someone with whom to discuss these difficulties. Most people in the group characterized the facility as clean.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

Many Muslims lack proper knowledge of Islam; therefore, they make assumptions based on what little knowledge they do possess. Due to the close connection between knowledge and Islam, they view teaching as a religious duty. The girls are eager to spread knowledge on how to correctly adopt an Islamic identity. The larger background for their choice is that many educated middle-class women choose to become teachers because it is viewed as a feminine and safe profession. Their decision is largely influenced by the fact that many educated middle-class women choose teaching since it is seen as a noble and safe work option. In addition, the parents of these girls frequently show a lot of support for their choice to become teachers. The lack of knowledge and skills needed for alternative jobs is another factor in their decision to become teachers. Muslim women are permitted under Shari'a to work or have a job, and there is no harm in doing so. But much as Islam has permitted many things with restrictions, it has also permitted women to work, but with requirements that women must adhere to. In Islam, it has also permitted women to work, subject to certain conditions. This is similar to how it has allowed for many things with limitations. Some prerequisites include that women must obtain their husbands' consent before working and that wives must comply with their husbands' wishes if they so choose. While some have praised Islam for traditionally portraying women more progressively, others have criticized it for the discriminatory character of its conduct rules and penal code as they refer to women. By disciplining female pupils via religious devotion, this type of education changes Muslim women's roles from passive recipients of religious

information to teachers and preachers of that knowledge. However, the gendered construction of Muslim womanhood in Bangladesh has only partially been undermined by the rising involvement of Muslim women in religious realms.

## **5.1 Recommendation**

Through my research, I was able to gain an understanding of how Qawmi madrasa development occurs inside educational institutions and how its participants interact with one another. So, first of all, I urge aspiring ethnographers to start with Qawmi madrasa projects since educational institutions are filled with data that may be researched from an anthropological perspective. Second, I would advise educators and madrasas to be more receptive to the notion of research since the results will be advantageous to the entire educational system. Thirdly, I urge policymakers to consider the views of educators as well as students when formulating their decisions. Also, a focus group needs to be checked on whether the government's actions toward Qawmi madrasas have the intended effects or not. This matter needs to be closely monitored, and more research and discussion are required.

## **5.2 Limitations**

The main limitation of this research was time, which had a significant influence on my findings. Given that institutions are highly strict about the concept of research, madrasa ethnography takes a lot of time. Only two of the five madrasas that I approached positively responded and agreed to let me do my research there. The madrasas that did let me speak with their students had certain restrictions. After a full day of studies, the Madrasa students engaged in the conversation and were eager to finish the interviews. Additionally, it took me a long time to talk to the madrasa instructors and parents in accordance with their schedule. Due to time

constraints, it was not feasible to interview many people. The research may have been stronger if more people had participated in this research and more people had been interviewed.

### **5.3 Further Research**

If the study could be conducted on a significantly larger sample size of participants, it would be beneficial to have a deeper understanding of the condition of the madrasa women. The research was completed within specific time constraints, so it would be better if future research using madrasa as a field of study is given ample time to research. Nevertheless, it can be asserted that educational institutions are essential in transmitting culture and creating identities. However, Bangladeshi anthropology's understanding of the function of "madrasas" is a newer field. Along with identity development, additional research is required on the importance of peer interactions, teacher relationships, youth identity, etc.

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