

**“Investigation into challenges of Islamic education at  
multi-cultural institutions -  
Case studies of teachers’ and students’ views in high  
schools in Dubai”**

**"تَحَرِّي بعض التَّحَدِّيات التي تواجه مادة التربية الإسلامية في المؤسسات  
التعليمية متعددة الثقافات"  
دراسة حالة من وجهة نظر معلمي وطلاب مادة التربية الإسلامية في بعض  
مدارس المرحلة العليا في دبي**

**by**

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

In the current century, the world has been affected by different events and developments, which composes challenges facing the teaching and learning Religious Education . Some challenges may cause difficulties to the learners regarding confusion or suspicions that might happen when students compare the practical scientific subjects and the spiritual-religious subjects. In this dissertation, the researcher studies the challenges facing Islamic education as an academic subject in multi-cultural institutions. The research explores some advantages and disadvantages of multiculturalism when teaching Islamic education in multi-cultural schools from the teachers' and students' perspective. This study will focus only on high school students at some multi-cultural schools in Dubai. Therefore, the purpose of this study aims to identify these challenges from teacher's and student's perspective within a global world. The study was carried out in Dubai using two questionnaires among a sample of 113 teachers and 30 high school students. The researcher used qualitative analysis to validate the quantitative study's findings through semi-structured interviews among ten teachers. Descriptive and Thematic Analysis has been carried out on the data to interpret results regarding common challenges faced in the path of religious education specific to Islamic Education. The study concludes with significant challenges identified discussing Arabic texts' inability to understand when the commonly used language is English. Irrelevant curriculum, mixing concepts with other beliefs . . . etc. Recognising these challenges would help important actors in their respective areas make amendments to the curriculum or the teaching and learning strategies to be smoother than before. The participants gave several suggestions, which they believed were effective to face these existing or emerging challenges that may arise in the multiculturalism educational institutions.

**Keywords:** Dubai -Teachers' perspective - Islamic Education – Challenges – Multi-cultural – International - High schools

يواجه التعليم الديني حول العالم الكثير من التحديات والتي قد تكون سبباً مُعَوِّفاً لأداء التعليم الديني دوره على الوجه الصحيح. تحديات تمنع أو تُصعِّب توصيل علومه بصورة صحيحة بدون لبسٍ أو شبهات للمتعلم. يسود العالم في القرن الحالي إقبالاً شديداً على العلوم المادية وتراجع عن العلوم النظرية عامة، ولذلك نجد أن نظرة المجتمع للدين وعلومه وتعليمه تتأثر بأحداث العالم ومُجَرِّياته مما يشكل تحدياً عظيماً يواجه تعليم مواد التربية الإسلامية. يستقصي الباحث في هذه الأطروحة التحديات التي تواجه تعليم مادة التربية الإسلامية لطلاب التعليم الثانوي في المدارس متعددة الثقافات، يتحرى البحث بعض الإيجابيات وبعض السلبيات من وجهة نظر معلمي مادة التربية الإسلامية. وقد اختار الباحث إجراء هذه الدراسة على بعض المدارس الدولية أو متعددة الثقافات في دُبي. ركَّزَ الباحث فقط على طلاب المرحلة العليا. وقد جمع الباحث بياناته في هذه الدراسة عن طريق استطلاعات شاركها مع عدد من معلمي مادة التربية الإسلامية في عدد من المدارس متعددة الثقافات في دُبي، مع استطلاع لِعَيِّنَةٍ من طلاب المدارس متعددة الثقافات في دُبي، وقد استكمل الباحث البيانات عن طريق مقابلات شخصية عبر وسائل التواصل مع عدد من معلمي مادة التربية الإسلامية ذوي الخبرة في المدارس الدولية متعددة الثقافات. كشفت تحاليل البيانات في هذا البحث عن عدد من المميزات وكذلك السلبيات التي تواجه الطلاب المسلمين وكذلك تواجه معلمي مادة التربية الإسلامية عند تدريسهم في المدارس الدولية والتي تجمع طلاب من بيئات وثقافات متعددة. قَدَّمَ البحث عدداً من الاقتراحات والتي اعتَقَدَ معمو المادة فعاليتها لمواجهة هذه التحديات القائمة أو المستجدة والتي قد تطرأ تبعاً لمجريات الأمور حول العالم بصفة عامة أو الخاصة ببيئة الطلاب وعلاقاتهم بصفة خاصة.

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## Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1. Main research aim .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.2. Methodology of Research .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.3. Research Questions .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.4. Research Objectives .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY .....	21
3.1. Introduction .....	21
3.2. Research Design .....	21
3.2.1. Study Population.....	23
3.3. Area of Research .....	24
3.4. Sample Size and Sampling Technique .....	24
3.5. Variables and Measurement Procedures .....	24
3.6. Methods of Data Collection .....	25
3.7. Validity and Reliability of the Instrument.....	30
3.8. Data Processing and Analysis .....	31
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS.....	32
4.1. Quantitative Analysis – Teacher’s Survey .....	32
4.1.1. Descriptive Statistics .....	32
4.1.2. Reliability Test .....	34
4.1.3. Descriptive Analysis.....	34
4.2. Quantitative Analysis – Student’s Survey.....	42
4.2.1. Descriptive Statistics .....	42
4.2.2. Descriptive Analysis.....	45
4.3. Qualitative Analysis – Interviews .....	32
4.4. Discussion .....	59
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.....	62
5.1. Implications.....	68
REFERENCES .....	69
APPENDIX A.....	73
APPENDIX B .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
APPENDIX C .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Throughout the last decades, the United Arab Emirates has become more culturally and religiously diverse. So, it was expected from the MOE. to give more care to the Islamic Education curriculum to protect and secure the beliefs and national identity of the citizens and Muslim students. That is why there have been continuing reviewing of the Islamic syllabus. The Islamic Education curriculum in the U.A.E. is taught in Arabic for Arabic native speakers and in English for non-Arabs. This research investigates the challenges of the multiculturalism on Muslim students' religious identity and recommends effective methods to face any challenges. This chapter will review the general difficulties that faced Islamic Education in the multi-cultural societies worldwide and the impact of these challenges on Muslim students' religious identity. The research is following "explanatory sequential mixed methods".

### **1.2**

The challenges facing religious curriculums are utterly different from other subjects' challenges due to religious education's distinct nature. It is even further from a specific Religion to another and from a place to another. However, when reviewing past research investigating the challenges of religious studies in general throughout the last decade, we find challenges relating to the numbers of religious groups' minorities. the state policy, the educational policies, or the difficulties that face a school to hire qualified religious education teachers also face a religious school when teaching Religion in a secular or pluralistic society. (Ubani et al. 2019)

Moreover, when focusing on Islam, the challenges confronting Islamic education worldwide can be categorised in three general forms.

The challenges are resulting in non-Muslim societies dealing with Islam as a threat to its societal structure. Or against the educational system of the curriculum in those societies. By



example, the conflict between Buddhists and Muslims minority in Myanmar is a clear example of increased animosity between races and different beliefs (Muhad et al. 2017).

Challenges confront Muslims in the societies in which Muslims are a minority and how they strive to teach, learn, and practice Islam's rituals and their difficulties with developing Islamic faith in their children. (Alrifa'i 2017) One of the challenges facing the Muslim community in England is educating their children in societies dominated by secular values and western traditions.

Challenges of designing an innovative Islamic curriculum suit the modern time's needs with an approach that combines the strong foundations of Islamic beliefs and demonstrates the flexibility of Islamic law and its convenience for all eras while applying modern strategies and teaching methods. (Rahman, Warsah & Murfi 2019) by example, Singapore's authority has established a syllabus for the Islamic education called "the Singapore Islamic Education System (SIES)". It plans to offer the students of Islamic teaching of all year groups a recognition, value, and skills to apply Islam in all life situations, particularly preparing students to deal with the current global challenges and fostering Muslims' practical experience in Singapore.

All the mentioned challenges require the support of the authoritative organisations in the state, a circular review and development to the Islamic Education curriculum, and a continues professional development to the teachers of Islamic Education. Teachers must aware of the progression of events worldwide and the skills to deal with the rapid effects in all aspects of life. All these challenges have in common is either managing Islamic Education in the plural and multi-cultural society to include a solid and a clear interpretation of the new globe arising events following the Islamic Shariah or maintaining and developing the religious Identity of Muslim students in plural societies.

Nevertheless, in the west, the researchers differ when analysing Islamic education challenges

in multi-cultural societies. Some of them deny the difficulties and think about the optimistic view, like gaining a vast knowledge from the diverse of mixed beliefs. Moreover, giving them opportunities to Muslim students to interact in the society, and confirming that the daily interacting with other groups helps Muslims' students to show and to practice the Islamic tolerance and kindness, which allow them to make a difference in their societies (Mahmud 2018) (Amri, Tahir & Ahmad 2017). While other researchers clarify the challenges and obstacles and analysing the difficulties that are causing suffering and irritations to the Muslim students in multi-cultural institutions, they argue that practising Islamic rituals and announcing Islamic beliefs is not easy, especially after 9/11. In contrast, some other researchers explain the deviations or doubts that might happen from Muslim students' daily communications with agnostics and atheists (Alrifa'i 2017).

Furthermore, the influence of friends on the Muslim students throughout different stages in their lives, so, some of them recommend the Islamic schools for Muslims' students to protect their religious identity from any possible influences. (Mohd Nor et al. 2017) (Panjwani 2017).

### **1.3 The importance of this research**

However, when examining the studies conducted on the same topic in the Middle East, the lack of research sorting, analysing and discussing the challenges that face Islamic Education in Arab countries in general. The research deficiency studied the impact of the multi-cultural environment on Muslim students' Islamic identity in Arab countries. Although Muslims represent most of the community in most Arab countries, they still counted as minorities in some multi-cultural institutions, where we find richness and diversity in cultures and beliefs. Studying the consequential influences resulting from Muslim students' interaction with other beliefs in some Arab countries is needed. It is an important subject for Muslim parents and Islamic Education teachers alike to be aware of the impact of multiculturalism on Muslim students' religious identity. Moreover, when focusing on the United Arab Emirates research

show that statutes and regulations shield justice, equality, essentially, and provided all reasons that promote tolerance, which encourage residents who belong to various cultures, beliefs, races, and nationalities coexist in harmony and happiness. "In almost all Muslim-majority states today, non-Muslims are equal citizens under the law"(Milligan 2018, p5).

Education is a fundamental component for the improvement of the Emirates' civilisation. It is obligatory from K to Y9, and free of charge at all stages for citizens within all the Emirates. The law organises the essential policies for the progression propagate of education at all levels. The United Arab Emirates is allowing private schools to be founded by people and businesses groups according to the terms of the United Arab Emirates' law. However, the Ministry of Education and the country's public authorities are supervising private schools. The constitution of the United Arab Emirates acknowledges "Islam shall be the official religion of the Union. The Islamic Shari'ah shall be a principal source ar legislation in the Union. The official language of the Union shall be Arabic" (Emirates 1996, p9) (Dhabi, Qaiwain & Khaimah 2013, p7). However, other groups with any other religious identity can practice and demonstrate their rituals' religious activities liberally. The United Arab Emirates constitution guarantees "equality, social justice, ensuring safety and security and equality of opportunity for all citizens shall be the pillars of the society. Co-operation and mutual mercy shall be a firm bond between them" (Emirates 1996, p9) (Dhabi, Qaiwain & Khaimah 2013, p5). However, this promoting acceptance and maintained justice encouraged various cultures and groups to invest and work in the United Arab Emirates environment with happiness, enjoying maintained security and tolerance.

The United Arab Emirates constitution rules Islam is the country's official Religion. Islamic Education in the U.A.E. is a compulsory subject for Muslim students from K to Y12, and optional for non-Muslim students (MoE 2017). The Islamic Education curriculum is managed, organised, and reviewed by the ministry of education of the United Arab Emirates (MoE 2017).

Furthermore, the country's educational authorities shall supervise the quality of the implementation of all subjects' educational program (Emirates 1996) (Dhabi, Qaiwain & Khaimah 2013).

Unlike other religions, Islamic Education has shaped Muslim students' religious, social, national, economic, and moral identity. It not only presents a limited relationship with the side of worship Allah S.W, but it penetrates all aspects of life. Multi-cultural schools represent a challenging environmental atmosphere to all religious minorities worldwide; this study will examine the influence of the continuous interaction with Muslim students' different cultures. Whether this has a positive or negative impact on their beliefs and convictions, also, the research will investigate the views of Islamic teachers regarding the Islamic schools in Dubai, and to which extent do the Islamic schools in Dubai provide an excellent choice for Muslim parents who like to preserve the religious identity of their children.

Examining and investigating the challenges that face Muslim students within our recent time, is needed, especially that the fantastic acceleration in recent times' developments lends its effects on everything. It touches thoughts, concepts, and convictions, and therefore we need to study the result of dealing with other cultures on Muslim students' Islamic identity. This study will focus on the high school level. The research will do the Investigation with the co-operation of some Muslim students and Islamic teachers in multi-cultural schools in Dubai.

#### **1.4 Methodology of Research**

The research follows the "explanatory sequential mixed methods", first a questionnaire is shared with a random sample of Muslim students who are studying in multi-cultural high schools in Dubai, and another questionnaire to teachers of Islamic Education at international and multi-cultural schools in Dubai to collect general data about their perceptions about the advantages and challenges that face Muslim students religious identity in multi-cultural institutions, and then, semi interviews will be managed with some experienced teachers who

have been teaching Islamic Education in multi-cultural high schools in Dubai, the talks are aiming to collect information about the type of influences on Muslim students religious identity in multi-cultural schools, and their recommendations to the ideal dealing with each challenge, and if the Islamic schools in Dubai are presenting an excellent educational institutions to maintain the Muslim students identities, the research is aiming the level of high school students in Dubai.

### **1.5 Main Research Aim**

This research will focus on the Islamic Education challenges in multi-cultural schools, and the influences of the multiculturalism on the Muslim students' religious identity. The researcher will focus on some multi-cultural institutions in Dubai.

### **Research Objectives**

1. Identify and understand the effects of multiculturalism on the religious identity of high school Muslim students.
2. Investigate the quality of Islamic schools as a solution and alternative to multi-cultural schools in Dubai.
3. To recommend methods and suggestions for Islamic education to the best investment in multiculturalism in Dubai, especially in Muslim communities in general.

### **Main Research Question**

What are the challenges and difficulties that influence the Islamic religious identity in the multi-cultural communities?

### **Sub Research Questions**

What are the influences of multiculturalism on high school Muslim students religious identity?

Do Islamic Schools offer solutions and a better choice if compared with multi-cultural schools in Dubai? How? Why?

What are Islamic education teachers' recommendations to deal with these challenges and direct

the influences on more positive sides?

In the following sections, the research will review past studies about the impact of multiculturalism on citizens' religious identity. To what extent do Muslim students are influenced when they are a minority in a multi-culture institution. A presentation to the research methodology, and why it was more convenient to choose the "explanatory sequential mixed methods". The quantitative and qualitative data analysis will show the views of teachers and students regarding the challenges that face Islamic Education in the multi-cultural high schools in Dubai. The findings will explain and recommend some methods and procedures to deal with this challenge and direct it to a more positive side.

## **CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to explain and focus on the impact of the plural society on citizens and school students' religious identity. The researcher will address this through the view of past research.

In this chapter, the researcher reviews some past studies about the challenges facing religious education worldwide in recent times. And the impact of Secularism on the world view of religious education as one main challenge. Then move to explain the models and the Islamic rulings of coexistence among different beliefs and different cultures when they exist in one community from Islamic view and its impact on the identity of the Muslims' citizens and the Muslims' students. However, due to the different views, some Muslim scholars were suggesting the Islamic schools as a solution to protect and support the Islamic identity within Muslim offspring, the review to the past studies shows different approaches towards the Islamic schools' idea. Some consider the Islamic schools as an amazing rescue to the Islamic Ideology, and some other consider it as isolation preventing Muslim students from interacting and communicating with other cultures and other beliefs, this interacting and communication would help Muslims' students to build a stronger knowledgeable character to know to deal with the global needs. Then, a demonstration of the importance of Islamic Education for Muslims' offspring as a factor in protecting and building Muslim identity and characteristics.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

#### **Plural Society Theory and Religious Identity**

This research investigates the impact of the plural society on high school students' religious identity. We imagined that multi-cultural schools have the same features as a plural society because we find various nationalities, beliefs, ethnics, mother tongues, and economic classes.

(Benedict 1962) stated examples of a plural society, he divided the populations according to the race and the ethnics division. He argued that it could be subdivided again according to religions or beliefs, considered colours, original nationalities, and mother tongue as elements to differentiate the population in a place. The community could be divided into groups according to high class and lower class as well. It depends on the society itself to decide who will be in the higher class and who will be categorised to the lower level, it is changeable from a society to another, the economic level of the

groups might affect this division, culture and kinship are one of the areas that impact the stratifications of the groups in the society as well.

### **2.3 Recent common misunderstanding of the religious Education**

One of the main challenges that facing religious education in the multi-cultural societies is the trend that considering religious education as an obstacle in the way of the scientific revolution, most secularists' researchers accuse religious education in general by lots of defects, by example (Gibbs 1998) in (Sahin 2018) argues that in our modern world we rely more on the model of entrepreneur academies, where religious behaviour appears less critical, along with the constant changes in the demographics of countries, which have affected the stability of ethics concepts, and this has caused a state of uncertainty in the ability of religious curricula to meet the needs of the modern world or to deal with the fast-changing events. By example, the secular principals that are arising and increasing had a clear impact on the community in Finland; we notice the Religion losing its power and control and transforming into formal ceremonies that many do not follow in light of changing societal values (Huhta 2014). The impact of secular education on the religious minorities in multi-faith schools is evident that many educators in multi-faith schools noted that when religious pupils are the minority in a class, they feel more secluded and lonelier (Zilliacus & Kallioniemi 2016). Therefore, a religious group's coexistence in society is influenced by this society's view of religious commitments and religious values. (Cross 1971) Argues that the deviations that might happen between the different groups in a multi-cultural society happen due to conflicts amongst those sects or ethnics, and this conflict happens when the different sects live separately from each other.

Therefore, if we examined the relationships between different groups in a multi-cultural society where there are lots of joint activities, like same school uniform, and harmonious relationship, and if they are together experiencing the same pressure at the same time, such as what happens during school exams,



or if they share the joy during School social gatherings, sports teams, and competitions where each team consists of members who have the same passion but may belong to different beliefs, in which case there will be no conflict, on the contrary, the diverse groups will be dissolved into a new social sect.

However, we can imagine the challenge of the community pressure that Muslim students face every day in their multi-cultural schools, and this pressure shows a direct impact on students' national identity, and the influences might include their religious identity.

(Alamri & Jaber 2017) pointed to two primary sources of religious deviation that occur either because of a lack of mental convictions that may be due to a lack of knowledge and a lack of understanding of the hidden wisdom of the texts of revelation, or self-desires that refuse to submit to religious controls, preferring to follow whims and desires, and they argue that one of the reasons for the deviation of belief is arrogance, which occurs when people view their desires and emotions selfishly and place them as a priority before virtues and values.

So, when extrapolating the challenges that are facing Islamic education in general, we notice that these challenges have different and more faces because Islam is a practical methodology for every aspect of human life, where learners realise that Islam is not only to confirm monotheism and complete obedience to Allah the Almighty, but also because Islam affirms that this monotheism and this obedience must be concrete in every aspect and practice in the life of a Muslim, so, with further Islamic enlightenment, it will be realised that Islamic religious philosophy considers controls as a manifestation of God's distinction of man, as God honours humans over other creatures, and decides to organise their lives and actions with divine laws, which are not the same with other creatures (Haqqi 2005).

#### **2.4 The Islamic view to the coexistence in multi-cultural societies**

(Jumah 2013) Demonstrated the models of coexistence between different groups, races, and ethics that had happened and accrued throughout the Islamic history, he mentioned that Muslim groups themselves

faced four different models of coexistence in plural societies, they faced the coexistence as a minority amongst the pagan community in Mecca in between the era of prophethood till the migration to Medina, it had been a persecuted suffering coexistence, in which they struggled hard to practice their beliefs. He considered the Abyssinian migration era as a different model of coexistence, as they lived as a minority in a just tolerated civilised community during the same era, that had happened to a group of them who migrated to Abyssinia, where they found a just Christian king who gave this Muslim minority the freedom to practice their religious duties freely in a tolerant community.

The third model was when Muslims were the authoritative party in the plural society of Medina after migration till the death of the Prophet P.B.U.H.; prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H. used this opportunity well to plan and to organise the rulings that secured and guaranteed a peaceful coexistence amongst all the groups and beliefs in Medina after migration, (Jumah 2013) claims that the fourth model appeared during the time of the second Caliph Omar Bin Al-Khattab when Muslims presented superpower at that era and managed the coexistence amongst the different beliefs with more control and justice.

However, the researcher thinks that the fourth model in (Jumah 2013) was just an extension to Medina's model because Omar bin Al-Khattab did not innovate new coexistence rulings during his caliphate's period, he just followed the same rulings that the Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H. dictated in Medina's constitution, of course, we realise that Muslims were more in numbers and powers at Omar's caliphate era. However, being the authoritative ruling party in a plural society did not change to consider it a new coexistence model.

(Embong 2018) claims that the practice of the Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H. in Medina is different from the Plural Society Theory by Furnivall (1956), Furnivall argues the multi-ethnic communities are full of fights and conflicts even when the different groups live under the same state law. Even when multilabel cultural sects exist in one state, they mostly live in different compounds in the same state.

The multi-ethnic society suffer from social pressure upon its groups, and mostly sustain opposite beliefs, which reflect on the continues clashes amongst its assemblies, he confirms that what happened at the time of the Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H. after Medina's constitution was opposite of the view of the Plural Society Theory by Furnivall, as the community of Medina enjoyed the peace and cooperative relationship amongst its different beliefs and groups under the organisation of the Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H., which prove that the practice of the Prophet P.B.U.H. demonstrated successful model should be followed. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the struggling of Muslims under the leadership of the Prophet P.B.U.H. in Medina community against the Jews tribes one after one, and the continues tension that had been caused by the hypocrites (Nugroho 2013), the matters which prove that the Plural Society Theory by Furnivall offered a good explanation to the historical events in Medina from the first year of Hijrah till the death of the Prophet P.B.U.H., actually the community of Medina at the time of the Prophet P.B.U.H. produced an excellent example for a prosperous plural society not because there were no conflicts and disputes between the different beliefs, but because the effective social contract that the Prophet P.B.U.H. dictated in the constitution of Medina, this social contract explained the role of each party, and the consequences of violating its clauses, and moreover that the Prophet put each clause into practice, the constitution of Medina was implemented well and with justice upon each member in the society, the subject that added value to this constitution, and made all parties in Medina alarmed not to encroach upon it, either Muslims or other groups as well.

This research claim that our recent time offers a new model of Muslims coexistence in the plural society. A model where Muslim students are in a multi-cultural school ruled and managed by the western management team and teaching western curriculum to Muslim students in a Muslim country, while Islamic Education is just offered as a special subject during a specific time to Muslims students. However, the state authority and the United Arab Emirates constitution support and promote Islamic culture all over the country and consider Islamic subject as a compulsory subject for Muslim students to preserve the Islamic and national identity for the country.

## **2.5 Secularism and its impact on religious education**

Secularism is managing a pressure over religious education all over the world; it is more prompted in multi-cultural societies that religion is a personal matter, does not interfere the societal interactions, or interrupt the needs of the individuals, while in the secular societies there are purposed intentions to seclude religion a way of life, politics, and economics.

In his attempt to explain how the secular western world views Islamic curricula compared with the scientific subjects' curriculum, (Sahin 2018) explains that Western secularists assert the student must be the centre of the educational process, while religious education considers God is the centre of any process, secular opinion believes that scientific experiments, courage the critical thinking and the ability to reject or to choose liberally as individual according to the needs of oneself or according to the needs of societies is not available in religious education, as opposed, religious education guide to make a full dedication to God and fear of the Lord as a priority that precedes anything else, which impedes creativity and delays progress in the field of science. However, this view ignored that the full submission to Islamic religion is a free choice, and it is built on commands of reading, thinking and contemplating on all aspects of life. (Al-Aqqad 2007) explains that mind is not mentioned in the Holy Quran except in the place of respect, appreciation and warning that it is necessary to act upon it and refer to it, and the reference to it does not come briefly or at random in the context of the Quranic verses, but the believer is on judging his critical thinking or blames the wrongdoers for neglecting their thinking skills. Allah S.W said: "And He placed at your service whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth—all is from Him. In that are signs for a people who think" Surah Al-Jathiyah Ayah 13 (Itani 2016, p191)

(Zilliacus & Kallioniemi 2016) demonstrate reasons for their suggestion to offer secular ethics education as an alternative to religious education from the viewpoint of the teachers of secular ethics; the teachers considered the secular ethics class as a perfect place to participate in a discussion about

humanity and equality. Conversations that happen in the secular ethics class are run around the life and prosperity of everyone, it concerning all, does not exclude anyone, because secular class mostly talking about general needs and common interest that could include all human, such as, friendship, the meaning of life, what is justice? Good and evil from the students perspective, teachers are not judging the students' opinions' as of right or wrong, while in religion classes students are studying the religious themes as judgmental fixed rulings, and firmly established on religious scripts such as the Bible or the Holy Quran. One of the educators said that secular ethics provide free room to discuss how to be human, so teachers' views share the same idea that secular classes are promoting the progress of humanity within the students.

However, in their research (Zilliacus & Kallioniemi 2016) claimed that the choice is to provide a subject cares and revolves around the human being. Nevertheless, Islamic education as a religious subject cares and turn around humanity; it does not ignore any aspect relates to the human being, Islam as a religion explains the relationship between human and God, human and another human, human and other creatures, human and the universe, and even helping this human to understand himself. (Haqqi 2005) explores some of the Qur'anic verses that detailed how do Islamic beliefs and faith in Allah S.W establishing a strong foundation to human civilisation, he argues that the care that had been given to human being by God S.W. is the basis for building civilisations because all the development on earth results from human's effort to improve the conditions of their life and to facilitate the existence on earth, and had it not been for Allah S.W binding the creatures, Angels, and the universe for human, they could neither produce nor develop their life, but because Allah S.W gives excellent care and attention for the human being, as Allah S.W has honoured them and has made everything at their service in order to be able to perform this significant role in the reconstruction of the earth. Allah S.W said in the Holy Quran: *“And indeed We have honoured the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and have provided them with At-Tayybat (lawful good things) and have preferred them*

*above many of those whom We have created, with marked preferment” Surah Al-Isra’ Ayah 70. (The Noble Quran.pdf n.d. p378)*

While we find groups of Muslim thinkers try to gather and reconcile between the two opposite sides of the western secular ideology and the conservative Islamic belief, they try to collate both sides' advantages, but it seems that the results are not as expected. (Qurrah 2009) as he reasoned that the western values have control over other values in Algeria, to the extent that we notice the impossibility of merging Islamic culture with Western culture, that is why we see the psychological struggle of the Algerian citizens who fight themselves to gather between the western values on the one hand and the Islamic values that represent their inherited belief that cannot be dispensed with on the other hand. While observing this ongoing conflict, we notice Algerians who want to adhere to their Islam in a state of misperception, we notice those who try to combine the two extremes of Islamic and Western culture are in confusion and misemploying to the Islamic rulings, by example, we see the Algerian citizens raise the slogans of Islam and declare their adherence to it, but when we examine the truth, we find that society does not implement and does not commit except to formalities and appearances, without real submission to the Islamic religion; that resulted in disturbance of values and lifestyle in Algeria.

However, we notice the impact of the waves of the secular and the western liberal ideologies on the Arab countries education systems (Almahi 2017) argues that globalisation affects education systems and policies in all aspects, affects the contents of curricula, affects the perspective of the concept of quality, and compels those responsible for education policies to link government curricula to economic policies and social changes around the world.

The question now, could the globalisation and the multiplicity of society be with a destructive effect on the values of Muslim students?

(Sonyyah 2009) Most sociologists claim that society's values are stable because of their association with society's culture and an integral part of inherited traditions. They claim that the values are stable to the

extent that they become the basis for individuals and the public's typical characteristics. However, in reality, the public does not retain these values and traditions except as long as it meets their needs and benefits occur, and the reality has proven that the values may change under the pressure that the individual or society faces, so, the values are subject to change or demolition and rebuilding according to the circumstances. (Soqaal 2018) Acknowledges that the culture of other groups influences the national identity of an individual in a pluralistic society. The influence includes all components of identity, such as language, culture, and even history, and this occurs when all different cultural groups communicate and interact actively in an atmosphere where social communication continues, this communication affects the structure of the national identity of the individual, with time this ongoing communication may result in a new culture, which penetrates all aspects of the individual identity.

## **2.6 The impact of multiculturalism on the students' religious identity**

So, what about the students' religious identity. Is religious identity affected and changed by social interaction with other cultural groups? Moreover, to what extent can the students' religious identity be affected by social interaction with other cultures in international institutions?

(Duderija 2008) discussed some elements which affect the religious identity of born Muslims in the west, like the interactions with others non-Muslims' identities, the society and the cultural view to religiosity and religions, the religious restrictions in the free societies and the Muslim groups understanding to the holy scrips, as it impacts all of the other elements. (Merchant 2016) explains that the approaches of teaching the religious education are one of the factors which influence the Islamic identity of the students, besides the knowledge and the capabilities of the teachers, as well as the surrounding view to the minority of Muslims in the society, humiliating Muslims and Islam in some societies has a significant impact on Muslims' identities. (Muhad et al. 2017) demonstrated the impact of the state's constitution and the authorities' discrimination on the Muslims' identity in Myanmar.

(Nordholt & Nordholt 1971) The investigations proved that religiosity relates to higher and valuable life targets, besides seeking more societal appreciation and respect. So, we can imagine that some societies provide their inhabitants with higher ranks and more advantages, which tempts the people to show their religious identity. Vice versa, if the individual found no appreciation and no support from the society to practice and to demonstrate his own religious identity, most probably he would be less enthusiastic in accomplishing his religious duties, it could come to the extent of being shy or ashamed of declaring the religious identity.

“greater religiosity is associated with more negative feelings in the least religious Nations and less negative feeling in the most religious Nations.” (Nordholt & Nordholt 1971) Which prove the pressure on Muslim minorities in anti-religious societies, or anti-Islam societies, in particular, this pressure might cause apparent effects on the short or the long term. Simultaneously, Islam allows polite dialogue and respectful communication with all groups in society and dictates the righteousness coexistence among all community groups. (Soares & Sudarsana 2018) are presenting a successful trial of coexistence amongst different beliefs. However, from the same nationality, they argue that the harmonious relationships between the different religions are due to different reasons, like the well-qualified teachers, and the efficient leadership team, and the teaching policy.

However, the main reason for this harmony and peaceful coexistence in plural society when Islam is ruling could be the proper implementation to the Islamic principles of “*no compulsion in religion*” Surah Al-Baqarah Ayah 256 (Itani 2016, p15) and the Islamic justice and tolerance towards all groups in the society “*O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even if against yourselves, or your parents, or your relatives . . .*” Surah Al-Nisa Ayah 135 (Itani 2016, p35).

Actually, the most critical factors that help to obtain good relationship amongst different sects are justice from aside, and the keenness of the authority in the community to promote tolerance and respect amongst the religious groups of the society from another side, then, altogether will feel secured and



sufficient, when people feel safe and respected, surely, the harmonious affiliation will be encouraged between them all.

## **2.7 Islamic schools and their role in preserving the religious identity of Muslim students**

However, some Muslims' thinkers tried to establish an atmosphere to protect the young generations from all of the continuous influences, they thought about the Islamic schools, their idea was to create an environment where Muslims grew and raised away from all reasons which might cause deviation in their religious identity, or away from the possible bullying, (Zein & Setiawan 2019) gave detailed data about some full-time Madrasah in Singapore, the Madrasahs are offering Islamic religious education side by side with secular education, these Madrasahs aimed to maintain the Islamic religious identity of Muslim students and provide them with the modern scientific education that needed at the recent time. (Zilliacus & Kallioniemi 2016) in their study that had been run on multi-faith schools, some teachers reported that the pupils who came from atheistic families were more to express their refusal to all forms of religion, while Islamic Education students seemed to be tolerated and respectful with other beliefs. As a result, Muslim students might face pressure in the atheist and agnostic environment because of being refused, avoided, or minimised.

Nevertheless, while we can find some governments that allow the establishment and management of Islamic schools in their diverse societies, we face the challenges of an open vision of Muslims themselves towards Islamic schools in multi-cultural cities. (Ahmed 2017) demonstrates the different views regarding Islamic schools, some are claiming the main challenge facing Islamic schools in Canada is to isolate Muslim students in an Islamic school, which segregates students and reduces their opportunities to interact with Canadian multi-cultural society, even if they interact with students from different cultures in the Islamic school. However, they are still dealing with Islamic culture only. At the same time, some other Muslims confirm that Islamic schools are helping Muslim students to avoid

some of the complications, like the difficulties to practice the Islamic rituals and culture in public places, Muslim students find it challenging to wear Islamic clothing, or have obstacles with performing their five daily prayers in multi-cultural schools. However, it seems that Islamic schools offer a right choice for some Muslims when they face some problematic issues in some foreign societies, and the existence of the Islamic schools in some societies prove the diversity of these communities. (Shah 2012) The belief of Muslim learners penetrates and develops their religious identity. Additionally, it is essential to realise that Muslim guardians' dedication to providing Islamic education to their kids in secular communities to avoid any threat might face Islamic beliefs and values.

The educational environment of multi-faith background forms a necessity of religion between pupils, and this mostly happens with Muslim students who show more dedication to their faith in the secular ethics class. Besides, coexistence with other beliefs improve students' critical and logical thinking and provide the students with a wide range of knowledge enabling them to have relevant debate skills throughout their growing stages, and this diverse teaching them how to cooperate and to be ideal in the teamwork regardless of the faith background of each member (Zilliacus & Kallioniemi 2016). The more a person involved deeply into his society's activities harmonically, the happier and more confident he is achieving his goals, when the individual's convictions and beliefs match his community's culture, he would become happier and more enhanced to achieve his "self-validating effect". However, some types of personalities might respond to the traditions of the community with unique reactions. However, the general observed outcomes show a strong relationship between the individual happiness and well-being and to the extent he is synchronising, coexist and accept the culture of his society and the atmosphere of his environment (Fulmer et al. 2010). So, we conclude that Muslim students could be happier in Islamic schools because it helps them avoid inner and outer conflict in the multi-faith environment.

Moreover, Islamic schools around the world became familiar and available in some countries, and under the supervision of the hosting countries' authorities. However, we still assume that even Islamic

schools are facing societal pressure in a multi-cultural environment. (Don 2017) Islamic schools approach should change direction following culture transformation particularly in teaching and learning procedures, and this modification must recognise the new teaching practices to outfit with the current generation, who are skilful in using the technology and gadgets as norms, if the educators are keen to make Muslim students fully involved in learning in the Islamic schools, they must reform the teaching strategies to be of interest to the students. Education will be more joyful to the students when they realise the wisdom behind their practices and when they are more concerned about their knowledge. Subject contents and objectives must be precise, clear, and well understood, in such case, we will see our pupils seeking more knowledge and searching to learn independently.

The United Arab Emirates is keen to provide Islamic Education to students from year 1 to year 12 as a compulsory subject, the ministry of education is responsible for designing and planning the Islamic subject contents and curriculum (MoE 2017). The authorities in each emirate shall observe the quality of the Islamic Education's educational process (Emirates 1996) (Dhabi, Qaiwain & Khaimah 2013). The United Arab Emirates is allowing private schools to be founded by people and businesses groups according to the terms of the United Arab Emirates' law (Emirates 1996, p9) (Dhabi, Qaiwain & Khaimah 2013, p7). There are 275 schools in Dubai, 67 of them are governmental schools, and 208 are private schools (Dubai Statistics Center 2020). According to a report about the private schools in Dubai, these schools include about 180 nationalities, highlighting the cultural diversity that characterises Dubai and gives it a rich atmosphere full of social interaction. They are accommodating about 90% of the students in Dubai (K.H.D.A. 2016). The above statistics show the importance of investigating the influence of multiculturalism on Muslim students' religious identity in Dubai.

## **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This research has included a collection of primary data and secondary data. In the past, many studies have focused on understanding how Islamic education integrates into multi-cultural institutions. The research direction has been focused on evaluating the research findings with support through the practitioner research method concerning previous studies. In terms of the collection method used for secondary data, the researcher has used journal articles, books, and other authentic academic sources. The primary research method has also been used for this study. The primary research data collection instruments which have been used include semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaires focused on the challenges students and teachers face regarding Islamic education in international high schools in Dubai. To get more clarity in this context, semi-structured interviews have also been conducted from a few teachers experienced in their fields and teaching Islamic education in such multi-cultural schools located in Dubai.

### **3.2. Research Design**

Some of the benefits of incorporating quantitative data in research are that testing of data can be done in a controlled environment whereby scientific measurement tools can be deployed which can help measure the accuracy, reliability, and validity of the data, strengthening the importance of the research and at the same time, increasing the significance of the research findings. Similarly, the probability of bias can be reduced due to standardised steps being followed while inputting data into software's such as SPSS while analysing the collected research data. Indeed, a significant benefit of carrying out quantitative research is that since the study includes large sample size and a considerably larger population was examined, this method of research can help analyse large sets of numerical data to measure the effectiveness of the research problem in a lesser time frame (Dowd 2018).

The benefit of qualitative research is that the respondent's narratives and theory grounded can be

covered and analysed in this research method. Moreover, the investigator can probe and receive descriptive information in-depth and rich in certain phenomena such as observations or interviews or even case studies (Dowd 2018).

A benefit of using mixed research methods in the study is that it considers quantitative and qualitative research methods advantages and capitalises on them. Simultaneously, the researcher can offset any drawback of the quantitative and qualitative research methods (Dowd 2018).

A mixed-method approach has been used, which defines the studies research design, by utilising the qualitative and quantitative method of collection, which would, in return, reflect the research traditions of interpretivism and positivism.

The researcher has gathered primary data, for this research, through questionnaire surveys. Questionnaire surveys, according to (Marcano Belisario et al. 2014), is an efficient data collection tool which is useful in collecting information which is sensitive but at the same time also includes a large proportion of participants which needs to be included in the research. Compared with other research techniques utilised by researchers, survey questionnaires are relatively less intensive in gathering data collection resources. The research has been structured in both qualitative and quantitative format. Semi-structured questionnaires were used for the students, with 90 percent of questions being close-ended and 10 percent being open-ended. Whereas closed-ended questionnaires were used for teachers. The different type of question was done to collect quantitative and qualitative responses from the participants to understand their perceptions, which in this study were teachers and students. The scale used for analysing the questionnaire answers was Likert scale. The questions were categorised in the following four segments; understanding the demographic information of participants, influences, comparison of Islamic schools with multi-cultural schools, and teachers' recommendations regarding dealing with the challenges faced in Islamic education. The respondent's data analysis was analysed through inferential and descriptive statistics after inputting respondents' data into SPSS software.

Regarding the qualitative data results, the analysis was presented through the research key themes

early on identified. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with experienced teachers in the field of Islamic education. The main advantage gained from adopting semi-structures interview format was that it allowed the researcher to gain in-depth knowledge and open-ended responses. Moreover, it can help compare primary data with the literature review data to get more factual information and overcome the gaps present in previous studies. Another benefit gained from conducting semi-structured interviews is that sensitive topics can be more easily discussed with the study participants. On the other hand, the disadvantage is that the semi-structured interviews provide data in a qualitative format, so statistical inferences and analysis were impossible. Another disadvantage is that the researcher needs to be aware of interviewer biases which may affect the interviews' data. This bias may happen with and without the researcher's knowledge, so it was important for the researcher to be informed about the various biases that may occur and how to avoid them and maintain the data's validity and reliability. Despite being aware of the possible disadvantages of this research method, the researcher selected this method. This was done to investigate and collect a comprehensive range of findings concerning the research objectives and avoid the apparent risk that may otherwise have prevailed in the study regarding missing out an essential and significant theme or emerging pattern. That is why the relevance of adopting a mixed-method approach was recognised for this study.

### **3.2.1. Study Population**

The research population included participants specifically; teachers and students, belonging to Islamic and multi-cultural educational institutions based in Dubai. Thirty students in the high school level have responded to the students' questionnaire, while 113 teachers have responded to the teacher questionnaire. To understand the teachers' and students' perspectives, the researcher included them in the population frame to be better analysed. The interviews occurred with 10 Islamic teachers. They aimed to collect relevant information regarding the internal and external influences, specifically in multi-cultural schools, that Muslim students perceive to belong to a collective group of religious identity in these schools. Likewise, recommendations were asked to gain a perspective from the

students about how they would deal with the identified challenge ideally. Similarly, Islamic educational institutions in Dubai must maintain cultural and religious identities, Muslim students. In relevance to this, the study population, apart from experienced teachers, also included high school students in Dubai.

### **3.3. Area of Research**

The study covers the research area first, identifying the multiculturalism of Muslim students studying going to high schools and understanding the religious identity in detail. Secondly, to cover an investigation of the Islamic schools' quality in Dubai, serving as a solution or an alternative to multi-cultural schools. Thirdly, the research will cover eliciting recommendations and relevant suggestions, in the context of the best form of multiculturalism investment in Dubai of Islamic education and generally in communities where a larger proportion of Muslims are located.

### **3.4. Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The total sample size for the research is 319. This number includes the questionnaires which were distributed to teachers and students. Total 65 questionnaires were distributed to students, whereas 254 questionnaires were distributed to teachers. The sampling method adopted for this study was probability sampling. A random sampling technique was utilised to cover Muslim students belonging to high schools in Dubai and cover the Islamic Education teachers teaching in multi-cultural and international high schools in Dubai. The researcher had posted the teachers' questionnaire in a social media group for teachers of Islamic Education in Dubai and sent the students' questionnaire directly to three groups of students in three different multi-cultural schools in Dubai. The Islamic teacher of each group sent the questionnaire to their selected group. One hundred thirteen teachers had responded to the questionnaire, while 30 students had responded to the students' questionnaire.

### **3.5. Variables and Measurement Procedures**

The variables identified in this study are divided into two dependent variables and one independent

variable. The dependent variables in this study considered were multiculturalism and the quality of Islamic high schools. The independent variable in this study considered was religious identity. The reason why multiculturalism and quality of Islamic schools have been considered dependent variables is measured in the research surveys. Whereas religious identity's effect was studied on the multiculturalism and quality of high school variables.

The survey questionnaire includes a section covering the demographics of the respondents. Then gender, age, mother tongue, high school grade and religion of parents. Then another section of the questionnaire covers an understanding of how many religious obligations the respondent adheres to such as whether they perform prescribed prayers, whether they fast during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. Then questions regarding whether there are any support systems available to them regarding reciting the Holy Quran were asked. A series of questions have then been asked to gauge the type of influences that may affect Muslim students' religious identity in their respective educational institutions. A higher score in the questionnaire would denote that a higher correlation exists between the variables identified.

### **3.6. Methods of Data Collection**

Researchers need to be aware of the various available research methods that can be used by them to analyse collected research data. The two main types of research methods which can be utilised are primary and secondary research methods.

#### **3.6.1 Primary Data**

The data collected from the primary sources, keeping in mind the core idea that the research project circulates, is referred to as primary data. This form of data incorporates research instruments such as experiments, interviews, or surveys, which the researcher collects based on first-hand sources.

Some of the advantages of using primary data which the researcher had studied before conducting research are as follows. Firstly, the main benefit of selecting primary data for research purposes is that



the data collected through this channel is specific and relevant to the study problem, leading to a higher probability of maintaining the data's accuracy and reliability. Secondly, this can ensure the quality of data collected is free of doubts specifically for the research investigator. Thirdly, there is no quota on the amount of data that can be retrieved at any period. So, the researcher requires more information at any particular time, then that additional data can be sourced and collected easily (Aryal 2019).

The disadvantages of the other hand, of conducting primary data, are that firstly, it is a hassle for the investigator to contend with the data collection regarding when, how, and why factors related to it. Secondly, to collect data, the investigator must be aware of the financial considerations, especially if the research scale is mostly due to an extensive sample size being considered and put under study investigation. The benefit of having a considerably proportionate sized sample is that more in-depth information may be derived. However, the investigator must be more concerned about gathering the funding for such big-scale research and which agencies they may need to visit to secure the funding amount. Similarly, some ethical considerations would be considered concerning the survey respondent's permission to participate in the survey and their consent on sharing their insights and experiences in the data analysis.

Similarly, other ethical considerations which the investigator needs to keep in mind is that respondents are aware of their rights and obligations. Likewise, whether they know their details such as name, home address, and contact details remains confidential throughout the research. Furthermore, investigators' dilemma when conducting primary data is that they must be aware of the importance of maintaining high data collection standards throughout the study and be careful of this factor when designing the study. So in regard to this, the investigator is aware of the accurate obtainability of required data desired in a specific format. In addition to this, the investigator is aware that the data collected through primary sources are reliable. Similarly, while collecting data, only relevant data has been collected, which is advantageous for answering research objectives, and problems, so unnecessary data have been excluded. Lastly, the investigator needs to be aware that collecting data

should be considered as it accounts to a significant amount of expense for research studies that cover a considerably larger sample size in their studies (Aryal 2019).

### **3.6.2 Secondary Data**

On the other hand, secondary data is gathered from experiments or research surveys and collected primarily for other research and by other people (Glen 2018).

The researcher had decided to use secondary data as well, apart from conducting primary research because this form of data is more conveniently quickly and freely available than primary research data. While doing research, the researcher had considered the following advantages and disadvantages while doing the literature review. Some of the advantages include firstly, and the research can be done more efficiently, in terms of efforts. It is a more economical option when research budget is constrained. It also helps save researchers time which can be focused more on analysing the data and making connections and themes relating to the research topic depending on the nature of the research. Secondly, secondary data helps support the functionality and collection of information required from primary data. This is possible by realising which the past study researchers have identified research deficiencies, so the researcher can highlight which gaps need to be overcome to create complete and insightful research.

Moreover, from doing this, the researcher can comprehend which information is required. Additionally, a more specific and concise collection of primary data can be done. Thirdly, when it comes to an understanding of the research problem, the basic knowledge regarding the subject can be gathered easily through secondary data. Lastly, it helps the researcher create a comparison basis for the collected data with the secondary data mentioned and organised in the literature review (MSG 2020).

Some of the disadvantages that the researcher considered while doing the research include firstly; biases since the secondary sources data is not explicitly written for the research's purpose. So, this can create biases regarding the goals and various purposes of the sources. For example, certain documents

that are personal and contain sensitive information may be exaggerated to the extent that the reliability of that specific data may become questionable. The researcher must be aware of such existing biases in secondary data to use reliable academically approved research areas and academic journals to find support for the research problem. Secondly, many at times, accessibility of the secondary data sources is a factor which can create an obstacle for the researcher to retrieve relevant data. This case can be defined under the concept of selective survival, which embodies the idea that certain documents are more likely to be found in preserved form, which is written by renowned individuals and figureheads. However, most commonly, as it was with this research, most data required from the perspective of common individuals tend to be not as preserved or protected in comparison, so even though the importance and relevancy of such documents are high for the research study. However, the problem of facing the accessibility barrier may be severe. Thirdly, some data sources such as data recorded in diaries may contain incomplete information that can be of little use to the researcher as the premise is unknown. Fourthly, it is crucial to be aware that a potential weakness of selecting secondary data for research is that at times, the researcher may lack information available other than the biases and data that is incomplete. This may be because no prior research has been done in the direction of the current study or the lack of recorded instruments unavailable when the research was conducted, which is more common in the early times.

Similarly, some research data is confidential in respect and contains classified sensitive information, so it is not readily available to the general public. This data may be of immense importance to the researcher concerning their research problem, but it may not be freely accessible due to the restrictions. Another form of the barrier which the researcher could face was in regard to sampling bias. Sampling bias can affect the reliability and validity of the data when the individuals of a lower level of income or education are eliminated from the sample's frame and hence are not represented in the study. Moreover, a disadvantage of secondary research was also identified as being restricted to behaviour which may be verbal. This is because research documents would contain notable verbal information

as conveyed by the respondents, however, when it comes to non-verbal information of respondent's behaviour that may not be documented and so the researcher may not be able to find direct and relevant information of it in the available sources online or offline (Zeepedia 2020). In conclusion, it was important for the researcher to be aware of these considerations and barriers they may face regarding collecting secondary data.

### **3.6.3 Data Collection Methods**

The data collection methods adopted for this study were both primary and secondary forms of data. For secondary, online available academic resources were studied, such as academic journals, books, reports, and articles. For primary, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires method was used to conduct the research.

This study used mixed methods to collect data and explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach. First, two questionnaires were organised to investigate the challenges facing Islamic education in multi-cultural high schools.

The first questionnaire was handled along with 30 students from different two multi-cultural high schools in Dubai, in January 2020, Respondents are from grade 10 to grade 12. About 57% of the respondents are females, while about 43% are males. The questionnaire asked the respondents about several points relates to their own Islamic Education subject. Nevertheless, the questionnaire spotlights the challenges that Muslim students face in the Islamic education curriculum in general. The researcher decided to settle for 30 students; the survey's main aim was to collect a survey about the student's views and challenges in Islamic Education in multi-cultural institutions.

The second questionnaire has been contributed to 113 teachers of Islamic education, and they are all teaching in international or multi-cultural institutions. The researcher has conducted the study thoroughly with teachers of Islamic Education in Dubai, the teachers who responded worked in different schools (about 35 schools) 72% of them represented multi-cultural schools, and the 28% declared that they are teaching in American schools, Indian schools, or private schools in Dubai.

Respondents are on an average of 29 years old (ranging from 27 years to 50 years old). 57% of the respondents teach Islamic education to all critical stages, from primary to grade 12, and the rest of the teachers are teaching or taught only one or two key stages. The participants were asked to answer questions whether they extremely agree to extremely disagree from one to five with different statements related to the challenges of Islamic education in high school multi-cultural institutions.

### **3.7. Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

According to a study conducted by (Johns & Miraglia 2015), reliability is measured when the research characteristics conform to consistency which is internally present and the research outcomes that can be replicable. The test used to analyse the quantitative research results was through Cronbach's Alpha test, and the software used was SPSS. This was done to measure all the respondent's responses in terms of their internal consistency level so that that reliability may be measured for the results. In relation to this, the test was carried out, and the result showed closer to 1 score, which concluded that the research conducted was, in fact, reliable and hence served as a piece of evidence to it.

On the other hand, the validity concept determines whether the research characteristics measure what it is affirmed to measure. According to (Cordier et al. 2014), the validity's content can be measured by studying the population target, study concepts, study aims, selecting relevant items to the study, and researchers who were involved in selecting the relevant study items. The research's validity was explicitly defined for questionnaires by developing questions that were precise in meaning and concept and related to the religious identity, multiculturalism, and quality of Islamic schools. Moreover, the results showed that the findings were significant and related to the research topic and covered the research objectives completely.

In terms of qualitative research validity, it is crucial to ensure that the study participants understand the idea behind the study. Moreover, they should be aware of their rights by acting as a participant in the interview research. This was done by informing the respondents that confidentiality will remain regarding their answers, and it will only be used in the analysis of the research. Regarding measuring

the qualitative research's internal validity, the researcher ensured that the research participants also had relevant knowledge regarding the scope of the study. This was carried out by interviewing the teachers who were experienced in their fields and had been teaching in multi-cultural and Islamic high schools. To maintain the quantitative research's internal validity, the external and internal threats that may affect and harm the study were known by the researcher so that they could be avoided.

Similarly, the researcher was also aware of the types of interview bias that may occur while conducting interviews from the interviewer's side and the side of the interviewee. This awareness allowed the researcher to remain informed of these risks and be aware of how to avoid these biases while conducting the semi-structured interviews with the teachers, who were serving as the respondents in this study. Moreover, apart from internal validity, the importance of external validity was also taken into consideration. In a situation where the study is devoid of external validity, then the impact of that on the study is that the findings cannot be applied to real-life situations, making the study purposeless (Djamba & Neuman 2002).

### **3.8. Data Processing and Analysis**

The steps required for taking out important information from a raw form of complex dataset explain the concept of data processing (Forte & Pipan 2017). To process the quantitative data, the software utilised for this research was SPSS. The variables related to religious identity, multiculturalism and quality of Islamic schools were included in the software, and 143 respondents were entered. The qualitative data was analysed by constructing recording the interview data collected in an organised manner through the development of interview transcripts. Then themes were picked out, and similarities and differences were identified, and subsequently, a descriptive analysis was conducted.

## CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

Data has been collected for this study by using a qualitative and quantitative approach. The quantitative approach uses two surveys carried out among two samples, i.e., teachers and students, respectively in a multicultural community. Similarly, the qualitative approach consists of semi-structured interviews carried among teachers in Dubai. This section would focus on two sections, the first section containing an analysis of the quantitative approach followed by the second section focusing on the analysis of the qualitative approach.

### 4.2. Quantitative Analysis – Teacher’s Survey

This section is divided into two surveys, the first being carried out among the teachers and the second among the students. The sample size of the first questionnaire constituted of 200 teachers. However, only 113 responded which are being considered for the study. The questionnaire carefully examines all the challenges faced by a teacher of Islamic Education in a multicultural community.

#### 4.2.1. Descriptive Statistics

Following are some descriptive statistics of the respondents for the study. The total sample, as highlighted by the table below shows, is 113.

Table 4.1. Total Sample

		Type of School	Teaching Level
N	Valid	113	113
	Missing	0	0

Out of the entire sample, the number of teachers employed in International Schools accounted for 71.7% of the entire sample, i.e., 81 respondents. MOE schools accounted for 5.3%, i.e. six, whereas

both accounted for 14.2%, i.e. 16, followed by teachers employed at other types of schools accounted for 8.8%, i.e. 10 of the entire sample. Therefore, the sample can be used to generalise challenges teachers of Islamic Education face in a multicultural community as most of the sample is employed at International Schools.

Table 4.2. Number of teachers according to schools they are employed at

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
International Schools	81	71.7	71.7	71.7
MOE Schools	6	5.3	5.3	77.0
Valid Both	16	14.2	14.2	91.2
Others	10	8.8	8.8	100.0
Total	113	100.0	100.0	

In the sample, most of the teachers teach all year groups, accounting for 57% of the entire sample, i.e. 64 teachers. Primary Stage teachers accounted for 20.4%, i.e. 23, Middle stage teachers accounted for 8.8%, i.e. 10, whereas Higher Stages teachers accounted for 14.2% of the sample, i.e. 16 teachers.

Table 4.3. Numbers of Teaching according to their Teaching level

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary Stage	23	20.4	20.4	20.4
Middle Stage	10	8.8	8.8	29.2
Valid Higher Stages	16	14.2	14.2	43.4
All year groups	64	56.6	56.6	100.0
Total	113	100.0	100.0	



Talking about the comparison between which teaching stage gives the most challenges towards a student in terms of Islamic Education in a multicultural community, many of the teachers opted for Higher stages, as highlighted in table 4.4. Higher stages accounted for 41.6% of the answers followed by all year groups, the primary and middle stages, respectively. Therefore, the majority of the challenges are faced by the students at higher stages.

Table 4.4. Challenges versus Teaching Stage

<b>Challenges vs Teaching Level</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Primary Stage	21	18.6	18.6	18.6
	Middle Stage	16	14.2	14.2	32.7
	Higher Stages	47	41.6	41.6	74.3
	All year groups	29	25.7	25.7	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.1.2. Reliability Test

To test the accuracy of the data, Cronbach Alpha was employed. All of the factors representing the challenges were used in the test. The value of Cronbach's Alpha came to be 0.729 signifying that the data is highly reliable and can be used to predict the study results.

Table 4.5. Reliability Test

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.7	20

#### 4.1.3. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis has been carried out to analyse the various challenges faced by the students for Islamic Education. This descriptive analysis would show a uniformed overview of each teacher's perspective on the challenges being faced by Students.

The descriptive statistics, as highlighted in Table 4.6. show that the minimum range of answers for all the survey challenges is 1 to 5, i.e., Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree. The mean answers for all ranges between 1 to 3, signifying that most of these challenges hold students facing them in a multicultural environment. The standard deviation ranges between 0.5 to 1 signifying that each answer deviates slightly from each other. The skewness and kurtosis metrics also further show that the data collected is average when checking the normality.

Table 4.6. Descriptive Statistics of Teacher's Sample

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Curriculum is insuitable	113	1	5	2.94	1.220	-.150	.227	-1.039	.451
Cultural Capacity	113	1	5	2.62	1.175	.111	.227	-1.104	.451
International Schools	113	1	5	2.31	1.166	.610	.227	-.680	.451
Level of Arab Language	113	1	4	1.42	.716	2.009	.227	4.183	.451
Intensity of Education	113	1	4	1.61	.860	1.449	.227	1.462	.451
Enriches Knowledge	113	1	5	2.33	.881	.501	.227	-.007	.451
Teaches Acceptance	113	1	4	1.83	.789	.974	.227	1.005	.451
Increased Student's Query	113	1	4	1.75	.774	.933	.227	.702	.451
Answering Controversial Questions	113	1	5	2.69	1.103	.359	.227	-.628	.451
Dependent on Teacher	113	1	5	2.05	1.076	1.075	.227	.547	.451
Dependent on School	113	1	4	1.75	.892	1.050	.227	.314	.451
Dependent on Parents	113	1	4	1.50	.643	1.114	.227	1.088	.451
Academic Knowledge Approach	113	1	5	2.83	1.068	.030	.227	-.970	.451
Faith Based Approach	113	1	5	2.33	1.073	.504	.227	-.669	.451
Overburdening Parents with Questions	113	1	4	2.52	.897	.121	.227	-.744	.451
Require more Wisdom	113	1	4	1.38	.617	1.629	.227	2.606	.451
Understanding Student Pysche	113	1	5	1.83	.944	.993	.227	.379	.451
Ideological Influence	113	1	4	1.89	.870	.872	.227	.261	.451
More Interested	113	1	5	3.19	.987	-.270	.227	-.784	.451
Teacher Satisfaction	113	1	5	1.41	.883	2.667	.227	7.150	.451
Valid N (listwise)	113								

Further descriptive analysis has been carried out better to understand these influencing factors over students' education quality.

The first challenge that students face in terms of Islamic Education is the Suitability of Curriculum. At the international level, the Islamic curriculum is not well suited to Muslim students. The curriculum

should be according to their cultural community and understanding to make it easily understandable for them. Majority of the teachers agreed with this factor accounting for 37.2% of the answers, whereas 39% of the people disagree; meanwhile, the rest remained neutral. Therefore, there is an equal chance that this is a good challenge.

Table 4.7. Suitability of Curriculum

Curriculum is unsuitable					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	18	15.9	15.9	15.9
	Agree	24	21.2	21.2	37.2
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	27	23.9	23.9	61.1
	Disagree	35	31.0	31.0	92.0
	Strongly Disagree	9	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

In a multicultural environment, there are many non-Arabs, and for them, the Islamic curriculum does not match their competency in regards to their own culture. Therefore, making it difficult for non-Arabs to comprehend the criteria. 48% of the entire sample agreed with this being a significant challenge which students are facing.

Table 4.8. Cultural Capacity

Cultural Capacity					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	24	21.2	21.2	21.2
	Agree	31	27.4	27.4	48.7
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	26	23.0	23.0	71.7
	Disagree	28	24.8	24.8	96.5
	Strongly Disagree	4	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Moreover, Arab students in International Schools also face a similar situation with the Islamic Education curriculum as they now belong to a different multicultural community. 65% of the entire

sample agreed with the verdict that Arab students are not well suited to the Islamic Education curriculum when in an International School.

Table 4.9. Arab Students Suitability of Islamic Education Curriculum

International Schools					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	32	28.3	28.3	28.3
	Agree	42	37.2	37.2	65.5
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	15	13.3	13.3	78.8
	Disagree	20	17.7	17.7	96.5
	Strongly Disagree	4	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Another challenge highlighted by the survey is writing, reading and speaking the Arabic language are below the expected level among international schools. 93% of the sample agreed with this being a significant challenge.

Table 4.10. Level of Arab Language

Level of Arab Language					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	77	68.1	68.1	68.1
	Agree	29	25.7	25.7	93.8
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	2.7	2.7	96.5
	Disagree	4	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

The intensity of Islamic Education also was almost 87.6% of the sample agreed that the intensity of Education is very high and does not match the number of hours a student studies.

Table 4.11. Intensity of Education

Intensity of Education					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	65	57.5	57.5	57.5
	Agree	34	30.1	30.1	87.6
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	7	6.2	6.2	93.8
	Disagree	7	6.2	6.2	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

When Muslim students connect with other faiths, it results in the enrichment of knowledge to which 63.7% of the sample agreed to as highlighted in Table 4.12. Similarly, it resulted in the acceptance of

other religions and increased the curiosity of other various phenomena as the sample agreed towards both of these statements highlighted in table 4.13. and 4.14. having a cumulative percentage of 86.7% and 86.7% respectively.

Table 4.12. Enrichment of Knowledge

<b>Enriches Knowledge</b>		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	17	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Agree	55	48.7	48.7	63.7
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	29	25.7	25.7	89.4
	Disagree	11	9.7	9.7	99.1
	Strongly Disagree	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.13. Teaching Acceptance

<b>Teaches Acceptance</b>		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	40	35.4	35.4	35.4
	Agree	58	51.3	51.3	86.7
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	9	8.0	8.0	94.7
	Disagree	6	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.14. Increased Student's Curiosity

<b>Increased Student's Query</b>		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	47	41.6	41.6	41.6
	Agree	51	45.1	45.1	86.7
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	11	9.7	9.7	96.5
	Disagree	4	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

As students' curiosity grows, they tend to ask controversial questions that often do not relate to the Islamic topic, so, Islamic Education teachers mostly ignore them. Therefore being a threat for a

student's progress. Only 49.6% of the sample agreed to the statement while the rest had an opposite opinion.

Table 4.15. Controversial Questions

Answering Controversial Questions					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	14	12.4	12.4	12.4
	Agree	42	37.2	37.2	49.6
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	29	25.7	25.7	75.2
	Disagree	21	18.6	18.6	93.8
	Strongly Disagree	7	6.2	6.2	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

The success of the Education departed outcomes depend upon three main actors in a student's life, namely Teachers, Parents and the School. Around 77% of the sample agreed that the success depends upon teachers, 82.3% agreed that it depends upon the school as well whereas 93% agreed that it also entirely depends upon whether the student's parents are also interested in their studies.

Table 4.16.

Dependent on Teacher					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	39	34.5	34.5	34.5
	Agree	48	42.5	42.5	77.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	11	9.7	9.7	86.7
	Disagree	11	9.7	9.7	96.5
	Strongly Disagree	4	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.17.

Dependent on School					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	55	48.7	48.7	48.7
	Agree	38	33.6	33.6	82.3
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	13	11.5	11.5	93.8
	Disagree	7	6.2	6.2	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.18.

Dependent on Parents					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	64	56.6	56.6	56.6
	Agree	42	37.2	37.2	93.8
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	6	5.3	5.3	99.1
	Disagree	1	.9	.9	100.0

Total	113	100.0	100.0
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Moreover, using academic knowledge approach in terms of convenience and suitability was agreed upon by 43.4% while around 63.7% of the sample agreed to use a Faith-based approach for Islamic Education.

Table 4.19. Academic Approach

Academic Knowledge Approach					
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	Strongly Agree	11	9.7	9.7	9.7
	Agree	38	33.6	33.6	43.4
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	27	23.9	23.9	67.3
	Disagree	33	29.2	29.2	96.5
	Strongly Disagree	4	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.20. Faith-Based Approach

Faith-Based Approach					
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	Strongly Agree	27	23.9	23.9	23.9
	Agree	45	39.8	39.8	63.7
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	20	17.7	17.7	81.4
	Disagree	19	16.8	16.8	98.2
	Strongly Disagree	2	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Students' curiosity tends to make them more inquisitive of their surroundings which sometimes overburden the parents. However, only 52% agreed with this statement. Whatever the reason, it is necessary to be more patient and have more wisdom in International schools as agreed by 94% of the sample. Similarly, it is also necessary to understand a student first rather than focusing on their faith in the multicultural community. 93.8% of the sample agreed that a student's psyche should be more considered.

Table 4.21.

Overburdening Parents with Questions					
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	Strongly Agree	13	11.5	11.5	11.5
	Agree	46	40.7	40.7	52.2
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	36	31.9	31.9	84.1
	Disagree	18	15.9	15.9	100.0

Total	113	100.0	100.0
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Table 4.22.

**Require more wisdom**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	77	68.1	68.1	68.1
Agree	30	26.5	26.5	94.7
Valid Neither Agree nor Disagree	5	4.4	4.4	99.1
Disagree	1	.9	.9	100.0
Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.23.

**Understanding Student Psyche**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	52	46.0	46.0	46.0
Agree	36	31.9	31.9	77.9
Valid Neither Agree nor Disagree	18	15.9	15.9	93.8
Disagree	6	5.3	5.3	99.1
Strongly Disagree	1	.9	.9	100.0
Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Muslim students tend to be ideologically influenced at multicultural schools as agreed upon by 81.4% of the entire sample. It further makes them less interested in Islamic studies, as shown in table 4.25. highlighted that only 30% agreed to the statement whether the rest denied.

Table 4.24.

**Ideological Influence**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	41	36.3	36.3	36.3
Agree	51	45.1	45.1	81.4
Valid Neither Agree nor Disagree	13	11.5	11.5	92.9
Disagree	8	7.1	7.1	100.0
Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.25.

**More Interested**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	4	3.5	3.5	3.5
Valid Agree	28	24.8	24.8	28.3
Neither Agree nor Disagree	30	26.5	26.5	54.9



Disagree	45	39.8	39.8	94.7
Strongly Disagree	6	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	113	100.0	100.0	

The last challenge that students face is teacher satisfaction. However, that does not seem to be a problem since all the teachers were satisfied being an Islamic Education teacher accounting to 92% of the sample, as shown in Table 4.26.

Table 4.26.

Teacher Satisfaction				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	85	75.2	75.2	75.2
Agree	19	16.8	16.8	92.0
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	2.7	2.7	94.7
Disagree	3	2.7	2.7	97.3
Strongly Disagree	3	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	113	100.0	100.0	

## 4.2. Quantitative Analysis – Student’s Survey

The second questionnaire had a sample size of 39 students. However, only 30 students responded which are being considered for the study. Similar to the survey carried among the teachers, the student's survey also considers all the challenges they face while pursuing Islamic Education from a student's perspective belonging to a high school.

### 4.2.1. Descriptive Statistics

Among the entire sample, the gender ratio was divided into 43% Males and 56.7% Females.

Table 4.26.

**Gender**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	Female	17	56.7	56.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Talking about the year of study, most of the students belonged to year 11, forming 70%, followed by year 12, i.e. 26.7% and year ten, i.e. 3.3%.

Table 4.27.

**Year of Study**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	10	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	11	21	70.0	70.0	73.3
	12	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Most of the students had the mother tongue of English language forming 50% of the entire sample, Urdu formed 30%, Arabic formed 10%, and the rest of 10% was formed by other languages.

Table 4.28.

**Language**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Arabic	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	English	15	50.0	50.0	60.0
	Urdu	9	30.0	30.0	90.0
	Others	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Sample mostly constituted of Islamic B students forming 90% of the entire sample while the rest of the 10% was formed by Islamic A Students. As highlighted in table 4.30., majority of the students were taught Islamic Education for around 80 minutes, forming 43.3% of the sample.

Table 4.29.

Islamic A/B					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Islamic A	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Islamic B	27	90.0	90.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.30.

Length of Islamic Education Hours					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	60 Minutes	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
	80 Minutes	13	43.3	43.3	80.0
	120 Minutes	4	13.3	13.3	93.3
	More than 120 minutes	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Talking about the student's parent's language and religion, the majority of them were not Arabic forming 76.7% of the entire sample whereas 93.3% of the entire sample were Muslims as shown in Table 4.31. and 4.32. respectively.

Table 4.31.

**Parent's Language**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Both Arabic	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
One Arabic	2	6.7	6.7	23.3
None Arabic	23	76.7	76.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.32.

**Parent's Religion**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Both Muslims	28	93.3	93.3	93.3
One Muslim	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.2.2. Descriptive Analysis

Carrying out the descriptive analysis, the minimum range between answers were 1 to 5, where 1 represented strong agreeableness and the opposite represented disagreeableness. The mean answer was more or less around 4 and 5 signifying that most of the students replied negatively. There is a little deviation observed in the answers, as shown in the table below.

Table 4.33.

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Proud to Declare Morals/Values to Non-Muslims	30	1	4	2.00	.983	.467	.427	-.971	.833
ISIS and Terrorism resulted in Cocealed Identities	30	1	5	3.50	1.196	-.324	.427	-1.041	.833
Lucky to Live in Multicultural Community	30	1	4	1.50	.861	1.910	.427	3.213	.833
Living in Multicultural Society Strengthens my Identity	30	1	5	2.37	1.217	.579	.427	-.432	.833
Distracts Religious Identity	30	1	5	3.63	1.273	-.858	.427	-.194	.833
Helps understand World Religions	30	1	5	3.43	1.104	-.313	.427	-.032	.833
Helped Practice Islamic Tolerance	30	1	4	1.97	.850	.427	.427	-.594	.833
Enabled me to Co-habitat with others	30	1	4	1.83	.747	.819	.427	1.089	.833
Valid N (listwise)	30								

In order to further analyse the challenges being faced by students, each factor was analysed separately. 43.3% of the parents did not help their children with their study. 26.7% of the parents rarely took an interest, whereas 30% of the parents helped them with their studies, which is very low. As highlighted below, the parent's interest is one-factor influencing Islamic Education's success at multicultural schools.

Table 4.34.

Parent's Help Study					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	9	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Rarely	8	26.7	26.7	56.7
	No	13	43.3	43.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Students are involved in performing daily salah and fasting in Ramadan, but they sometimes skip it based on their convenience. This amounted to 36.7% whereas 90% of the sample was involved in fasting during Ramadan. Table 4.35. displays that only 30% of the sample performed their daily salah, 36.7% often prayed, and the rest of the 33.3% did not perform their daily salah. These tasks or act of worship further develops the practice of Islamic Education in students at home.

Table 4.35.

Perform Daily Salah					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	9	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Often	11	36.7	36.7	66.7
	No	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.36. displays the results for the sample fasting in Ramadan. 90% of the students fasted during the month; however, 10% of the sample still often fasted or did not fast during the month.

Table 4.36.

**Fast in Ramadan**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	27	90.0	90.0	90.0
	Often	2	6.7	6.7	96.7
	No	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Only 43% of the sample was interested in taking help from local masjids or home to improve their Quranic Recitations. Table 4.37. displays the sample results for taking help from masjids and home to improve their Quranic recitations. Around 70% of the sample size did not take any help from any kind of support.

Table 4.37.

**Support to Improve Quranic Recitation**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
	Often	2	6.7	6.7	43.3
	No	17	56.7	56.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Similarly, in table 4.38. it was highlighted that 86% of the students understood Islamic Education in the prescribed hours. Teachers mentioned that the intensity of Education compared to the prescribed hours is a challenge as students may not understand it. However, the majority of the students were able to understand the course within time. 36.7% of the sample strongly agreed, 50% of the sample sometimes understood within prescribed hours, 6.7% rarely understood, and 6.7% did not understand.

Table 4.38.

**Understand Islamic Education in Provided Hours**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
	Sometimes	15	50.0	50.0	86.7
	Rarely	2	6.7	6.7	93.3
	No	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.39.

Enjoy Studying at School		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Agree	12	40.0	40.0	50.0
	Somewhat Agree	7	23.3	23.3	73.3
	Disagree	3	10.0	10.0	83.3
	Strongly Disagree	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.39. displays the figures regarding whether students enjoy studying Islamic Education at school. Only 10% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. 40% of the sample only agreed, 23% somewhat agreed, whereas 26.7% were in denial with the statement.

When comparing the area of priority preached to Muslims by Prophet Muhammad PBUH (SAW) and the area of priority in their opinion, most of the students coincided at Monotheism. When discussing the latter most of the students agreed with Monotheism at 60%, followed by the Holy Quran and Sunnah at 20%. Meanwhile, in their opinion, most students agreed with Monotheism as the priority at 50%, followed by Real-life application being the second at 30%.

Table.4.40.

Area of Priority		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Monotheism	18	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Holy Quran	6	20.0	20.0	80.0
	Practical Topics	3	10.0	10.0	90.0
	Islamic Law	2	6.7	6.7	96.7
	Real Life Application	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.41

**Area of Priority in Opinion**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Monotheism	15	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Holy Quran	1	3.3	3.3	53.3
	Practical Topics	4	13.3	13.3	66.7
	Islamic Law	1	3.3	3.3	70.0
	Real Life Application	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

However, these were only the topics in terms of importance to a Muslim. When discussing how difficult it is to learn these topics in Islamic Education, the most challenging topic identified within Islamic Education was Islamic law accounting for 36.7% of the sample, followed by learning Monotheism at 16.7% and Holy Quran, History of Islam and Real-life Application, each accounting for 13% of the sample as shown in Table 4.42.

Table 4.42.

**Difficult Topic**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Monotheism	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Holy Quran	4	13.3	13.3	30.0
	Practical Topics	2	6.7	6.7	36.7
	History Of Islam/Seerah	4	13.3	13.3	50.0
	Islamic Law	11	36.7	36.7	86.7
	Real Life Application	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

To understand the most exciting teaching methods for Students within Islamic Education, they were asked what they enjoy most. The answers are displayed in Table 4.43. Students were most inclined



towards Videos, Documentaries and Class Discussions as highlighted in the table below, forming 36.7% and 30% of the sample.

Table 4.43.

Enjoy within Islamic Education					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Quran and Sunnah	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Videos and Documentaries	11	36.7	36.7	50.0
	Class Discussions and Debates	9	30.0	30.0	80.0
	Research and Independent Learning Tasks	4	13.3	13.3	93.3
	Demonstrating Knowledge	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Islamic Home tasks and Education Projects are given in order to improve the learning of the students. However, as seen in Table 4.44. Islamic home tasks were moderately seen to improve learning, forming 40% of the entire sample, whereas 56.7% of the students replied that it did not help improve learning.

Table 4.44.

Islamic Home Tasks					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Improving	12	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Difficult	1	3.3	3.3	43.3
	Do not help in Learning	17	56.7	56.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Similarly, Islamic Education projects also improved learning, forming 50% of the sample. However, 16.7% of the sample believed it was difficult to perform, and 33.3% of the sample mentioned that it was not helping in the learning process.

Table 4.45.

Islamic Education Projects		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Improving	15	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Difficult	5	16.7	16.7	66.7
	Do not help in Learning	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Assessments are a role to identify whether the students understand the lessons being taught at school. However, when asked which assessments were the most difficult for the students, they identified it as Summative Final assessments forming 50% of the entire sample. This was followed by a majority of 26.7% of the sample mentioning Islamic Oral Assessments as tricky.

Table 4.46.

Difficult Assessments		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Summative/Final Islamic Written Assessments	15	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Formative/Continuance Written Assessments	4	13.3	13.3	63.3
	Islamic Oral Assessments	8	26.7	26.7	90.0
	Islamic Projects and Researchers' Assessments	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The main obstacles as discussed include the inability to understand Arabic, lack of Parents support, less teaching time and the burden of other subjects. The majority of the sample highlighted the burden

of other subjects as the main obstacle they were facing. 63.3% resonated with this statement. This obstacle was followed by the inability to understand the teachings as they were present in the Arabic language, which they did not understand.

Table 4.47.

Main Obstacles		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Difficult to understand topics in Arabic	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	Parent's Can not help	2	6.7	6.7	33.3
	Teaching time isn't enough	1	3.3	3.3	36.7
	Priority to other Subjects	19	63.3	63.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.48 to 4.55. explains various variables that have been impacted due to a multicultural society. Students are prouder regarding declaring Islamic values towards their peers, forming 40% of the sample. A significant chunk of the sample disagreed that they had to conceal their identities in Non-Muslim Countries due to the ISIS and Terrorism.66.7% of the entire sample believed they were fortunate to be in a multi-cultural society that it strengthens the religious identity. Further variables proved that it taught acceptance and co-habitation with other people belonging to various other religions.

Table 4.48 highlights how students are more able to declare Islamic Morals and values to their Non-Muslim friends. 40% of the students resonated with the statement; however, 26.7% only somewhat agreed.

Table 4.48.

**Proud to Declare Morals/Values to Non-Muslims**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	12	40.0	40.0	40.0
Agree	8	26.7	26.7	66.7
Somewhat Agree	8	26.7	26.7	93.3
Disagree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

ISIS and Terrorism is a leading concern of the entire world which has created mass phobia in the entire world. However, only 43% of the sample agreed that they had to conceal their identities in International Regions.

Table 4.49.

**ISIS and Terrorism resulted in Cocealed Identities**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
Agree	7	23.3	23.3	26.7
Somewhat Agree	5	16.7	16.7	43.3
Disagree	10	33.3	33.3	76.7
Strongly Disagree	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Many of the students, i.e., 90% of the entire sample, felt lucky to be living in a multicultural community such as Dubai. Only 6.7% of the entire sample felt the opposite. The figures have been highlighted in the table below.

Table 4.50.

**Lucky to Live in Multicultural Community**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	20	66.7	66.7	66.7
Agree	7	23.3	23.3	90.0
Somewhat Agree	1	3.3	3.3	93.3
Disagree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Religious Identity of an Individual is impacted upon by their multicultural surroundings as highlighted by other authors. However, in table 4.51. it is confirmed that due to residing in such societies, it has

only led to the strengthening of religious identity of a person. Around 83.3% of the sample were in agreeableness to the statement. Whereas as further confirmed in Table 4.52. only 33.3% of the entire sample confirmed that living in a multicultural community distracted their identity from the religion.

Table 4.51.

**Living in Multicultural Society Strengthens my Identity**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	9	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Agree	8	26.7	26.7	56.7
	Somewhat Agree	8	26.7	26.7	83.3
	Disagree	3	10.0	10.0	93.3
	Strongly Disagree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.52.

**Distracts Religious Identity**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Agree	3	10.0	10.0	20.0
	Somewhat Agree	4	13.3	13.3	33.3
	Disagree	12	40.0	40.0	73.3
	Strongly Disagree	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Previously, in the teacher's survey, all the teachers were on the uniform conclusion that residing in a multicultural society makes a person more open to other religions and makes them more tolerant towards others. Similarly, 56.7% of the student sample, as shown in Table 4.53. resonated with the statement that it helps understand world religions. In comparison, 96.7% of the people accepted that it helped them practice Islamic Tolerance in society, as shown in Table 4.54.

Table 4.53.

**Helps understand World Religions**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
Agree	2	6.7	6.7	13.3
Somewhat Agree	13	43.3	43.3	56.7
Disagree	7	23.3	23.3	80.0
Strongly Disagree	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.54.

**Helped Practice Islamic Tolerance**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
Agree	12	40.0	40.0	73.3
Somewhat Agree	7	23.3	23.3	96.7
Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

It further has enabled people to co-habitat easily with people from different religions. Majority of the sample, i.e. 96.7% of the students agreed to the statement.

Table 4.55.

**Enabled me to Co-habitat with others**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
Agree	16	53.3	53.3	86.7
Somewhat Agree	3	10.0	10.0	96.7
Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

At the end of the study, the students' main challenges included the difficulty to understand Islamic Topics, Arabic Language, the Curriculum, Difficult Exams, Less Teaching Material. The figures have been displayed for each in Table 4.56.

Table 4.56.

### Main Challenges

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Difficult to understand Islamic Topics	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Arabic Language	2	6.7	6.7	26.7
	Curriculum	5	16.7	16.7	43.3
	Difficult Exams	2	6.7	6.7	50.0
	Less Islamic Teaching Material	2	6.7	6.7	56.7
	Less tests	1	3.3	3.3	60.0
	None	3	10.0	10.0	70.0
	Overburdened by Other Subjects	6	20.0	20.0	90.0
	School Policy	1	3.3	3.3	93.3
	Teachers	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

### 4.3. Qualitative Analysis – Interviews

The following data have been identified from the ten interviews carried out among teachers present in the UAE region regarding the challenges faced in multi-cultural schools concerning Islamic Education.

#### 4.3.1 Multiculturalism and the Islamic religious identity

The first theme identified among all the ten interviews is the influence of Multiculturalism on Religious Identity. Most of the students have shown more attached to foreign cultures more than the Islamic culture. They are celebrating the events of celebration and holiday according to the Gregorian Calendar. Most of the students have organised their life matching to the free western style in terms of the relations between males and females, and their acceptance of the Un-Islamic concepts for the meaning of freedom and their fashions.

#### 4.3.2 The level of the students' Arabic Language

As the Language of communication is English, this caused weakness in the native Arabic speakers' Arabic Language. The students have more fluent English than Arabic, and they can express their feelings, needs, and ideas in English better than Arabic. Therefore, lacking skills concerning the Arabic

Language making it hard for the native Arabic speakers to understand the Islamic Education programme in Arabic.

#### **4.3.3 Relevant Curriculum**

Moreover, some Islamic education curriculum contents often do not attract the student's attention either because it is not related to them or because they find it boring. Some students do not understand it; it is either difficult for them or finds it boring. Therefore, more relevant contents and topics must be covered as a response to the new world needs.

#### **4.3.4 The Scientific theories, scientific facts, and Islamic concepts**

Many scientific theories are mixed with scientific facts such as Darwin's Evolutionary Theory, which conflict with the Islamic explanation of the creation. Similarly, many of the students are engaging in defending some other theories that are not yet proved to be facts that confuse some of the Islamic beliefs like life after death and the Day of Judgment.

#### **4.3.5 The excellence of Education between multi-cultural schools and Islamic schools**

Islamic Schools are still recommended for more protection of Muslim Students' religious identity. However, the level of Education provided at Islamic schools is not the same as the outstanding multi-cultural schools in Dubai since they often lack funding and cannot provide the same infrastructure as the none-for profits multi-cultural schools. Moreover, Multi-cultural schools make the students deal with different cultures and help them practice real tolerance towards others in society. As discussed in previous literature, many governments put more focus on scientific Education than Religious Education. Therefore, other schools are more flourishing as compared to the Islamic ones.

#### **4.3.6 The Family Background of the students**

The first focus is on the religious orientation of the Muslim students in multi-cultural schools. These students are not from a Muslim background only; most of them have mixed beliefs parents. Therefore,



each student's psychology should be well understood by the teacher before making any assumptions. Parents should also be inclusive in terms of the course to help their wards to engage in it eagerly.

#### **4.3.7 The qualifications and efficiency of the teachers of Islamic Education**

Moreover, the entire learning depends upon the teacher's deep and right understanding of Islam and its objectives. It is also essential for the Islamic Education teacher to be aware of the global events, scientific and knowledge theories that relate to religions or contradict Islam. The teacher of Islamic Education must be with accurate knowledge and a deep awareness of the doubts and accusations directed against Islam and critically respond to them. Teachers should lead their students by example, supporting their discussion with valid arguments and correct proofs beside all the required personal qualities such as patience and the ability to accommodate various situations with outstanding professionalism and competence. They must keep their professional development up to date in all fields; therefore, the Islamic Education programme's success depends on the teacher so far.

**4.4.** Following the findings of this research, Multiculturalism proved to impact the students' religious identity, this impact with all its faces shows challenges in the way of the teachers of Islamic Education and the Muslim students. One of the Islamic Education's main objectives is to maintain and preserve Muslim students' religious identity. As the Multiculturalism has lots of influences on Muslim students, the primary influence is when we note some students who have grown in multi-cultural environment underestimating some Islamic values and beliefs, which weakening the student's religious identity. A review of the Islamic curriculum contents would benefit from solving some of these influences. The Islamic programme curriculum must answer the students' questions, remove their doubts, and cure their suspicions. When the teachers of Islamic Education are prepared with the needed knowledge and the professional skills to deal with each challenge, it will help achieve the aims of the country's Islamic Education curriculum.

Islamic schools must be well prepared to assume their role in preserving the religious identity of the Muslim students while they must be able to compete at a high level with the outstanding multi-cultural schools. A model of an outstanding Islamic school in the United Arab of Emirates would provide an excellent alternative to the citizens, instead of being confused what to choose, the excellence of the scientific Education from a side in the outstanding multi-cultural schools or preserving of the Islamic and national identity on another side in the local Islamic schools.

#### **4.5. Discussion**

The survey carried among the teachers highlighted key challenges or factors influencing the quality of Islamic Education provided to the students belonging to multi-cultural schools. The challenges highlighted were the Suitability of Curriculum, Cultural Capacity of non-Arabs, Arab students compatibility with Islamic Education, Level of Arab Language, Intensity of Islamic Education, Enrichment of Knowledge, Acceptance towards other religions, Increasing curiosity, Controversial Questions, Dependency upon teachers, schools and Parents Interest, Overburdening parents with questions, Requiring more wisdom, Understanding Student's Psyche, Vulnerable towards Ideological Influence, Least Interested Students and Teacher Satisfaction. All these challenges play a crucial role in the Islamic Education of Students.

The curriculum's suitability plays the most crucial role since it explains how the multi-cultural community impacts Muslim students; therefore, they face challenges in understanding the context. The cultural capacity of non-Arabs differs to that from the Arabs, and therefore, it hinders that understanding of the context similarly. Even the Arab students who study in these multi-cultural schools also observe the same level of hindrance. As Arabs living in the UAE, their Arab language skills are also not that excellent, proving to be an obstacle towards Islamic Education. The intensity of Islamic Education being taught at these schools further do not match the prescribed hours of learning.

Therefore, students are not able to fully grasp all the concepts in a limited time. When a Muslim student interacts with students from other religions, they tend to gain knowledge which further impacts their study as they tend to ask more questions while also learning acceptance towards other religions. Whether the Education imparted is successful in terms of understanding depends entirely upon the teachers and the school and the parents' significant interest. Otherwise, the children will still lack. Controversial questions are often difficult for teachers to answer, resulting in the overburdening of parents with many questions at once. Therefore, more wisdom and understanding are required to teach Islamic Education in international schools because it is more important to focus on their thought process instead of their religion.

Furthermore, it is a common challenge to make the students interested in Islamic Education in international schools. However, they are easily ideologically influenced. The last challenge is teacher satisfaction which also plays a significant role in terms of Islamic Education. Therefore, all of these challenges should be focused on when imparting Education to students.

To further analyse the results gathered from the teachers, a sample of students was also identified. It was observed that parents rarely help the students with their Education which has been proved as a challenge during the teacher's survey. As opposed to the previous survey, most of the students mentioned that they were able to understand the curriculum within the time. It also further validated the teachers' results on multiculturalism, enabling students towards acceptance and co-habitation with people from other faiths. The main challenges highlighted by the student's survey was that the students did not like some of the teachers. Moreover, school policy may also become an obstacle, as proved by the teacher's survey.

Moreover, most of them mentioned that other subjects overburdened them and that exams led to a decline in understanding important Islamic Topics. The curriculum was not also according to the

present era, and therefore, most of them found it boring. It is already difficult for them to understand the curriculum because of being in the Arabic Language.

Similarly, challenges such as the lack in level of Arabic Language is enforced by the interviews taken from the teacher's sample. It further highlights how students find it challenging to understand Islamic concepts as they start mixing it with other concepts belonging to other religions. They want a curriculum that is more relevant to their time. Often the success depends upon the teachers and the way they teach the material. Teachers need to focus more on the academic background of the students rather than their religious orientation.

## **CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION**

### **Recommendations and suggestions to the best investment of Multiculturalism for the favour of Islamic Education in multi-cultural institutions**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

According to (Statistics Center 2020) there are 275 schools in Dubai, 67 of them are local Arabic schools, and 208 are private schools. About 88.3% of the students enrolled in private schools come from different nationalities, cultures, and beliefs, while 11.7% are Emirates citizens (Dubai 2020). The private schools in Dubai gathered students from about 182 nationalities (KHDA 2020b). The percentage of Muslim students in some multi-cultural and international schools in Dubai ranges from 11% to 60%, and those Muslim students themselves come from multiple nationalities and cultures (KHDA 2020a). Therefore, we find that Dubai represents a vibrant environment in terms of cultural and ideological diversity, which requires good management of the educational curricula in general, and the Islamic education curriculum, thus achieving the maximum benefit from this cultural diversity while preserving the religious and the national identity of the United Arab of Emirates at the same time. Therefore, in this chapter, the research will present some recommendations and suggestions for Islamic Education to the best investment of Multiculturalism in Dubai, especially in Muslim communities in general.

**5.2.** Many factors create a challenge for students or teachers in imparting Islamic Education within multi-cultural schools. It is necessary to identify these challenges as the problems present in teaching religious Education are different from those present in other areas. (Ubani et al., 2019). It might include state policies, school policies and even the reforms introduced for educational programs. These challenges often present in countries where there are an Islamic Phobia, and people are scared regarding people's religious orientation (Muhad et al., 2017). Similarly, other places where Muslims are a minority instead of being a majority (Alrifa'i, 2017) followed by the challenges in updating the

Islamic Education program based upon new innovative yet relevant curriculum (Rahman et al., 2019). These challenges are resolved through the adequate support of every actor involved in the process, the parents, the teachers, or the entire school, even the government. However, there is an increasing lack of research analysing these challenges present in the UAE, especially regarding the multi-cultural schools present in the region. Therefore, this study highlights all these challenges that require a particular focus on them while considering the future of Islamic Education in multi-cultural schools.

These challenges have been identified through carrying out qualitative and quantitative research among teachers and students belonging to a multi-cultural school at their high school level. Many of the challenges identified through the literature review and then confirmed through the survey and interviews include Relevance of Curriculum, Understanding of the Arabic Language, Enrichment of Knowledge, growing acceptance towards people of different Faiths, Increased curiosity, overburdened by other subjects, need to understand student's psyche, Dependency upon Teachers, School and Parents.

**5.3.** The curriculum is the outline of the Islamic Education being taught at multi-cultural schools. Many of the students found themselves bored because of the outline since they did not find it relevant. Among the teachers, it was identified that the curriculum poses a significant threat in terms of Islamic Education as it is not suitable for students studying in multi-cultural schools since there are other students present who belong to different religious backgrounds. Furthermore, students want to be taught topics and contents that are more relevant to daily life situations and problems that students face now. This is further seen in the thematic analysis of the qualitative data where teachers said that the program's success also depends upon how Education is presented to the students. It must be reformed around today's relevant problems and studies to easily understand the Islamic Education curriculum. It is highly recommended to review other subjects' curriculum within each stage, including in the Islamic curriculum some topics and contents that answer the students' inquiries, to remove any suspicions or confusion that might happen from some scientific and knowledge theories. By example,

concepts such as Darwin's evolution theory is also something which contradicts with the teachings of Islam; therefore, students tend to confuse Islamic beliefs with other concepts. In this way, every student from a Muslim or non-Muslim background will easily relate to the curriculum while also improving their learning of the same.

**5.4.** Students belonging to a multi-cultural school are open to various kinds of learning due to the interaction between different cultures and religions that form their society. Students experience various concepts and occasions belonging to different religions, which confuse the students' understanding of some of the Islamic education teachings. Occasions such as Christmas, Easter and Diwali are all different occasions. However, many Muslims take part in it equally when belonging to a multi-cultural society because of which they sometimes mix up the concepts of Islamic Education with those cultures. This concept mixing often leads to the rise of many controversial questions that teachers of Islamic Education might ignore answering them, thinking that they do not relate to the topic or ignore such questions to avoid the students' arguments or the lack of time. However, it creates more questions in the mind of students. Due to incomplete answers, some questions are redirected to home, many parents who in return also do not know the right answer to the question -mostly if they were from non-Islamic background-. Students need to be taught Islamic Education with extreme patience and wisdom to understand their queries and answer them wisely to smoothly recognise the wisdom and reasons for Islamic practices and beliefs. This idea is further identified in other research studies concluding that many factors impact individuals' religious identity when living in a multi-cultural society (Duderija, 2008).

**5.5.** Another challenge is understanding the Arabic Language. Many people in the UAE region speak English because neither of their parents or their peers speaks Arabic. However, the courses of Islamic Education are present in the Arabic Language, which becomes a significant obstacle for the students in learning. That is why some Arabic native speakers move to the Islamic Education class in the English Language, impacting the students' cultural identity. However, they lack in skills regarding

reading, writing, and speaking of the Arabic Language, makes the content boring for the students as they are not able to understand it fully and efficiently, it also causes less of independent learning tasks, as they will not be able to take it. Therefore, reforms should be brought in where students study Islamic Education in Arabic in multi-cultural schools, or extra support and care to the Arabic curriculum to help the students take it smoothly. Majority of the students included in the sample spoke the English level, therefore further strengthening the case to bring in English level as the medium of communication or provide the students with the English translation when needed. Therefore, Language plays an integral part in discussing the challenges being faced in religious Education in the world.

Similarly, the student's parents are not aware of the Arabic Language and mostly speak English because they cannot help their children with Islamic Education either. Parent's interest is an essential factor in helping children understand Islamic Education effectively as agreed upon by many sample teachers. Many students that their parents hardly helped them with their courses are challenge as highlighted by Teachers. Teachers carefully stated that the Education's success depends upon the parents' role of how interested they are themselves in the learning of Islamic Education. Therefore, parents should be informed regarding this factor and made inclusive in the study of Islamic Education so that students' problems are further reduced.

## **5.6. The advantages and disadvantages of Multiculturalism**

Ideally living in a multi-cultural society opens an individual towards new people and entirely new surroundings. The different cultures that one grows up to teach the individual various new knowledge and learning that the individual then applies in their daily lives. This new knowledge makes the person understand the reasons behind their surroundings being different, making the individual more tolerant towards change and different religions. It is an understood phenomenon that living with people from different faiths makes the person more tolerant towards other people and their religions. It is further observed in other research studies. (Fulmer et al., 2010). Similarly, it creates acceptance towards these



religions in an individual's heart, promoting peace, harmony, and friendship. While all these phenomena take place, another increased activity is the increasing curiosity in students regarding different cultures, making the student learn more regarding their surroundings. This learning then creates mixed concepts which is an obvious challenge in Islamic Education as mentioned before.

It has been observed that students present in a multi-cultural are more open to change to new ideas. Therefore, they are more vulnerable towards being ideologically influenced, i.e., they are more open towards changing their thought process, fashions, the Islamic etiquettes in dealing between males and females and less attention to some Islamic beliefs or practices. Therefore, they cannot easily be committed to Islamic teachings than students' in pure Islamic institutions. Moreover, in the study, it was also observed that these students are also less interested in learning Islamic Education. The reasons mentioned before can be cited as the cause for this lack of interest regarding Islamic Education among the students such as the relevance and the competency of the curriculum, Arabic Language and much more.

Nevertheless, the students also mentioned that the MOE Islamic subject's success does not impact their results or their final high school certificate, which qualify them to the university level. Therefore, they mentioned that they give more focus and attention to scientific subjects. Therefore, it is remarkable that the constitution of the United Arab of Emirates, the MOE, and the KHDA in Dubai as well as is stated that Islamic subject is a compulsory subject from Grade 1 to Grade 12 (Emirates 1996) (KHDA 2020b), the authority in the country is adding and supporting to the importance of the Islamic curriculum.

**5.7.** Other challenges include the lack of modern solutions and excellence of the scientific subject education in Islamic schools compared to the non-for-profit multi-cultural Schools. Non-for-profit multi-cultural Schools provide a lot of facilities and extensive new knowledge that Islamic schools still lack in. This is also attributed to the lack of funding in the Islamic School. Therefore, many teachers

still recommend students opt for international schools because they have many innovative solutions that Islamic Schools still lack in. This can also be further proved by other researchers who concluded that scientific Education is more prioritised over religious Education. (Sahin, 2018; Huhta, 2014). As many teachers have experienced good models of outstanding Islamic Schools in the West, they recommended establishing outstanding Islamic Schools in the United Arab of Emirates, to provide the Muslim students with excellent Education in both scientific and Islamic subjects.

**5.8.** Another aspect to be focused upon here is teachers' need to be on their best terms with the students and always there to help whenever the students are confused or require support because this is one of the students' primary concerns. Some of the students are not interested in the study of Islamic Education because the Islamic education teacher neglected to fascinate them either with activities or with attractive teaching methods. Therefore, they refrain themselves from taking enough interest in the course itself. Therefore, teachers should teach students with utmost respect and understanding, as the program's success also depends on the way it is being taught. The teacher licence and permit to teach a subject is a priority before 2021 (Authority 2021). Most of the teachers were satisfied with themselves teaching Islamic Education, while many teachers were also unsatisfied. So, job satisfaction can also be attributed to the rising challenges in this regard.

Moreover, students from various backgrounds, either cultural or religious, are present in a multi-cultural school. Each student understands Islamic teachings based on their mentality and thought process. Therefore, a teacher needs to focus on the students' psyche and understanding of the concept rather than focusing on their religion first. (Sahin, 2018) stated that focusing on Aqeedah and monotheism is a priority. However, since multi-cultural schools have mixed beliefs and many religions, a teacher carefully needs to decide how to teach the students Islamic Education to the students' best understanding.

Therefore, in a multi-cultural school, challenges being faced by students in terms of religious Education are very different when compared to other schools such as only Islamic schools. This is because of the difference in orientation between these schools. However, to make religious Education smooth and comfortable in various regions, it is necessary to resolve any challenges being faced by the students. These challenges should be adequately identified and acted upon all the industry's supporting actors so that a uniformed effort could be made to resolve these challenges. The government has a significant role in maintaining the religious identities of its individuals. (Muhad et al., 2017). Out of the experimental factors challenges such as having mixed concepts, inability to understand the Arabic Language and the way Islamic Education is taught in these regions hold the most significant priority, which would immediately produce a smooth effect.

### **5.1. Implications**

Therefore, this research has provided the UAE with many points to touch upon and resolve so that Islamic Education is spread as effectively as possible among many multi-cultural schools. This would also spread knowledge regarding it among many other students hailing from different religions which would reduce Islamophobia in many areas. Many other countries can also use this study to provide them with a framework to find such challenges that they may be facing in their respective countries when it comes to Islamic Education being taught to high school students. Many international schools face a similar situation in many regions mentioned previously, such as where Muslims are in the minority, and people are afraid of Muslims. These are the places most affected in terms of challenges being faced for Islamic Education.

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## APPENDIX A

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July 8, 2020

### *To whom it may concern*

This is to certify that **Ms. Manar Abdelghany Mohamed Elsis** with student ID number **20182068** is a registered part-time student on the **Master of Education** programme at **The British University in Dubai** since **September 2018**.

Ms. Elsis has successfully completed the taught modules and is currently working on her thesis titled **"Investigation into challenges of Islamic education at multi-cultural institutions: Case studies of teachers' and students' views in high schools in Dubai"**.

She needs your support in conducting interviews and questionnaires to complete the research.

This letter is issued on student's request.

Yours sincerely,

**Amer Alaya**  
**Head of Student Administration**