Maktab Education in Bangladesh: Its Role in Disseminating the Fundamental Teachings of Islam, Current Challenges, And Future Prospects

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ABSTRACT

Maktab education is a traditional and important educational system in Bangladeshi Muslim society. It provides the foundation of Islamic education to the children. Maktabs play a very significant role in teaching children Qur'anic recitation, essential supplications, the rules of Salah (prayer), the fundamental beliefs of Islam, acts of worship, moral values, and Islamic etiquette from generation to generation. However, maktab education is currently facing various challenges due to changing social realities, academic pressure from mainstream educational institutions, a shortage of trained teachers, financial constraints, limited parental awareness and involvement, a lack of modernization in curricula and teaching methods, and irregular student attendance.

This study aims to examine the current state of maktab education in Bangladesh, assess its role in disseminating the fundamental knowledge of Islam, identify existing challenges, and explore potential pathways for future development. The study employs a review of relevant literature alongside field-level data collected from teachers, students, and parents associated with selected maktabs. The findings indicate that maktab education can play the most effective role in children's religious and moral development if appropriate curricula, trained teachers, suitable teaching materials, parental involvement, and modern teaching methods are integrated into the entire maktab educational process.

Keywords: Maktab Education, Islamic Education, Fundamental Teachings of Islam, Challenges of Maktab Education, Future Prospects.

1.INTRODUCTION

Allah the Almighty declares in the Holy Qur'an: *"Iqra' bismi rabbika alladhi khalaq"* (Read in the name of your Lord who created) (Al-Qur'an, Surah Al-'Alaq, 96:1). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: *"Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim"* (Ibn Majah, Hadith No. 224).

The Qur'an also emphasizes the elevated status of knowledgeable people: "Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees" (Al-Qur'an, Surah Al-Mujadilah, 58:11). Hazrat Uthman ibn Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "The best among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it to others" (Ismail, Hadith No. 5027).

In Islamic educational thought, Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him) is an important scholar who emphasized the significance of children's early religious and moral education. In his renowned work *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, he discusses the importance of nurturing children from an early age. He states, in a commonly cited passage, that a child is a trust placed in the care of parents and that the child's pure heart is like a precious jewel, capable of receiving different impressions. If a child is taught goodness and beneficial values from an early age, the child may grow up accordingly and attain success in this world and the Hereafter (Al-Ghazali, 2020).

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever follows a path in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make a path to Paradise easy for him” (Muslim, Hadith No. 2699).

One of the principal functions of maktab education is to provide children with practical instruction in Salah and the fundamental acts of worship from an early age. Sunan Abi Dawud contains a narration concerning the gradual development of children's habits of worship. Amr ibn Shu'ayb, reporting from his father and grandfather, narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: “Command your children to pray when they are seven years old, and discipline them regarding prayer when they are ten years old, and separate their beds” (Abu Dawud Hadith No. 495).

Children commonly receive their first lessons in Qur'anic recitation, Salah, and basic Islamic etiquette through maktabs. These religious teachings and scholarly perspectives highlight the importance of early Islamic education in developing children's religious awareness and moral character.

In Bangladesh, children receive basic Islamic education through various types of maktabs operating in mosques, private homes, and independent educational settings.

However, changing social realities, school and coaching-centre schedules, shortages of trained teachers, infrastructural limitations, inconsistencies in curricula, the influence of technology, and changing parental attitudes toward maktab education have created a need for renewed research into its present condition and future prospects.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Maktab education is a traditional institutional arrangement for acquiring religious knowledge, promoting Qur'anic learning, and developing moral values in Bangladeshi Muslim society. Through maktabs, children receive basic instruction in the Arabic alphabet, Qur'anic recitation, Salah, supplications, fundamental Islamic beliefs, and Islamic etiquette. Historically, the development of maktab education has been associated with mosques, local religious learning centres, and community-based initiatives. Nevertheless, the position of maktabs within the contemporary education system, the quality of instruction, teacher training, financing, and the integration of traditional and modern educational approaches require further analysis.

A substantial portion of existing research on Islamic education in Bangladesh focuses on madrasa education, the administrative structures of religious institutions, curricula, and the relationship between education and society. Such research helps explain the broader institutional and social context of religious education. However, madrasa education and maktab education differ in their objectives, organizational structures, and modes of operation. Therefore, findings from research on madrasas cannot automatically be applied to maktabs. A separate review that recognizes the distinctive characteristics of maktab education is consequently necessary.

Maktab education represents a well-established tradition of primary religious instruction in South Asian Muslim societies. Historically, children learned Qur'anic recitation, basic Arabic, and religious practices through mosques, local religious learning centres, and private initiatives. In Bangladesh, this tradition is closely connected with local religious leaders, families, and community participation. Nevertheless, historical and contemporary analyses must distinguish between local maktabs, formal madrasa institutions, and religious instruction provided within the mainstream education system.

Roy, Huq, and Rob (2020) examined the historical context, institutional diversity, and contemporary challenges of religious education in Bangladesh. Their research addressed the contributions of religious educational institutions, educational quality, coordination among different educational traditions, and the achievement of national educational objectives. Although their study concerns the broader religious education system, its analysis is relevant to understanding the institutional position and social role of maktabs in Bangladesh.

This discussion suggests that maktab education should not be examined solely as a system of religious instruction. It should also be understood as part of the broader relationship among families, religious institutions, and local communities.

The principal objective of maktab education is to provide children with opportunities to acquire fundamental Islamic knowledge. Its major components include Qur'anic recitation, the basic rules of Salah and other acts of worship, religious beliefs, and ethical conduct. Through this education, children become familiar with religious practices and develop an understanding of the religious values observed within their families and communities.

Roy et al. (2020) discussed the historical contributions of religious educational institutions in Bangladesh and their broader social context. The authors highlighted the importance of examining educational quality, social cohesion, and the relationships among different educational traditions. Their discussion provides a basis for considering not only religious knowledge but also moral education and social coexistence when evaluating the role of maktab education.

Ahmed (2026), on the other hand, reviewed the practical implementation of Islamic education at the primary level of general education in Bangladesh in relation to the National Education Policy. The study examined curricula, textbooks, implementation structures, and teacher training. The researcher identified structural weaknesses and shortcomings in teacher preparation as issues affecting effective implementation. Although this discussion does not directly evaluate maktab education, it helps explain the importance of curriculum development and teacher preparation in delivering effective religious education to children.

The existing literature therefore provides insights into the importance of religious knowledge and values-based education. However, separate field-level research is required to determine how effectively maktabs in Bangladesh achieve these objectives in practice.

On the other hand, this study is grounded in three complementary educational perspectives: the Non-Formal Education Framework, the Community-Based Learning Model, and the Pedagogical Reform Perspective. These theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for evaluating the institutional structure, educational practices, socio-cultural contributions, and modernization challenges of Maktab education in Bangladesh.

Maktab education can be examined within the framework of non-formal education, as it provides structured religious and moral learning outside the conventional mainstream education system. This perspective helps evaluate institutional arrangements, curriculum content, accessibility, teaching practices, and educational opportunities within Maktab institutions.

Maktab education is closely connected to local communities, particularly mosques, religious teachers, parents, and community members. The community-based learning perspective highlights the importance of community participation, parental involvement, local support, and collaborative responsibility in sustaining and developing Maktab education.

The pedagogical reform perspective provides a basis for examining opportunities to improve traditional teaching practices through teacher training, learner-centred approaches, appropriate educational technologies, and contemporary instructional methods. It also helps assess the possibilities and challenges of integrating traditional religious education with modern educational approaches.

Together, these perspectives provide a conceptual foundation for assessing the current condition, institutional and financial constraints, educational quality, community participation, and future development prospects of Maktab education. They also support a comparative evaluation of rural and urban Maktab institutions in the context of changing educational and socio-economic conditions.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examines the current status, modernization challenges, financial constraints, and future prospects of

Maktab education in Bangladesh. A mixed-methods research approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods, was adopted to explore the institutional, educational, financial, and socio-cultural dimensions of Maktab education.

The study focuses on selected rural and urban Maktab institutions in Sylhet District, Bangladesh. It examines institutional structures, teaching practices, teacher-student relationships, parental perspectives, and opportunities for integrating traditional Maktab education with contemporary educational approaches.

The area of this study is Sylhet District of Bangladesh which was selected as the geographical area for this study. A total of 50 Maktab institutions from rural and urban areas were included in the research.

The institutions were selected based on their geographical locations, institutional characteristics, student enrollment, management practices, and relevance to the research objectives.

The inclusion of both rural and urban institutions enabled a comparative assessment of educational opportunities, institutional limitations, financial conditions, and modernization challenges across different socio-economic and geographical contexts.

The study was conducted from May 2026 to August 2026. A total of 150 participants were included in the study, comprising 30 Maktab teachers, 50 students, 50 parents and Islamic Scholars 20.

Teachers provided information regarding teaching practices, institutional management, teacher training, financial challenges, and barriers to modernization. Students shared their experiences concerning the learning environment, educational facilities, and teaching methods. Parents provided insights into the importance of Maktab education, their educational expectations, satisfaction levels, and perspectives on integrating religious education with mainstream schooling.

A combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques was employed to select Maktab institutions and study participants. Purposive sampling was used to select institutions and participants based on their relevance to the research objectives, geographical locations, and direct involvement in Maktab education. Convenience sampling was also applied to recruit participants who were readily accessible and willing to participate in the study.

The selection process considered institutional characteristics, geographical distribution, participant availability, and their ability to provide relevant information regarding the current status, challenges, and future prospects of Maktab education. Both rural and urban Maktab institutions were included to facilitate a comparative understanding of their educational, institutional, and socio-economic conditions.

Data collection procedure of this study was very much multidimensional. Primary data were collected using two principal methods:

Interviews: Interviews were conducted with relevant participants to gather information about the current status of Maktab education, teaching practices, financial constraints, teacher training, modernization challenges, and future development prospects.

Questionnaires: Questionnaires were administered to teachers, students, and parents to collect information regarding the learning environment, educational quality, institutional facilities, use of modern educational resources, and their perceptions of Maktab education.

The collected data were reviewed, cross-checked, and verified by the researcher at the end of each working day to maintain accuracy and consistency. Before finalizing the research instruments, a pilot test was conducted in similar settings to assess the clarity and appropriateness of the questionnaire. Expert opinions were also obtained to evaluate the validity of the research instruments.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies and percentages were calculated for categorical variables, while means and standard deviations were used for quantitative variables.

Qualitative data obtained through interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The collected information was carefully reviewed, coded, and organized into relevant themes to identify recurring patterns, perspectives, and key issues related to Maktab education.

The major analytical themes included institutional conditions, financial constraints, teacher training, pedagogical practices, integration of digital technology, parental expectations, modernization challenges, and the comparative characteristics of rural and urban Maktab institutions.

Ethical principles were maintained throughout the research process. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from participants before data collection. Confidentiality and privacy of participants' personal information were maintained, and the collected data were used exclusively for academic and research purposes.

For participants under the age of 18, appropriate consent was obtained from their parents or legal guardians. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without facing any negative consequences.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The Role of Maktabs in Disseminating the Fundamental Teachings of Islam

Maktabs play a significant role in disseminating the fundamental teachings of Islam. They are particularly important in introducing children to Qur'anic reading. Through instruction beginning with letter recognition and correct pronunciation, followed by the Qaida, Amma Para, and eventually Qur'anic recitation, maktabs establish the foundation of children's religious education.

Maktabs also teach the obligatory and necessary rules of Salah, the method of performing ablution (Wudu), and the surahs and supplications recited during prayer. In addition, children may receive instruction in funeral rites, including shrouding and burial, as well as the procedures for performing the funeral prayer (Janazah). These lessons provide children with basic knowledge of everyday religious practices.

The renowned Muslim philosopher Ibn Sina emphasized group-based learning for children in his educational philosophy. A statement attributed to him suggests that children should learn together in a classroom or group setting, such as a maktab, because interaction and competition among peers can facilitate learning and promote social and intellectual development (Sina, 2025). Shahin Hasnat similarly observes that morning maktabs attached to mosques are not merely centres for learning the Qur'an but also institutions for developing religious values and strengthening faith (Hasnat, 2021).

Maktab teachers also introduce children to age-appropriate concepts concerning the fundamental beliefs of Islam, including belief in Allah, the prophets and messengers, revealed scriptures, angels, and the Hereafter. Presenting these concepts in simple and accessible language during the early stages of learning can contribute significantly to children's religious understanding.

Maktabs also play an important role in developing ethical values and appropriate conduct. These include truthfulness, trustworthiness, respect for parents, respect for elders, kindness toward younger people, cleanliness, respect for neighbours' rights, and humane behaviour.

Furthermore, maktabs establish an educational connection among local mosques, families, and communities. Parents can monitor their children's religious learning, while communication between teachers and parents can help make the educational process more effective.

4.2. Distribution of Respondents by Category

Respondent category	Number	Percentage
Students	50	33.3%
Parents	50	33.3%
Teachers	30	20.0%
Islamic scholars	20	13.3%
Total	**150**	**100%**

A total of 150 respondents participated in the study. Students and parents each accounted for 50 respondents, representing 33.3% of the total. Teachers accounted for 30 respondents (20.0%), while Islamic scholars accounted for 20 respondents (13.3%). Thus, students and parents were comparatively well represented, while the perspectives of teachers and Islamic scholars were also included.

4.3. Distribution of Respondents by Age

Respondent category	Age group	Number	Percentage
Students	Under 10 years	20	40.0%*
Students	10 years and above	30	60.0%*
Teachers	26–40 years	25	83.3%
Teachers	41–60 years	5	16.7%
Islamic scholars	26–40 years	5	25.0%
Islamic scholars	41–60 years	10	50.0%
Islamic scholars	Over 60 years	5	25.0%
Parents	26–40 years	25	50.0%
Parents	41–60 years	20	40.0%
Parents	Over 60 years	5	10.0%

Percentages for students are calculated using the total number of students (n = 50) as the denominator.

The age distribution indicates that 40.0% of the students were under 10 years of age, while 60.0% were 10 years and above. Among teachers, 83.3% were aged 26–40 years and 16.7% were aged 41–60 years.

Among Islamic scholars, 25.0% were aged 26–40 years, 50.0% were aged 41–60 years, and 25.0% were over 60 years of age. Among parents, 50.0% were aged 26–40 years, 40.0% were aged 41–60 years, and 10.0% were over 60 years of age.

4.4. Distribution of Respondents by Type of Maktab

Type of maktab	Number	Percentage
Mosque-based maktabs	90	60.0%
Independent maktabs	10	6.7%
Home-based maktabs	40	26.7%
Others	10	6.7%
Total	**150**	**100%**

An analysis of the locations and organizational arrangements of maktabs indicates that 60.0% of respondents were associated with mosque-based maktabs. Home-based maktabs accounted for 26.7%, while independent maktabs and other arrangements each accounted for 6.7%.

These findings suggest that mosque-based arrangements remain a major channel for providing maktab education within the study sample.

4.5. Subjects Taught in Maktabs

Subjects taught	Number of respondents	Percentage
Qur'an, Qaida, Amma Para, Salah, Wudu, prescribed supplications, and Islamic etiquette	137	91.3%
The above subjects, together with Sirah and Islamic Aqidah	13	8.7%
Total	**150**	**100%**

When asked about the subjects taught in maktabs, 91.3% of respondents reported that the curriculum included the Qur'an, Qaida, Amma Para, Salah, Wudu, prescribed supplications, and Islamic etiquette. The remaining 8.7% stated that Sirah (the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad) and Islamic Aqidah (creed) were taught in addition to these basic subjects.

The findings indicate that fundamental Islamic subjects remain central to instruction in most maktabs, while the inclusion of additional subjects appears relatively limited within the study sample.

4.6. Appropriateness of the Maktab Curriculum

Opinion	Number	Percentage
Appropriate	109	72.7%
Moderately appropriate	18	12.0%
Not appropriate	23	15.3%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Regarding the appropriateness of the existing curriculum, 72.7% of respondents considered it appropriate. Another 12.0% regarded it as moderately appropriate, while 15.3% considered it inappropriate.

Although nearly three-quarters of respondents expressed a positive opinion of the curriculum, a substantial minority indicated that improvements or reforms may be necessary.

4.7. Daily Teaching Duration

Teaching duration	Number	Percentage
30–60 minutes	30	20.0%
1–2 hours	98	65.3%
More than 2 hours	22	14.7%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Regarding teaching duration, 65.3% of respondents reported that instruction generally lasted one to two hours per day. Another 20.0% reported a duration of 30–60 minutes, while 14.7% indicated that teaching lasted more than two hours.

Thus, within the study sample, one to two hours appears to be the most commonly reported daily teaching duration.

4.8. Effectiveness of Maktabs in Teaching the Qur'an and Fundamental Islamic Knowledge

Effectiveness	Number	Percentage
Highly effective	123	82.0%

Moderately effective	15	10.0%
Not effective	12	8.0%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Regarding the effectiveness of maktabs in teaching the Holy Qur'an and the fundamental teachings of Islam, 82.0% of respondents considered them highly effective. Another 10.0% regarded them as moderately effective, while 8.0% considered them ineffective. This is an important finding because it indicates that most respondents perceive maktabs as effective institutions for providing children with basic Islamic education.

4.9. Student Attendance

Attendance level	Number	Percentage
Very good	80	53.3%
Moderate	49	32.7%
Low	21	14.0%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Regarding student attendance, 53.3% of respondents rated it as very good, 32.7% rated it as moderate, and 14.0% rated it as low.

Although most respondents considered attendance satisfactory, approximately one-third viewed it as only moderate. This suggests that maintaining regular attendance remains an area requiring attention.

4.10. Need for Teacher Training

Opinion	Number	Percentage
Highly necessary	117	78.0%
Not necessary	21	14.0%
Cannot say	12	8.0%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Regarding the need for training maktab teachers, 78.0% of respondents considered training highly necessary. Another 14.0% believed that training was unnecessary, while 8.0% expressed no definite opinion.

These findings provide a strong indication that regular teacher-training programmes should be considered an important component of maktab development.

4.11. Use of Modern Educational Materials

Use of modern educational materials	Number	Percentage
Not used at all	141	94.0%
Used occasionally	9	6.0%
Total	**150**	**100%**

The use of modern educational materials, such as audio and video resources, was reported to be extremely limited. A total of 94.0% of respondents stated that such materials were not used at all, while only 6.0% reported occasional use. This finding points to a substantial gap in the use of technology-supported and modern educational resources in maktab instruction.

4.12. Major Problems Facing Maktab Education

Major problem	Number	Percentage
Inadequate teacher remuneration	51	34.0%
Irregular student attendance	44	29.3%

Lack of parental cooperation	23	15.3%
Shortage of educational materials	13	8.7%
Shortage of trained teachers	12	8.0%
Lack of a standardized curriculum	7	4.7%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Among the major problems facing maktab education, inadequate teacher remuneration was identified by the largest proportion of respondents (34.0%). Irregular student attendance was the second most frequently reported problem, identified by 29.3% of respondents.

Additionally, 15.3% identified a lack of parental cooperation, 8.7% reported a shortage of educational materials, and 8.0% identified a shortage of trained teachers. The smallest proportion, 4.7%, identified the lack of a standardized curriculum as the principal problem.

Overall, these findings suggest that the challenges facing maktab education extend beyond curriculum-related issues. Teacher management, financial support, student attendance, parental involvement, and access to educational materials are also significant concerns.

4.13. Impact of Academic Pressure from Mainstream Schools

Impact of schoolwork pressure	Number	Percentage
Very high impact	80	53.3%
Low impact	36	24.0%
No impact	34	22.7%
Total	**150**	**100%**

When asked whether academic pressure from mainstream schools affected students' participation in maktabs, 53.3% of respondents reported a very high impact. Another 24.0% reported a low impact, while 22.7% stated that there was no impact.

The findings therefore suggest that academic pressure from mainstream schools is an important obstacle to regular attendance at maktabs.

4.14. Reasons for the Closure or Decline of Morning Maktabs in Urban Areas

Principal reason	Number	Percentage
Classes at most educational institutions begin between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m.	124	82.7%
Students and parents go to bed late and do not wake up early	26	17.3%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Regarding the closure or decline of morning maktabs in urban areas, 82.7% of respondents identified the early starting times of mainstream educational institutions—generally between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m.—as the principal reason.

Consequently, it becomes difficult for students to attend morning maktabs while also meeting the schedules of their regular schools. Another 17.3% of respondents identified late bedtimes and difficulties waking up early among students and parents as the main reason.

This finding is particularly important because it indicates that institutional timetables play a major role in the difficulties faced by morning maktabs in urban areas. A mismatch has developed between conventional morning maktab schedules and the timetables of mainstream educational institutions.

4.15. Area-wise Suitable Times for Operating Maktabs based on the Location

Preferred operating time	Number	Percentage
Afternoon maktabs	88	58.7%
Morning maktabs	62	41.3%
Total	**150**	**100%**

When asked about the most suitable time for operating maktabs in urban areas, 58.7% of respondents favoured afternoon maktabs, while 41.3% continued to support morning maktabs.

The findings suggest that, given present urban conditions, respondents showed a somewhat stronger preference for afternoon-based arrangements. Since most respondents considered early school starting times a major obstacle to morning maktab attendance, afternoon schedules may offer a practical way to reduce conflicts with mainstream education.

However, the continued support for morning maktabs among 41.3% of respondents indicates that a complete shift away from morning instruction may not be appropriate in every context. Rather than discontinuing morning maktabs altogether, a flexible system that accommodates both morning and afternoon schedules according to local needs may be more reasonable.

The challenges facing Maktab education are closely related to geographical context. Its modernization pressures and financial constraints vary across different regional contexts.

Maktab education in rural and urban areas exhibits several differences in terms of educational environment, students' participation, operational schedules, parental involvement, and the influence of modern lifestyles. Although both rural and urban maktabs aim to provide children with basic Qur'anic and Islamic education, their operational conditions and social contexts are not identical.

In rural areas, maktab education is still closely associated with traditional mosque-based learning, particularly after Fajr prayer. Children generally have greater opportunities to participate in early morning maktab activities, and these institutions continue to play an important role in transmitting Islamic values, moral principles, religious manners, and social discipline. Local religious traditions and community involvement also contribute to the continuation of rural maktab education.

In contrast, maktab education in urban areas faces several practical challenges. Early school starting times, double-shift educational systems, coaching activities, parental professional commitments, and the increasing influence of digital entertainment have made traditional morning maktab attendance more difficult. Consequently, many urban parents are increasingly considering alternative arrangements, including private Islamic tutors, commercial Noorani Madrasas, and Hifz Khanas.

Another significant difference concerns the preferred operational schedule. While traditional morning maktabs remain relatively familiar in rural communities, afternoon-based arrangements appear more suitable to many urban families because of conflicts with mainstream school schedules. Survey findings indicating that 58.7% of respondents favour afternoon maktabs and 41.3% support morning maktabs further demonstrate the diversity of preferences in urban settings.

Therefore, the differences between rural and urban maktab education are not limited to their operational schedules; they also reflect variations in educational opportunities, social environments, parental involvement, and children's daily routines. These differences highlight the importance of adopting context-specific strategies to ensure the sustainable development of maktab education in both rural and urban areas.

5. Integrated Analysis

Maktabs across different regions of Bangladesh vary in their organizational structures, management practices,

and educational arrangements. Some operate within mosques, others function independently, and some are associated with madrasas or other Islamic educational institutions.

Typically, children receive instruction according to their age and learning level in Qur'anic reading, Qaida, Amma Para, short surahs, prescribed supplications, the rules of Salah, and fundamental Islamic teachings. Some maktabs also provide instruction in Islamic ethics and everyday conduct in Bengali.

Nevertheless, considerable differences may exist among maktabs in terms of curricula, teacher–student ratios, classroom facilities, educational materials, and teaching schedules. While some maktabs are sustained through local community contributions, others lack adequate financial resources to provide teacher remuneration and educational materials.

An analysis of attendance and operating schedules in morning maktabs suggests an important distinction between rural and urban settings. In rural areas, declining attendance at morning maktabs may be associated primarily with students' and parents' sleeping schedules and limited parental supervision in ensuring that children attend early-morning classes.

In urban areas, however, the problem appears to be more structural. A substantial 82.7% of respondents identified the commencement of mainstream school classes between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. as the principal obstacle to the operation of morning maktabs.

Regarding suitable operating times in urban areas, 58.7% of respondents favoured afternoon maktabs. This suggests that, to sustain maktab education under contemporary urban conditions, alternative schedules—particularly afternoon arrangements—may be considered alongside traditional morning maktabs.

Nevertheless, 41.3% of respondents continued to support morning maktabs. Therefore, rather than adopting a single timetable for all settings, it may be more appropriate to introduce flexible arrangements that accommodate both morning and afternoon instruction according to local circumstances.

The findings also indicate that inadequate teacher remuneration, irregular student attendance, limited parental cooperation, shortages of educational materials, and insufficient teacher training are among the major challenges facing maktab education.

Although most respondents considered existing curricula appropriate and maktabs effective in teaching fundamental Islamic knowledge, the limited use of modern educational materials indicates opportunities for improvement. The high proportion of respondents who supported teacher training further suggests that professional development could be an important means of improving instructional quality.

Maktab education has considerable potential for modernization and improvement while preserving its traditional religious identity. First, an accessible, practical, and standardized curriculum should be developed according to children's ages and levels of competence. Second, regular training opportunities should be provided for teachers.

Third, technology can be introduced as a supplementary educational resource. Audio materials, videos, digital Qur'anic learning resources, and child-friendly interactive content may help increase students' interest in learning.

Fourth, communication between maktabs and parents should be strengthened. Providing monthly or quarterly reports on students' progress could encourage families to participate more actively in their children's education.

Fifth, transparent management, regular assessment, and accountable local governance arrangements could be introduced to strengthen the administration of maktabs.

These measures could help improve educational quality, increase student engagement, and ensure that maktab education remains relevant to the changing needs of Bangladeshi society.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several practical and policy-oriented recommendations are proposed to improve the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of Maktab education in Bangladesh.

a. **Standardized Teacher Training Modules:** A structured and standardized teacher-training programme should be introduced for Maktab teachers. The training modules should cover effective teaching methods, child-centred learning approaches, classroom management, age-appropriate instruction, and basic digital literacy. The Islamic Foundation, relevant educational authorities, and Maktab management committees could collaborate in developing and implementing these programmes.
b. **Low-Cost Digital Learning Integration:** Affordable digital learning resources should be gradually introduced into Maktab education. Educational audio-visual materials, digital Qur'an learning resources, recorded lessons, and offline learning applications could support traditional teaching methods. Such initiatives should consider the financial capacity and technological facilities of rural and urban Maktab institutions.
c. **Collaborative Scheduling between Mainstream Schools and Maktab Institutions:** A coordinated scheduling system should be developed through collaboration between mainstream schools and Maktab institutions. Flexible class timings, alternative morning or afternoon sessions, and weekend learning arrangements could help students participate in both general and religious education without creating additional academic pressure.
d. **Institutional and Financial Support:** Appropriate financial and institutional support should be provided to Maktab institutions, particularly those operating with limited resources. Local mosque committees, community organizations, government agencies, and relevant non-governmental organizations could work together to improve educational facilities, teaching materials, and institutional management.
e. **Curriculum Development and Quality Improvement:** A structured and age-appropriate curriculum should be developed to ensure consistency in basic Qur'anic education, Islamic knowledge, moral values, and practical religious instruction. Periodic curriculum reviews and educational assessments could help maintain teaching quality while preserving the traditional values of Maktab education.
f. **Strengthening Community and Parental Participation:** Greater involvement of parents, mosque committees, and local communities should be encouraged to ensure the sustainability of Maktab education. Regular parent-teacher meetings, community awareness programmes, and local monitoring initiatives could strengthen institutional accountability and student participation.

7. Rural-Urban Educational Development Initiatives: Separate but coordinated development strategies should be adopted for rural and urban Maktab institutions, considering their different educational, financial, infrastructural, and scheduling challenges. Rural institutions may require greater infrastructural and financial assistance, whereas urban institutions may benefit from flexible scheduling, improved space management, and alternative learning arrangements.

Overall, the implementation of these recommendations requires coordinated efforts among government authorities, the Islamic Foundation, mosque management committees, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and local communities. Such collaborative initiatives could contribute to improving the quality, accessibility, institutional sustainability, and long-term development of Maktab education in Bangladesh.

8. CONCLUSION

Maktab education is an important means of teaching children fundamental Islamic knowledge, Qur'anic recitation, religious practices, and moral values in Bangladeshi Muslim society. As a long-standing traditional education system, maktabs hold considerable religious and social significance.

However, maintaining their effectiveness under contemporary conditions requires improvements in curricula, teaching methods, teacher training, educational materials, and institutional management.

Preserving the traditional characteristics of maktabs while adopting age-appropriate and child-friendly teaching approaches could increase children's interest in religious education. At the same time, coordinated initiatives involving families, teachers, local communities, and relevant institutions could contribute significantly to improve educational quality.

The findings of this study suggest that maktabs are widely perceived by respondents as effective systems for providing children with fundamentals of Islamic education. Nevertheless, inadequate teacher remuneration, irregular attendance, limited parental cooperation, insufficient educational resources, and conflicts between morning maktab schedules and mainstream school timetables remain important challenges.

The preference expressed by a majority of respondents for afternoon maktabs in urban areas also suggests that flexible scheduling may help address some of these difficulties. However, the continued support for morning maktabs indicates that operating arrangements should be adapted to local circumstances rather than imposed uniformly.

Therefore, maktabs should not be regarded merely as places where children learn to read the Qur'an. They can be developed into organized educational settings that nurture fundamental Islamic knowledge, ethical conduct, and human values. Achieving this goal requires evidence-based research, standardized curricula, trained teachers, appropriate educational resources, sustainable financial support, and teaching methods responsive to contemporary needs.

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