**EFFECTIVENESS OF FEMALE *MADARIS* IN WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT IN PAKISTAN**

**ABSTRACT**

This study explored the role of female *Madaris* (Islamic seminaries) in women’s empowerment in *Pakhtun* Society. The key aim of the study was to examine whether Female *Madaris* empower women or perpetuate women subordination in *Pakhtun* Society. The study attempted to understand and highlight how *madrassah* stakeholders (*Muhtamim*) and female *madrassah* graduates think of women when it comes to equality between males and females or establishing an egalitarian social structure. The study was carried out in two districts (*Nowshera* and *Peshawar)* of *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,* Pakistan. The study was conducted by employing Qualitative research methodology. The study’s respondents consisted of three groups (*Muhtamims*/teachers, students and students’ parents). Interview guide was used as tool of data collection. The relevant data was collected through in-depth interviews (both individual and group) and personal observations in field. With an insight from interpretivism/hermeneutics, the data was analyzed and presented thematically. The overall claim that the study makes is that female *Madaris* in study locale produce a cluster of females for perpetuating patriarchal structure of society under the garb of religiosity. The knowledge taught in female *Madaris* is selected knowledge that is controlled and interpreted by men for their hegemonic interest. This teaching and interpretation of knowledge from men’s perspective and its internalization by female students has led them to false consciousness. The assertion that is made is that female *Madaris* strengthen patriarchy and male hegemony instead of empowering women. Thus, it is concluded that female *Madaris* of *pakhtun* society are reproducing the existing *pakhtun* patriarchal norms and structures. These institutions are received financial support from local and international actors coupled with access to political power structure. The institutions work as camp offices for religious political parties and their rhizomization leads to the multiplication of their vote bank. These Madaris, in return, promise to keep intact the vested interest of the actor/donors implicitly.

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