



# Does the Islamic Education Curriculum Promote Islamic Identity? Perceptions of Kuwaiti Foreign High School Students

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**Abstract:** This study examines the role of the Islamic education curriculum in promoting Islamic identity among foreign private high school students in Kuwait. A total of 286 students completed a questionnaire used to examine their perspectives on the role of Islamic education curriculum in promoting Islamic identity. Results showed significant differences in students' perceptions according to gender: male students perceived Islamic identity more strongly than female students. In addition, all students demonstrated a strong sense of belonging to the Muslim community and expressed their pride in their faith. Based on our findings, our recommendations include the necessity of updating Islamic education curricula for the globalized era as well as adopting successful strategies based on other Muslim countries' experiences to preserve Islamic identity in a globalized era.

**Keywords:** Islamic Education, Foreign Private Schools, Islamic Identity, Kuwait

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Private education law in the state of Kuwait is promulgated by its constitution, which defines foreign schools as educational institutions that follow the methodology of a foreign country and were originally established to meet the educational needs of foreign communities. One of the reasons for private education emerging in Kuwait was the public-school system's inability to provide enough spaces for expatriate students; this situation led to the opening of private schools to accommodate such learners (Yassin, 1975).

The Ministry of Education is the administrative supervisor of private schools in Kuwait, and these schools are required to provide Arabic and Islamic education to Muslim students (Ministry of Education, 1998a, p. 65). There is a great demand for private education in Kuwait, mainly due to the low quality of public education and its educational outcomes. The Director General of the National Center for the Development of Education, Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem, announced that Kuwait was in last place according to the results of the fourth grade TIMSS International Study in 2015. There were 49 countries who participated in the mathematics test and 47 countries who participated in the science test; these numbers showed a decrease in the efficiency catalyst

indicator of six ratings. In 2015, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair also issued a warning about the decline of Kuwaiti education (Al Jarida, 2015) and the World Economic Forum Annual Report on Global Competitiveness of 2019 stated that the quality of education in Kuwait had declined to the 95th place among 137 nations. The report pointed out the lack of a positive link between expenditures in Kuwait versus outcomes, especially regarding education (World Economic Forum, 2019).

The decline in educational outcomes resulted as education indicators issued by the Central Administration for Statistics revealed that approximately 18% of Kuwaiti students (70,764 male and female students) attend private schools, with most students concentrated in foreign schools. In comparison, there are 324,307 Kuwaiti students enrolled in Kuwait government schools (Ministry of Education, Kuwait: [www.moe.edu.kw](http://www.moe.edu.kw)).

Private schools in Kuwait vary in their affiliation; for example, there are bilingual schools as well as American, British, French, and Indian schools. There are also a few foreign language-based schools. The Ministry of Education's statement on the privatizing of education and implementation of teaching other languages highlighted the importance of Arabic as a home language and Islamic studies being obligatory for Arabic-speaking and Muslim



students. The Ministry formed a committee to develop Arabic and Islamic curricula in foreign schools to focus on encouraging students' sense of religious belonging by providing Islamic education curricula in foreign schools (Al Ruwaili, 1990; Ministry of Education, 1998b), as private education induced the fear that foreign cultural influences could negatively impact students' Islamic identities. Such concerns were discussed at the educational conference for private education organized by the Kuwaiti Teachers Society (KTS, 2007). A senior Islamic education supervisor at the Public Administration for Private Education stated that efforts toward providing Islamic and Arabic language education in foreign private schools have been faced with challenges. He emphasized the need to study negative phenomena resulting from the contradictions in some aspects of Western culture with Islamic Sharia (law) in foreign private schools. The conference stressed the dire need to highlight the importance of the Arabic language and Islamic education in foreign schools, as well as the need to pay sufficient attention to similar subjects (Educational Magazine, 2007).

The explicit interest in the Islamic education curriculum is clear and effective at the government level; it is, however, important to activate the curriculum's role through practice, behavior, and students' perceptions. The Islamic education curriculum differs from other courses of study. According to Al Khawaldeh and Eid (2003), "it is a process of interaction between the individual and their surrounding social environment in accordance with the principles of Islamic Sharia to build the Muslim's integrated personality in all its aspects, and in a balanced manner" (p. 33). The Islamic education curriculum is characterized by its openness, sophistication, and evolution (Al Sayed, 2006). However, there are many challenges for Islamic education in the current globalized era (including marginalization), compared with other academic subjects, and learners showing less interest in this particular subjects compared to others (Mustafa & Salim, 2012). One of the justifications for marginalization is that Islamic education does not maintain the openness of other curricula, as Rosnani (2004) pointed out, "Islamic educators should expand their pedagogical methods in accordance with the changing times." (p.82) This claim can be easily refuted, because Islam instructs us to research and learn, and according to the Hadith "a word of wisdom is the lost property of a Muslim. He should seize it wherever he finds it" (Ibn Majah and Al Tirmidhi). Islam is characterized by the acceptance of others. It encourages interacting with other cultures for enrichment and accepts others' differences without the need for any differentiation (Tumin et al., 2021). The following is mentioned in the Quran: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you

may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted" (Al-Hujurat: 14).

Muslims are required to show tolerance and acceptance and embrace other ideas and knowledge so as not to contradict its foundations, ethics, values, and the ideology of Islamic practice. (Olimat & Abu-Alshaik, 2013)

Another challenge includes external and foreign pressures on, and interventions in, Islamic education, on the pretext that such curricula promote terrorism, extremism, and exclusion (Syah, 2016). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia issued a statement prepared by 156 scholars from Saudi universities regarding a proposal that called for modifying Islamic education curricula. These scholars explained that any change made to the Islamic curriculum would be considered an acknowledgment that it supports extremism and terrorism. Their statement clarified that Islamic education curricula are derived from the Quran and Sunnah; hence, an accusation that relates them to terrorism and extremism is not acceptable (Hammad, 2007).

#### A. *The Nature of Islamic Identity*

Bakkar (2000) defined identity as "a set of beliefs, principles, characteristics, and codes that make a certain nation feel different from another nation" (p.69). Some might not include religion as part of the formation of identity; their argument would be that identity is based on history, culture, and language. While perspectives on Islamic identity vary from the previous explanation, Islamic identity often stems from a more comprehensive concept: cultural identity. According to Al-Qaradawi (1994):

Religion is a component of cultural identity as it determines [a] nation's philosophy of life and purpose of existence and answers significant questions, such as "Who are we?" "Where did we come from?" "What is our fate?" All cultures owe their composition and trends to religion, whether this religion is heavenly or positive, true, or false; no identity can be felt without religion, whatever this religion is (p.18).

The formation of religious identity is a complex process; it relies on religious commitment, interaction, and relationships with parents, peers, and the school community. Hence, the environment one grows up within is a major factor in shaping an individual's identity. Therefore, to understand the construction of the religious identity, it is essential to thoroughly examine the relationship between individuals and the social factors that determine the formation of religious identity (Rissanen, 2014; Borisov, Akaeva, & Kazieva, 2016; Azmi et al., 2020).



Students in the secular schooling system need to realize the relationships between their religious identity and valuing it with in their educational preparation. Through the secular educational environment, students are exposed to various norms and behaviors (Janson, 2012). It is important to investigate the sociocultural and environmental factors within the secular educational systems that affect the religious identity formation (Omar, 2012; Abu-Ras, Senzai, & Laird, 2013; Miedema, 2014; Rissanen, 2014, Borisov et al., 2016).

The essence of preserving students' Islamic identities within a foreign school environment in Muslim countries is a fundamental concern that educators must address among younger generations (Janson, 2012). Accordingly, it is important to investigate the Islamic education curriculum's role within foreign school environments in preserving their Islamic identity, and how much effort is being directed toward signifying the essence of Islamic identity within their curriculum and teaching practices.

#### *B. The Essence of the Islamic Education Curriculum*

The Islamic education curriculum is characterized by the precedence and sovereignty of the religious and moral dimensions of Islam. This means that the philosophy, objectives, and methods of this curriculum center on religion and ethics, which are based on the contents of the Quran, Sunnah, and other Islamic texts (Al Sayed, 2006). The Islamic education curriculum is characterized by a holistic approach in which the objective is to strengthen students' sense of connection to Islam, instill a sense of responsibility toward their communities as productive citizens, and develop critical thinking skills to enable them to cope with the rapid changes occurring in the current globalized era. In addition, "[l]ike other curricula, [the] Islamic education curriculum consists of general outputs of content, activities, goals, and reform. Each element has a function, reciprocal relationship with and influence on other elements" (Al Myasra, 2010, p. 467).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the existing literature, there are some studies that were related to private education in general; however, the concept of religious identity, especially Islamic identity, has not been highlighted or appropriately addressed. In the literature, foreign schools are often linked to what is known as cultural identity. This absence of studies that address the issue of Islamic identities among private foreign school students was the main incentive for this study, as Kuwait is a Muslim country and its constitution states that Islam is a major source in legislations.

A comparative study by Al Duwailah (2002) aimed to identify the differences among students in foreign private and public schools in terms of religious, social, and cultural values using a sample of 1,305 male and female students. The findings showed a marked and consistent

increase in the number of students enrolled in foreign schools and addressed the significant impact of religious values on students in public schools, compared with the cultural values of those receiving a foreign education. Furthermore, their results showed that females were more aware of religious aspects than males.

Abd El Nabi (2002) explored Islamic identity from the perspective of contemporary challenges and demonstrated the role of culture in instilling and preserving Islamic identity. He administered a questionnaire to identify the educational requirements needed to strengthen it. The results showed that Islamic identity faces many challenges in the modern era, most importantly due to globalization. The study demonstrated the inability of Islamic curricula to enhance Islamic identity. Findings reveal the urgent need to ensure that curricula, especially in the subject of Islamic education, support the consolidation of Islamic identity.

Alghorani (2003) examined the relations between Islamic identity, acculturation, and adjustment among Muslim students in Islamic schools in Chicago suburbs. The sample consisted of 167 Muslim students, both male and female, who were enrolled in Islamic high schools (10th, 11th, and 12th grades), and originated from either the Arabs, South and East Asians, or Others. Four measures were used in this study, related to Islamic identity, Islamic knowledge, acculturation, and self-adjustment. Results indicated that Islamic identity positively associated with Islamic knowledge, practices, and personal adjustment, and correlated negatively with acculturation.

Al Azmi (2004) studied the religious values of students in both private and public schools. The study examined a sample of 558 male and female students in a secondary school to examine their Islamic values. The findings showed that public school students displayed more Islamic and social values, such as justice and equity, than students receiving a foreign education. They concluded that in terms of Islamic values, the gap between students in public and foreign schools widens as they move on to higher grades.

Leirvik (2004) considered religious and national identities and how they are addressed by Muslim countries' educational systems. He described the phenomenon of religious education in foreign schools in Muslim countries and examined Islamic education books in Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Jordan, and Indonesia. He found that politics played a major role in influencing religious education and concluded that Islamic education curricula could accommodate relevant changes occurring in the current era of globalization.

Merry (2005) investigated Muslim parents' preference for Islamic schools in foreign countries through interviews with Muslim and non-Muslim teachers and parents from Belgium and the Netherlands. Merry found that most



Muslim parents believed that Islam involves cultural belonging and societal values; thus, it is highly important to take pride in belonging to the faith, and schools should understand their role in enhancing students' religious identity.

Bertram-Troost, Roos, and Miedema (2006) explored the role of schools in shaping adolescents' religious identities. A questionnaire survey and interviews were conducted of middle and high school students in four Christian Danish schools to determine the schools' role in influencing students' religious identities. Their findings showed that students' religious identities were related to environmental background, family, and cultural heritage, as well as parents' impact on students regarding their degree of religious commitment. The study found that the schools' role in, and effect on, students' religious commitment was virtually non-existent.

Al Shehri (2008) examined the role of secondary school teachers in facing cultural challenges in a globalized era. Their study highlighted the role of teachers in preserving students' Islamic identities, determining how to address globalization and its criteria in coping with it cautiously, and ensuring the enhancement of students' Islamic identities. Their results showed that the teachers' role in the cultural dimension of addressing globalization challenges was moderate, whereas their contributions to the moral dimension were substantial.

Chaudhury and Miller (2008) explored the formation process of religious identity among Bangladeshi-American Muslim adolescents. The study used a grounded theory approach by utilizing semi-structured interviews with sixteen participants. The study concluded that two different kinds of religious identity formations occur among the respondents based on their cultural and generational differences. Several factors affected the construction of religious identities, such as exposure to alternative belief systems, and understanding incentives for specific practices among followers. The study also found that religious identity formation is an evolving and continuous process wherein individuals develop and grow according to their religious trajectory.

Al Qady (2008) addressed the problem of cultural globalization and presented a proposal to enhance the role of teachers in reinforcing cultural identity. The principal suggestions were to provide programs that strengthen the role of religious education and Islamic civilization for conserving students' cultural identity.

Avest, Bakker, and Miedema (2009) examined how identity is shaped through students' narratives of their identity's development. The 374 participants included students, teachers, parents, and school supervisors. The study also explored Islamic and Christian teachers' influence on students. Findings revealed that teachers' behaviors have a deep impact on students' identities and that Muslim teachers link values and morals to the Quran and Sunnah, according to the ways in which they practice

them. Furthermore, Muslim teachers relate their beliefs and practices to their relationship with Allah. The study demonstrated the impact of the educational setting on identity and showed that the relationships students build in the classroom with their classmates and teachers exert a significant influence on their identities.

Al Sayed (2011) conducted a comparative study on the working policies of the curricula of international schools in Egypt, Japan, and France. Findings revealed the absence of the Arabic language, religious education, and ethnic history in these schools. Al Sayed recommended that—according to the ways in which they practice them—owners of international schools should be obligated to teach Arabic and religious education curricula due to their significant role in supporting students' connection with the culture of the school's country of origin. Moreover, they should avoid giving preference to Western culture when there is a conflict with the host culture.

Although some studies have examined similar topics, no previous studies have examined the impact of foreign private school culture on students' Islamic identity in a Muslim country. For example, some investigations have examined Islamic or religious identity and schools' general impact on it. Avest et al. (2009) discussed the broader role of schools and teachers in forming students' religious identity. Bertram-Troost, Roos, and Miedema (2006) suggested that the key role in shaping and strengthening religious identity is played by the home, whereas the role of the school is weak or even non-existent.

This study aims to demonstrate the Islamic education curriculum's role in promoting Islamic identity formation among students in foreign private high schools in a Muslim country by investigating its effect on Islamic identity in foreign schools.

#### A. *Research Problem*

Identity formation is a complex process related to various social, psychological factors, religious, political beliefs, social relationships, as well as education. It is important to investigate the impact of the Islamic education curriculum in preserving students' Islamic identity within foreign school environments, with the consideration that Islamic education is a compulsory subject required by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education in both the private and public sectors. Furthermore, it is essential to explore foreign private schools' environments, which are typically dominated by Western cultural values (mostly American), which can influence the formation and construction of students' Islamic identity to some extent.

Parents of students attending such schools have expressed to the researcher in several informal conversations during school visits their uncertainty about marginalizing the role of Islamic education. Al Misbah,



Jasem the senior Islamic education supervisor at the Kuwaiti Ministry of education of education at Kuwait, stated in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper Al Rai, "I worked with private foreign schools for 14 years and found [some controversial ideas in] many American and British books" (Al Rai, 2016, August 28).

Such a concern is the main factor motivating the present investigation of the role of Islamic education in enforcing Islamic identities among Muslim students in foreign private schools in Kuwait. The questions that arise include how students cope with a Western educational context while preserving their Islamic identities and does Islamic education play a central or marginal role in preserving their Islamic identities in such a context.

The main objectives of this study are to understand the effect of foreign private school culture on Muslim students' religious identities and to identify the role of the Islamic education curriculum in promoting Islamic identity among foreign private school students in Kuwait.

### B. Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated in this study:

1. To what extent are Muslim students enrolled in foreign schools in Kuwait aware of their Islamic identity?
2. What is, from the students' perspectives, the Islamic education curriculum's role in promoting Islamic identity in the Western educational context of foreign schools?
3. Are there statistically significant differences among the targeted sample considering the variables (i.e., gender, grade, and age)?

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire was designed by reviewing the previous literature and used to identify the Islamic education curriculum's role and its impact on promoting Islamic identity from the perspectives of high school students in foreign schools in Kuwait.

### A. Population and Sample

A total of 268 Muslim students (182 male and 86 female) in Grades 9–12 attending three different American private high schools in Kuwait participated in this study. Table I shows the distribution of the individuals in the sample.

TABLE I. DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY SAMPLE

Variable		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	182	67.91%
	Female	86	32.09%
	Total	268	100%
Age	13–14	33	12.31%
	15–16	46	17.16%
	16–17	97	36.19%
	17+	92	34.33%
	Total	286	100%
Grade	9 <sup>th</sup>	52	19.40%
	10 <sup>th</sup>	22	8.21%
	11 <sup>th</sup>	86	32.09%
	12 <sup>th</sup>	108	40.30%
	Total	268	100%

### B. Research Instruments

A questionnaire with two main sections was prepared. The first section included 24 items related to the students' sense of Islamic identity. The second comprised 23 items related to students' perspectives regarding Islamic education curriculum's role in promoting Islamic identity in the Western educational context of foreign schools. The questionnaire used a 3-point Likert scale with responses of "agree," "don't know," and "disagree."

### C. Validity and Reliability

The 47-item questionnaire was presented to a group of arbitrators who specialize in curricula and teaching methods and was modified according to their suggestions. The agreement and consensus of the arbitrators was considered a clear statement of the questionnaire's validity and the reliability of its content. The calculation for the coefficient to measure the validity of the research instrument was verified using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26). The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 25 males and females in grades 9th–12th. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.92, indicating that the reliability of the questionnaire was very high. The reliability coefficients for the questionnaire sections were also calculated and are presented in Table II.



TABLE II. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY COEFFICIENTS FOR THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Sections	Number of Items	Validity Coefficient
First section	24	0.79
Second section	23	0.93
Entire questionnaire	48	0.92

It is evident from Table II that both sections of the questionnaire are statistically stable with validity coefficients ranging from 0.79 to 0.93. Hence, the questionnaire can be generalized and applied to the main study sample.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the research questions, the questionnaire responses were gathered and statistically processed using SPSS by extracting the repetitions, percentages, arithmetic averages, and standard deviations of each item on the questionnaire. Further, the significance of the differences between the responses of the participants were determined according to the study variables (i.e., gender, age, and grade).

The data showed the highest rate of agreement to be for statements such as I am proud to be Muslim. This reflects students' perceptions of Islam, as well as the importance of having a sense of belonging to the Muslim community and pride in their faith. Merry (2005) confirmed that a school's role is to reinforce students' sense of pride and belonging to their religious community in addition to strengthening their identity. The results of studies by Avest et al. (2009) and Azmi et al. (2020) coincide with this result that teachers' values and behaviors, and their teaching practices have a strong effect on strengthening and cultivating students' identity formation. The questionnaire item with the second highest agreement rate was The Prophet Muhammad is an exemplary model for every time and place. This reflects the participants' awareness of the Prophet Mohammad's importance as a role model. This awareness is positively reflected in students' practices and behavior, as per the tenets of Islam, and their implementation of the Prophet's teachings and traditions. The foundation of Islamic studies is grounded in the two main core sources represented in the Quran and the Hadith. Islamic knowledge plays a significant positive role in enhancing students' Islamic identity. Obtaining Islamic knowledge is considered an obligation for Muslims to interrelate all aspects of their lives, and to become capable of making decisions from the perspective of their religion (Alghorani, 2003).

The lowest rate of agreement was for the item, I am missing religious role models in my life; students indicated that they were fully convinced of the importance of religious role models in foreign schools, and the absence within the Western cultural milieu of such schools is a serious matter. Avest et al. (2009) verified this by showing that teachers' behavior has a great impact

on students' identity, and simultaneously shows that an Islamic education curriculum including the teachers practices and the introduced content had a vital role in illuminating ideal role models students are encouraged to be inspired by. It can be interpreted that Islamic education teachers played an important role in implanting students' Islamic identity (Azmi et al., 2020).

Table III illustrates the differences between the average responses of the study sample to the first section (i.e., awareness of Islamic identity and a sense of belonging to the Muslim community) according to gender. These differences in the arithmetic average for males and females may be because males are more perceptive and aware of Islamic identity than females. This outcome is inconsistent with the findings of Al Duwailah (2000) and Alghorani (2003), who found that clarity on religious values was higher among female students than among male students, indicating that female students are superior to male students when it comes to Islamic knowledge, which accordingly reflects positively on strengthening their Islamic identity. This difference indicates that a deeper investigation and thorough analysis is necessary of Islamic sense of belonging among male and female private foreign high school students.

TABLE III. THE PERSPECTIVE OF FOREIGN STUDENTS ON ISLAMIC IDENTITY ACCORDING TO GENDER VARIABLE

Gender	Number	Arithmetic Average	Standard Deviation	Value (t)	Degrees of Freedom (DF)	Level of Significance
Male	182	2.67	0.212	4.405	266	0
Female	86	2.54	0.279			

Table IV presents the results of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of participants' responses to the first section according to age. There were no significant differences at the 0.05 level between the averages of the research sample for the first section according to age. The calculated F value was 1.511 and its statistical significance was 0.210, indicating agreement within the sample regarding this section.



TABLE IV. RESULTS OF THE ONE-WAY ANOVA OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO THE FIRST SECTION ACCORDING TO AGE

Age	Number	Arithmetic Average	Standard Deviation	Source of Disparity	Total Squares	Degrees of Freedom (DF)	Average Squares	Value (F)	Level of Significance
13-14	33	2.57	0.245	Among groups	0.267	3	0.0890	0.0590	0.0
15-16	46	2.64	0.197			264			
16-17	97	2.61	0.269	Within groups	15.566	264			
17+	92	2.66	0.233	Total	15.833	267			
Total	268	2.63	0.244					0.5111	0.21

Table V shows the results of the one-way ANOVA comparing the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the sample's responses for the first section according to grade. No statistically significant differences were found at the significance level of 0.05 between the averages of the research sample for the first section according to grade.

The calculated F value and its statistical significance indicate the agreement of the sample regarding this section. There were no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between the averages of the sample's individuals for the first section according to gender, and no differences between the sample's individuals for this section according to age or grade.

TABLE V. RESULTS OF THE ONE-WAY ANOVA COMPARING THE ARITHMETIC AVERAGES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO THE FIRST SECTION ACCORDING TO GRADE

Grade	Number	Arithmetic Average	Standard Deviation	Source of Disparity	Total Squares	Degrees of Freedom (DF)	Average Squares	Value (F)	Level of Significance
9	52	2.59	0.247	Among groups	0.3890	3	0.13	0.2152	0.09
10	22	2.64	0.143			264			
11	86	2.60	0.278	Within groups	15.444	264			
12	108	2.67	0.224	Total	15.833	267			
Total	268	2.63	0.244				0.059		

Next, the results for the second section (What is, from the students' perspectives, the Islamic education curriculum's role in promoting Islamic identity in the Western educational context of foreign schools?)

Results revealed that the highest level of agreement was for item 13, Islamic education addresses religious occasions and celebrations. However, such responses raise questions about whether this is the true and essential role of Islamic education because this restricts it to religious occasions. Islamic education plays a preventive and curative role in encountering and eliminating religious challenges; it also depends on creedal, ethical, social, economic, and realistic principles that individuals

implement and practice, and not merely on theoretical or formalist beliefs (Al Harthy, 2015). Moreover, exposure to religious occasions enables students to internalize their Islamic identity, which can contribute to their religious identity formation (Wang, 2012).

Item 8, Islamic education emphasizes the rights and duties of Muslims and non-Muslims, received the second highest level of agreement. This reflects students' respect for their religion, which underscores the rights and duties of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Al Adouly and Wazi (2004) similarly stressed the need to prepare students to undertake future responsibilities and to increase their



awareness of human rights to preserve, defend, and protect them. Islamic education instructors hold significant responsibility in proactively providing students with effective and constructive feedback to accomplish meaningful and effective teaching. Teachers are required to utilize reliable and meaningful practices, instruction strategies, and constructivist feedback to ensure the formation of their students' Islamic identity (Bertram-Troost, de Roos, & Miedema, 2007).

Item 2, Islamic education does not suit the age we are living in, received the lowest level of agreement. It is important to pay attention to this response and to identify its causes by reviewing the current curricula of Islamic education in accordance with the openness of this age and commensurate with learners and different learning styles. Polaris and Ferfar (2010) noted the importance of harmonizing existing cultural and modernist concepts. They suggested the need to renew ways of thinking and develop a balance between them, without prejudice toward credal constants such as monotheism, while preserving the characteristics of Muslim thought in curricula—especially in Islamic education—to eliminate any potential conflicts.

Table VI displays the results for the second section according to gender (males were at the first level, while females were at the second level). No statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between the averages of the sample were found.

TABLE VI. RESULTS OF AN INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST ASSESSING THE DIFFERENCES AMONG PARTICIPANTS REGARDING THE ROLE OF THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN PROMOTING AWARENESS OF ISLAMIC IDENTITY AND A SENSE OF BELONGING TO THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY.

Gender	Number	Arithmetic Average	Standard Deviation	Value (t)	Degrees of Freedom (DF)	Level of Significance
Male	182	2.54	0.407	0.137	266	0.89
Female	86	2.53	0.379			

Table VII presents the averages of the participants for the second section according to age. The calculated F value and its statistical significance indicate disagreement among the participants regarding this section. To determine the statistical significance, a least significant difference (LSD) test was used.

TABLE VII. RESULTS OF THE ONE-WAY ANOVA FOR COMPARING THE ARITHMETIC AVERAGES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE RESPONSES OF THE STUDY SAMPLE INDIVIDUALS THE ROLE OF THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM PROMOTING THE AWARENESS OF THE ISLAMIC IDENTITY AND SENSE OF BELONGING WITHIN WESTERN CULTURAL OF FOREIGN TO THE AGE VARIABLE

Age	Number	Arithmetic Average	Standard Deviation	Source of Disparity	Total Squares	Degrees of Freedom (DF)	Average Squares	Value (F)	Level of Significance
13–14	33	2.53	0.304	Among groups	1.307	3264	0.4360	0.8232	0.04
15–16	46	2.68	0.267						
16–17	97	2.51	0.457	Within groups	40.750	264			
17+	92	2.48	0.400	Total	42.057	267			
Total	268	2.53	0.397				0.1540		

Table 8 shows the participants' responses to the second section according to age (15th–16th, 16th–17th), with statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level. This may be because these age groups are more perceptive of Islamic education's role in preserving students' Islamic identity in foreign schools, compared with those in other age groups. This finding is consistent with the results of Al Azmi's study (2004), which indicated that the religious values of students in foreign schools decreased as they moved on to the higher grades.

TABLE VIII. RESULTS OF THE LSD TEST SHOWING THE DIFFERENCES IN PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES REGARDING THE ROLE OF THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN PROMOTING ISLAMIC IDENTITY AND A SENSE OF BELONGING TO THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY.

I	J	Average Differences (I–J)	Level of Significance
15–16	16–17	0.16923*0	0.02
	17+	0.20063*0	0.01



TABLE IX. RESULTS OF THE ONE-WAY ANOVA COMPARING PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES REGARDING THE ROLE OF THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN PROMOTING ISLAMIC IDENTITY IN THE WESTERN CULTURAL CONTEXT OF FOREIGN SCHOOLS ACCORDING TO GRADE.

Grade	Number	Arithmetic Average	Standard Deviation	Source of Disparity	Total Squares	Degrees of Freedom (DF)	Average Squares	Value (F)	Level of Significance
9	52	2.59	0.326	Among groups	0.985	3	0.3280	0.1102	0.1
10	22	2.69	0.145						
11	86	2.52	0.444	Within groups	41.072	264			
12	108	2.48	0.415	Total	42.057	267	0.1560		
Total	268	2.53	0.397						

Table IX shows the differences in the participants' responses to the second section according to grade, with no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 significance level. The calculated F value and its statistical significance indicate the agreement of the participants regarding this section.

As presented in Table IX, 10th-grade students' responses were the highest, while the 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students were second and the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students last. There were no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level of significance between the averages of the participants for the second section, and no differences between the study sample individuals for this section according to grade.

## CONCLUSION

The results of our analyses revealed that students in foreign schools in Kuwait feel a sense of pride in and belonging to the Muslim community. If schools succeed in becoming safe havens for students, they can promote their sense of belonging and provide them with the freedom to express their religious faith and accordingly shape and strengthen their identity formation. Hence, the educational system should bridge any gaps that may weaken religious identity, especially the effects of globalization and social media, and it should encourage the youth to connect with their Islamic identity. The Islamic education curriculum must play a vital role in promoting open dialogue with students on Islamic values such as tolerance, amnesty, and acceptance of others while preserving their faith. This will help to further empower students' sense of belonging to the Muslim community and to preserve their Islamic identity.

The complexity of the Islamic identity formation is clear, which requires collaborative efforts from both teachers, school administrations, parents, and even

religious scholars to enable and guide the formation of Islamic identity (Azmi et al., 2020).

Accordingly, schools need to reach out to parents, who have a significant influence in shaping students' Islamic identity, and Islamic teachers to collaboratively nurture and promote students' sense of belongingness and empower their sense of Islamic identity within the foreign schooling environment (Wang, 2012).

Alghorani (2003) reported that Islamic identity can decrease with the years spent at school, and this needs to be investigated. This study explored the role of the Islamic education curriculum on supporting and promoting high school students' sense of Islamic identity. Accordingly, further investigations toward younger students are required to comprehend their formation of Islamic identity in foreign schools in Muslim countries. Addressing the significance of education's role in identity formation in general and the role of Islamic education curriculum in particular requires a transformation in Islamic education teaching strategies. Most importantly, a transformation in teachers' preparation for foreign schools in Muslim countries is essential. This call for fundamental change emerges from students' statements that Islamic education is not suitable for the age we are living in and we need further analysis of the contents of Islamic education curricula. It is important to understand the causes underlying this belief by reviewing the current curricula in relation to modern times and reforming them in a way that considers students' growth and learning styles. It is necessary to establish a balance between traditional and modern concepts, as well as between technological development and social variables, and to consolidate the link between the ideas and methodology



proposed by Islamic education curricula. This, in turn, must keep pace with modern times, without prejudice toward doctrinal tradition.

Bertram-Troost, de Roos, and Miedema (2007) have found that the school community also plays a vital role in providing an atmosphere to support even uncertain students, and be open to their arguments, and even doubts. Such evolution can be accomplished by recruiting inspiring and qualified Islamic teachers who thoroughly understand the foreign environment of such schools and are able to spiritually inspire students while being role models to nurture their Islamic values and morals. Wang (2012) found that teachers have the potential to influence the formation of students' religious identity with early and continuous exposure to religious instruction.

It is imperative to highlight the importance of the Islamic education curriculum in foreign schools by activating its role not only in classrooms, but also by extending its influence through awareness seminars for students. Students' activities should be encouraged to revive their role in representing Islamic identity in a more visible and realistic way that reflects pride in their faith and their belonging to the Muslim community.

Islamic education teachers are obligated to introduce Islam as a comprehensive way of life that is not limited to curriculum and content. Through the use of Islamic education for supporting Islamic identity, they offer students wider perspectives and meaning that create a sense of belonging with an Islamic identity, as shown by Milligan (2003).

Moreover, enhancing values and ethics—not only is resitrected to Islamic education curriculum, but in all curricula and courses—through coordination between teachers of Islamic education and teachers of other subjects, to promote a sense of Islamic identity in the Western cultural context of foreign schools. The development of role models for students and emphasis on the curriculum's role are not limited to academic achievement and tests; such anticipated growth among learners aslo involves enhancing the essential role of Islamic education (i.e., reinforcing religious affiliation, as well as values and morals). Students should be encouraged to develop critical thinking skills by ensuring that teachers are trained in a way that is suitable for the globalized era, moving from traditional religious teaching methods and strategies to innovative modernist discourse that is able to cope with the transformation while simultaneously preserving students' Islamic identity and their sense of belonging.

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