



## Religious tolerance in secondary Islamic Education textbooks in Kuwait

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### ABSTRACT

With widespread media coverage of religious ‘extremism’, there is a great deal of interest in how religious identities and principles of tolerance – or intolerance – are learned and manifested. The current study investigates the extent to which high school Islamic Education textbooks reflect Islamic religious tolerance, and how this topic presented. A content analysis for religious-tolerance topics was conducted in the Islamic Education textbooks in Kuwaiti high schools; the results show that tolerance is mentioned much more often than intolerance, but there is still room for improvement.

### KEYWORDS

Islamic education; religious tolerance; content analysis; curriculum; textbooks

### Introduction

Religions in general not only affect individual attitudes but also shape interpersonal relationships, which are important for social sustainability. The myriad challenges of modern multicultural Islamic societies have resulted in an assertion of the goals for Islamic Education (IE) and the importance of altering students’ values accordingly. Muslim educators are committed to encouraging students to reflect upon and develop upstanding personal values and manners regarding the coexistence of different religious and cultural groups, referring to values extracted from the Quran and Sunnah,<sup>1</sup> in IE (Yaakub 2009; UNESCO 2014). Moreover, building the fundamental Islamic faith should maintain the Muslim identity while ensuring that Islamic values serve as life anchors, setting the framework for relationships in the society (Halstead 2004).

In Kuwait, one goal of the Ministry of Education’s development plan for public schools is to create opportunities for youth to grow in light of Islamic values. Muslim students in both public and private schools study Islamic subjects as part of the core curriculum, in order to connect with Islamic disciplines and societal values (UNESCO International Bureau of Education 2011). Muslim students also learn the basic principles of other religions as part of the Islamic studies curriculum, but non-Muslim students are not obliged to take Islamic studies (Ministry of Education 2011).

The population of Kuwait is diverse in terms of national origin and religion; statistical reports on the Public Authority for Civil Information website show that in June 2017, Kuwaiti citizens comprised only 30% of the total. The majority of the population (74%) was Muslim, but 19% (including 267 Kuwaitis) identified themselves as Christians and 7% as other. Non-Muslim Kuwaitis have the same rights as Muslim citizens, based on Article 7 of the constitution, which states, ‘Justice, freedom and equality are the pillars of society; and cooperation and compassion are the firm link binding all citizens’ (Kuwait’s Constitution 1962). Non-Muslims have the freedom to worship and practice their beliefs, and the more than 800,000 Christian residents are served by churches and schools, which represent various denominations (Garcia 2017). Given the multicultural nature of the society, it is

important to enhance Islamic values within the IE curriculum to strengthen the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The rise of what is called religious ‘extremism’ has attracted growing global attention, especially as horrible terrorist incidents occur around the world. Kuwait has also been exposed to such activities by religious extremists who target innocent victims and threaten the civil society (US Department of State 2015). In fact, Islamic regulations emphasise several moral principles found in the Quran, such as the protection of human rights, freedom of religion, equality and equal opportunities for human rights in civil societies (Yeşilova 2010; Jad 2009).

Tolerance has been defined in many ways in the literature. Tobing (2013) defines it as ‘a response to a set of beliefs that are originally thought to be objectionable, with disapproval but without using force or coercion.’ (As cited in Potgieter, Van der Walt, and Wolhuter 2014, 2). In its ‘Declaration of Principles on Tolerance,’ the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states, ‘Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace’ (1995).

Thus, the continuous development of Kuwait’s curriculum standards involves cooperation among the Ministry of Education; the World Bank; and UNESCO, which acts as a consultant for educational development in national IE textbooks, focusing on the concepts of religious tolerance and civil coexistence (UNESCO 2014). According to the *National Report of Education for All in Kuwait until 2015*:

The project to promote and reinforce the positive values derived from Islamic Sharia (Islamic law)—especially the values and concepts of citizenship that are associated with democracy, freedom, the rule of law, a culture of tolerance, and accepting human rights and other rights—is based on the following policies:

- (1) Guiding the students towards positive ideas, while rejecting violence and extremism.
- (2) Making young people aware of the importance of volunteering.
- (3) Connecting the school and the educational centre with the environment around it (UNESCO 2014, 76).

### Purpose

In this qualitative study, the researcher used deductive content analysis to test the existence of Islamic religious tolerance concepts in the IE textbooks, based on the criteria of eight principles of Islamic tolerance; this approach proceeds from the general to the specific (Burns and Grove 2005). The high school years were selected because they are critical years in the students’ lives, when they need to develop a spirit of good citizenship and an awareness of the importance of coexistence with followers of other religions. The researcher targeted all six of the relevant IE national curriculum textbooks (Grades 10–12, with one textbook for each of two semesters a year) in order to achieve a good representation of the Islamic religious tolerance value under investigation, as recommended by Neuendorf (2002).

This study adopted two research questions:

- To what extent do high school IE textbooks reflect Islamic religious tolerance?
- How is the concept of Islamic religious tolerance presented in high school IE?

### Education for Islamic religious tolerance

Religious tolerance in Islam is expressed by the acceptance of religious pluralism, which gives legitimacy to the existence of religious differences in society. Islam rejects compelling anyone to adopt or leave a religion; it explicitly allows non-Muslims to express, practice and teach their

religious beliefs. It forbids aggression against the peaceful followers of other religions, as well as failure to defend them (al-Sharbaji 2002; al-Rajhi 2004). Muhibbu-din (2004) defines religious tolerance as 'a prerequisite and an essential condition for the peaceful coexistence for all faith groups in any community' (163). Muslims have a long history with Christianity and Judaism, and belief in the prophets— not only Prophet Muhammad but also all of the earlier prophets (peace be upon them)— is an article of Islamic faith, which encourages coexistence with other religions (Jad 2009; Hidayat 2001). Islam establishes the following eight principles of religious tolerance towards non-Muslims (Jad 2009; Hidayat 2001; Abokhalil 1993):

- (1) *Freedom of belief and worship*: Islam prevents coercion in religious belief, requiring respect for others' right to their beliefs (Leirvik and Kaymakcan 2007). In a well-known verse, the Quran states, 'There shall be no compulsion in religion' (2:256).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Islamic Sharia (Islamic law) guarantees freedom of belief and equal citizenship for all people with different beliefs (Khatab 2002).
- (2) *Equality*: Islam requires equality between Muslims and non-Muslims in human affairs. A funeral procession once passed in front of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and he stood up. When he was told that it was the coffin of a Jew, he asked, 'Is it not a living being (soul)?' (Al-Bukhari n.d. |23|71|in-book)<sup>3</sup>
- (3) *Justice*: Islam demands justice for non-Muslim residents; all members of the community have the same rights, regardless of their beliefs. The Quran states, 'O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives' (4:135).
- (4) *Coexistence*: Islam guarantees to non-Muslims social participation and warm relations, thus creating communities that integrate Muslims with others. 'This day [all] good foods have been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them' (Quran, 5:5).
- (5) *Keeping promises*: Islam orders Muslims to fulfil their pacts with all parties, no matter their faith. 'And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have taken it [O believers], and do not break oaths after their confirmation while you have made Allah, over you, a witness. Indeed, Allah knows what you do' (Quran, 16:91).
- (6) *Mercy and kindness*: Islam encourages compassion and kindness towards Muslims and non-Muslims, teaching that: Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes— from being righteous towards them and acting justly towards them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly (Quran, 60:8).
- (7) *Safety and peace*: Islam mandates complete security for non-Muslims under an Islamic government. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) warned, 'Whoever kills a *mu'ahid* (a person who has been granted a pledge of protection by the Muslims) shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise' (Al-Bukhari n.d. |87|52|in-book).
- (8) *Gentleness in dialogue*: Islam orders Muslims to be kind and gentle in interactions with non-Muslims. 'And argue with them in a way that is best' (Quran, 16:125).

Thus, for the purpose of this study, the researcher has defined Islamic religious tolerance as:

An Islamic belief and a behavioral value that guarantees freedom of belief and worship, equality, justice, coexistence, and safety under Islamic law. It requires Muslims to use good manners in dealing with non-Muslims; this includes keeping promises, being kind, and being gentle in their dialogue.

The Islamic curriculum textbooks adopt the Islamic view of religious tolerance, and they attempt to put these values into practice through teaching instruction.

Still, the IE curriculum does mention exceptions in the case of war, with Islamic jurists discussing jihad, its conditions, and the treatment of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Jihad in Islam means

exerting one's efforts for the sake of Allah (Khadduri 2006, 55). It does not necessarily entail war or fighting, since striving for the sake of Allah can be accomplished by either peaceful or violent means (Khadduri 2006). Many Muslim scholars over the years have conceptualised the idea of jihad, and they have set out conditions in case of war.

Muslims must not violate treaties or the rules of war. Fighting is prescribed only when necessary, such as when defending oneself, people who have been promised protection, or other Muslim countries against attacks. The Quran states, 'Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors' (2:190). When a Muslim country attacks another, the two should be reconciled, but if one country is oppressing the other, it should first be compelled to treat the country justly (Hidayat 2001; Jad 2009; Abokhalil 1993). Even during armed conflict, Islam upholds ethical and human standards, as demonstrated by Abu Bakr's instructions for the conduct of fighters<sup>4</sup>:

I advise you ten things: Do not kill women or children or an aged, infirm person. Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy an inhabited place. Do not slaughter sheep or camels, except for food. Do not burn bees, and do not scatter them. Do not steal from the booty, and do not be cowardly (Sabiq 1946, 45).

Islam respects all religions, and Muslims must avoid sitting with people who mock any other religion. The Quran instructs:

And it has already come down to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of Allah [recited], they are denied [by them] and ridiculed; so do not sit with them until they enter into another conversation. Indeed, you would then be like them (4:140).

And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus, we have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do (6:108).

Thus, religious tolerance is a universal principle consistent with the main Islamic principle of freedom of religion (Leirvik and Kaymakcan 2007). To reinforce this concept in education, students must learn about shared rights and freedoms in order to promote respect and protection of others; counteract attitudes of fear and rejection of others; and develop their capabilities for self-determining judgment, moral reasoning and critical thinking (UNESCO 1995).

Today, Muslim countries face numerous challenges due to globalisation, and their societies must be educated about the Islamic principles of religious tolerance. This will help to foster ethical, moral, spiritual beings who develop in a positive, healthy direction to build up modern societies (Nor and Malim 2014; Saeed 1999).

Previous studies have heightened the effect of education on students' attitudes towards tolerance. Al Sadi and Basit (2013) analysed the subsequent effects of an educational intervention in Omani schools and found significantly greater tolerance in the experimental group than in the control group. A study by Chang (2002) suggested that the general education curricula can play a significant role in shedding light on society's racial perspectives and allowing students to recognise and evaluate injustice, intolerance and inequality in ways that prepare them to succeed in diverse, multicultural societies.

Thus, the IE curriculum content must reflect Islamic principles of religious tolerance in order to guide students' values and behaviours. Studies have been conducted in several Middle Eastern countries; one was al-Mawagdah's (2010) content analysis study regarding tolerance principles in Islamic cultural textbooks in the secondary stage in Jordan, which reported that the principle of Freedom of belief and worship was found in 14 out of 102 (13.7%) text units in the first year of secondary school textbook, while the principle of Equality was found in 19 out of 119 (15.1%) text units of the textbooks for the second year of secondary school. Religious tolerance principles were presented gradually from the first to the second year, and the study recommended that religious tolerance principles be comprehensively integrated into Islamic culture textbooks. Another content analysis study by Matalkah and al-Odat (2010) looked at Jordan's Grade 10 Islamic curriculum textbooks and revealed that tolerance was discussed in 14.7% of the text units, while respecting

others was found in 11.6% of them. Al-Jilali's (2011) content analysis of the Algerian secondary IE curriculum found examples of contemporary Islamic speech regarding Islamic tolerance, and it demonstrated the need for integrating human, international and religious values to build new global values. The researcher recommended balancing the values of Islamic identity with those of religious tolerance, being careful not to cause any confusion between them. Research by Rahi and Rahi (2015) in the Iraqi city of al-Kut demonstrated that the correct understanding of principles of Islamic religious tolerance in the IE curriculum helped to counteract intolerance from the teachers' perspectives. Al-Rashid's study (2010) affirmed the existence of religious tolerance values in educational objectives in elementary school curricula in Kuwait, but there had been no previous content analysis of religious tolerance in Kuwaiti IE high school textbooks.

It is clear that teaching methods contribute to enhancing tolerance values through classroom instruction, especially since teachers are considered transmitters of (religious) knowledge and are responsible for helping their students develop spiritual and moral awareness (Halstead 2004; Kasim and Yusoff 2014). Kasim and Yusoff (2014) suggest that teachers employ varied methods to stimulate students' interest in spiritual and moral concepts and to inspire them to incorporate these values in their education and personal growth. Saeed (1999) discussed teaching methods for integrating tolerance in IE, suggesting that teaching techniques should close the gap between religion and its valid practices by explaining difficult words and ideas, assigning independent assignments and reports, facilitating critical discussions about issues and problems in the society, and encouraging students to find solutions. Another strategy for enhancing tolerance and harmony is to give the students freedom to explore and discuss ideas, creating an open atmosphere for thinking. All such instruction is important for students to accept and understand that every faith is valid for its own followers.

Memon's (2011) study suggested strategies for enhancing the teaching of tolerance in Islamic subjects; he emphasised following the teaching strategies of the prophets by being kind and caring. Examples from the Quran and the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) must be embodied in classroom instruction so as to inspire good behaviour in students, and any misbehaviour must be corrected with kindness. In order to teach students to accept the diversity of other cultures in their societies, teachers must adapt the traditional Islamic type of instruction by taking advantage of modern methods.

## Methodology

To maximise credibility and validity, the researcher adopted triangulation of a combination of research methods and sources of data (Yin 1994), collecting data from different research sources in order to support the findings from various data sets and decrease individual bias (Bowen 2009). To answer the research question, the researcher chose **inductive** content analysis to test the existence of tolerance values as a concept, using the qualitative method to build a comprehensive understanding of the tolerance values embedded in all secondary school IE textbooks. In addition, the use of six different secondary IE textbooks established a high level of confidence in the trustworthiness of the results.

### Study procedures and data analysis

To answer the research questions, content analysis was performed on all six textbooks. Since there was no existing content analysis research targeting IE school textbooks in the Kuwaiti context, the content analysis was driven by the researcher's definition of Islamic religious tolerance (as mentioned previously), based on theoretical knowledge of eight principles of religious tolerance in Islam (Jad 2009; Hidayat 2001; Abokhalil 1993).

In the preparation phase, the researcher selected the units of analysis (Guthrie et al. 2004; Polit and Beck 2004) related to the religious tolerance values for the purposes of this study

(Stemler 2001). These were categorised as ayahs,<sup>5</sup> hadiths, sentences, questions, situations, diagrams and poems.

The researcher and another faculty member from Kuwait University's College of Education worked independently of each other to establish a list of coding for Islamic religious tolerance according to the researcher's definition. They employed a human coding strategy suitable for hard copy documents such as school textbooks (Franke 2000, as quoted in Neuendorf 2002, 135).

Based on Neuendorf's (2002) suggestion, they constructed two initial code books and two code forms to answer both research questions. The first initial code book, targeting the first research question, classified 'religious tolerance' as a text unit that mentioned Islam's tolerance of other religions and their followers; in contrast, it classified an 'exception to religious tolerance' as a text unit that mentioned circumstances of intolerance towards other religions. The nominal scale for religious tolerance values ranged from 0 to 3, where 0 = not presented, 1 = presented, 2 = tolerance exceptions and 3 = nonspecific. All textbook units were classified by type, based on the way the value was presented (as an ayah, hadith, sentence, question, situation, diagram or poem). The coders established an empty code form to classify the text unit content in IE textbooks (Neuendorf 2002).

To answer the second research question, the researcher constructed a second initial code book to classify the themes of Islamic religious tolerance text units found in IE books. Based on the researcher's definition, the researcher classified Islamic religious tolerance into five general themes of behaviour with non-Muslims:

- (1) Good manners, including mercy, kindness and keeping promises
- (2) Protecting their rights to freedom of belief, safety and peace
- (3) Coexistence
- (4) Gentleness in dialogue
- (5) Justice and equality

These five themes were represented in the second initial code book and code form, using a nominal scale of 1–5.

To ensure the validity of the content, the researcher consulted three Education professors from Kuwait University's College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, all of whom agreed that these five themes accurately represent the concept of religious tolerance in Islam.

The researcher selected two assistant researchers from the College of Education to work voluntarily in the coding process. They used the code books and coding forms initially to practice coding, and subsequently to revise the code books. This step was important for training coders in using the code books and code forms and determining the existence and classification of Islamic religious tolerance values in a random sample of lessons from the IE textbooks. In addition, it helped eliminate differences between individual coders and trained them to perform the process easily and consistently (Neuendorf 2002).

In accordance with Neuendorf's (2002) recommendations, this training ensured the objectivity of the coders in judging the IE textbook by the coded message only, eliminating any personal interaction – especially since the coders had not had any direct involvement with the IE text previously. The coders discussed and revised the code books and code forms, based on their analytical practices; after taking into account their feedback, the researchers modified the code books and code forms. The coders also agreed to eliminate overlapping text units from the data content analysis. After that, they independently coded one IE textbook, using the final version of the code book and the code form.

Table 1 shows the first intercoder reliability, using Krippendorff alpha to measure both research questions (Krippendorff 2004, 241). Utilising Neuendorf's (2002) solutions to increase intercoder reliability and decrease the number of overlapping text units, the researchers gave the coders further training in clarifying religious tolerance themes and in distinguishing between text units indicating tolerance and those representing tolerance exceptions. At this point, the researcher re-checked the Krippendorff alpha (Table 1).



**Table 1.** Intercoder reliability for research questions.

	RESEARCH QUESTION 1	RESEARCH QUESTION 2
Number of text units	29	29
First Krippendorff alpha	$\alpha \geq .76$ acceptable ( $\alpha \geq .667$ )	$\alpha \geq .66$ acceptable ( $\alpha \geq .667$ )
Number of text units	29	29
Second Krippendorff alpha	$\alpha \geq .81$ acceptable ( $\alpha \geq .667$ )	$\alpha \geq .79$ acceptable ( $\alpha \geq .667$ )

As the final step, the trained coders performed the content analysis for all IE high school textbooks, using the final versions of the code book and code form. The researcher made sure that each coder had new hard copies of all six IE textbooks (first editions published in 2013/2014).

## Results

### *Analysis of religious tolerance concepts*

As shown in [Table 2](#), the majority of lesson containing religious tolerance text units were available in grade 10 (20 lessons out of 40) and grade 12 (22 lessons out of 40), which present almost 50% of total lessons. However, in grade 12 the number of lessons containing religious tolerance text units were 7 lessons out of 37 which presented 18.9% of total lessons (see [Appendix 1](#)).

### *Analysis of religious tolerance exception concepts*

## Discussion

The results showed that Islamic values of religious tolerance stand as core concepts in IE in Kuwait and were well represented both in independent lessons and embedded in other lessons, in different types of text units ([Table 2](#)). These results were in line with the targets and objectives of the IE curriculum and with al-Mawagdah (2010) and al-Rashid (2010). Matakah and al-Odat (2010) and al-Jilali (2011) also found religious tolerance represented in school IE textbooks. Moreover, these results agreed with fundamental Islamic values of religious tolerance as mentioned in Jad (2009), Hidayat (2001) and Abokhalil (1993).

Religious tolerance was presented most often in Grade 10, followed by Grade 11 and lastly Grade 12. This is consistent with Matakah and al-Odat (2010)'s study, which revealed a high representation of tolerance values in Jordan's Grade 10 Islamic textbook. In Kuwait, though, the relatively low number of tolerance value text units in Grade 12 is a weak point. Tolerance values in IE should be transmuted and fostered in both horizontal and vertical conceptual expansion between practice and theory in the curriculum (Afdal 2004). Thus, they must be presented more

**Table 2.** Types of religious tolerance value text units, by grade.

TEXT UNITS	GRADE 10	GRADE 11	GRADE 12	TOTAL
Ayahs	12	6	6	24
Hadiths	5	9	2	16
Sentences	40	38	19	97
Questions	17	19	5	41
Situations	9	6	0	15
Diagrams	2	0	0	2
Poems	0	1	0	1
Total	85	79	32	196
Number of lessons containing religious tolerance text units	20 of 40	22 of 40	7 of 37	
Percentage (number of lessons/total lessons)	50%	55%	18.9%	

evenly across all three high school grades, as in al-Mawagdah's (2010) results, where religious tolerance principles were represented most highly in the senior year in Jordan.

The religious tolerance theme of 'good manners with non-Muslims' had significantly higher ratings values in Grade 11 IE textbooks (Table 3). This theme includes treating non-Muslims with mercy and kindness, as well as keeping promises made to them; therefore, the result supports IE's goal of building a human personality based on positive moral, ethical, and spiritual values who can contribute to the building of modern societies (Nor and Malim 2014; Saeed 1999; Kasim and Yusoff 2014; Memon 2011).

'Protecting the rights of non-Muslims' was the second-ranked theme in Grade 10 IE textbooks (Table 3), and it comprised one entire lesson, titled 'Non-Muslim Rights', in an Islamic culture unit. Leirvik and Kaymakcan (2007) asserted that freedom of religion, including the right to express one's belief and worship, is an essential Islamic value (Jad 2009; Hidayat 2001; Abokhalil 1993; al-Rajhi 2004). The Quran commands, 'There shall be no compulsion in religion' (2:256). IE textbooks highlighted various aspects of non-Muslim rights, including rights to belief, learning and teaching, safety, work, owning property and living in the neighbourhood of their choice.

'Coexistence' was the third-ranked theme (Table 3). As mentioned in Jad (2009), Hidayat (2001), al-Rajhi (2004) and Saeed (1999), Islam ensures the opportunity for social participation and integration of non-Muslims in a Muslim society. This result agreed with the studies of al Sadi and Basit (2013) and (Leirvik and Kaymakcan 2007) that the purpose of religious tolerance is to enhance peaceful coexistence. Al-Jilali's (2011) study illustrated the existence of Islamic tolerance in Algerian secondary school textbooks and called for social and human integration based on Islamic values.

The themes 'gentleness in dialogue' and 'justice and equality' ranked fourth and fifth, respectively (Table 3). These two values are fundamental in Islam (Jad 2009; Hidayat 2001; Abokhalil 1993; al-Rajhi 2004). Allah says, 'And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best' (Quran, 29:46)<sup>6</sup> and, 'Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice' (Quran, 4:58).

Addressing the need to counter intolerant behaviours, Rahi and Rahi (2015) recommended that IE curriculum educate the youth regarding the significance of relations within the society and with other non-Muslim countries. Al-Malki (2005) stressed the importance of Islamic moderation in facing intolerance and extremism. Therefore, it is imperative that IE textbooks clarify the reasons and specific situations for conflicts with non-Muslims and their implications in real life. Religious tolerance exceptions related to jihad were presented mostly in one Grade 10 lesson named 'The Concept of Jihad and How It Differs from Terrorism' (Tables 4 and 5) (see Appendix 2). Rahi and Rahi (2015) showed that IE curriculum supports lessons and values that correct students' misconceptions and lack of awareness of Islamic tolerance as opposed to extremism and terrorism.

A comparison between Tables 2 and 4 proves that the religious tolerance text units in the IE curriculum far outnumber those for religious tolerance exceptions, thus confirming the notion of Islamic moderation. Religious tolerance was represented in various text units through ayahs, hadiths, sentences, questions, situations, diagrams and poems, all of which affirmed the concept of religious tolerance and strengthened the connections among different lessons (Table 2) (see Appendix 1 & 2).

Table 3. Main themes of religious tolerance values found in text units, by grade.

TOLERANCE MAIN THEMES	GRADE 10	GRADE 11	GRADE 12	TOTAL
Good manners	29	39	6	74
Protecting their rights	43	10	8	61
Coexistence	3	16	10	29
Gentleness in dialogue	3	11	4	18
Justice and equality	7	3	4	14
Total	85	79	32	196



**Table 4.** Religious tolerance exceptions text units, by grade.

TEXT UNITS	GRADE 10	GRADE 11	GRADE 12	TOTAL
Ayahs	3	0	0	24
Hadiths	0	0	0	16
Sentences	5	1	0	97
Questions	4	1	0	41
Situations	0	0	0	15
Total	12	2	0	14
Number of lessons containing text units with exceptions to religious tolerance	1 of 40	1 of 40	0 of 37	
Percentage (number of lessons/total lessons)	2.5%	2.5%	0%	

**Table 5.** Main themes of religious tolerance exceptions text units, by grade.

TOLERANCE EXCEPTIONS MAIN THEMES	GRADE 10	GRADE 11	GRADE 12	TOTAL
War circumstances (prevention of violations)	6	0	0	6
Self-defence	4	0	0	4
Defending people who have protection contract with Muslims	2	0	0	2
Conspiring and spyware against Muslims	0	2	0	2
Total	12	2	0	14

## Conclusion and recommendations

The significant contribution of the present study is its demonstration of Islamic religious tolerance in Kuwait's high school IE curriculum, along with the insights it provides regarding IE textbooks in the Kuwaiti context. The total rating scores of religious tolerance text units showed that the lowest rate was found in Grade 12 (Table 2).

First, it is recommended that Grade 12 IE textbooks concentrate more on religious tolerance, especially human rights and coexistence since students at this age are poised to become more actively engaged in the society and build global relationships, with many going on to study in countries around the world. As of 15 October 2017, the US State Department's Education USA website stated that over 15,000 Kuwaitis were studying in the United States, while the Kuwait Cultural Office UK website counted 4,500 Kuwaitis studying in the United Kingdom; as a point of comparison, Kuwait University's website announced that its students for 2016/2017 numbered 37,112.

Second, better examples and illustrations of tolerance, as well as exceptions to it, are needed. These should be relevant to current events so that students can build on their knowledge and apply the concepts appropriately in various real-life situations. In fact, Kuwait has high numbers of migrant workers, who come from different cultural and religious backgrounds, so students typically encounter non-Muslims often. Since IE textbooks are taught in public and private schools, more depth in asserting religious tolerance values must be a priority.

Third, despite the diverse methods for presenting Islamic principles of religious tolerance, it is recommended that students engage in activities outside the classroom to transfer values of tolerance – such as coexistence, human rights, justice and equity – into real life. By interacting with non-Muslim communities and individuals, participating in volunteer work, and engaging in dialogue with less privileged members of the society, students will increase their capacity to support tolerance in real life situations, and they will be empowered to work for justice, peace and tolerance at the national and international levels.

While the present study focused on content analysis of the IE curriculum textbooks, future studies must concentrate on investigating the methods that teachers use in the classroom to foster student awareness regarding religious tolerance. Investigating the perspectives of students and parents regarding religious tolerance and its practical application in the curriculum is also an important future direction.

## Notes

1. Sunnah: the collected words and acts of Prophet Muhammad.
2. The translations of the meanings of the Quran verses are taken from Sahih International, *The Quran: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, which can be accessed at <https://quran.com/>.
3. hadith: a saying of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), with a chain of narration going back to the one who heard it. *Sahih al-Bukhari* is the most trustworthy collection of hadiths and is considered second only to the Quran in terms of Islamic sources.
4. Abu Bakr was the close companion and father-in-law of Prophet Muhammad. Upon the Prophet's death, Abu Bakr was chosen to succeed him as the first caliph of the Muslims.
5. ayah: a verse of the Quran.
6. People of the Scripture: Jews and Christians.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

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## Appendix 1. Examples of religious tolerance text units, by main themes

### Good manners

- Grade 10, Part 1, 147:
 

Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly. (Quran, 60:9)
- Grade 11, Part 2, 167: 'What is the effect of tolerance words in directing speech between Muslims and non-Muslims?'
- Grade 10, Part 1, 85: 'Take a lesson from the story of Noah in the kindness and gentleness and good manners.'
- Grade 11, Part 1, 142: 'Ways of keeping good human relations: kindness, tolerance and a smile.'
- Grade 10, Part 1, 150: 'The Prophet (pbuh) fulfilled the treaty for the Christians, ensuring safety for themselves, their money and their places of worship.'

### Protecting their rights

- Grade 11, Part 2, 138: 'The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'Whoever killed a *mu'ahid* (a person who is granted the pledge of protection by the Muslims) shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise.' (al-Bukhari|87|52|in-book)
- Grade 11, Part 2, 91: 'Omar ibn al-Khattab, Prophet Muhammad's companion and the general leader, provided the People of the Scripture with safety and security for themselves and their money, and ensured that their churches were not demolished.'
- Grade 10, Part 1, 148: 'Non-Muslims who live in the Muslim community have security and confidence in their lives, property, and honor.'
- Grade 12, Part 2, 146: 'There shall be no compulsion in religion' (Quran, 2:256).
- Grade 10, Part 2, 149: 'One of the human rights in Islam is freedom of belief and worship.'
- Grade 12, Part 2, 123: 'Islam forbids violating the rights of others, as in theft or fraud.'

### Gentleness in dialogue

- Grade 12, Part 2, 25: 'And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best' (Quran, 29:46).
- Grade 11, Part 1, 165: 'Intercultural dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims must be characterized by good words and must avoid intolerance.'
- Grade 11, Part 2, 165: Allah ordered Moses and Aaron to speak gently with Pharaoh, saying, 'And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]' (Quran, 20:44).
- Grade 10, Part 2, 131: 'Abraham discussed with his father politely, even though he was a disbeliever.'

### Justice and equality

- Grade 10, Part 1, 46: 'Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people to judge with justice.' (Quran, 4:58)
- Grade 12, Part 1, 150: 'Islamic history is full of examples that show relations between Muslims and non-Muslims based on justice and equity.'
- Grade 12, Part 1, 76: 'Ali bin Abi Talib made efforts to adopt justice; therefore, all people felt that there were the same under the Islamic country's law.'
- Grade 11, Part 2, 25: 'Islam's approach is based on gentle dealing and equity for all human beings, including believers and unbelievers.'
- Grade 12, Part 1, 76: 'The scales of justice do not discriminate between individuals.'

## Appendix 2. Examples of religious tolerance exception text units, by main themes

### War circumstances (prevention of violations)

- Grade 10, Part 1, 155: 'And fight in the Way of Allah those who fight you, but transgress not the limits. Truly, Allah likes not the transgressors' (Quran, 1:190).
- Grade 10, Part 1, 155: 'The reason for jihad (fighting) in Islam is to prevent Muslim countries from being attacked.'
- Grade 10, Part 1, 158: 'Discuss and give evidence against the claim that Islam was spread by the sword.'

### Self-defence

- Grade 10, Part 1, 155: 'Fighting in Islam is limited to the purpose of preventing harm and aggression' (Quran, 1:190).

'And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy' (Quran, 8:60).

- Grade 10, Part 1, 158: 'Discuss the reasons for jihad (fighting) in Islam.'
- Grade 10, Part 1, 158: 'What happens when Muslims neglect to defend their lands?'

***Defending people who have protection contract with Muslims***

- Grade 10, Part 1, 150: 'Islamic History is full of models that determine the Muslims' relationships with others, including nearby countries, with full citizenship rights for non-Muslims and guarantees of safety for themselves and their money.'
- Grade 10, Part 1, 150: 'The contract made by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and Abu Bakr with the Christians of Najran to maintain themselves, their money and their places of worship.'

***Conspiring and spyware against Muslims***

- Grade 11, Part 2, 25: 'It is forbidden for a Muslim to transfer news about his country and to spy for an enemy non-Muslim country.'
- Grade 11, Part 2, 28: "What is the opinion of Islam when a Muslim transfers news of his country to a non-Muslim enemy?"

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