



Enabler of Madrasah Education: The Case of LGU-Supported Traditional Madrasah in General Santos City

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Received: 10-12-2024 Reviewed: 25-12-2024 Accepted: 12-01-2025

Abstract

This study explored the enablers of Madrasah education programs, focusing on locally-led efforts of the Local Government Unit of General Santos to support the traditional Madrasahs in the city, recognizing the vital role of traditional madrasah education in promoting religious and cultural identity as well as social cohesion. This research analyzed the key factors contributing to these educational initiatives' effective implementation and sustainability. A case study method approach was utilized, including surveys and interviews. The findings revealed several critical enablers, such as active community involvement, government assistance, and capacity building. This paper underscores the significance of the all-of-the-community approach in creating an inclusive educational environment that meets the needs of Muslim learners. Hence, the analysis concluded that contextual factors such as social, economic, environmental, and political dimensions affect the implementation of the traditional Madrasah in General Santos City. The study recommends the standardization of the traditional Madrasah Curriculum, considering the nuances of Muslim communities in General Santos.

Keywords: traditional Madrasah, enablers, madrasah education, local government unit, community stakeholders

Introduction

Education is essential for societal progress, promoting individual growth and community development. In a multicultural and multireligious society, education frequently reflects on a careful balance between preserving cultural identity and meeting the demands of contemporary education. In the Philippines, traditional madrasah education is special in the educational system, providing Islamic-based teaching for Muslim learners.

Local Government Unit (LGU) involvement in promoting traditional Madrasah education in General Santos City has received more attention. This initiative is part of the

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broader national efforts to promote inclusive education, which recognizes the importance of Madrasah schools in the socio-cultural and spiritual development of Muslim communities. However, despite the support received from the government, there are still considerable challenges to meeting the diverse needs of Madrasah schools in the city to continue to deliver quality education to Muslim learners like resource constraints, curriculum alignment, and sociopolitical considerations that continue to impact the success of Madrasah education.

This study explored the enablers of Madrasah education programs, emphasizing the efforts of the local government unit in General Santos City to assist traditional Madrasah, recognizing the critical importance of traditional madrasah education in establishing religious and cultural identity, including social cohesion. This study analyzed the important aspects that contribute to the effective implementation and sustainability of these educational efforts.

Literature Review

The educational systems of Muslim-majority nations and the larger Islamic world have been greatly influenced by traditional madrasah education for centuries. These are Islamic schools that primarily focus on religious instruction. The literature on madrasah education looks at its evolution over time, its applicability today, and the opportunities and problems it poses.

Historically, madrasah education was explored by scholars such as Ahmed (2008) and Ansari (2011), who pointed out that these establishments played a crucial role in the preservation and dissemination of knowledge during the Islamic Golden Age. Madrasah graduates held prominent roles in society, and madrasahs were among the few institutes of higher study in many Islamic countries.

The curriculum of traditional madrasahs is mostly derived from classical Islamic writings. This includes learning Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), logic, theology, and memorizing and understanding the Qur'an. Mohammad Aslam (2018) claimed that rote memorization and oral transmission, a technique derived from traditional Islamic educational traditions, are the main focus of many madrasahs. Critics contend that this method can result in a lack of critical thinking and a restricted focus on religious issues at the expense of broader intellectual growth, even though it has been commended for its depth of learning and capacity to preserve a tight relationship with sacred texts. While some madrasahs have changed their pedagogical techniques, many still use a traditional, teacher-centred model of education, according to research (Riaz, 2010; Cavatorta, 2016). This teaching approach prioritizes memory and obedience above interactive or participatory learning strategies. This is viewed as a constraint in encouraging innovation and critical thinking but as a strength in maintaining religious traditions.

For Muslim Filipino students, the institutionalization of madrasah education in public schools through the government-subsidized ALIVE program identified some major challenges affecting the program implementation, such as lack of permanent infrastructure, limited instructional resources, learners' absenteeism, low and delayed Asatidz allowances, and

cultural variances among Muslim Filipinos (Sali et al., 2020). It was noted in the study of Mokhtar (2010) in Singapore the religious teachers were all aware that the primary sources of finance for the madrasahs were the school fees paid by the students, donations from the public, the Madrasah Fund, and the meagre yearly subsidies from the government. The religious leaders all concurred that there was insufficient money to support madrasahs. Additionally, he stated that the government is deeply concerned about madrasah students' generally subpar secular academic results (Madjid, 2023). Furthermore, the government may think about offering equity financing, in which they would match the funds raised by the madrasahs for the construction of their school facilities. This would substantially assist the madrasahs in renovating their most dilapidated school buildings and provide the necessary resources for students learning.

At the same pace as Singapore, the Philippine Madaris (Morales et al., 2015) noted that primarily, there is a strong need to develop alternative income sources for these Madaris since these Madaris have been heavily reliant on donations from both local and international organizations. This will provide an additional source of funds for the madaris to finance and raise their Asatidz allowances. It is apparent that the curricular content and content standards have not been improved and still has been a text-based approach (teaching primarily relies on books rather than standards). Developing alternative sources of finances can prove very effective in upgrading the resources and the development of the school in general in both the management and the delivery of teaching. (Dreisbach & Mendoza-Dreisbach, 2023)

The studies on Madrasah Education in the Philippines became integral to reviewing and giving relevant context to ALIVE program implementation and its challenges (Radiamoda, 2022). Since its inception in 2004, the following were identified as the major issues and concerns of the program implementation in ALIVE-recognized schools in the country: (1) teacher qualification, (2) Madrasah Education curriculum, (3) pedagogy (4) and management, (Sali et al. 2020). Additionally, the traditional madaris is no exception. Samid (2022) stated that the possible employment of graduates in Madrasah is the lowest (they are not able to apply to any government institutions due to their lack of social skills and learning; traditional madaris graduates end up being Islamic teachers in traditional madaris as well), policy initiatives for traditional madaris are limited(policies are still in infancy stage) cited by Cagape, (2008) and their effective implementation has faced additional challenges beyond the conventional obstacles of poverty and poor funding.

Additionally, according to Zaidi (2008), madrasah education is closely tied to social, political, and cultural factors. He explored the connection between madrasah education and more general societal problems, including poverty, political identity, and extremism. Some critics argue that because of their seclusion from the outside world and lack of involvement with modernizing educational trends, some madrasahs, especially those in South Asia and the Middle East, may act as havens for extreme beliefs. Some contend, however, that madrasahs are frequently used as scapegoats, even though the great majority of them offer underprivileged populations a useful educational service. (Aileen Gani Padilla, 2024)

Although the Madrasah has long existed in Muslim communities, it has still been plagued by challenges. Among the Islamic institutions, the traditional Madaris are the most

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plagued by issues and problems (Samid, 2022). Challenges ranging from financial limitations and charges of encouraging ideological extremism are just two of the many difficulties madrasas face. Ali (2019) points out that one significant problem madrasas face is their dependence on private funding, which can result in differences in quality throughout institutions. Inconsistent educational outcomes can also be attributed to the absence of standardized curricula and teacher preparation programs.

Mandaville (2007) emphasized in his work that most madrasahs do not preach extremism or violence. Rather, madrasahs are frequently the sole educational institutions for underprivileged groups. Blumer (2012) supports this reasoning. According to him, madrasahs frequently serve as communal hubs, providing religious education, healthcare, social services, and vocational training to the poor.

In the country, madrasah teachers (Asatidz) frequently serve as moral mentors and community leaders in addition to teaching religious knowledge. Samsudin (2017) claims that the madrasah curriculum covers more general secular courses like mathematics and mathematics and Islamic subjects like memorizing the Qur'an, Islamic jurisprudence, and Arabic. The lack of compensation is one of the biggest issues madrasah teachers face. The Asatidz in the Philippines receive lower pay than their counterparts in the public school system (Samiha, 2015).

Madrasah instructors in the Philippines frequently depend on community-based funding, which might be irregular and insufficient, whereas public school teachers are subject to national salary guidelines. This disparity is most noticeable in Mindanao's remote and conflict-prone areas, where madrasah schools could function without official government backing (Coronel Ferrer, 2023). Teachers may get little wages or stipends, and sometimes, their pay is sporadic or delayed. A large number of madrasah instructors work under informal or part-time contracts. Employment security is a significant concern for many madrasas, particularly those who operate in isolated areas (Jalil, 2017). Because they frequently work on a volunteer or temporary basis without official labour contracts, teachers may not have job security and minimal protection against exploitation or arbitrary dismissal. Many madrasah educators experience financial insecurity, which is made worse by this volatility. (Macasalong, 2013)v

Another difficulty is the limited availability of professional development options for madrasah teachers. Many madrasah teachers, especially those in remote or rural locations, cannot participate in conferences, training workshops, or postgraduate studies, according to Bautista (2016). Although DepEd has attempted to offer madrasah educators basic teacher training, the programs' frequency and scope are frequently restricted, depriving teachers of the most recent pedagogical resources and current teaching approaches.

Community stakeholders play a critical role in ensuring the sustainability, quality, and relevance of madrasah education programs, especially in marginalized or rural areas. Researchers like Samsudin (2017) stressed that community organizations, parents, and local religious leaders are frequently the first to address the educational needs of Muslim communities by giving madrasah schools funding and direction. In addition to providing

financial assistance, these stakeholders are essential to the daily operations of madrasah schools because they facilitate professional growth and teacher training. Bacalso (2018), added that private foundations and NGOs play a crucial role in filling in the funding gaps by frequently offering grants for projects that increase the capacity of school administrators and teachers as well as for infrastructure and educational materials.

Almario (2014) also pointed out that community involvement goes beyond encouraging the inclusion of conflict resolution and peace-building techniques in the curriculum, which has a wider social influence outside of the classroom. The long-term success and resilience of madrasah education programs are ensured by this collective involvement, which also builds a sense of empowerment and ownership among the community while fortifying the educational basis of madrasah students (Lantong et al., 2023). In the end, madrasah education is a potent instrument for both spiritual and socioeconomic growth because of the collaboration of local communities, religious leaders, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies. (Ibnu et al., 2023)

Over the past few decades, madrasah education in the Philippines has experienced significant development, especially in the context of Muslim communities in Mindanao, with growing government and stakeholder support (Ayala et al., 2017). Madrasahs have long been regarded as being crucial to maintaining cultural identity, advancing religious education, and meeting the educational requirements of marginalized Muslim communities; hence, this support is vital. (Peteros, 2022)

The Philippine government has taken action to encourage the development of madrasah education as it has come to understand its significance. The Governance of Basic Education Act (Republic Act No. 9155) of 2001, which established a more inclusive educational framework to meet the needs of all societal segments, including Muslim communities, was a significant milestone. The act allowed local education governance to have more autonomy, making it easier to integrate madrasah education into the official educational system.

Furthermore, the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) has played a significant role in advocating the improvement of madrasah education. To guarantee that madrasah teachers receive the necessary training, that schools receive accreditation, and that the curriculum complies with both domestic and international standards, the NCMF collaborates with DepEd, local government units (LGUs), and other interested parties.

Additionally, the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented changes to guarantee that madrasahs fulfilled national requirements through the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) for Madrasahs, which was created in collaboration with regional Islamic organizations. As stated by Samsudin, N. (2017), the issuance of DepEd Order No. 51 in 2004, which mandates the inclusion of Arabic language and Islamic studies in the curriculum, is a signal to guarantee that madrasah education adheres to both religious and national educational standards (Tardif, 2021). This was a component of a broader initiative to raise educational standards in Muslim-majority Mindanao and Sulu.

Local government units (LGUs) have significantly promoted madrasah education in the Southern Philippines, especially in Mindanao. Rabiya A. (2016) points out that LGUs

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frequently give madrasah schools direct finance, infrastructure support, and logistical aid, particularly in remote and conflict-affected areas. In certain cases, LGUs work collaboratively with Islamic groups and organizations to supervise and manage madrasah operations.

The Philippine government demands more support for madrasah schools and *Asatidz*, especially in regions where madrasahs serve as the primary educational institutions for Muslim learners (“Status of Students’ Boarding Houses in the University of Eastern Philippines, Laoang Campus,” 2022). To guarantee that the *Asatidz* receive sufficient pay, benefits, and training opportunities, Samsudin (2017) suggested that the government should increase its financial commitment to these schools. Bautista (2016) advocates the growth of professional development programs, particularly in Islamic studies and contemporary teaching methodologies, to fill the gaps in teacher qualifications and pedagogical skills. These programs should be accessible to teachers teaching in remote areas and should offer certification accepted by Islamic educational authorities and the government.

On the other hand, parental support is one of the greater considerations in traditional madrasah education, which reflects how families affect the educational experience of students attending religious schools (Gaylo et al., 2022). Parents' strong commitment to upholding religious and cultural norms within the family unit frequently explains their active support of madrasah education.

Parents in Southeast Asia, especially in the Philippines, prioritise enrolling their children in madrasahs to ensure they receive a religious education that aligns with their family values (Hassan, 2012). This is supported by Jamil (2014), who discovered that parents in areas with a majority of Muslims are strongly interested in promoting madrasah education because they see it not just as a tool for religious instruction but for communal development as well. Some research indicated difficulties with parental support, especially with regard to budget limitations and educational understanding. Even though they may have a strong desire to support their children's education, parents in marginalized groups may experience financial difficulties that make it difficult for them to do so. Despite their strong devotion to their children's religious education, parents frequently cannot afford private tutoring or additional educational resources due to financial constraints, especially in rural or underdeveloped areas (Zahid, 2018).

Despite all the efforts to support traditional Madrasah and integrate it into the formal education system, it remains a complicated issue. One of the main issues noted in the study of Luna (2017) is that madrasah schools do not have enough resources. While some madrasahs receive government assistance, many nevertheless face financial difficulties that limit their capacity to upgrade facilities, supply high-quality instructional materials, and pay teachers an adequate salary. (Malana & Javier, 2020)

General Santos City, which is situated in the southern Philippines, is known to acknowledge religious freedom (Cayaon, 2022). Muslim presence is substantial in this city, making up around 5% of the total population. The city is home to Madaris, or Islamic religious schools, essential in providing local Muslim children with an Islamic education. The city's seventeen (17) barangays are home to sixty-five (65) Madaris centers. The number of *Asatidz*

who support these centers is 195. As a dynamic urban center, General Santos City is home to a diverse population, including many Muslim families seeking quality education for their children. However, integrating traditional madrasah education within the broader educational landscape presents unique challenges and opportunities (Hunziker, 2023). The LGU's support for these institutions reflects a broader commitment to inclusivity and recognition of cultural diversity, aligning with national efforts to enhance educational access for all.

The Madrasah implementation is highly progressive in the Southern Philippines, especially in General Santos City. To meet the needs of the Madrasah's schools concerning cultural education, the Local Government Unit and the community stakeholders are very supportive of its implementation. This measure is a significant step toward protecting Muslim children's cultural and religious heritage while guaranteeing their access to high-quality education in the community. The LGU's and stakeholders' support in implementing and maintaining Madaris initiatives is essential to their efficacy. To improve the quality of education in their areas of responsibility, LGUs must provide infrastructure, resources, and policy assistance. This assistance will enable the Madaris system to better integrate into the broader educational setting and meet the demands of the Asatidz and learners.

Ariff (2020) explained that although the government has offered some financial assistance and legislative frameworks, the way these policies have been implemented has varied by region. Because of the Philippines' decentralized education governance system, local government units (LGUs) may be more active in promoting madrasah education in some regions than others. For example, local officials may more likely to provide resources to madrasahs in places with significant Muslim populations, but government support may be scarce in other locations. Hence, this study explored the enablers of madrasah education programs, focusing on locally-led initiatives of the Local Government Unit (LGU) to support the traditional Madaris in General Santos City.

For over 20 years, the General Santos City government has provided training to expand the Asatidz's capacity and a monthly stipend to support the Madaris program. This initiative provides opportunities to address the educational requirements of Muslim students in General Santos City. Hence, this study endeavoured to provide a comprehensive understanding of the enablers of madrasah education in General Santos City, contributing valuable insights to policymakers, educators, and community leaders. By identifying and amplifying successful practices, it hopes to promote the continued development of madrasah education as a vital component of the region's educational framework and cultural heritage.

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach using the case study tradition. This tradition is used to probe the real-world responses to the research objectives. The case study technique will enable the researchers to conduct an in-depth examination of data within the context of Madrasah Education in General Santos City. This study uses a case study to analyze and investigate contemporary real-world phenomena through in-depth contextual research about a few occurrences or situations and their relationships (Zainal, 2007, pp.1-2). Thus, this

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technique is appropriate, as the study requires an examination of the contextual phenomena surrounding the implementation of Muslim Education in the LGU-assisted Madaris in General Santos City.

Participants

Because the inclusion criteria are adapted to the knowledge, skills, and experiences of persons involved in implementing Madrasah Education in General Santos City, the participants were chosen using the purposive sample technique. The team interviewed 16 key informants from eight (8) Madaris who the LGU assisted in this study. The Asatidz and Mudirs of the Madrasah in General Santos served as key informants. Moreover, LGU focal persons with direct knowledge and engagement in implementing the Madrasah program also participated in this study.

Data Collection Method

This study followed several data collection techniques, such as interviews through Key Informant Interview (KII) and focus group discussion (FGD).

The researchers conducted a Focus Group Discussions involving the stakeholders of the Madrasah. This included participants from the Asatidz, Mudirs, religious leaders, parents, and Local Government Unit in General Santos City. Data that was collected were used to corroborate data gathered from the KII.

An open-ended interview was done separately after the FGD. The interview sessions were recorded on audio with the consent of the participants, and the voice recordings were transcribed. The researchers also made field notes to record sincere, accurate, and real reflections on the interviews.

Data Analysis

The qualitative information from the focus group discussions and interviews was examined after participant confirmation of the accuracy of the data transcription. Using the Quirkos application, the collected qualitative data was coded, categorized, and arranged into themes for study. The study was directed by the six-phase theme analysis described in Braun and Clarke's (2008) framework. The study examined the main themes that emerged from the results of the FGD and the interviews.

Result and Discussion

The following presents the research findings and discussion based on the data collected from the participants.

The Key Enablers of Madrasah Education Program in General Santos City



Enabling local policy landscape in recognition of Islamic faith and identity

One of the factors that makes traditional Madrasah education programs highly regarded among Muslim communities is that they serve as an avenue to strengthen and practice their faith and preserve Muslim identity. Madaris are considered essential institutions for cultural and religious preservation rather than only schools inculcating Islamic beliefs. The narratives of the *Asatidz* and Madrasah operators support this:

“Ang isa sa mga naibibigay ng madrasah sa community ay ang identity, pinatitibay nito ang pananampalataya, kapag nakakakita ng madrasah, masasabi talaga na Muslim community yan”[KII_P1]

(One of the contributions of Madrasah to the community is the recognition of Islamic faith and identity. If you see Madrasah, one can say that it is a Muslim community.)

The growing recognition of the local government units for traditional Madaris as part of their inclusive governance practice has significantly contributed to uplifting the profile of these learning centers. The sustained support given by the LGU through funding the needs of the Madrasah has been effective in making Madaris an important segment of society for values transformation.

“Ang LGU ang nagbibigay ng tulong pinansiyal para sa mga honorarium ng mga Asatidz sa pamamagitan ng ICCAD”[KII_P3]

(The Local Government Unit is providing financial help, specifically the honorarium of the *Asatidz* through the ICCAD.)

In the same vein, financial support was highlighted as one of the primary supports of LGU Gensan and Community Stakeholders through providing salaries for the *Asatidz* and *Mudirs*.

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“Sa mga stakeholders namin, ang may pinakamalaking tulong ay ang ICCAD at ang LGU, dahil bawat isa sa amin ay binibigyan ng Php 5,000 na allowance, at the same time yung mga PTA Presidents namin ay binibigyan kami ng Php 2,000 monthly, at napakalaking tulong yun. Ang mga parents naman ay naga contribution”.[FGD_P6]

(Regarding our stakeholders, the greatest support is from the ICCAD and LGU because each of us receives P 5,000 as an allowance; in the same manner, our PTA Presidents are given P 2,000 monthly, which is a very big help. Our parents, on the other hand, give help through their dues.)

“Pero minsan may mga instances naman na may mga tao na nag iisponsor, halimbawa may isa na magsasabi na ako ang magbibigay ng monthly, mayron talagang ganun” [FGD_P7]

(There are also instances where some people sponsor; for example, one says, “I will be the one who will give monthly”, but there are cases like that.)

The LGU of General Santos City has supported the traditional Madrasah financially and politically. Initiatives from the local government, like infrastructure development (painting and repairing of dilapidated classrooms), grants to deserving students to study abroad, particularly in Islamic countries, and subsidies to the 65 LGU-supported Madrasah in the city and the increase in the salary of the 195 Asatidz have assisted in easing the difficulties of Madrasahs in the locale.

Active Community Support and Commitment for Madrasah Education among Muslim families

The operation of traditional Madaris is maintained through the active support of the parents and other community members (through the *sadaqa* of those who belong to the middle class or rich families). These grassroots initiatives ensure that madrasahs are responsive to the specific needs of the local population. The active participation of parents in school activities, decision-making processes, and resource mobilization helps create a sense of ownership and obligation. Notably, Madaris continues to thrive when there is strong support from the community as it benefits from extra funding, volunteer efforts, and advocacy for educational improvements.

“Nagsimula talaga ang madrasah sa pagtipon tipon ng mga parents at sila na ang naghahanap kung sino ang magtuturo sa madah.”[KII_P1]

(The Madrasah started with parents gathering together, and they were the ones who looked for someone to teach in the madrasah schools).

“Tumutulong ang stakeholders, number one is logistics, financial, and then maintenance of classroom and development. Ang iba din ay yung sadaqa or allowance ng mga Madaris facilitators, at ang iba ay nag papa feeding hindi lamang sa mga estudyante kundi pati narin sa mga Asatidz”[FGD_P4]

(The stakeholders help in logistics, financial support, classroom maintenance, and development. Others give *sadaqa* as allowance for Madrasah facilitators, and some conduct feeding programs for the students and the Asatidz (teachers)).

The strong sense of parental involvement and responsibility in promoting traditional madrasah education is among the study's most important findings. In addition to prioritizing their children's religious education, parents in General Santos City are important stakeholders who actively participate in the administrative and financial facets of madrasah operations. Many parents donate their time or make financial contributions to support school events, infrastructure upgrades, and fundraising campaigns, particularly in communities with low economic status. This degree of parental involvement demonstrates the importance of madrasah education in the neighbourhood's Muslim community and the close relationship between education and cultural identity. However, it is also clear that financial difficulties restrict some parents' ability to fully support their kids' education, especially when getting them extra help or resources.

Also, training for the *Asatidz* and *Mudirs* was provided to equip madrasah educators to meet the relevant needs of Muslim learners.

“Isa sa mga paghahanda, generally dito sa CMO-ICCAD at sa yearly activities ng Federation Madaris ay mayroon doong two days training sa mga guro, tinuturuan sila sa mga teaching methods, yung mga bago, strategy, at saka iba’t ibang makabagong pamamaraan ng pagtuturo” [KII_P3]

(One of the preparations here in CMO-ICCAD and the yearly activities of the Federation of Madaris is the 2-day training for the teachers; they were taught about teaching methods and new strategies.)

Inclusion of some of the subjects of the traditional Madrasah in the Madrasah Education Program of the Department of Education

The vision of creating a standardized curriculum for the Madrasah is included in the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum of the Department of Education. There are 6 to 7 subjects (Hadith, Tawheed, Fiqh, Seerah, Qur’an, Arabic Language, Akhlaq, Aqeedah) in the REMC that are also taught to the learners in the Traditional Madrasah. This indicates that Traditional Madrasah is navigating the competencies set in the national educational curriculum.

“Dito sa Gensan ay walang unified kurikulum, bawat madrasah ay may sariling kurikulum, kaya may sarili silang mga subjects na pinapairal o itinuturo sa kanilang mga mag aaral, halimbawa nito ay ang Madrasah MEBA at Madrasah Darul Ulom” [KII_P2]

(In General Santos, we don’t have a unified curriculum; every Madrasah has its curriculum, and they have their subjects being taught to their students. An example of this is the Madrasah MEBA and Madrasah Darul Ulom)

Growing desire/demand for a balanced Islamic Education

The growing number of Muslim populace in Mindanao has significantly spurred demand from Muslim parents to educate their children holistically and aligned with their

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Islamic beliefs, values and traditions. The traditional Madrasah is seen as a possible avenue to fulfil that desire through an enhanced and quality education that these traditional *Madaris* must offer. For example, a parent desires/ dreams of having a son who is an engineer and at the same time leads the prayer in their home or a daughter who is a doctor and is also a memorizer or eloquent reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

The leadership role taken by the traditional leaders, religious scholars (Ulama), and teachers (mudir and asatidz) plays a crucial part in establishing and sustaining the operation of Madrasah education. Local initiatives to improve the condition of these traditional madaris are often initiatives from these leaders.

“Nag create kami ng PTCA Officers naming Arabic tapos may mga Asatidz na sila na ang nagtuturo, karamihan ay mga volunteers, mga magulang na nagsasahod sa mga Asatidz para maipagpatuloy lang ang pag aaral ng kanilang mga anak” [FGD_P6]

(We created an Arabic PTCA Officer; the Asatidz are the ones who are teaching, and there are also volunteers; parents give an honorarium to the Asatidz to continue their children's education).

The demand for Madrasah Education is reflected in recognition of Muslim parents' need to enrol their children in Madrasah. They believe that Madrasah can teach their children to be morally upright. They also have high expectations for the Madrasah to discipline their children.

“Ang mga parents, ipinapasok sa Madrasah ang kanilang mga anak, pagpasok sa Madrasah nagiging matino yan. Nabibigyan ng tamang disiplina, at sa kalaunay nagiging ustadz” [KII_P5]

(The parents enrol their children in Madrasah to become good citizens. They are disciplined and eventually become Ustadz).

The accreditation of the Madaris under the Local Government Unit of General Santos City

The Madaris operators are strengthening their efforts to make their institutions operate within the bounds of the national governing agencies. Many traditional Madaris are recognized/accredited by their local government units or the Securities and Exchange Commission. This was a product of both a requirement from the government or the desire from the operators and its teachers to assure the community that the true teachings of Islam are being adhered to by these traditional Madaris.

“Sa amin, chinicheck-up namin kong ano ang itinuturo ng mga Asatidz, di ba mayroon namang mga objectives, kinakailangan na ang tinuturo nila ay isinusulat nila sa kanilang notebook. Binabagay din namin ang mga Ustadz sa ibat'ibang Grade level, yun dumadaan talaga sa screening kung ano ang itinuturo ng mga kasamahan namin” [FGD_P1]

(In our case, we check what the Asatidz are teaching. There are objectives, right? They must write down what they teach in their notebooks. We also assign the Ustadz to

different grade levels, ensuring that they go through proper screening for what our colleagues are teaching)

“May monitoring na ginagawa nag ICCAD para ma assure na nagtuturo talaga ang mga guro. Sunday and Monday, naglilibot yan sila para masiguro din na dekalidad ang itinuturo sa mga bata”[FGD_P3}

(Monitoring is conducted by the ICCAD to ensure that the teachers are indeed teaching. Every Sunday and Monday, they supervise to ensure that the lessons taught to the children are of high quality).

NGO's and religious leaders' support of Madrasah education is vital as it adds to the schools' resources. NGOs help increase the capacity of the Asatidz by providing training and educational resources, offering student scholarships, and supporting neighbourhood-based campaigns that emphasize the value of education. Religious leaders are important supporters of madrasah education and have a lot of clout in society. In addition to urging families to enrol their kids at madrasahs, they also work with other interested parties to generate money and forge closer ties with outside donors or academic establishments. These leaders' participation guarantees that madrasah education will continue to be in line with community values and be supported materially and morally.

“Ang mga Mudirs ay may monitoring na ginagawa sa amin, nagbibigay sila ng link sa GC namin, para ma organize ang mga itinuturo mula sa mababang level hanggang sa mataas na level”[FGD_P5]

(The Mudirs also monitor us, providing a link in our group chat to organize the lessons from lower to higher levels).

“Bilang Mudir, nagsusurprise visit ako at chinecheck ko yung mga lessons nila, yung mga questions nila upang matiyak na ang itinuturo nila sa mga mulits natin ay tama”[KII_P4]

(As a Mudir, I conduct surprise visits and check their lessons and questions to ensure that what they are teaching our students is accurate).

The desire to be accredited means recognising their efforts to be in sync with what secular education offers in terms of learners' outcomes. The participants are furthering their efforts to match or at least be at par with all curricular and co-curricular activities of secular education.

An important step toward raising the standard and validity of madrasah education in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is Madaris' accreditation under the MBHTE. The accrediting framework ensures that all madrasahs fulfil minimal quality criteria while acknowledging the diversity of educational approaches in the region by distinguishing between Traditional Madrasah and Balanced Private Madrasah Centers. This promotes contemporary educational possibilities for the Muslim community while also assisting in preserving Islamic values.

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Conclusion

The study concludes that contextual factors such as social, economic, environmental and political dimensions affect the implementation of the traditional Madrasah in General Santos City. Generally, the Local Government Unit of General Santos City plays a vital role in enabling the operation of the Madaris in the city. The institutionalization of the Indigenous Cultural Community Affairs Division (ICCAD) of the City Government with the inclusion of a flagship program, Madaris for Peace, results in a vibrant response from the Muslim community to the educational needs of Muslim learners during weekends. Through this program, administrators of Madrasah have expressed their commitment to collaborating with the Local Government Unit in pursuing relevant curricular and co-curricular offerings in the Madrasah. This partnership also led to intangible results, such as promoting peace and preventing violent extremism in the city.

The analysis in this paper identified critical enablers such as active community involvement (e.g. Parents-Teacher Association, Student Body Organization and Religious Advisory Council), government assistance (monthly honorarium, classroom facilities support), capacity building (*Madaris* Academy and annual training of the Asatidz and Mudirs); however, implementation of these efforts was sometimes choked by inadequate financial resources. Overall, this paper underscores the significance of the all-of-the-community approach in creating an inclusive educational environment that meets the needs of Muslim learners.

The study recommends the standardization of the traditional Madrasah Curriculum, considering the nuances of Muslim communities in General Santos. This requires collaborating with the Mindanao State University-General Santos to review the curriculum using the Context -Input -Process -Product (CIPP) model. A standardized curriculum with technical assistance from the experts will be developed from this. A capacity development program can also be designed based on Asatidz's training needs assessment. Also, there is a need to consider including the Traditional Madrasah Education/Madrasah Education Program in the normative funding of the Local Government Unit of General Santos.

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