Research Article:

Inter-religious Elements in Pendidikan Islam KSSM for The Future of Islamic Religious Education in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The escalating tensions among students of diverse religions, races and ethnicities in educational settings highlight the pressing need for enhanced inter-religious understanding and communication. This lack of comprehension often leads to conflicts, biases, and misunderstandings, underscoring the importance of fostering connections based on respect, justice and peace. While inter-religious education has made strides in various continents like Europe, Australia and Africa, there remains a gap in its implementation in places such as Malaysia, a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. This study delves into the incorporation of inter-religious elements into the Islamic religious education curriculum in Malaysia, aiming to bridge the gap and promote inclusivity. Two primary methods are employed through the use of a qualitative approach. The first way involves conducting a document analysis, which entails examining various types of documents such as textbooks, curriculum standards, official government papers and research publications. The initial method's findings will be corroborated through a semi-structured interview conducted with educators and experts. This study elucidates the underlying and unspoken aspects of inter-religious debates inside the curriculum. The findings underscore the necessity for a formal integration of inter-religious education to enrich the future of Islamic religious education in Malaysia, paving the way for a more inclusive and harmonious educational landscape.

Keywords: Inter-religious, Islamic religious education, Curriculum, Pendidikan Islam KSSM, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The global landscape is rich with diverse societies, each shaped by unique geographical locations and backgrounds (Mohd Khambali@Hambali, 2020). This diversity has given rise to multi-ethnic communities and a plethora of religious beliefs, as highlighted in IPSOS Reports (IPSOS, 2023) showcasing the prevalence of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Taoism and other faiths across the world. Countries like Australia, Brazil, China, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Madagascar and Indonesia exemplify this religious diversity. Notably, Islam has emerged as a rapidly growing religion, particularly in Europe, with countries like Belgium, France, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Austria witnessing a significant Muslim population surge (Congressional Research Service, 2011). However, challenges such as discrimination and prejudice persist for Muslim communities in Western nations (Blinder et al., 2019).

In contrast, Malaysia stands out as a predominantly Muslim nation with a diverse population comprising Malay, Chinese, Indian and Bumiputera ethnic groups (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). This diversity extends beyond ethnicity to encompass variations in religion, culture, and language, yet it fosters a harmonious coexistence among different racial groups. Islam remains the most widely practiced religion in Malaysia, followed by Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and other faiths (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020), underscoring the country's unique blend of cultural and religious pluralistic nature. While Malaysia's diversity is a defining feature, it also poses challenges in maintaining social cohesion and unity within the nation.

In order to ensure the stability of social relationships, the government has implemented various strategies, such as the National Education Policy outlined in the Barnes Report 1951 (Report of the Committee of Malay Education). As part of these efforts, national schools have been established, where instruction is conducted in either Malay or English. Additionally, the Razak Report which was introduced in 1956 emphasises the national nature of education with the goal of fostering a unified society (Abdullah, 2010). The Razak Report has put forward various proposals, specifically advocating for the national language to be used as the primary medium of instruction in schools, the implementation of a uniform Malaysia-oriented curriculum across all types of schools, and the establishment of standardised examination and teacher training systems. The recommendations mentioned have been implemented up to now (Zakaria et al., 2012).

While the current recommended suggestions have been put into effect, more efforts by the government are necessary to ensure that the stability of social ties, particularly among children in schools, is maintained at a controlled level. Since then, the government has taken measures to maintain positive relationships among students in schools. These measures include organising programmes such as *Rancangan Integrasi Murid Untuk Perpaduan* (RIMUP) or Student Integration for Unity Plan and *1 Murid 1 Sukan* or 1 Student 1 Sport (KPM [Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia], 2013; Zakaria et al., 2012).

The organised programmes aim to foster the interaction among students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Nevertheless, a 2016 report from the Ministry of Education Malaysia maintains that the programmes organised are still limited to specific seasons and have achieved fewer successful outcomes (Alias et al., 2017). According to the research conducted by Vellymalay (2015), if this issue is not addressed, it will have a negative effect on students' relationships with their peers at school. The research shows that the level of interaction among students at school is influenced by their preference for people of the same religion and ethnicity. This is because students feel more at ease socialising with others who belong to the same religious and ethnic groups. The presence of prejudicial attitudes among students in the classroom inhibits effective interaction and can ultimately result in disputes and disagreements (Hie & Samsu, 2019; Vellymalay, 2017).

One of the elements that contributes to this issue is the insufficient exposure to the individual differences of each kid in school (Damin et al., 2021; Khalil et al., 2018). This aligns with the research undertaken by Sabri et al. (2021) which identified a discrepancy in the acceptance of religious differences among Malaysian adolescents who fall within the age range of school-aged children. Efforts have undeniably been made to create distinctions among students. However, earlier endeavours primarily emphasised ethnicity and cultural factors (Omar et al., 2018).

Therefore, to enhance the exposure to religious diversity in society, it is recommended to follow the findings of various studies conducted by Mat Zain et al. (2019), Salleh and Abd Khahar (2016), the Chairperson of Committee to Promote Inter-religious Harmony and Understanding (cited from *Malay Mail*, 2016), and Wan Bakar (2014). These studies suggest that inter-religious understanding can be fostered through formal education. Bin Jamil (2022) argues that the inclusion of multi-religious education is essential as it has the potential to cultivate well-rounded Malaysian students. Within the framework of multi-religious education, the term 'good students' can be described as those who possess the capacity to understand both themselves and others (Selçuk & Valk, 2012). Given that the focus of these endeavours is on promoting religious comprehension, it is considered suitable to conduct the discussion within the framework of religious education, as practiced in various European and African countries, Türkiye, and several other nations (Museka, 2019; Díaz, 2018; Llorent-Vaquero, 2018; Abrahams, 2000). Therefore, in Malaysia, it is more appropriate to include the teachings of other religions in *Pendidikan Islam* (Islamic Education) curriculum. This is because it aligns with the religious education system in Malaysia and supports the goals of *Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia, PPPM 2013–2025* (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025). The blueprint has assigned *Pendidikan Islam* within *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah, KSSM* (Standard Secondary School Curriculum) approach as a platform to promote unity (KPM, 2013). These cultivating efforts are regarded as attempts to improve the level of tolerance among schoolchildren.

To achieve the objective, this study aims to assess the degree to which inter-religious content is incorporated into Pendidikan Islam KSSM. The study functions in identifying the necessity of incorporating inter-religious elements, as indicated by teachers and experts in *Pendidikan Islam* who possess expertise in the curriculum development and implementation.

INTER-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Etymologically, inter-faith or inter-religious is defined as the existence of religiously different individuals (Merriam-Webster.com, n.d.). It is also defined as being among religious believers or in the meeting between religious believers of different philosophies, beliefs, practises and religious institutions (Mayhew & Rockenbach, 2021; Ramli & Awang, 2016; Byrne, 2011). This implies that 'inter-religious' refers to individual engagement or even the meetings represented by a few individuals of different religions. Based on detailed observation, this term is found to be the subject of a few debates, such as inter-religious relations (Jeyaraj, 2007), inter-religious marriage (Sintang et al., 2012), inter-religious dialogue (Awang & Mohd Khambali, 2013), and inter-religious education (Moyaert, 2019). In summary, the analytical findings of each study reveal that there are two similar qualities, namely; religions diversity and interaction between religions' believers.

Inter-religious interaction involves the interaction between two parties who form a strong relationship through bonding (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2010). This relationship facilitates the exchange of ideas, similar to the interaction between a student and a teacher in a classroom setting (Mohd Paudzi, 2021). The interaction is frequently linked with other concepts such as communication and socialisation, as these terms are interconnected and also pertain to dialogues (Mohd Paudzi, 2019). Therefore, the inter-religious idea possesses the previously indicated two primary characteristics, which can be referred to as inter-religious aspects.

Since this study focuses on religious education at school, the inter-religious concept is discovered through the learning forms or methods in religious education that have been implemented and are known as inter-religious education. Hermans (2003), Ven der Ven (1994) and Ziebertz (1993) have identified three common forms of religious instruction in schools: (a) mono-religious education, (b) multi-religious education and (c) inter-religious education. Mono-religious education is a specific type of religious education that centres on the teaching and learning of only one religion (Sterkens, 2001). The primary goal of this approach is to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of certain religious customs and practices (Hermans, 2003). This educational approach prioritises students' cognitive abilities, enabling them to fully understand each religious tradition they study (Sterkens, 2001). Furthermore, another aspect to consider is multi-religious education. The word multi-religious pertains to the presence of various and distinct belief systems embraced by individuals, including Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism (Moyaert, 2018; Hermans, 2003). Multi-religious education is an educational strategy

that emphasises learning about different religious traditions and is generally associated with a pedagogical method of studying various religions (Moyaert, 2018; Mwale et al., 2014; Hermans, 2003). Inter-religious education refers to the process of instructing and acquiring knowledge about different religions, including their beliefs, practices, cultures, philosophies and taboos (Bryne, 2011). Inter-religious education is distinct from a multi-religious approach as it specifically emphasises two aspects: acquiring knowledge about different religions and facilitating interactions and conversations among followers of many faiths (Hermans, 2003). This education not only emphasises the understanding of different religions, but also fosters positive qualities such as gratitude, respect, altruism and acceptance of diversity among students through interaction (Bisri & Karwadi, 2018; Morgen & Ssndage, 2016).

Wingerden et al. (2012) assert that a number of main fundamentals are emphasised through inter-religious education, namely religion, social and pedagogy. Furthermore, the religious instruction process does not merely focus on a single religion; the exposure also entails more than one religion. In terms of social, the instruction must create awareness among students concerning the life environment, which serves as a fundamental of the society. On the other hand, pedagogically, the main purpose of education does not only involve students' cognition, psychomotor and affective aspects are also crucial so that students will be able to experience and get immersed in every instructional process. As summarised by Kujawa-Holbrook (2014), Boys et al. (2006), and Van der Ven (1994), inter-religious education functions as a medium to learn about other religions and live in togetherness through mutual interaction. This connotation may be deduced from the fact that inter-religious education involves two variables: learning about the diversity of religions with a focus on informational content regarding the fundamentals of other religions and ways to interact with religious believers (Mwale et al., 2014; Hermans, 2003).

Religious education is commonly practiced in a mono-religious manner in several countries, including Austria, Scotland, Poland, Sweden and even Malaysia (Milerski & Karwowski, 2021; Lau, 2021; Von Brömssen et al., 2020). However, in the present day, certain countries are implementing alterations to their approach to religious education. Religious education in Britain initially only concentrates on teaching Christianity. However, there are some groups who propose that religious education in Britain should be changed to include teachings from multiple religions. This idea has gained traction and is now being used as a standard for reforming religious education in Europe. Africa is not exempt from this trend. Countries such as Zambia, Ghana, Lesotho and Botswana are also actively working towards reforming their religious education (NCDC, 2013; Abrahams, 2000). This example demonstrates that the structure of religious education is inherently variable, but may still adapt to present circumstances, much like how certain countries have transitioned from a model of multi-religious education to one of inter-religious education.

This type of transition in educational formats is attributed to multiple variables, one of which being the influx of immigrants, similar to the situation in various European nations. According to the 2019 report by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social

Affairs (DESA), the rise in global migration, particularly in European countries, is a result of the movement of immigrants from outside, leading to alterations in the socio-demographic makeup of certain countries (International Organisation for Migration, 2022; Wielzen & Ter Avest, 2017). The influx of immigrants has a direct impact on children at school who come from various ethnic and religious backgrounds. If not effectively addressed, this tendency can result in issues arising from the divergent identities of individuals within a society, compounded by the reluctance of certain individuals to acknowledge and embrace the uniqueness of others (Goldberg, 2020). Due to this phenomenon, certain European countries are taking steps to reform the structure of religious education. Initially, they implemented mono-religious and multi-religious education models, but later transitioned to an inter-religious approach, which is now being implemented in schools (Wingerden et al., 2012). The European Union provides evidence by implementing the European Research Project on Religion and Education (REDCo), which introduces the concept of inter-religious education as an initial measure to promote harmonious societal interactions (Weisse, 2010).

Therefore, schools implement comprehensive inter-religious education to facilitate the instruction and comprehension of different religions, as well as the interaction among students of different faiths (Moyaert, 2019). This instructional approach considers not only students' cognitive abilities but also their psychomotor characteristics by promoting contact among students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds during the teaching and learning process (Moyaert, 2018). Consistent with the perspectives of Mohamad Yusuf and Sterkens (2013), the primary objective of this education is to cultivate the capacity for interaction and discourse among diverse students inside the school.

In the context of societal unity, the need of inter-religious education is recognised and emphasised. This approach aims to decrease the excessive focus on individual and societal devotion to specific religions (Court & Seymour, 2015). It also serves as a means to promote understanding and appreciation of the significance of positive relationships in a diverse society (Engebreston, 2012; Byrne, 2011; Balakrishan, 2009). In the context of students at school, there are several important issues that have been identified. These include reducing discrimination against minorities by the majority, training students to be responsible with their own religion through activities where students of different religions share their experiences, and promoting appreciative attitudes towards the idea that diverse human beings are created to demonstrate God's divine power, which is shown through being respectful and fair to one another. Inter-religious education serves as an undeniable means of fostering unity among students of different religious backgrounds in schools.

In conclusion, inter-religious education is an educational strategy that promotes positive interactions among students of different religions within a school setting. The process

encompasses the instruction on religious customs and encourages contact, conversation, sharing, and communication among students of diverse religious backgrounds. This fosters the development of positive attitudes in students, including respect, helpfulness, and cooperation towards one another. Inter-religious features should be incorporated into religious education in schools, especially for children from diverse religious background, as is the case in Malaysia.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

Islam is the official religion for Malaysia under Act 3(1) of the Federal Constitution (Malaysia Federation Constitution, 2010):

> Islam is the religion of the Federation, but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation.

The act designates Islam as the official religion of Malaysia, although it does not prohibit believers of other faiths from practicing religions other than Islam. The inclusion of Islam as the official religion in the social compact of Malaysian society can be attributed to its significant role in Malay history and culture (Al-Attas, 1972). Historical records indicate that Islam was the initial religion to establish its presence in *Tanah Melayu* (the Malay World) prior to achieving independence (Abd Wahab et al., 2020). The veracity of this claim is supported by the inclusion of Article VII in the Johor State Constitution of 1895 and Chapter 51 in the Terengganu State Constitution of 1911 (Bari, 2005).

Moreover, Malay civilisation has been practicing Islamic education as their religious education since the 13th century (Abdul, 1995). In the past, the teaching and learning activities in religious education were carried out in an informal manner (Hashim & Langgulung, 2008). According to Mohd Nor and Wan Othman (2011), there is no legal requirement for Muslim children to get Islamic education. Following the attainment of independence by Tanah Melayu, in 1960, the government initiated the implementation of educational regulations derived from Laporan Rahman Talib 1960 (Report of the Education Review Committee). In the report, the government mandated that schools with 15 or more Muslim students must implement *Pendidikan Islam* curriculum (Mat Diah, 1989). Subsequently, *Pendidikan Islam* has been maintained as a religious discipline in schools in Malaysia.

Since its introduction, *Pendidikan Islam* has undergone various curriculum reviews that align with the changes made to the national curriculum taught in schools (Aslan, 2019). In 2011, the Malaysian education system underwent a makeover after using the integrated approach in curriculums of both primary and secondary schools for 20 years. The goal was to create a new education development plan that would address the issues of the 21st century and satisfy global standards (KPM, 2013). Consequently, the national curriculum in Malaysia transitioned from *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah, KBSR* (Primary

School Integrated Curriculum) and *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah, KBSM* (Secondary School Integrated Curriculum) to *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, KSSR* (Primary School Standard Curriculum) and *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah, KSSM* (Secondary School Standard Curriculum), when the government implemented *Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia* (PPPM) 2013–2025. This plan serves as the guiding framework for the education system in Malaysia (KPM, 2016). The modifications in the national education system resulted in the implementation of curriculum adjustments for all courses, including *Pendidikan Islam*, as mandated by the national curriculum.

The changes in the national curriculum have resulted in a visible impact on the renewal of the national curriculum documents. This refers to the transformation from *Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran, HSP* (Curriculum Specifications), to *Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran, DSKP* (Standard Based Document for Curriculum and Assessment). It serves as an authoritative text to provide guidance to teachers throughout the process of teaching and learning. The Ministry of Education Malaysia divides it into three primary sections: content standards, learning standards, and performance standards (KPM, 2013). The curriculum documents are being renewed in order to improve upon the prior curriculum and meet the requirements set forth in PPPM 2013–2025.

Pendidikan Islam KSSM

The Malaysian education system underwent modifications that resulted in the renewal of the curriculum from KBSM to KSSM as previously discussed. Curricular documents for all topics at school, including *Pendidikan Islam*, known as Pendidikan Islam KSSM, have been modified.

Typically, the key elements of a curriculum that need to be considered are objectives, contents, instructional strategies and evaluation techniques (Langgulung, 1991). Therefore, the goals in the curriculum act as the specific objectives or anticipated results in accordance with a nation's educational philosophy (Hamdan, 2007). The main objective of Pendidikan Islam KSSM, as stated in DSKP, is to equip students with the necessary qualities to become servants and *khalifah* (leaders) of Allah. These qualities include knowledge, faith, *taqwa* (piety), good deeds, honourable attitudes, and credibility based on al-Quran and al-Sunnah. Additionally, students should be able to contribute to the improvement of the nation and national civilisation in order to achieve well-being in this life and the Hereafter (KPM, 2017). This objective aligns with the National Education Philosophy and the Islamic Education Philosophy of Malaysia, which serve as the foundation for the development of the Malaysian curriculum. The aim is to cultivate individuals who possess both knowledge and skills, as well as a sense of responsibility towards themselves and society, for the purpose of their overall well-being in this life and the Afterlife (Legal Research Board Malaysia [LBRM], 2021).

Therefore, in order to accomplish the stated goals, it is necessary to attain defined and measurable targets at the conclusion of *Pendidikan Islam* classes (Oliva, 2009). At each

level of schooling, including preschool, primary school and secondary school, there are specific learning objectives that students must master based on their school level. In preschool, the main focus is on mastering the basics of al-Quran and *Jawi* (Malay language in Arabic letters), developing a strong belief system (*aqidah*), practicing basic religious rituals, fostering positive attitudes and introducing the concept of s*irah* (history of Prophet Muhammad) (KPM, 2016). At the primary school level, Pendidikan Islam KSSR focuses on training students to develop the skills of reading, comprehending and writing. At the secondary school level, Pendidikan Islam KSSM emphasises several factors, including knowledge, practical application, internalisation, and cultural integration. These aspects are a continuation of Pendidikan Islam KSSR (KPM, 2013). Upon examination of each learning objective of Pendidikan Islam KSSM, it can be inferred that the mentioned programme aims to cultivate students who possess a comprehensive understanding and proficiency in each aspect of *Pendidikan Islam*, progressing gradually in accordance with their cognitive abilities. Ultimately, by the conclusion of the session, students will have the ability to read, understand, engage in practical exercises and utilise the acquired knowledge. They will even be proficient in both reading and writing in *Jawi* (KPM, 2016). Each purpose specified is crucial for meeting the spiritual requirements of students without neglecting their personal, intellectual and societal needs (Siraj, 2001).

Meanwhile, the substance of lessons is also an essential component of a curriculum. The curriculum often includes a range of elements, such as concepts, facts, theories and principles (Ahmad Sa'adah & Ibrahim, 2004). In the context of Pendidikan Islam KSSM, there are five primary constructs identified, namely knowledge pertaining to the content and facts about specific knowledge. These constructs encompass several main fields, including al-Quran, Hadith, *Aqidah* (Islamic Creed), *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Sirah dan Tamadun Islam* (Islamic History and Civilisation), *Akhlaq Islamiyyah* (Islamic Ethics) and *Jawi* (KPM, 2017). Furthermore, the execution of practical exercises that involve the application of theories or knowledge taught during class. Subsequently, use the knowledge acquired in everyday situations. It is not limited to individual practices alone, but also requires adaptation to the extent that it can be practiced collectively in groups. This aligns with Imam al-Ghazali's definition of knowledge, which he divided into three main components: knowledge, skills and values (KPM, 2017). To summarise, *P*endidikan Islam KSSM curriculum has successfully met the requirements of three key areas that are frequently highlighted in education: cognition, affectivity and psychomotor skills.

Albakri et al. (2001) argue that prioritising instructional tactics or methods is crucial for ensuring effective information delivery and improving students' performance in class. The most recent curriculum has defined the role of teachers as facilitators in the process of teaching and learning. This position must be implemented in all instructional sessions within the classroom. Consequently, teachers need to adjust their educational methods in accordance with their function as facilitators. When teaching *Pendidikan Islam*, several recommended methods include inductive and deductive instruction, teacher-centred and student-centred instruction, games, visits, problem-solving, projects, acting, processes and other learning styles that depend on the teachers' creativity. In addition to the aforementioned

approaches, teachers have the option to employ alternative teaching methods or techniques. However, it is crucial for them to verify that the methods employed align with the 21st century learning competencies and adhere to the teaching recommendations outlined in DSKP (KPM, 2017).

Furthermore, assessment is a crucial component that should be highlighted in a curriculum as it serves as the means of evaluating the attainment of instructional objectives (Jaafar, 2019). According to Langgulung (1997), when evaluating the effectiveness of Islamic education, it is crucial to consider two key elements: wisdom and virtue. Generally, Islamic education emphasises not only students' academic achievements, but also their behaviour and attitudes. There are typically two types of assessment: (i) formative assessment, which evaluates the curriculum's objectives, material and instruction in classrooms, and (ii) summative assessment, which tests whether the objectives have been met or not. Additionally, Pendidikan Islam KSSM incorporates an evaluation known as *Pentaksiran Sekolah, PS* (School Assessment). Formative and summative assessments can be undertaken in both formal and informal settings. For example, teachers may conduct formative assessments during classroom instruction and use summative assessments to evaluate student performance at the end of a lesson or term (KPM, 2018).

Additionally, Pendidikan Islam KSSM includes other elements such as *Pendidikan Abad Ke-21, PAK-21* (21st Century Learning Skills), *Kemahiran Berfikir Aras Tinggi, KBAT* (Higher Order Thinking Skills) and *Elemen Merentas Kurikulum, EMK* (Cross Curriculum Elements). In order to foster cooperative ideals among children of different nationalities and religions at school, the concept of unity should be understood in terms of three key principles: accepting, appreciating, and managing difference. On the other hand, 21st century learning skills focus on developing students' resilience, curiosity, determination, knowledge, compassion and loyalty. Students must acquire all of these qualities in order to achieve global competitiveness. Furthermore, *Pendidikan Islam* also prioritises KBAT, which seeks to promote systematic and concentrated thinking among students. *Pendidikan Islam* also emphasises the importance of highlighting EMK, which involves integrating other branches of knowledge with *Pendidikan Islam* (Ghulam et al., 2019; Rekan et al., 2016). In addition to that, Pendidikan Islam KSSM emphasises the development of entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation.

In conclusion, the covering of Pendidikan Islam KSSM content is well-balanced in terms of addressing students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities. This aligns with the principles of Islamic education and the national education philosophy, aiming to cultivate children who are well-rounded in their physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and personal development.

METHODS

The aim of this study was to assess the extent to which inter-religious content has been included into Pendidikan Islam KSSM curriculum. This study utilised a qualitative research methodology, employing two primary methods. The first way involves conducting a document analysis, which entails examining various types of documents such as textbooks, curriculum standards, official government papers and research publications. The second approach involves conducting in-depth interviews. The interviews were done in a semi-structured manner to provide flexibility and convenience for the informants. They were provided with the chance to include inquiries that pertained to the research objectives teaching and learning contents and strategies, assessment methods, and their views on incorporating inter-religious content into the syllabus of Pendidikan Islam KSSM. The interviews were conducted with six informants who were chosen from a pool of *Pendidikan Islam* teachers and experts. The selection approach used was based on purposive sampling. The researcher employed certain criteria to select informants from among *Pendidikan Islam* teachers who are practitioners with a profound comprehension of the instruction and acquisition of Islamic education in schools. While the experts refer to those who are responsible for the development of *Pendidikan Islam* curriculum documents and textbooks.

The interview session was performed in bahasa Melayu (Malay language) via Google Meet to streamline the data collecting process, as the informants were located in different states and distance posed a limitation. Subsequently, the interviews' data were analysed using the Atlas.Ti programme, employing the thematic content analysis method. This method was chosen based on Creswell (1998) assertion that it is the prevailing approach in qualitative research. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data obtained, this study utilizes the method of triangulation in analysing the data by combining research data from document analysis and interview data to further strengthen the findings of the study, as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003).

Furthermore, the informants in this study were all experienced *Guru Pendidikan Islam* (Islamic Education Teachers) with a minimum of five years of working experience. This qualification aligns with the definition of experts provided by Mustapha and Darusalam (2018), who also consider teachers with more than five years of experience to be experts. Essentially, informants were categorised into two distinct groups according to their respective jobs, such as draftsperson and executives. Table 1 displays the data pertaining to the individuals providing information.

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Table 1. Information about informants

Participant	Period of service	Expertise
G01	14 years	Teacher
G02	21 years	Teacher
G03	9 years	Teacher
G04	13 years	Teacher
G05	21 years	Teacher
P01	10 years	Expert

The table shows that five teachers are serving as the executives of teaching and learning *Pendidikan Islam* in class, while one informant is serving as the draftsperson who was directly engaged in developing and drafting DSKP and Pendidikan Islam KSSM textbooks.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The subsequent themes were constructed based on the study of the interviews:

Orientation of Inter-Religious Elements

According to Kamus Dewan, the term "orientation" refers to the track or direction of anything (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2010). In the context of this study, the orientation of inter-religious aspects refers to the inter-religious track in the objectives of Pendidikan Islam KSSM. Subsequently, the interviews indicated that all participants held the belief that the objectives of Pendidikan Islam KSSM in DSKP were broad and not focused. From the viewpoint of the teachers, G01 believed that the existing objectives lacked a comprehensive and inclusive approach. This aligns with the perspectives of G03 and G04, who also viewed the objectives as being vague and lacking specific content related to inter-religious topics, stated as follows:

> *Objektif dinyatakan secara holistik dia tidak menekankan satu-satu, kalau ada pun objektif mengikut bidang..* (The objectives are stated holistically, not emphasised one by one, even if there are any, the objectives are field-based..) (G01)

> *Objektif DSKP itu tidak ada pengkhususan* (The objectives of DSKP do not comprise specifications) (G03)

> *Itu secara general dalam objektif, emm objektif lah dalam DSKP tapi dia tidak highlight kan emm secara jelas atau secara spesifik dekat objektif itu emm focus utama* (That's the objectives in general, hmm the objectives in DSKP, but they are not highlighted hmm in a clear or specific manner hmm the main focus) (G04)

Meanwhile, G02 believed that the objectives of *Pendidikan Islam* were indirect yet realistic in line with the change of times as mentioned by G05. On the other hand, P01, as the draftsperson, agreed with G05 by saying that the goals of the curriculum aimed to prioritise students' needs to internalise real Muslim character in themselves so that they would be able to be close to Allah and benefit society.

> *Tidak ada khusus untuk pengajaran antara agama, cumanya dalam PdPc (teaching and learning) kita cuma hanya mengaitkan sesuatu isu dengan agama-agama lain, tapi secara tidak langsung, tidak ada dalam DSKP yang tertentu* (There's no specific inter-religious teaching, only the PdPc (teaching and learning) where we only relate issues with other religions, but not directly, there's none in any particular DSKP) (G02)

> *Kalau melihat tajuk-tajuk KSSM sekarang ini dia macam lebih emm realistik* (If we look at the current topics of KSSM, they are more likely to be hmm realistic) (G05)

> *Tajuk yang diberi itu yang berkaitan dengan kehidupan kita seharianlah* (The given topics are related with our daily life) (G05)

> *Tetapi kalau kita nak melihat sebenarnya untuk pengajaran antara agama ini kita tidak menyentuh secara direct di dalam DSKP kerana melihat pertama sekali ialah kerana emm asas ataupun perkara yang mana lebih emm lebih diperlukan oleh pelajar* (But if we in fact want to see the inter-religious teaching, we do not directly touch on it in the DSKP because of considering, first is because hmm the fundamentals or which aspects are needed more by the students) (P01)

Based on the informants' responses, the orientation of inter-religious elements in the objectives of Pendidikan Islam KSSM was not highlighted specifically; it was indirect, and even the inter-religious elements were only discussed in the events where they matched the lesson topics in class. Furthermore, the document analysis of DSKP of Pendidikan Islam KSSM concluded that the objectives focused more on six major fields that existed in the curriculum, namely al-Qur'an, Hadith, *Aqidah* (Islamic Creed), *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Sirah dan Tamadun Islam* (Islamic History and Civilization), and *Akhlaq Islamiyyah* (Islamic Ethics) (KPM, 2017). This result indicates that the objectives did not clearly entail inter-religious elements.

The objectives of this religious education curriculum were distinct from those of other countries, such as European and African countries, and Türkiye, which included inter-religious elements as part of their objectives for religious education classes (Birmingham City Council, 2022; T.R. Ministry of National Education, 2019; Curriculum Development Centre, 2013).

In summary, the objectives of Pendidikan Islam KSSM prioritise the development of students' character in order to create well-rounded individuals in both their present and

future lives, as stated in the National Islamic Education Philosophy (KPM, 2001). PPPM 2013–2025 emphasises the importance of Pendidikan Islam KSSM as a means to foster harmony within schools. Therefore, Pendidikan Islam KSSM serves not only to develop one's character but also to promote unity by providing exposure to the diverse Malaysian population. However, the issue arises: to what degree can the promotion of unity through Pendidikan Islam KSSM be effectively carried out? This is a worry because the current objectives exclusively focus on students' characteristics, whereas Jaafar (2019) argues that curriculum objectives should provide guidance and direction for the knowledge imparted to students.

Moreover, religious education curricula used in other countries appear to incorporate inter-religious components within the learning syllabus, as part of their endeavours to promote diversity and foster harmony among students in schools. In order to enhance the existing syllabus of Pendidikan Islam KSSM and align it with PPPM 2013–2025's goal of fostering unity among societies, it is imperative to include inter-religious elements in the objectives. This will provide students, particularly in Malaysia, with exposure to religious diversity and promote a sense of inclusivity.

Inter-religious Interaction Forms

Regarding the various types of inter-religious connection, the interviews revealed unanimous agreement among all participants that the aspect of inter-religious interaction has been incorporated into Pendidikan Islam KSSM. Nevertheless, the exchange of information regarding inter-religious engagement occurred only in a limited number of instances. G01 and G04 stated that the interaction content was limited to a small portion, concealed and indirect. The content was straightforward and lacked depth, as evidenced by the emphasis on positive values in various areas such as *Akhlaq Islamiyyah* (Islamic Ethics), and *Sirah dan Tamadun Islam* (Islamic History and Civilisation), as mentioned by G02 and G03. In this scenario, teachers assume the responsibility of implementing a variety of activities to promote and facilitate contact among students from different cultural and social backgrounds within the school setting as follows:

> *Ada, sebagai instrinsik yang tersembunyi kita kena mahir untuk huraikan mengikut kesesuaian situasi. Kalau nak kata yang direct tu, yang saya nampak lah, adab berjiran, adab berkomunikasi dan adab menghormati guru* (There is, as a hidden intrinsic we need to be skilled in elaborating based on the situational suitability. If I were to mention the direct ones, what I see, manners with neighbours, manners in communication and manners in respecting teachers) (G01)

> *Secara, kalau kita tengok secara buku teks itu, kalau secara direct, nak suruh kita interaksi, emm suruh murid interaksi itu nampak macam tidak straight, dia tak direct* (In a sense of, if we look at the textbook, in a direct sense, to make us interact, hmm to encourage the students to interact, it seems like it is not straight, not direct) (G04)

> *..seperti mana tadi yang disebutkan, dalam DSKP hanya terkandung dalam bidang Adab dan Akhlak sahaja kan? Betul..* (..as mentioned earlier, in DSKP the content is only in the fields of Manners and Akhlak only right? Right..) (G02)

> *..yang saya nampak, macam contohnya apa, tingkatan dua ada di bab akhlak tentang muliakan ibu bapa bahagiakan keluarga..* (..what I see, like for example, for form two, in the akhlak chapters, there is this topic about esteeming parents make the family happy..) (G03)

Hence, P01, as a draftsperson, also agreed with G01 and G04 that the inter-religious interaction in Pendidikan Islam KSSM did indirectly exist.

> *..untuk kita berinteraksi dengan orang bukan islam ini kita tidak sentuh secara spesifik, kita tidak ada contoh tajuk emm bagaimana contohnya kita apa memberi garis panduan..* (..for us to interact with non-muslims, we do not touch on it specifically, we do not have topic examples hmm how for example we provide the guidelines..) (P01)

The interviews revealed that *Pendidikan Islam KSSM* contained noticeable inter-religious components, however the material provided was basic and restricted. The findings enhanced the subsequent document analysis of textbooks, revealing the inclusion of inter-religious interaction elements in various subjects such as al-Quran, *Sirah dan Tamadun Islam* and *Akhlaq Islamiyyah* for level 2 (lower secondary) (Yahya et al., 2018; Wan Abdullah et al., 2017; Yahya et al., 2016). Nevertheless, every highlighted piece of information was implicit and merely functioned as basic notes inside the subtopic being discussed.

On the other hand, other countries' religious education curriculum expressly contains information regarding inter-religious cooperation in its content. The significance of religious education abroad in fostering interpersonal connections among students from different backgrounds is explicitly articulated (Birmingham City Council, 2022; Revd, 2020).

In summary, it can be inferred that the content of inter-religious interaction is included in *Pendidikan Islam KSSM*. However, this material is not explicitly stated and is only covered in some connected subtopics. The syllabus of religious education in other nations includes inter-religious contact as an integral component, distinguishing it from this one.

Information about Other Religions

Fundamentally, all informants agree that information about other religions was not included in Pendidikan Islam KSSM. According to G01 and G05, there is no specific topic on other religions in the curriculum since it only focuses on Islam. G01 and G05 explained that:

> *Elemen agama lain, berdasarkan pemahaman saya la, tidak ada* (The elements of other religions, based on my understanding, there's none) (G01)

> *Sama juga macam tidak adalah tajuk yang menjurus kepada untuk bincang dengan lebih tajuk-tajuk agama lain, tak ada* (The same goes with there's no topic that are inclined towards discussing more about the topics on other religions, there's none) (G05)

G02, G03 and G04 said that the curriculum did not emphasise information about other religions as follows:

> *…dalam DSKP Pendidikan Islam, saya pergi taklimat DSKP pun, rasanya untuk pengajaran antara agama kita memang tidak tekankan, apa yang kita tekankan dalam Pendidikan Islam…* (…in the Pendidikan Islam DSKP, even when I went to the briefing on DSKP, indeed I think we do not emphasise inter-religious teaching, what we emphasise in Pendidikan Islam…) (G02)

> *..kalau kita tengok dari sukatan pelajaran 25 era masyarakat Jahiliyah ada lah, sentuh sedikit masyarakat Arab sebelum kerasulan ada agama Nasrani, Yahudi, tapi sikit lah..* (..if we look at the syllabus 25 during the era of Jahiliyah society, we touch a little bit on the Arabs before the coming of the Prophet, there were Nasrani, Yahudi religions, but it's just a bit..) (G03)

> *..tidak ada, secara direct secara yang fizikal nya tidak ada secara tu..* (..there's none, directly physically there's none as such..) (G04)

P01 argued that the information about other religions was not stated clearly in Pendidikan Islam KSSM. P01 mentioned that:

> *Okay, kalau tanya tajuk begini jawapannya nak details tak adalah, sebenarnya contoh kalau perayaan agama-agama semua itu memang tidak ada disentuh dalam Pendidikan Islam..* (Okay, for this kind of topic the answer is there's no detailed one, in fact for example religious celebrations and all are definitely not touched in Pendidikan Islam..) (P01)

According to these interviews, Pendidikan Islam KSSM does not contain any information on other religions. Based on the analysis document DSKP, it is evident that there is no content regarding other religions within the content of the KSSM Islamic Education curriculum. This corresponds with the study. This aligns with the findings of Salleh and Abd Khahar (2016) which indicate that *Pendidikan Islam* does not include any information regarding the doctrines and taboos of other religions.

Religious knowledge is explicitly taught in countries like United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Lesotho and Ghana. In these countries, religious education includes discussions on various religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Sikhism (Williams,

2020; Von Brömssen et al., 2020; NCDC, 2013; Liverpool City Council, 2008; Hull, 2005).

Overall, it was unanimously agreed upon by all sources that *Pendidikan Islam* was deficient in terms of providing information about other religions. The reason for this is that the debate topics explored the intricacies and depth of Islam, specifically in comparison to its implementation in other countries.

Teaching and Learning Strategies on Inter-religious Elements

According to this theme, all participants noted that the curriculum did not include teaching methods or strategies for inter-religions. G01, G02 and G03 reported that certain activities were conducted indirectly to address subjects pertaining to inter-religious components. They mentioned that:

> *Tapi tidak straight, kalau ada pun sikit je la, sebab benda itu kan secara tak langsung, kan, kita implement secara tak langsung..* (But it's not straightforward, even if there is, it's just a little bit, because it is indirect, we implement it indirectly..) (G01)

> *..saya rasa memang, tak da kot..* (I think, there's none indeed..) (G02)

> *..tidak ada, cikgu itu sendiri yang kena aplikasikan dalam pembelajaran..* (..there's none, the teachers themselves have to apply in their teaching..) (G03)

Meanwhile, G04 and G05 stated that the teaching methods of inter-religions were only conducted through the merging of topics related to inter-religions. G04 and G05 added that:

> *..saya menggunakan kaedah penggabung jalinan sebagai salah satu strategi ataupun salah kaedah untuk berkongsi, maklumat dengan murid, yang ada elemen antara agama la.. selalu yang kerap di guna pakai ialah kaedah penggabung jalinan..* (..I use the integrating method as one of the strategies or one of the methods to share the information with the students, which comprise the inter-religious elements.. The most frequently used method is integrating..) (G04)

> *..kami ada gabung jalin lah, dan berdasarkan tajuk lah kan yang sesuai..* (..we do integrate, and based on suitable topics..) (G05)

Additionally, P01 stated that the teaching strategies did not directly mention inter-religious elements or teaching methods; it depended on the teachers to make a variety of activities.

> *Di bahagian aktiviti ini dia tidak adalah menyentuh secara direct..*"(It is not touched directly in this activity section..) (P01)

According to the replies from all informants, it can be inferred that teaching strategies for inter-religious issues were not incorporated into Pendidikan Islam KSSM. This was because it relied on teachers' own efforts to integrate components relevant to inter-religious subjects. Contrary to the information provided by informants, the analysis of textbooks revealed that the level 2 Pendidikan Islam KSSM textbook included an activity in the *Aqidah* field that involved inter-religious elements and was designed for both Muslim and non-Muslim students (Yahya et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the activity was simply a suggestion, and it was at the discretion of the teachers to decide whether or not to implement it.

In contrast, foreign countries have included particular teaching and learning activities in their religious education syllabus that are suitable for religious instruction. These activities include engaging in dialogues between students from different religious backgrounds, visiting places of worship and undertaking projects that involve students from diverse religious traditions (Babagario, 2019; Moyaert, 2018; Noor & Siregar, 2013). This technique facilitates teachers in effectively facilitating the teaching and learning process in the classroom, aligning with the primary objective of imparting information in a convenient manner (Jaafar, 2019).

This finding suggests that incorporating teaching and learning strategies for religions has become essential to facilitate the teaching and learning activities carried out by teachers. This can be justified by considering the situation of religious education in other countries, which suggests that there are potential strategies for developing effective inter-religious teaching and learning.

Assessment of Inter-religious Elements

Every item covered in an educational syllabus will be evaluated to test students' comprehension of the material (Jaafar, 2019). Therefore, within the framework of the inter-religious evaluation in Pendidikan Islam KSSM, all participants unanimously affirmed the absence of a documented assessment approach for inter-religious knowledge in the curriculum. As stated by G01, the official evaluation of inter-religious components was not carried out because it was not included in DSKP. G01 mentioned that:

> ...*saya tak ada tanyalah secara serius, maksudnya kalau kita betul-betul nak uji, memang tak ada dan ia bukan keperluan, dia tak ada pun dinyatakan dalam DSKP kita dalam pentaksiran maknanya secara bertulis secara lisan tidak memerlukan...* (...I did not seriously ask, meaning that if we truly want to test, there's none and it is not a need, it is not stated in our DSKP in the evaluation meaning that it is not necesarry in writing, verbally..) (G01)

Meanwhile, G02 and G03 believed that assessment activities were only conducted indirectly and casually through the activities carried out by teachers. This is because the assessment of inter-religious elements was not part of *Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah* or PBD (Classroom Assessment). As such, G02 and G03 mentioned that:

> *Kalau saya, saya santai-santai tu, biasa la, kita nak tengok setakat mana mereka tahu, sebab sini agama mereka non-Muslim ni, secara tak langsung, santai-santai lah, bukan untuk kita letak dalam PBD* (In my case, I do it in a relaxing way, well, we want to see to what extent do they know, because here their religions, non-Muslim religions, it is indirect, in a relaxing way, not for us to include in PBD) (G02)

> *Kalau aktiviti tu, sama juga la, santai-santai, kalau nak tanya mereka faham betul-betul agama lain, itu tidak la* (For activities, it's the same, in a relaxing way, we do not ask them whether they truly understand other religions) (G03)

Next, G04 thought that the assessment of the inter-religious information in the curriculum was only conducted through teaching and learning activities, which relied on teachers' wise decisions to do them:

> *..untuk menguji pengetahuan sedia ada berkaitan dengan agama lain, itu seringkali kita buatlah emm sebagai orang kata aktiviti dalam kelas kita sentiasa..* (..to test their prior knowledge related to other religions, we frequently do that hmm as what people call activities in class as always..) (G04)

> *..maksudnya memang tak ada lah melainkan emm kebijaksanaan guru tersebutlah, kalau nak dia nak..* (..meaning that, there's none except hmm it's up to the teachers' wisdom, if they want to..) (G04)

For G05, the evaluation of students' knowledge about inter-religions did not exist at all in the curriculum:

> *Buku teks satu, dia memang tak menyentuh secara mendalam, tak ada sangat dia menyentuh emm mungkin sebab kalau orang sebut antara agama, bila dia kurang ilmu jadi lain, penerimaan kan macam-macam* (The textbook is one thing, it does not touch on it in depth, not much is touched hmm perhaps if people mention inter-religions, when they lack knowledge, it goes south, responses may vary) (G05)

As a curriculum draftsperson, P01 also asserted that there is no specific assessment for inter-religious elements due to the absence of specific topics about inter-religions in the curriculum. This is related to the fact that only topics in the learning syllabus will be complemented by an assessment process:

> *Bila dah ada dalam buku teks maka pihak Lembaga Peperiksaan boleh membuat soalan peperiksaan berkaitan dengan tajuk ini* (When it is included in the textbook then the Board of Examination may formulate examination questions related to this topic) (P01)

Based on all informants' responses, the assessment of students' inter-religion knowledge was informally undertaken, and the evaluation was only done spontaneously during classes. Furthermore, the evaluation of inter-religions was not present in PBD because

to the limitation that formal assessments were only feasible for the subjects covered in the learning syllabus. The lack of inter-religious conversation issues in the learning syllabus is the reason for this (Jaafar, 2019).

This aligns with the religious education curriculum implemented by international countries, wherein assessment tasks were carried out to gauge students' comprehension of the themes covered in class. In addition, the assessment activities are categorised into two forms: written assessment and practical assessment (Williams, 2020; Fancourt, 2010).

In conclusion, it can be inferred that evaluation activities for a particular issue can only be carried out if that issue is included as a topic in the learning syllabus. Consequently, evaluating inter-religious components is now not possible, either by textual or formal methods. The absence of an official discussion subject on inter-religions in *Pendidikan Islam* syllabus is the reason for this. Therefore, this demonstrates the urgent requirement for it in order to facilitate the inter-religious implementation via Pendidikan Islam KSSM. This serves as an endeavour to assess the level of students' comprehension of their disparities and ultimately cultivate students who possess the ability to recognise, comprehend and embrace each variation that exists among them, in accordance with the unity principle outlined in DSKP of Pendidikan Islam KSSM (KPM, 2017).

Acceptance of Inter-religious Elements

The inclusion of inter-religious components in Pendidikan Islam KSSM necessitates the input of key stakeholders involved in the development and execution of Pendidikan Islam KSSM curriculum. Consequently, the informants voiced three distinct opinions. According to G01, G04 and G05, it was deemed suitable to incorporate inter-religious components into Pendidikan Islam KSSM. This viewpoint was endorsed by the experts in *Pendidikan Islam* curriculum, specifically P01. The following is as follows:

> *..ia adalah wajar..* (..it is reasonable..) (G01)

> *..kalau ikut pandangan peribadi memang kita sokonglah untuk digarapkan sedikit maklumat tentang emm antara agamalah kepada murid Islam itu sendiri..* (..in the sense of personal opinions, of course we support for the information to be exposed about hmm inter-religions to the Muslim students..) (G04)

> *.. wajar juga tapi saya rasa kena kajian itu lebih banyak..* (..it is reasonable, but I think more research is necessary..) (G05)

> *..Kalau tanya kewajaran itu, memang wajarlah first sekali selepas kita ini kita tahulah negara kita ini negara yang campur campuran..* (..If you ask about reasonability, first it is reasonable since we know that our country is multiracial..) (P01)

On the other hand, G02 highlighted that including knowledge of other religions in *Pendidikan Islam* would be a huge step, although inter-religious interaction aspects might potentially be incorporated into the subject:

> *Saya rasa kalau kita nak buat, khusus pengajaran agama-agama lain kepada pelajar-pelajar, saya rasa tak wajar. Tapi kalau kita nak mengajar mereka cara nak berinteraksi dengan non-Muslim itu wajar, sebab kita negara majmuk kan* (I think if we were to implement it, specifically teaching other religions to the students, it is not reasonable. But if we were to teach them the ways to interact with non-Muslims, that's reasonable, since our country is plural right) (G02)

Contrarily, G03 contended that incorporating inter-religious aspects into *Pendidikan Islam* would be unsuitable, as the purpose of the subject is to reinforce students' faith. If inter-religious components are added, it would violate the purpose of Pendidikan Islam KSSM, which is to solely focus on one faith:

> *..memang tidak wajar, sebab kalau ikutkan Pendidikan Islam, memang nak kukuhkan Akidah pelajar, kalau Akidah dia tidak mantap, macam mana hendak mengukuhkan pengetahuan dia tentang agama Islam..* (..it is definitely not reasonable, because according to *Pendidikan Islam*, it is definitely aimed to strengthen students' Aqidah, but if their Aqidah is not strong, how are we supposed to strengthen their knowledge about Islam..) (G03)

From the responses of each informant about the acceptability of inter-religious features in Pendidikan Islam KSSM, it can be deduced that the majority of informants are in favour of implementing inter-religious interaction in the curriculum. Nevertheless, there exists a discrepancy over the substance of alternative religions. There were proponents of its implementation, while others had contrasting views. However, the experts in *Pendidikan Islam* curriculum emphasised that the inter-religious aspects, whether through inter-religious interaction or information about other religions, must be sufficiently important to be incorporated into Pendidikan Islam KSSM. This will act as a catalyst for the introduction of fresh information in the teaching and learning of Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study underscores the critical need for enriching inter-religious elements within the Pendidikan Islam KSSM curriculum as a means to foster unity among students and deepen their comprehension of diverse religious perspectives. While the study sheds light on the significance of this enhancement, it is crucial to recognise the study's limitations, including the necessity for further exploration and the creation of a comprehensive model for seamlessly integrating inter-religious elements into secondary school education. From a pedagogical standpoint, the study emphasises the value of employing student-centred approaches that align with 21st-century skills to effectively implement the proposed curriculum enhancements. Teachers are pivotal in facilitating inter-religious learning

and cultivating an inclusive school environment. Moving forward, future research should concentrate on designing and refining an inter-religious elements model to bridge the identified gaps in the current curriculum. This endeavour will contribute to the ongoing mission of promoting religious harmony and embracing diversity within Malaysian society, ultimately nurturing unity and inclusivity among Muslim students.

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