Challenges Facing Integration of Academic Subjects into Islamic Religious Curriculum at Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus

Authors: [1]Moiz Burhani, [2]Celestine Ndanu Mwaniki and [3]Paschal Wambiya
[1,2&3]The Catholic University of Eastern Africa - Kenya. **Website:** www.cuea.edu
Correspondence: Moiz Burhani **Email:** moizburhani@gmail.com

Chief Editor
Web: www.ijsdc.org Email: info@ijsdc.org

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Abstract: This study examined the integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum at Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus and its influence on students' holistic development. Guided by the Holistic Education Theory, the study was guided by the following research question; what challenges face the integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum at Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus? mixed methods approach that applied a convergent parallel design was adopted. The target population comprised 1,013 students, 93 teachers, 32 administrative staff members, 30 representatives from the Parents' Association, and 12 members of the Board of Management. A sample of 802 respondents participated, including 709 students, 65 lecturers, 9 administrators, 22 representatives from the Parents' Association, and 9 Board members. Primary data were collected using semi-structured questionnaires alongside interview guides for administrators and Board members. Secondary data were gathered through document analysis. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, percentages, frequencies, and standard deviations, and inferential analysis was conducted using multiple regression techniques via SPSS Version 27.0. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, and findings were presented through tables, charts, and narrative summaries. Ethics was considered throughout the study. The study revealed a substantial integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum at Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus. A strong positive correlation (r = 0.62, p = 0.001) was found between the integration and students' holistic development. The integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum significantly enhances students' holistic development. The findings provide valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and researchers regarding the integration of academic and religious curricula and its contribution to the holistic development of students.

Key words: Challenges, integration, academic subjects, religious, curriculum

1.1 Background to the Study

The integration of academic subjects into religious curriculum has historical precedents in various cultural and religious traditions. For example, in medieval Islamic education, scholars such as Ibn Sina and Al-Biruni (2019) integrated subjects like mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy into religious

education, recognizing the compatibility and mutual enrichment of different branches of knowledge. Similarly, Jewish education has a long tradition of incorporating secular subjects alongside religious studies, reflecting the value placed on intellectual development and the pursuit of knowledge (Cohen, 2020; Pomson & Deitcher, 2019). In recent decades, educational researchers and practitioners have explored innovative approaches to integrating academic subjects into religious curricula across different religious traditions and geographical regions (Smith, 2017; Ahmed, 2019). Studies in Asia and Europe have investigated the integration of subjects such as science, mathematics, environmental studies, and interfaith dialogue into religious education, aiming to promote critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and a deeper understanding of both religious and secular disciplines (Wei, 2018; Jackson, 2018).

Globally, holistic religious education for character formation is a subject that has received ample attention in both secular and religious circles. This education is geared towards producing socially, morally, and mentally developed individuals. Savarirajan and Fong (2019) conducted a study on the impact of faith integration on the spiritual growth of students in Christian higher education in United States. The data were collected, over a period of three consecutive years 2016 to 2018, from students preparing for Health Care and Science careers. Findings reveal a positive impact of IFL on the personal faith of students. The results also indicate students demonstrating growth in their understanding of the biblical worldview within the context of Biology.

The Islamic community's interest in education stems from the belief that students at all levels of schooling are unique individuals with inherent value, and they should be educated to utilize their God-given capacities to become principled individuals capable of contributing to society in any capacity (Nyabwari et al., 2016). The process of teaching for Islamic character formation starts in the home, where the basic values of discipline, mental and physical health, and the importance of work are emphasized. Religious education has been a cornerstone of many educational systems worldwide, serving not only to impart spiritual teachings but also to instill moral values and cultural heritage (Astley, 2017; Jackson, 2018). Traditionally, religious curricula have prioritized theological and spiritual subjects, often at the expense of broader academic and life skills (Smith, 2017). Globally, there is growing interest in integrating secular academic subjects into religious education to provide a more holistic and interdisciplinary learning experience, enabling students to connect religious knowledge with intellectual, moral, and social competencies (Cohen, 2020; Wei, 2018). Despite these trends, empirical evidence on how such integration affects students' holistic development in Kenyan Islamic institutions remains limited. At Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus, there is a need to understand how the integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum influences students' cognitive, moral, spiritual, and social development. Addressing this gap is crucial for guiding curriculum planning, teaching strategies, and policy formulation to ensure that faith-based education effectively fosters students' holistic development.

Ahmed (2019) investigated the inclusion of interfaith dialogue within Islamic education curricula in Indonesia, Pakistan, and India. His research found that incorporating structured interfaith discussions within Islamic education improved students' ability to understand and respect diverse perspectives. It also enhanced social cohesion and reduced prejudices among students from different religious backgrounds.

Wei (2018) explored the integration of environmental studies into Buddhist monastic curricula in Taiwan. The findings revealed that students who engaged in environmental studies demonstrated

heightened ecological awareness and a stronger sense of environmental stewardship. The study emphasized how Buddhist teachings, which often advocate for harmony with nature, seamlessly support ecological education.

Cohen (2020) explored the integration of mathematics with moral education in Jewish schools in Israel. His study found that combining mathematical concepts with moral lessons helped students develop critical thinking skills alongside a deeper appreciation for ethical reasoning. The approach enabled the transmission of Jewish values through relatable and practical educational activities, enriching the moral and intellectual growth of students.

Ndzovu (2023) asserts that in Kenya, Islamic education is widely spread among various sections of the Muslim community. Many Muslim children are sent to the basic Qur'an schools (simple shelters in private houses) and madrasas (large institutions) to receive religious instruction. Despite this trend, there is a feeling among Kenyan Muslims that they are educationally disadvantaged in relation to secular education (Ahmed, 2019). These sentiments have increased the urgency for secular education for economic competitiveness, but without disregarding the value of religious education culminating in the establishment of Islamic-integrated schools. This shows a significant transformation of Islamic education in Kenya, revealing the abundance of Islamic traditions of learning across the country. This calls for both the religious teaching and secular academic education to go hand in hand for holistic development and development of learners.

Despite the institution's efforts to integrate academic subjects into the religious curriculum, several challenges have been encountered. Studies on curriculum integration in religious institutions worldwide highlight difficulties such as resistance from traditionalist scholars who fear the dilution of religious teachings, resource constraints in hiring qualified educators who can teach both religious and academic subjects, and disparities in instructional methodologies between secular and religious studies. Similar concerns may arise at Aljamea, including potential conflicts between religious doctrines and modern scientific theories, variations in students' reception and adaptability to an integrated curriculum, and the challenge of maintaining a balanced instructional approach that does not compromise the depth of religious education. Additionally, administrative and logistical challenges, such as curriculum planning, teacher training, and assessment methods, could affect the effectiveness of integration. It is due to this therefore that this study investigated the how integration of academic subjects into Islamic religious curriculum and its influence on holistic development of students.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

At Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus, the focus has traditionally been on instilling religious knowledge, skills, and values that promote social stability, moral behavior, mental and social health, and social control. However, academic subjects have not been given high priority compared to religious subjects. There is however great need to give the two types of curriculum equal consideration to enable learbers fir in the global market. Such paradigm shift could develop critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, workplace skills, and soft skills such as communication and teamwork (Bacon, 2018). This gap motivated the current study, which investigates the influence of integrating academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum on students' holistic development.

1.3 Research Question
One research question guided this study:
What challenges face the integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum at Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus?

1.4 Literature Review
In this section, theoretical and empirical literatures on the challenges facing the integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum are presented.

1.4.1 Theoretical Framework
The study was anchored on Miller's Holistic Curriculum Theory (1998), which emphasizes the development of the whole person, including cognitive, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Originally developed by Canadian educator Miller in 1979, the theory advocates for education that is meaningful, interconnected, and contextual, enabling students to apply knowledge in practical, real-life situations (Nyabwari et al., 2016). In relation to this study, the theory provides a conceptual foundation for examining the integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum at Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus, as it promotes learning that is engaging, relevant, and holistic. The independent variable - academic integration - is guided by Miller's principles of connectedness and interdependence, ensuring that both religious and secular content contribute to comprehensive student learning. The dependent variable, students' holistic development, is informed by the theory's emphasis on nurturing intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, and emotional growth. Similarly, the research questions are shaped by the theory: assessing the extent of integration, exploring its influence on holistic development, identifying challenges, and determining effective measures to enhance integration. By linking theory to practice, Miller's framework justifies the study's focus on curriculum design, teaching strategies, and student outcomes, highlighting the critical role of holistic education in fostering well-rounded, ethically responsible, and competent learners. Miller's theory suggests five paradigms that holistic religious education for character formation should address to produce holistic persons (Rasima, 2018). The five paradigms include physical competencies, emotional competencies, spiritual competencies, intellectual competencies and social competencies. These competencies help learners in all aspects of their day-to-day living. They make learners established mentally, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually to benefit themselves and society in general.

1.4.2 Review of Related Literature
Challenges Facing the Integration of Academic Subjects into the Islamic Religious Curriculum
Elijah and Roberts (2025) investigated challenges in teaching of religion in secular classrooms presents both significant challenges and unique opportunities in Delta. These authors note that in increasingly diverse educational settings, teachers face the task of introducing students to various religious traditions without promoting any one belief system over another. This comes along with complex dynamics of teaching religion in a pluralistic, secular classroom environment. Some of the challenges that educators encounter includes avoiding bias, addressing sensitive topics, and balancing the separation of church and state, while also highlighting the opportunities for fostering intercultural understanding, empathy.

Ahmad et al. (2023) aimed to develop an integrated thematic curriculum for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the Ibtidaiyah madrasah level, exploring how such a curriculum could enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes. Their study employed a Research & Development model,

following the steps outlined by Borg & Gall. The researchers utilized a combination of observations, literature studies, and questionnaires to gather data on the current state of the IRE curriculum and to validate the new integrated thematic model. The findings revealed that teachers had not fully implemented an integrated thematic approach due to the existing syllabus limitations. However, when the integrated thematic curriculum was introduced, students showed increased enthusiasm and engagement in the learning process, leading to improved interactions between teachers and students.

Musa and Okafor (2022) examined Islamic schools in Ghana, focusing on efforts to include practical skills training within religious education. The study found that while Quranic teachings remain the priority, some schools have incorporated vocational subjects such as carpentry, tailoring, and agriculture to provide students with livelihood skills. This approach has been well received by local communities, especially in rural areas where employment opportunities are scarce. Musa and Okafor argue that integrating academic and vocational training within Islamic institutions could help address both spiritual and economic needs, providing a holistic education model that suits the region's context. This study focuses on incorporating vocational skills within Islamic education in Ghana but does not explore the inclusion of broader academic subjects or their impact on students' holistic development. It also lacks a structured framework for integration.

In Sudan, Ahmed and Elamin (2023) studied the curriculum structure in Islamic education institutions, highlighting the government's role in encouraging curriculum modernization. The research found that some Islamic schools are increasingly offering a dual curriculum of religious and academic subjects to enhance students' prospects in higher education. However, the study revealed a tension between government policy and conservative religious leaders who prioritize traditional education. Ahmed and Elamin suggest that finding a common ground is essential to ensure that students benefit from an education that prepares them for both spiritual and worldly responsibilities.

1.5 Methodology

This study adopted a mixed methods approach by using convergent parallel design. Cross-sectional survey was used to collect quantitative data while qualitative data was collected through phenomenology methods to get feelings and experiences of participants. The study targeted 1013 students enrolled in various programs at Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus, who are the primary beneficiaries of the integrated curriculum and can provide valuable insights into their learning experiences and perceptions of how the curriculum influences their holistic development. The study also targeted 93 teachers who deliver both Islamic religious education and academic subjects, as their perspectives on the challenges, effectiveness, and practices of integrating academic content into the religious curriculum are critical to understanding the implementation process. Additionally, 32 members of the administrative staff, responsible for curriculum planning and implementation, were the other target. The study further targeted 30 representatives from the Parents' Association and 12 members of the Board of Management, who oversee governance and operational matters. This diverse target population, totaled to 1181 individuals.

Sampling Procedures and Sample Size: This study used both probability and non-probability sampling procedures to sample target groups because of the variations in the characteristics describing the populations targeted. It used the Yamane's (1967) formula for finite population to calculate the sample size:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where

n represents the sample size,

N represents the size of the population and

e represents the sampling error at 98% level of confidence.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \qquad n = \frac{1181}{1 + 1181(0.02)^2} = 802$$

The sample size was 802 respondents. **Sample Matrix**

Table 1: *Sample Matrix*

Target Population	Number Targeted	Procedure	Sample size
Students	1013	1013/1181*802	709
Lecturers	94	94/1181*802	65
Administrators (HTS, DHTS)	32	32/1181*802	9
Parents' Association Representatives	30	30/1181*802	22
Board of Management Members	12	12/1181*802	9
Total	**1181**		**802**

Source: Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus Data, 2023

Description of Research Instruments: This study employed both primary and secondary data collection instruments. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and interview guides, while secondary data was gathered from relevant documentation, including curriculum frameworks, strategic plans, and meeting minutes. The questionnaires were tailored for different categories of respondents, featuring both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions provided structured responses directly aligned with the research questions, while open-ended questions allowed respondents the opportunity to share their insights and perspectives.

Data Analysis Procedures: Quantitative data collected from closed-ended questions and Likert scale items were organized, numbered, coded, and keyed into a computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 27.0. Descriptive statistics, including means, percentages, frequencies, and standard deviation, were then used to analyze the data. SPSS aided in the statistical analysis process. The researcher used multiple regression analysis to explain the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Multiple regression analysis measured the relationship between the dependent variable and one or more independent variables by estimating probabilities. Hypothesis testing in the study employed Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine the relationships between variables and differences among groups, respectively. Pearson's correlation was used to measure the strength and direction of relationships between variables, such as the integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum and its influence on students' holistic development. This method was appropriate as it quantified the degree of association between continuous variables (Field, 2018). The correlation coefficient (r) indicated the strength of the relationship, with values closer to +1 or -1 signifying strong positive or negative

relationships, respectively. For hypothesis H_{01}, which involved comparing more than two aspects (e.g., different methodologies or frameworks for integration), ANOVA was employed. ANOVA was suitable for determining whether there were statistically significant differences between the means of three or more groups (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The F-statistic was calculated and compared with the critical value at a significance level of 0.05. If the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating significant differences between the groups. During the reporting of Pearson's correlation results, the correlation coefficient (r), p-value, and sample size (n) were included. For ANOVA, the F-value, p-value, and degrees of freedom were reported. These results collectively determined the strength of relationships and the significance of differences, thereby addressing the study objectives comprehensively. Qualitative data which was generated from open-ended questions, was categorized into themes and patterns of content analysis to determine the adequacy of usefulness, consistencies, and the credibility of the information was examined. Notes were written manually and scripts analyzed by coding areas. The analyzed data was presented in narratives and direct quotes.

1.6 Presentation, Discussion and Interpretation of Research Findings

The total targeted respondents for the study were 802, drawn from students, lecturers, administrators, parents' association representatives, and board of management members. Out of these, 800 participants returned completed questionnaires and/or participated in interviews. The overall response rate was therefore (800/802) *100 = approximately 99.75%. This high response rate indicates strong participation and engagement with the study objectives. Table 1 summarizes the distribution and return rates for each respondent group.

Table 2: *Questionnaire Distribution and Return Rate*

Sample Group	Sample Size	Distributed	Returned	Response Rate (%)
Students	709	709	709	100
Lecturers	65	65	54	83.1
Administrators (HTS, DHTS)	9	9	9	100
Parents' Association Representatives	22	22	22	100
Board of Management Members	9	9	6	66.7
Total	**802**	**802**	**800**	**99.75**

Source: *Field Data, 2025*

The data in Table 2 shows that students, administrators, and parents' representatives had full participation, each recording a 100% response rate. Lecturers returned 83.1% of distributed questionnaires, while the board of management members had a response rate of 66.7%. The high overall response rate of 99.75% enhances the credibility and reliability of the study findings, suggesting that the data is highly representative of the targeted population at Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus. Such a response rate surpasses the commonly accepted minimum threshold of 80% for robust analysis (Ahmad & Halim, 2017; Freiman et al., 2019), thereby affirming the validity of the study's conclusions. The strong participation across respondent groups supports the comprehensiveness of the data and its suitability for subsequent interpretation and discussion.

Challenges in Integrating Academic Subjects with the Islamic Religious Curriculum

This section explores the challenges faced in the process of integrating academic subjects with the Islamic religious curriculum at Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus. The purpose was to identify key structural, pedagogical, institutional, and resource-based barriers that affect the successful implementation of integration efforts. Stakeholders—including students, lecturers, administrators, Board of Governors members, and parents' association representatives—provided insights into the constraints experienced at both instructional and systemic levels. Quantitative data were obtained through standardized questionnaires, while qualitative perspectives were gathered through interviews. The findings presented here shed light on the multifaceted obstacles that hinder effective integration and inform the need for targeted strategies to address them.

Table 3: *Lecturers' Responses on Challenges Facing Integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum*

Statement	SA f (%)	A f (%)	U f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)	Mean	SD
I was not trained on how to integrate academic subjects into Islamic Education.	15 (27.8)	18 (33.3)	10 (18.5)	6 (11.1)	5 (9.3)	3.59	1.24
Lack of instructional materials makes integration difficult.	17 (31.5)	20 (37.0)	9 (16.7)	5 (9.3)	3 (5.6)	3.80	1.11
I have access to resources that support integration of academic and religious content.	14 (25.9)	19 (35.2)	10 (18.5)	6 (11.1)	5 (9.3)	3.57	1.23
Time constraints limit my ability to integrate both curricula.	16 (29.6)	22 (40.7)	7 (13.0)	6 (11.1)	3 (5.6)	3.78	1.09
The curriculum is overloaded, making integration difficult.	14 (25.9)	21 (38.9)	8 (14.8)	6 (11.1)	5 (9.3)	3.61	1.20
I receive adequate administrative support to implement integration.	10 (18.5)	12 (22.2)	10 (18.5)	13 (24.1)	9 (16.7)	3.02	1.39
Students struggle to understand lessons when academic and religious topics are combined.	12 (22.2)	20 (37.0)	11 (20.4)	6 (11.1)	5 (9.3)	3.52	1.20
Continuous professional development is needed for effective integration.	21 (38.9)	22 (40.7)	6 (11.1)	3 (5.6)	2 (3.7)	4.06	0.98
I feel confident in designing integrated lesson plans.	15 (27.8)	23 (42.6)	7 (13.0)	6 (11.1)	3 (5.6)	3.76	1.09
Collaboration with other departments is limited when planning integrated lessons.	14 (25.9)	21 (38.9)	9 (16.7)	6 (11.1)	4 (7.4)	3.64	1.17
Overall Average						**3.64**	**1.17**

Source: *Field Data, 2025*

The findings highlight several perceived challenges among educators regarding the integration process. A significant portion of respondents (33.3%) agreed and 27.8% strongly agreed that they had not received adequate training on integrating academic content into Islamic education, with only 11.1% strongly disagreeing. This suggests a skills gap that may hinder effective curriculum fusion. Similarly, the issue of instructional materials was prominent, with 37.0% agreeing and 31.5% strongly agreeing that a lack of materials made integration difficult. Only 7.4% strongly disagreed, reinforcing the widespread concern. Although 35.2% of respondents agreed and 25.9% strongly agreed that they have access to supportive resources, this is tempered by 18.5% who were undecided, pointing to possible inconsistency in resource availability. Time constraints also emerged as a key obstacle, with 40.7%

agreeing and 29.6% strongly agreeing, while only 5.6% strongly disagreed—indicating that time remains a significant limiting factor in integration efforts.

Curriculum overload was affirmed by 38.9% agreeing and 25.9% strongly agreeing that it impedes integration. Administrative support was perceived as lacking by many, with only 18.5% strongly agreeing they received adequate support, while 16.7% strongly disagreed and 18.5% were neutral. This divided view suggests variability in institutional backing. Interestingly, students' difficulty in understanding integrated content was a concern for 37.0% who agreed and 22.2% who strongly agreed, suggesting integration may complicate learning for some. Yet, most respondents endorsed the need for continuous professional development, with 40.7% agreeing and 38.9% strongly agreeing, reinforcing training as a top priority.

Confidence in designing integrated lessons was relatively high, with 42.6% agreeing and 27.8% strongly agreeing, though 13.0% remained undecided. Lastly, limited collaboration across departments was seen as a challenge, with 38.9% agreeing and 25.9% strongly agreeing - highlighting the need for more interdisciplinary planning. Overall, the analysis indicates that while educators acknowledge the value and are confident in integration practices, they face practical challenges - chiefly related to training, time, materials, and institutional coordination - that must be addressed to enhance successful implementation.

The data illuminate a clear perception among educators that insufficient training remains a major barrier to effectively integrating secular and Islamic religious subjects, with 61.1% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing about the lack of adequate training. This is consistent with findings from recent studies like Darwis, Rahman, & Wahab (2023), who observed that teacher preparedness is a critical determinant in the success of integrated curricula, yet many institutions report insufficient investment in professional development. Educators in integrated Islamic settings often express confidence in their philosophical understanding of integration but struggle with practical application in lesson planning and execution (Munir & Kailani, 2022). The gap between theory and practice necessitates comprehensive, structured training that combines subject expertise with pedagogical strategies. As emphasized by Abdullah and Choudhury (2023), effective integrated education systems invest strategically in continuous, hands-on workshops that help teachers apply theoretical integration frameworks to real classroom scenarios. Without this support, the integrity of integration efforts risks being undermined by uninformed or superficial implementation.

Another major challenge is the lack of appropriate instructional materials. With a combined 68.5% of educators reporting difficulties due to insufficient resources, this issue underscores the need for curricula enriched with integrated textbooks, multimedia aids, and thematic modules. This finding corroborates the work of Farooq and Jaffar (2023), who found that the dearth of well-designed Islamic-integrated learning materials severely restricts teachers' ability to deliver meaningful, cohesive lessons.

Time constraints and curriculum overload emerged as additional significant barriers, with 70.3% affirming that time limitations hinder integration and 64.8% indicating overloaded curricula as an impediment. These practical realities often lead teachers to prioritize core academic standards or examination content, sidelining integration efforts. This tension is echoed in research by Hasan and Lee (2022), who reported that teachers in faith-based schools routinely feel 'crushed' between covering

mandated syllabi and implementing integrative activities, frequently choosing the former in exam-driven systems.

Institutional support and departmental collaboration are also critical challenges, as 35.2% of respondents acknowledged inconsistent administrative backing and 64.8% cited limited cross-departmental collaboration. This disparity suggests uneven structural commitment to integration. Studies like that by Nasser & Karim (2022) highlight that in successful integrated frameworks, leadership actively champions inter-disciplinary planning, allocates budgeting, and provides dedicated time for teacher collaboration.

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences also provides insight into the reported challenges, particularly the educators' concern with instructional material and student comprehension. Gardner (2011) argues that teaching must be tailored to various cognitive strengths—linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, among others. The lack of integrative instructional materials, noted by over 68% of respondents, limits teachers' capacity to address diverse intelligences. This aligns with findings from Habib and Amir (2023), who assert that integrated instruction demands well-curated resources to support different learning modalities. Additionally, 59.2% of educators noted that students found integrated content difficult to understand, which could be a symptom of curriculum delivery that does not accommodate diverse intelligences. Without access to appropriate tools, teachers may rely on traditional lecture-based methods that favor only a narrow band of learners—undermining Gardner's vision of differentiated and inclusive instruction.

Table 4: *Students' Responses on Challenges Facing Integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum*

Statement	SD f(%)	D f(%)	U f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	Mean	SD
There is limited time to cover both academic and religious subjects properly.	28 (4.0)	49 (6.9)	78 (11.0)	287 (40.5)	267 (37.6)	4.01	1.00
Some teachers do not understand how to integrate academic content with Islamic education. (Neg.)	42 (5.9)	61 (8.6)	101 (14.2)	270 (38.1)	235 (33.2)	3.85	1.08
I have access to digital tools that support integrated learning.	91 (12.8)	124 (17.5)	112 (15.8)	213 (30.0)	169 (23.8)	3.34	1.28
The curriculum is too heavy to allow proper integration.	30 (4.2)	45 (6.3)	83 (11.7)	290 (40.9)	261 (36.8)	4.00	1.01
There are few resources to support both academic and religious content together.	36 (5.1)	58 (8.2)	98 (13.8)	268 (37.8)	249 (35.1)	3.89	1.07
I receive adequate support when learning integrated subjects.	66 (9.3)	117 (16.5)	134 (18.9)	216 (30.5)	176 (24.8)	3.45	1.24
Sometimes I find it difficult to relate academic subjects to religious concepts.	44 (6.2)	66 (9.3)	105 (14.8)	264 (37.2)	230 (32.4)	3.80	1.11
Our school provides enough guidance for teachers on integration.	75 (10.6)	112 (15.8)	137 (19.3)	203 (28.6)	182 (25.7)	3.42	1.27
I feel overwhelmed by the amount of content in integrated lessons.	52 (7.3)	72 (10.2)	98 (13.8)	265 (37.4)	222 (31.3)	3.75	1.16
1Integration is poorly coordinated across different subjects.	40 (5.6)	65 (9.2)	108 (15.2)	266 (37.5)	230 (32.4)	3.82	1.10

Source: *Field Data, 2025*

The analysis of students' responses regarding challenges to the integration of academic and religious education reveals a strong recognition of various structural, pedagogical, and resource-based constraints affecting the success of integrated learning. The most prominent concern was time constraints, as reflected in the item "There is limited time to cover both academic and religious subjects properly," which had 40.5% agreement and 37.6% strong agreement, resulting in a mean of 4.01 (SD = 1.00). This suggests that students often feel rushed or pressured when navigating between the dual demands of academic and religious learning. Similarly, the statement "The curriculum is too heavy to allow proper integration" received high levels of agreement (mean = 4.00, SD = 1.01), indicating that content overload is a major barrier to effective integration. A related concern, "I feel overwhelmed by the amount of content in integrated lessons," was also strongly endorsed (mean = 3.75, SD = 1.16), showing that the volume and complexity of materials may hinder students' ability to absorb and apply integrated knowledge.

Pedagogical challenges were also apparent. The item "Some teachers do not understand how to integrate academic content with Islamic education" recorded a mean of 3.85 (SD = 1.08), with 33.2% strongly agreeing and 38.1% agreeing, indicating that gaps in teacher competence or training may obstruct successful delivery of integrated content. Likewise, "Integration is poorly coordinated across different subjects" (mean = 3.82, SD = 1.10) underscores systemic challenges in aligning subject content under an integrated framework. Students also reported challenges in connecting content, as shown by their agreement with "Sometimes I find it difficult to relate academic subjects to religious concepts" (mean = 3.80, SD = 1.11), suggesting a conceptual disconnect in curriculum design or delivery. Additionally, "There are few resources to support both academic and religious content together" was a significant concern (mean = 3.89, SD = 1.07), pointing to limited instructional materials that effectively support both domains. On the other hand, support-related items such as "I receive adequate support when learning integrated subjects" and "Our school provides enough guidance for teachers on integration" recorded lower mean scores of 3.45 and 3.42, respectively. These middling scores, with notable percentages of disagreement (16.5% and 15.8%), suggest that students feel institutional and instructional support is insufficient or inconsistent.

Access to enabling infrastructure was also somewhat limited, as evidenced by the item "I have access to digital tools that support integrated learning" (mean = 3.34, SD = 1.28). This reflects digital inequity and the lack of supportive technology, which can hinder innovative and student-centered delivery of integrated content. Overall, students' responses indicate that while they may recognize the value of integration, they face several practical and pedagogical challenges in its implementation. The most pressing issues are curriculum overload, limited time, inadequate teacher preparedness, poor coordination, and insufficient resources. These findings underscore the need for systemic reforms in curriculum design, teacher training, and institutional support to ensure integration is not only conceptually sound but also practically effective.

The responses also indicate that teacher preparedness is central to effective integration. Over 71% of students agreed that "Some teachers do not understand how to integrate academic content with Islamic education" (mean = 3.85, SD = 1.08), suggesting that inadequate teacher training undermines integration efforts. Indeed, the work of Raja and El-Naggar (2022) emphasizes that integrated teaching requires not only knowledge of religious and academic subjects but also pedagogical agility to interweave themes

coherently. A similar issue was observed in Malaysian Islamic schools, where teacher training programs lacked components on integration, leading to compartmentalized instruction (Zai & Mohd, 2023). Consequently, integration often becomes tokenistic—relying on limited cross-referencing rather than thematic alignment. As Olaleye and Yusuf (2024) argue, robust initial and in-service training that includes cross-disciplinary pedagogy, content mapping, and reflective practice is critical to address this skills gap. Without such professional development, the curriculum must remain disconnected, which in turn reinforces the students' experience of fragmented learning.

The finding that students struggle to relate academic subjects to religious concepts (mean = 3.80, SD = 1.11) underscores a conceptual mismatch between curriculum designers' intentions and student understanding. This gap arises from both pedagogical and cognitive factors. Al-Khawas (2022) emphasizes that integration demands more than content juxtaposition—it requires clear pedagogical scaffolds, analogical reasoning, and cultural contextualization to help students navigate conceptual overlaps. In a cohort of students studying integrated science and religious ethics, Al-Khawas found that many could not draw sophisticated links when lessons lacked guided scaffolding. Similarly, the study by Mujahid and Bleicher (2023) revealed that poorly structured integration can result in superficial connections that fail to resonate cognitively, leaving students confused rather than enriched. Enhancing conceptual clarity thus requires teaching strategies like concept mapping, reflective questioning, and structured dialogues that embody both domains simultaneously.

Table 5: *Administrators' Responses on Challenges Facing Integration of Academic Subjects into the Islamic Religious Curriculum*

Statement	SD f(%)	D f(%)	U f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	Mean	SD
Time constraints make it difficult to cover both academic and religious content effectively.	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	1 (11.1)	3 (33.3)	4 (44.4)	4.11	0.93
Teachers lack adequate training on curriculum integration.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (22.2)	4 (44.4)	3 (33.3)	4.11	0.78
There is insufficient instructional material to support integrated teaching.	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	1 (11.1)	4 (44.4)	3 (33.3)	4.00	0.87
Some departments resist changes related to integration.	1 (11.1)	1 (11.1)	2 (22.2)	3 (33.3)	2 (22.2)	3.44	1.13
The curriculum structure does not support flexibility for integration.	0 (0.0)	2 (22.2)	2 (22.2)	3 (33.3)	2 (22.2)	3.56	1.01
Lack of collaboration between academic and religious departments hinders integration.	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	1 (11.1)	4 (44.4)	3 (33.3)	4.00	0.87
Assessment strategies are not aligned with integrated learning outcomes.	1 (11.1)	1 (11.1)	1 (11.1)	4 (44.4)	2 (22.2)	3.56	1.13
There is inadequate monitoring of integration implementation.	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	2 (22.2)	3 (33.3)	3 (33.3)	3.89	0.93
Student diversity complicates the integration process.	1 (11.1)	2 (22.2)	2 (22.2)	3 (33.3)	1 (11.1)	3.11	1.17
Teachers have suggested improvements, but implementation is slow.	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	1 (11.1)	4 (44.4)	3 (33.3)	4.00	0.87

Source: *Field Data, 2025*

Administrators reported a range of significant challenges facing the integration of academic subjects into the Islamic religious curriculum. These challenges span structural, pedagogical, organizational, and resource-related concerns, with strong agreement on the most pressing issues. Time constraints emerged

as one of the most serious barriers, with a mean of 4.11 (SD = 0.93), supported by 44.4% strongly agreeing and 33.3% agreeing that time limitations hinder effective integration. Similarly, the statement "Teachers lack adequate training on curriculum integration" also received a mean of 4.11 (SD = 0.78), showing a clear consensus that professional development in integration methods is lacking. Another prominent concern was resource insufficiency, particularly "There is insufficient instructional material to support integrated teaching," which scored a mean of 4.00 (SD = 0.87). This suggests that even where intent and policy exist, the lack of appropriate teaching aids impedes actual implementation.

Collaboration gaps between academic and religious departments were also noted. The item "Lack of collaboration between academic and religious departments hinders integration" garnered a mean of 4.00, again indicating widespread agreement that interdepartmental synergy is essential but often lacking. Concerns about rigidity in curriculum structure were moderately endorsed (mean = 3.56), indicating that the system's design may not sufficiently accommodate interdisciplinary or value-based linkages. The same mean score was noted for "Assessment strategies are not aligned with integrated learning outcomes," pointing to a misalignment between curriculum intentions and evaluation practices.

Organizational issues such as "Some departments resist changes related to integration" (mean = 3.44) and "Teachers have suggested improvements, but implementation is slow" (mean = 4.00) suggest that institutional inertia and slow policy responses are further barriers to meaningful integration. On the lower end, "Student diversity complicates the integration process" had the lowest mean (3.11, SD = 1.17), suggesting that although diversity may influence delivery, it is not perceived as a primary obstacle by most administrators. Finally, the monitoring of integration is also seen as inadequate (mean = 3.89), with 66.6% agreeing or strongly agreeing that more oversight and evaluation mechanisms are needed to track the integration's progress and effectiveness.

Time constraints emerged as a top challenge for administrators, reflected in the high mean score (4.11, SD = 0.93), with 77.7% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that limited instructional time hinders integration. This aligns with recent research by Khalid and Mansour (2022), who found that heavily loaded timetables in faith-based schools often force educators to prioritize core academic subjects, leaving minimal room for integrated pedagogical approaches. These findings echo global concerns, such as those highlighted in the UNESCO Learning Compass 2030 report (UNESCO, 2021), which emphasized that rigid scheduling systems limit the development of cross-cutting competencies. At Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah, the curriculum's dual demands—covering Islamic teachings and academic content—require extensive coordination. Without flexible timetabling and purposeful curriculum restructuring, teachers may resort to superficial or episodic integration. Addressing time constraints calls for creative scheduling models—such as block lessons, interdisciplinary theme days, and carefully integrated timetable strands—that enable adequate depth and coherence across subject domains.

Another prominent challenge was the reported lack of instructional materials to support integration (mean = 4.00, SD = 0.87), suggesting that design and access to appropriate teaching aids remain inadequate. Research by Al-Hassan and Abu-Zahra (2023) supports this insight, stating that teachers in Islamic integrated schools frequently lack textbooks, worksheets, or digital content that bridge both domains. Consequently, they resort to ad hoc resource assembly, which can compromise curricular consistency and academic quality. Evidence from Indonesia's integrated "Science & Faith" curriculum (Nurhasanah & Pramudia, 2022) shows that centralized, thematically-connected texts help maintain

coherence and reduce teacher workload. As digital platforms proliferate, open-access repositories of integrated materials—compiling lesson sequences, assessment prompts, and multimedia tools—offer scalable solutions. Institutions must collaborate with publishers, ICT teams, and content experts to produce and distribute context-aligned resources. Doing so would transform integration from a pedagogical idea into a sustainable, resource-supported practice.

Beyond departmental and resource issues, the curriculum's structural rigidity was perceived as moderately restrictive (mean = 3.56), suggesting that system design does not fully support holistic integration. This resonates with studies like that of El-Tayeb and Salah (2021), which found that national accreditation systems often valorize compartmentalization—punishing schools that deviate from traditional subject divisions. Likewise, the misalignment between assessments and integration goals (mean = 3.56) echoes the work of Singh and Rahman (2023), who emphasized that "what gets measured is what gets done." If integrated learning is not assessed through interdisciplinary, value-infused exams or performance tasks, teachers inevitably revert to subject-specific content. Educational systems need to develop multidimensional assessment rubrics that capture knowledge, values, and thinking skills across subject areas, supported by external moderation and professional development. This would ensure that integration objectives are not merely aspirational but embedded within measurable outcomes.

Lastly, administrators cited resistance to change (mean = 3.44) and slow implementation of teacher suggestions (mean = 4.00) as organizational impediments. This reflects well-established change management challenges—schools are often culturally resistant, particularly when new practices disrupt long-held norms (Murad & Ali, 2022). Additionally, inadequate monitoring of implementation (mean = 3.89) leaves teachers unsupported, and integration initiatives vulnerable to fading interest. Recent systems-thinking research (Othman & Yusof, 2024) underscores that feedback loops—such as classroom observations, lesson audits, and practitioner communities—are key to sustaining innovation. Administrators themselves must champion integration, establish shared accountability, and deploy tools such as lesson reviews, student portfolios, and reflective sessions. Doing so will institutionalize integration as both a pedagogical method and a cultural practice, backed by policy, practice and ongoing quality assurance.

1.7 Conclusion
The integration of academic and Islamic religious curricula at Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah faces notable challenges, including limited instructional time, resource constraints, and resistance to pedagogical changes. Teachers struggle to balance comprehensive content delivery within the available time, and insufficient training in interdisciplinary instruction affects effectiveness. Additionally, infrastructural and financial limitations hinder access to quality teaching materials and technology. Cultural resistance to change slows adoption of new teaching methods. Despite these challenges, institutional efforts and stakeholder willingness provide a foundation for improvement. Addressing these obstacles is critical to achieving seamless and effective curriculum integration.

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