

A Qualitative Approach to Explore Teaching Methods Used to Teach Religious Courses
in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

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As the world observes paradigm shifts in almost every aspect of human life, educational processes in Saudi Arabia are also undergoing significant changes. The learning needs of contemporary Saudi Arabian students differ from the education requirements prioritized in previous centuries. Thus, there is a need for today's teachers to employ innovative teaching mechanisms appropriate to the students' needs in the present times. The purpose of this study was to identify the various teaching methods currently used by Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia and to understand their rationale for utilizing these techniques. A total of 20 Islamic teachers were interviewed in this study. The findings show that lecturing, narrative method, teaching by practice, iterative, role modeling, preaching, indoctrination, and recitation methods are the most commonly used teaching methods that are used in religious courses. At the same time, several reasons, including teachers' beliefs, rigid course contents, and students' characteristics were found to be influential in determining the type of teaching method selected in their classrooms. Teachers in this study demonstrated that they do not understand learning theories, and therefore do not use them in their classrooms. From this study, the researcher concluded that Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia are influenced by several barriers that limit their use of modern, more effective, technology-based teaching methods.

Dedication

To my wife, Fawziah, who offered me unconditional love and inspiration throughout the research period. I also dedicate this work to my loving parents, Yahya and Fatimah for the push of tenacity and patience with my educational journey that forced us to live apart for a long time. Moreover, I cannot forget to appreciate their endless giving and reaching out, even when they had nothing more to offer. Lastly, to my siblings, who have been always on my side.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher introduces the topic in the context in which the research was conducted. The chapter is divided into several segments, each providing key information pertaining to the research topic. Specifically, this chapter is divided into six segments: background information, the research problem and the purpose of the study, justification for the study, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, and the significance of the research.

Background Information of Islamic Studies

Religious education is one of the most significant subject of learning in Saudi Arabia, given the country's nature; to be precise, Saudi Arabia, as a country, is built on the strong pillars of the Islamic religion, as is well documented in its constitution. This means that every citizen and non-citizens in Saudi Arabia should be conversant with the religious principles to abide with the federal laws since the country is built on the Islamic foundations. However, when children are born, they know nothing about the country's laws and religious principles. Therefore, parents assume the responsibility of imparting this important knowledge to children in the home, while teachers and religious leaders supplement this work at school and in religious centers, respectively.

The preservation of the religious foundations of the Islamic domain plays an important role in shaping the content, structure, and methods of teaching religious studies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the evolution of Saudi Arabia's teaching and learning sector is circumscribed based on the interest in preserving the foundations of Islam in the country (Prokop, 2003). According to Kovacs (2014), Saudi Arabia is the

main source or provider of Islamic education worldwide. This calls upon teachers at all levels of education to deploy strategic teaching methods to enhance students' understanding of Islam's core principles. Islamic education in Saudi Arabia is linked to the time that Prophet Mohammad emerged and brought Islam religion into the world. Initially, religious concepts were taught in traditional settings such as homes where parents took charge of the sessions. But as time moved on, formal institutions such as madrassa were established to accommodate more children at a single session. Today, Islamic education is taught at all levels of the educational systems in Saudi Arabia including elementary schools, colleges and universities.

To ensure that students are motivated and even engaged in learning Islamic studies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the country's educational stakeholders should prioritize the identification and deployment of appropriate teaching methods. The teaching methods that are considered effective in imparting the required Islamic principles to the students cannot be applied in high schools or tertiary institutions alone; rather, these methods should be implemented even at elementary levels, to ensure that a strong foundation in Islamic principles is established among early learners. According to Marghalani (2017), the Saudi Arabian religious education is perceived in various ways to be a unique system. For example, it is stated that the Saudi Arabian education system is not only centralized, but also that it places strong emphasis on the Islamic *tarbiyah* (Marghalani, 2017). However, while the same curriculum is taught throughout Saudi Arabia, the methods used to deliver the course content differ from one teacher to another.

In the current century, teaching Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia poses a significant challenge to teachers owing to numerous factors, such as the allegations of extremism leveled by Western countries (Marghalani, 2017). This is because there are numerous anti-Muslim campaigns on different platforms such as social media that can make children disinterested in Islam (Suleiman, 2017). Therefore, teachers should adopt strategic methods that will enhance students' motivation and engagement in the classroom. Notably, students' interests in Islamic courses at both elementary and higher educational levels have subsided of late as justified by the assertion made by Laeheem (2017) which affirms that youths were not interested in the religious education and activities. This means that learners no longer find religious education interesting as there are other non-religious activities which they find interesting. This has resulted in a lack of familiarity with Islamic principles and the teachings provided by the Quran, as explained by Ebrahimi and Yusoff (2017). Incomplete knowledge of the Islamic doctrines correlates directly with a lack of adherence to religious practices but showing proper understanding of the Islamic principles results in identification with the religion.

It should be understood, however, that a strong identification with Islam tends to invite criticism from anti-Muslim communities (Prokop, 2003). Based on the findings of the study by Ahmed and Matthes (2017), Muslims are framed negatively due to Islam's portrayal as a violent religion. For instance, the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States saw media targeting Islam, linking it to terrorism (Sultan, 2016). It is this kind of assertion that results in a decreased interest in learning Islamic studies among students. However, Ghosh et al. (2017) argued that education can be

incorporated into anti-terrorism campaigns, helping students to become resilient citizens. However, this can only be achieved when effective teaching methods are employed in an appropriate religious pedagogical practice.

Teacher-centered pedagogical teaching methods currently deployed in religious education in elementary schools are proving ineffective in achieving their primary goal of enhancing the students' understanding of the religious principles (Yusoff et al., 2018). Teacher-centered methods such as lecturing are expository in nature and do not improve students' critical thinking abilities as required in the modern world. Based on Ganyaupfu (2013), students do not build engagement levels with the courses being taught under the teacher-centered pedagogical techniques. These methods are not only least practical but also are more theoretical and encourage students to memorize classroom content.

However, there are other strategic teaching methods justified in the previously published studies as they effective in promoting critical thinking ability and level of understanding among students. For examples, the findings from Jusoh and Jusoff's (2009) study indicated that numerous multimedia tools are in use today for teaching Islamic studies. According to Jusoh and Jusoff (2009), these multimedia tools include videos clips, internet, PowerPoint slides, and mind maps, etc. With the help of these multimedia tools, students find Islamic studies interesting as well as entertaining (Jusoh & Jusoff, 2009). Moreover, it is a commonly held belief in the public domain that it is possible to transform a dry and dull lesson into a rather engaging and interactive classroom lesson when the optimum teaching practices are employed. However, very few qualitative studies have assessed the methods used to teach religious courses in Saudi

Arabia since most of them such as Alotaibi (2014) used quantitative methods.

Furthermore, Alotaibi (2014) asserted that the teaching methods used in religious studies in Saudi Arabia do not adhere to the teachings of the Quran or *sunnah*. Nonetheless, it is important for elementary school teachers to use effective approaches while equipping students with the relevant religious knowledge as required by the Quran and *sunnah*.

Some of the more strategic methods used to teach religious studies in elementary schools are perceived as learner-centered rather than the more common teacher-centered approaches. According to Limbach and Waugh (2014), learner-centered teaching methods promote critical thinking among students and are unlike some of the more conventional teaching approaches that focus on the ability of students to memorize the course concepts.

In a study conducted by Alwadai (2014), it was noted that teaching methods are among the seven major barriers to improving Saudi Arabian elementary school students' critical thinking skills in Saudi Arabia. Other barriers that obstruct elementary education students from enhancing their critical thinking abilities include, but are not limited to, students' ability, classroom structure, and school communities (Alwadai, 2014).

According to Alwadai (2014), teachers must devise the best possible ways to remove the stated obstacles if they wish to improve the elementary school students' critical thinking levels. For example, to remove the barriers to successful teaching, appropriate and effective approaches must be implemented to achieve the desired goal of enhancing critical thinking abilities among elementary education students. The main question, however, is why teachers in Saudi Arabia's elementary schools continue using these

methods that they obstruct students' development of critical thinking abilities to teach religious education despite their conviction.

The aim of this study was to document the methods currently used to teach religious courses in Saudi Arabia. This qualitative study is structured to cover different aspects of these teaching methods, including their applicability in the social and academic lives of elementary school students. Understanding the nature of the teaching methods and their significance in the students' lives is key in the formulation of strategic approaches that are successful in achieving the desired goals of the education system. It is also through the exploration of these teaching methods that the relevant stakeholders in Saudi Arabia's elementary education system will be able to connect the dots while answering the question of why teachers persist in using certain methods despite their limitations. Therefore, this qualitative study will be beneficial for exploring the teaching methods that teachers currently use in teaching religious courses within the elementary education domain in Saudi Arabia.

Research Problems

According to Ashaari et al. (2012), some teaching and learning methodologies adopted for Islamic studies have been greatly criticized by scholars because of their failure to adequately respond to the threats posed by the needs of the contemporary world. Ideal teaching methods for Islamic studies should respond appropriately to modernity as it is experienced in different sectors of human life today. Taking the case of Saudi Arabia, this particular study identified the exact teaching methods that elementary teachers should use to teach religious courses.

Understanding the specific teaching methods employed by elementary school teachers for Islamic studies is the key to helping education stakeholders to fully understand the precise teaching methods that Ashaari et al. (2012) found to be inefficient ways of addressing current problems in the world. It is challenging to understand why teachers continue to use methods that they know to be ineffective. Apart from identifying the precise methods that Islamic teachers use while teaching religious education materials, this study documented the reasons teachers gave for utilizing their respective approaches in Saudi Arabia's elementary schools.

As Alwadai (2014) noted, teaching methods are key in promoting critical thinking among students. However, poor teaching methods are likely to be barriers to effective learning, and students do not benefit from learning environments characterized by poor teaching methods. A common assertion in the public domain across the world's six continents, is that modern technology is advancing at a rapid pace and impacting almost every aspect of human life. Ranging from economic to social life, technological advancement is changing the ways in which people interact, learn, and conduct other real-world activities. In Saudi Arabia, the government has continued to support the development of modern technology in all sectors, including education (Alshuaibi, 2017). However, other factors, such as teachers and policies, are proving to be significant obstacles to the full implementing the use of technology for teaching in Saudi Arabia (Alqarni, 2015). Therefore, elimination of the stated obstacles should result in the full implementation of using technology in in Saudi Arabian education system.

Employing some methods of teaching such as lecturing hinder students to understand clearly the desired course content, since these teaching methods will act as barriers to their ability of thinking critically (Alwadai, 2014, p. 43). Critical thinking among students is important in contemporary society, as students are expected to apply the same concepts in real-life scenarios. The reason that teachers continue to use conventional teaching methods has not yet been established. Therefore, this research is structured with the aim of elucidating the reasons that teachers use their preferred methods for teaching religious courses in the elementary education domain in Saudi Arabia. Non-thinking teaching methods are teacher-centered rather than learner-centered, as required by current education systems. Technology-based learning and teaching methods are not widely used, and there is also no apparent reason that accounts for this phenomenon in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In fact, there are instances in which technology-based teaching methods are completely neglected, despite being recommended as appropriate in the current educational context.

Furthermore, it is important to note that teaching methods incorporated in the learning environment in this era of technological advancement should be able to raise the students' motivation and the engagement levels (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2010). When students are motivated in the classrooms, their engagement levels tend to rise, and their chances of understanding the course concepts increase in comparison to the students who are bored. For new teaching methods to be adopted in elementary schools within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, their potential to raise both the motivational and engagement levels of the students in the classroom must be proven. If this does not occur, the methods

should either be abolished or not adopted in the first place. It is in this vein that Ashaari et al. (2012) noted the need for modifying teaching methodologies and approaches for Islamic education to ensure that the discipline is helpful in equipping learners with the knowledge required to solve modern global challenges.

Use of appropriate teaching methods will enhance students' understanding of basic course concepts in religious studies as well as foster their critical thinking abilities. This set of advantages will result in the creation of law-abiding citizens once the young learners have passed through the optimum educational system successfully up to the time of their school completion. Therefore, the main problem that this particular research was how to resolve is the puzzle of the methods that teachers in Saudi Arabia use to teach religious courses to children in elementary education. After revealing the specific methods used in teaching Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia's elementary schools, this research elucidates the reasons that teachers continue to employ these methods in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative study, the various methods that Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia currently use while teaching religious courses in elementary schools were explored. One cannot teach effectively without understanding the implications associated with each teaching method that is under consideration to be applied in classrooms. This study adds to the knowledge base of the existing literature to help educational stakeholders in Saudi Arabia to better understand all of the implications of the teaching methods employed by Islamic teachers to aid in formulating appropriate strategies that will increase students'

levels of understanding. Thus, increasing awareness of these teaching methods among parents, teachers, government officials, and other educational stakeholders was the primary goal of this study. It can be asserted, therefore, that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this qualitative study will be beneficial in helping teachers to appreciate the most effective teaching methods for religious courses in elementary education.

The process of transmitting knowledge to children requires the use of appropriate methods for their optimum understanding of the concepts. For example, Kheruniah (2013) observed that a competent teacher adopts strategic approaches that can motivate students during Fiqh lessons. Based on this finding, students at the elementary level are expected to understand fully the concepts of Fiqh, as the course educates them not only on actions and practices, but also on the good behaviors that are in direct alignment with the requirements of Islam. This study is structured so as to allow the target audience to become familiar with various aspects of teaching methods, such as recitation and role modeling, used in religious education for elementary students.

Students who understand well the content of the religious courses tend to apply the acquired knowledge in their real-world activity. Therefore, the educational stakeholders' priority should be to encourage teachers to apply effective teaching methods while imparting the knowledge to the students. The implementation of effective teaching methods would ensure that learners will understand the course content sufficiently to apply them in real-life interactions with others. Students who do not acquire this knowledge are likely to act contrary to the requirements of Islam, and

ineffective teaching methods are perceived as among the contributing factors to this observation. Therefore, this qualitative study purposes to utilize both credible and legitimate secondary data sources alongside the primary research to explore the teaching methods used for teaching religion to elementary students in Saudi Arabia. The findings are used to determine the appropriate approaches for use in elementary learning environments to ensure that students at this level understand the desired Islamic course principles that will ultimately make them better citizens, not only in Saudi Arabia but also in other parts of the world that appreciate the same principles.

Justification of the Research Study

According to Maroun et al. (2008), several Arab countries have acknowledged that a good education system is a pillar of economic growth. Saudi Arabia is among these countries, and implementation of the strategic education reforms would improve the condition of education among all students at all levels of learning, including the rising population of young learners. The young population is increasing in Saudi Arabia, and this demographic group represents a majority in several nations within the Arab world (Maroun et al., 2008). It should be remembered, however, that several Arab countries have made significant efforts to implement and develop reform programs in the education sector, leading to an increase in the law-abiding citizens. A key advantage of this change is that there are more skilled people that help in driving the socioeconomic agendas of their respective countries forward.

The majority of the teaching methods used to teach religious courses in Saudi Arabia do not incorporate the requirements of the Quran and *sunnah* (Alotaibi, 2014). As

Maroun et al. (2008) explained, the younger generation of learners are not only born but also raised in the contemporary world, which is characterized by the digital revolution that has resulted in the spread of technological applications. Due to the use of ineffective teaching methods in elementary education, young learners have developed a negative attitude toward Islamic studies.

Despite the integration of religious studies into the curricula of numerous education systems, Ashaari et al. (2012, p. 619) stated that Islamic students in the underdeveloped Muslim world still face several global challenges such as illiteracy, poverty, and educational accesses. This means that Islamic educational learning centers have done little to curb the negative effects of cultural influences from foreign communities and other problems affecting people in the contemporary world. Maroun et al. (2008) found that teachers should adopt approaches that are effective in equipping religious learners with both Islamic beliefs and practices that are strategic in helping them internalize Islamic culture and identity.

Furthermore, Ashaari et al. (2012) stated that Islamic studies are regarded as holistic in nature, and the production of the knowledge is based on human experience and revelation. Moreover, the transformation of knowledge can be facilitated through several human faculties, such as the soul, the mind, and the heart. The selection of the teaching methods should be carefully to suit religious need because Islamic education is holistic in nature (Ashaari et al., 2012). Once the appropriate teaching methods have been adopted by teachers, the elementary students' understanding of religious concepts will be enhanced. Failure to explore current teaching methods would hinder educational

stakeholders in employing appropriate teaching methods that would otherwise have addressed contemporary global challenges. Therefore, the situation would not change, as students' disinterest in Islamic studies would continue. This would eventually result in societal members that lack knowledge of the basic Islamic principles and provisions.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

This qualitative study was designed to achieve several objectives, as listed below:

- i. To identify the teaching methods used to teach religious courses in elementary schools in Saudi Arabia.
- ii. To determine the reasons behind teachers' preferences for certain teaching methods in religious education.

Research Questions

This qualitative study was guided by two main research questions. The process of finding the most relevant answers to the research questions listed below will contribute relevant information to the study. The two main questions in this study are:

- i. What methods are currently used to teach religious education in elementary schools in Saudi Arabia?
- ii. Why do elementary religious course teachers in Saudi Arabia use these methods?

Significance of the Research

This qualitative research study is of great significance to the education sector in Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia. Most notably, this study's findings address the knowledge gap concerning the appropriate methods for teaching religion in Saudi Arabia's elementary schools. In essence, few researchers have successfully conducted

studies on the teaching methods used for religious education in elementary schools in Arab countries generally, let alone Saudi Arabia. The studies that have been published previously have limited their focus to other issues. For instance, the role of modern technology in the Islamic studies but did not extensively explore the teaching methods of religious courses at the stated level of education.

Given that this particular study's main focus is on the exploration of the methods used to teach religious studies in Saudi Arabia, the findings are relevant help close a large gap in the existing knowledge. Thus, it is important to understand the findings and conclusions that emerge from this research as providing not only accurate and reliable but also legitimate and professional assessments of teaching methods as far as Islamic studies is concerned in the elementary schools of Saudi Arabia. Consequently, this would provide a good platform on which the educational stakeholders in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries could stand while formulating strategic teaching methods designed to enhance students' understanding of religious concepts and to foster critical thinking among elementary learners.

The study is significant because it provides in-depth insights into the significant factors that should be considered when determining the best teaching methods for religious education in elementary schools. Specifically, this study provides a depth and breadth analysis of the methods used to teach Islamic courses and a comprehensive assessment of their strengths and weaknesses as they apply in elementary learning environments. The results from this study enable educational stakeholders from throughout the Muslim world to make an informed judgments regarding teaching

methods that work in the best interest of the target students' academic development. In this regard, the study is of great significance in guiding educational stakeholders to make appropriate and strategic decisions in the adoption of teaching methods for religious education in elementary schools.

Summary of the Chapter

A qualitative approach was used to profoundly explore and identify the methods that currently used to teach religious courses in elementary schools in Saudi Arabia. In this chapter, the background information is provided to introduce the research topic. To be precise, the background information provided contextualizes the research in terms of the nature of the teaching methods used in religious education in Saudi Arabia's elementary schools. Elsewhere, the research problem section provides comprehensive information on the problems that this particular study aims to solve. This study is formulated to address the problem of ineffective teaching methods that fail to enhance students' understanding of key Islamic concepts and principles. This research addressed the current teaching methods and how they promote critical thinking among students in elementary schools, as described above.

The justification for the study has provided comprehensive information on the rationale as to why this study is important. In this section, it is documented that the interests of students' interest in Islamic studies at both the elementary and higher education levels have recently subsided, and the majority of the learners no longer find religious education interesting. Therefore, it is necessary to re-examine the teaching methods that are currently employed, as they may be lowering the students' motivational

and engagement levels regarding religious education in the classroom. This introductory chapter of the research has also presented the study's aims and objectives, listing the objectives that guide the researcher during the study. Moreover, two research questions were used to unveil the required qualitative data while exploring the teaching methods employed in religious education in Saudi Arabia's elementary schools.

Definition of Terms

Tawheed: An Islamic leading principle providing that there is only one Allah Almighty and has no companion (AlSarhi et al., 2014).

Salah: The practice of formal worship in Islam (Elyas & Picard, 2010)

Quran: The central religious written text of the Islam religion.

Fiqh: An Islamic course interested in the students' behaviors and practices Islam based on the rules governing the relationship between human beings with Allah, neighbors and other creatures (Alotaibi, 2014).

Tafseer (Tafsir): The explanation of the Quran (Alotaibi, 2014).

Hadith: Stories provided by Prophet Mohammad for the learning purposes (AlSarhi et al., 2014).

Imam: A person who leads worship services in Mosques.

Tarbiyah: Nurturing, rearing or taking care of Muslim children through different stages until one becomes obedient and righteous (Alotaibi, 2014).

Kutbah, Kuttah: Formal oration or sermon delivered at the onset of the meridian prayer on Friday (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

Madrassah: A Muslim school, usually part of mosque, where children or even adults go to learn about the Islam religion (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Background of the Topic

History of Islamic Education in Saudi Arabia

Each education discipline has its history and the study of Islamic education in the world cannot be an exception to this fact. According to Amri et al. (2017), the inception of Islamic education is traced back to the era when the Prophet Mohammad was named as an apostle in Makah city and he became the educator of the Islamic religion, and the education system was the precise prototype developed by the Muslims to achieve their educational goals by then. Amri et al. (2017) explained that the development of Islamic education occurred simultaneously with the emergence of the Islamic religion. When Islamic religion was introduced, people were taught about its concepts and principles in both formal and informal institutions as a way of furthering its scope in the world. This means that Islamic education is comprised of several basic concepts that continue to evolve because of the existence of Islam throughout the world.

Saudi Arabian educational practices have a rich history. As with most of the world, education in the Arabian Peninsula developed from a pair of roots: traditional and formal systems. According to Elyas and Picard (2010) a Qur'anic school was religion oriented in Saudi Arabia and served as an appropriate platform in which traditional learning was conducted before children attained the age of being taken to the formal learning centers. In both urban and suburban areas, the traditional learning process in Saudi Arabia was generally conducted in homes and/or at the local district mosques (Elyas & Picard, 2010). As Elyas and Picard (2010) explained, the curriculum for the

traditional learning in Qur'anic schools depended on the provisions of the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith. All of the teachings in the traditional learning system were aimed at enhancing students' knowledge and an understanding of the religious provisions in Qur'an.

Elyas and Picard (2010) observed that the common practice of reciting verses of the Qur'an five times every day during Salah formed the foundation of Islamic education during the traditional learning era. Because other forms of education were not common before Saudi Arabia was established as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, this is attributed to the fact that the oral knowledge transmission was significant in traditional learning (Elyas & Picard, 2010). This type of learning practice focused exclusively on making the learners memorize the Qur'anic verses, instead of opening their minds to apply the basic concepts provided in them. In comparison, during the pre-school era, the purpose of memorizing Qur'anic verses was to ensure that there was a smooth transmission of the Qur'anic concepts down through the generations.

The volatile early years of traditional learning ended in 1932 when Saudi Arabia changed its identity to that of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, resulting in the establishment of formal education. Kutbah was the first method of formal education that was adopted in the Kingdom (Marshallsay, 2012). According to Elyas and Picard (2010), the instructions in the kutbah did not cover anything beyond basic arithmetic, religion, and the Arabic language. However, this changed after the kuttah had served for long time as the only type of formal education in Saudi Arabia. Toward the end of the twentieth century, modern elementary schools were introduced as a replacement for kuttah in the

formal education sector. Although the curriculum of the modern elementary school is larger in scope, it still resembles the structure of the kuttab in terms of the content of the curriculum, the instruction methods, and the teacher's ministerial image (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

Controversies Surrounding Islamic Education

Since ancient times, knowledge has been a significant factor in the Islamic traditions throughout the world. Jamjoom (2010) stated that religion is perceived to be the foundation of every educational decision in Saudi Arabia, while Marshallsay (2012) asserted that knowledge is more than a form of worship; it is an extremely important segment of the code of conduct among the Muslim population. This means that Islamic education is mandated to influence the knowledge that can have a positive effect in the lives of Muslims. However, since Islamic is so diverse and spread out across the world, its religious education has experienced a range of controversies because of this diversity (Marshallsay, 2012). In some parts of the world, Islam is linked to terrorism and extremism, leading to a negative impact on not only the reputation of Islam as a religion but also on the efforts of passing the concepts of Qur'anic verses onto the learners. For instance, the literature research conducted by Awan and Zempi (2016) found that Muslims were increasingly finding themselves attacked because of the enhanced anti-Muslim hate campaigns that emerged after the terrorist attacks in different parts of the world. This type of scenario creates a difficult environment for teaching Islamic education to elementary learners in multicultural settings. It is challenging to increase the students' engagement in the religious classes when there is a lot of negative information

all over the world regarding that particular religion. The students tend to become disengaged from the learning activities whenever their motivational levels go down. However, after conducting a comprehensive investigation on the state of the international education in Saudi Arabia, Almogbel (2015) recommended the integration of specific international education values, such as peace and multiculturalism, into Saudi Arabia's public education curriculum.

Factors to Consider When Employing Religious Studies Teachers

Just like an education system in any other society, Saudi Arabia has put in place some sets of rules that govern the qualification of a person to be employed as a teacher in the students' learning environments. These qualifications vary from one discipline to another, justifying why there are varied characteristics among teachers of different subjects. In this section, the academic qualifications, teaching experience, and gender issues are explored as far as elements under consideration when employing religious education teachers in Saudi Arabia is concerned.

Academic Qualification

Academic qualification is the leading factor when determining the capability of an individual to be employed as a teacher of any subject in most parts of the world. In Saudi Arabia, this is still the case as individuals are expected to submit the formal school certificates to the employers before getting a chance of being absorbed into the teaching domain of not only the religious education but also of the subjects in the country. However, different research tasks have been conducted by various people to justify that teachers in Saudi Arabia are not employing necessary effective approaches or rather

strategies that would enhance proper understanding of the intended knowledge to the students. For instance, Alwadai (2014) carried out an explanatory sequential mixed-method research with the aim of examining the thoughts of the Islamic teachers on the aspect of enhancing critical thinking abilities among primary school pupils in the southern of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In this research, Alwadai (2014) found out that Islamic educators in Saudi Arabia did not have the basic knowledge of critical thinking as they were unable to explain the concepts of critical thinking to their students irrespective of their educational qualifications.

This means that as much as there is a certain threshold of academic qualification that is considered before employing Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia, the blend of professionals being absorbed into the teaching field end up lacking common basic skills that are necessary for the modern-day learning environments. Critical thinking is one of the areas that teachers need to enhance in classrooms today to enable learners applying the theoretical concepts learned into the real-life situations. Therefore, showing great skills of promoting critical thinking among religious education students in Saudi Arabia is a great factor of consideration for the individuals desiring to be employed as Islamic teachers alongside the academic qualifications.

Teaching Experience

Teaching experience is also another factor that is being considered by the employers of not only Islamic teachers but also the teachers of other subjects in different education systems across the world and Saudi Arabia cannot be an exception. Employing experienced teachers is advantageous to the learners as this group of teachers have

varying attitudes about their students, and not only think but also tend to have different behaviors in the learning environments when they are compared with ones that are less experienced (Wolters, & Daugherty, 2007). The authors asserted that teachers' experience is important in helping them come up with significant goal structures that are beneficial to their students. Besides, more experienced teachers are perceived to be more knowledgeable when it comes to the teaching content as explained by Wolters and Daugherty (2007). Colleges students taking education courses in Saudi Arabia are required to enroll in internship programs within schools of different levels based on the programs they undertake to increase their levels of teaching experience. Giving student teachers opportunities to practice teaching is a significant mechanism of increasing the required experience when they finally graduate and become ready to engage in the classroom activities. It should be remembered that experienced teachers have desirable classroom management activities as compared to the novice ones (Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). That is why Saudi Arabia and other countries encourage teaching practice programs for the student teachers before their employment time.

Gender

Despite lacking both presence and voice in the today's research concerning Saudi Arabia and its educational system at large, women Islamic teachers are influential stakeholders in the development of the current Saudi Arabia's education system (Jamjoom, 2010). In every society, gender is used to make general perceptions about individuals that can either give or deny an individual the opportunity of pursuing one's desires. In this context, there are different perceptions about the male and female Islamic

instructors in Saudi Arabia, as explained by Jamjoom (2010). To be specific, Jamjoom (2010) asserted that female Islamic studies teachers are seen as the weavers of the moral fiber holding the society of Saudi Arabia. This means that female Islamic education instructors are significant components in shaping of the moral behaviors among the students studying religious education in Saudi Arabia. The importance of the female Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia lies in the fact that they stand as living examples of the role of women in the current day in Saudi Arabia.

Theoretical Framework

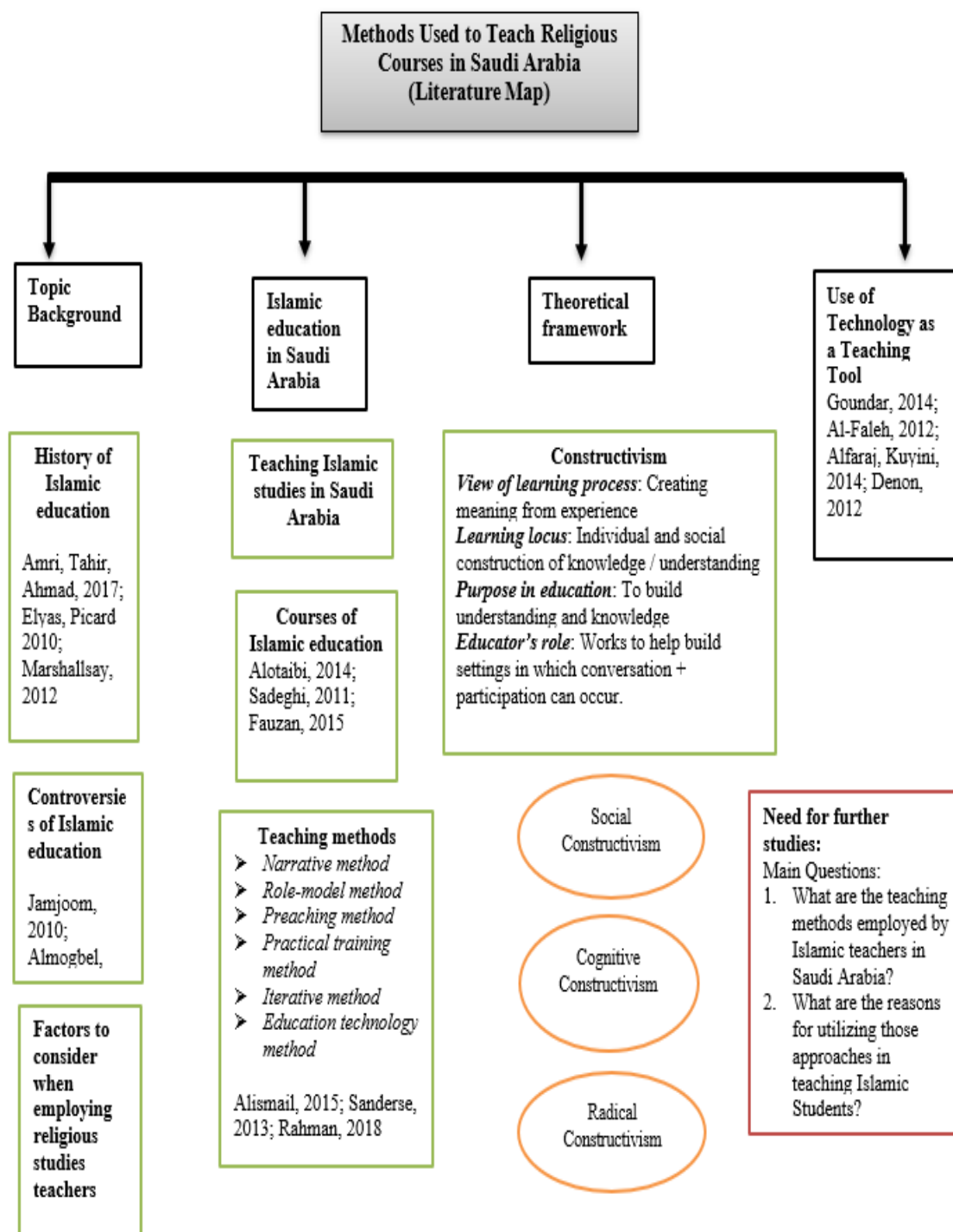
Constructivism Learning Theory

Constructivism is the learning theory in the existing literature. According to Alzaghoul (2012), it is among the most commonly used learning frameworks in education systems. Alzaghoul (2012) stated that constructivist learning theory perceives a learning process should enable students to engage in active construction of ideas and concepts. Thus, this study was focused on determining the teaching methods used by Islamic educators in Saudi Arabia and linking these methods with the provisions of the constructivism learning theory as shown in Figure 1.

The literature map in Figure 1 was formulated based on the secondary information relating to teaching methods of Islamic studies as well as the learning theories in the existing literature. Significant aspects found after conducting literature review are summarized below.

Figure 1

Literature Map



Subjecting students to different conditions in the learning environments enables them to acquire varied skills. According to Ertmer and Newby (2013), students exposed to instructional learning approaches stand to gain different competencies, meaning that the benefits for students exposed to constructivist theory will be different to those for students exposed to other learning theories. However, any educational model is relevant in the modern-day learning process, which aims at improving the general behaviors of the learners by empowering their cognitive functions to come up with relevant life meanings that are essential in their development as complete humans. A closer look at the provisions of constructivism theory shows that it incorporates the features of other learning theories in a single mixed blend that is essential in the today' learning.

In the current research, the focus was directed towards constructivist learning theory because there is a requirement to improve the critical thinking abilities among students in the modern world, and constructivism views learning as a process of creating knowledge from students' experiences. It should be understood that the work of educators in constructivist learning theory is to help in building learning environments in which both conversation and student participation are fostered. Constructivism defines the role of teachers as creators of appropriate learning settings, and this research is interested in determining the teaching methods applied by Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabian's elementary schools. The current research also examined why educators use the teaching methods that they do, as well as identifying their strengths and limitations. The researcher used findings from this particular research to propose strategic teaching practices that would enable proper understanding of the religious concepts among Islamic

students in the Saudi schools. Constructivism's provisions were relied upon as a benchmark for the effective teaching methods. This means that empowering Islamic teachers to use constructivism approaches while teaching Islamic courses in Saudi Arabia emerged as one of the recommendations but only based on the findings of this current study.

Constructivism Learning Theory: Definition, Overview, and Rationale

In the twenty-first century, effective teaching is comprised of numerous strategies, tools, and practices that are associated with constructivism. Kalina and Powell (2009) explained that the use of constructivist tools, practices, and strategies ensures that there is optimal communication between teachers and students. As evidenced in the literature map in Figure 1 above, constructivism is a learning theory that provides for the knowledge creation process among students since it allows teachers to invite students to actively participate in the process of learning. The literature map depicted above also shows that constructivism learning paradigm relies on the provisions of both psychology and philosophy during teaching in the classrooms.

In the current study, the objective was to examine the role of constructivism as employed in different teaching methods in assisting elementary school learners in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to take active roles in constructing both the knowledge and meaning of various course provisions of Islamic education. Following the assertions of Bada and Olusegun (2015), it can be stated that constructivism is important since it helps both in gaining an understanding of the state of the knowledge and in the way and time in which knowledge is constructed among students.

According to Hamat and Embi (2015), there are four basic principles, known as tenets, of constructivist theory. As these authors explained, the first tenet states that knowledge is dependent on the previous constructions that tend to exist in the mental framework of the learner (Hamat & Embi, 2015). Knowledge can be gained when the mental framework is deconstructed and then reconstructed based on both the interactions that take place within the surroundings and on the individuals' experiences (Hamat & Embi, 2015). This means that knowledge results from active cognition, not from being accumulated passively by the learner.

The second tenet maintains that assimilation and accommodation results in the construction of knowledge. This is in the sense that the mental framework assimilates familiar information while non-familiar information is accommodated in the mental framework, albeit through the development of high-level logic, as captured by Hamat and Embi (2015). This second tenet can be summarized to state that cognition is a process characterized with an adaptive feature that works with the aim of making the behaviors of the learners viable to the given learning environment.

Although the third tenet is designed to provide that cognition can assist in organizing and making sense of the experience of the learner, it cannot be said to be a process that is determined by presenting reality with high degrees of accuracy. Specifically, the third tenet shows that although learning is a process of invention, it is organic in nature. In contrast, Hamat and Embi (2015) noted that, since it is constructed continuously, knowledge is neither all factual nor static. They explained that for the learning process to be termed as meaningful, it should involve aspects of reflective

learning that are directed toward resolving cognitive conflicts whenever previous frameworks and understandings are improved (Hamat & Embi, 2015).

Therefore, the fourth tenet is justified since numerous interactions such as language-based, social, cultural, and biological constructions provide the foundation to the knowing process among learners. The four physical tenets demonstrate that constructivist approach appreciates the active role of students in the process knowledge creation. Constructivist learning theory, for instance, tends to provide that religious learners in Saudi Arabia's elementary schools should participate actively in the knowledge creation process. Besides, both individual and social experiences are important in creating knowledge among students. Furthermore, constructivism acknowledges the differences that are shown in various validity levels of the created knowledge, based on the accuracy in the representation of the reality. When applied in Saudi Arabia, constructivism stands in a better position to promote the teaching of Islam in its elementary schools. This can be achieved through fostering the knowing process whose principles are built based on the four beliefs stated above. However, the individual tenets in this list of four have specific ways of being emphasized, thereby bringing about different degrees or types of constructivism.

In their study on constructivist theories in current educational practice, Juvova et al. (2015) mentioned that pedagogical constructivism relies on the concepts of different individuals such as Piaget and Vygotsky. Piaget, for instance, distinguished various basic stages that occur in the thinking development of a child as one's sensory motor intelligence develops (Juvova et al., 2015). The Piaget's perception is that children tend

to create their individual views about the world based on the cognitive functions their minds engage in while defining the environment surrounding them. Piaget is just one of many constructivists who made significant proposals while formulating this theory in learning and teaching environments.

However, in general, Juvova et al. (2015) noted that pedagogical constructivism is comprised of numerous aspects including, not limited to, the practices that stimulate learners to not only improve their social interaction traits but also enhance the communication skills they depict as they develop both knowledge and critical thinking abilities. In most cases, constructivism is considered a continuum, instead of merely a unitary theoretical position of the learning process. Since there are different assumptions that are associated with constructivism, several types of constructivism have been both defined and supported in multiple dimensions. Nonetheless, cognitive, social, and radical constructivism frameworks are the three types of constructivism that are typically covered in the teaching paradigm in the public domains seen in Figure 1 in the literature map.

Development of Constructivist Theory

Piaget's Theory of Constructivism. The provision of Jean Piaget's theory is based on the understanding of the way children both do and think within the different levels as they develop into mature adults. According to Ültanır (2012), cognitive constructivism is based on the cognitive configuration and the knowledge creation process in the mind of a child. This is justified in the literature map provided in Figure 1 as it shows that constructivism learning theory relies on the idea that individual creation

of knowledge is its learning locus. Piaget's argument is formed on the foundation that the view of a child regarding the world and the decisions about reality that follow these views differ from the ones associated with adult human beings. This theory provides insight into the things that children can be interested in and capable of doing at the various ages as they grow physically and develop mentally.

Based on Piaget's assertion, children have unique perceptions of the world that seem to be different from what adults perceive. These perceptions among children can be said to be both robust and coherent. Piaget believed that since children are not complete adults, they tend to be stubborn and rigid with what they perceive to be true (Ültanır, 2012). How children complete tasks and think shows that they act with certain integrity characterized with a unique logic that is well suited to their immediate possibilities and needs. However, as much as children have their own precise views, they still manage to change them during social interactions with other people in their surroundings.

Piaget additionally noted that children's views continue to evolve as they develop. Ültanır (2012) highlighted the four main periods of development proposed by Piaget that exist as the mind of a child evolves; these include the "sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages". According to Piaget's theory, conceptual changes in young people come from the experiences or actions of people in their environment; this is alongside the unseen processes that are responsible for equilibrating or compensating for what Ackermann (2001) terms as surface perturbations.

Vygotsky's Constructivism. According to Churcher (2014), Lev Vygotsky is perceived as the father of the social constructivism theory because he promoted the

assertion that the idea of people engaging in dialogues and interacting with one another resulted in construction of knowledge. Vygotsky believed that the social environment played a significant role in co-constructing knowledge and that people use language when constructing meaning during the process of social interaction (Churcher, 2014). This assertion is in direct alignment with the way constructivists view learning as shown in the literature map provided in Figure 1. Specifically, Vygotsky's theory discusses the function that social and cultural interactions perform in the learning process. This theory clearly draws on the importance of learners' engagement in the process of acquiring knowledge. As a social process, Vygotsky presented the idea that the process of learning requires the assistance of other individuals within one's learning environment. Churcher (2014) made it clear that people use language as an inter-psychological tool that is essential to the mind of proponent of the social constructivism framework in the process of creating knowledge.

Types of Constructivism Theories

Social Constructivism. According to Amineh and Asl (2015), the theory of social constructivism refers to a learning theory that covers the world's knowledge and understandings that are developed through the joint efforts of individuals. Based on the provisions of this learning theory, social constructivism can be said to be built on the assumptions that understanding, importance, and meaning are generated or developed as a result of coordination among people (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Therefore, social interactions are essential in prompting individuals to participate in the knowledge creation processes that would result in their developments.

Social constructivism is built on two basic principles: Amineh and Asl (2015) asserted that the first principle provides that people have a tendency to rationalize their individual experiences. Although there are numerous ways in which people use while rationalizing their experiences, developing a strategic framework of the social context and how it functions sum up the common approach that people use to rationalize their life experiences (Amineh&Asl, 2015). Additionally, human belief that language is essential system that allows individuals to construct reality is another principle of social constructivist theory (Amineh&Asl, 2015). In applying these two principles in the context of the current research, it can be stated that students are encouraged to rationalize their individual experiences while constructing the meaning of the religious knowledge in the elementary schools. However, this is done by a diligent scrutiny of the language that Amineh and Asl (2015) explained to be a crucial system in constructing reality.

Furthermore, the social constructivist theory is characterized with some definite assumptions on reality, knowledge, and learning. First, the proponents of this theory believe that reality cannot emerge in advance since it relies on human activities to be constructed. In addition, because reality is not created before the so-called social invention, this means that it cannot be discovered by people. Moreover, Amineh and Asl (2015) stated that social constructivist theory depicts that knowledge is constructed from not only the social contexts but also from the cultural perspective given that it is a human product. This assertion means that students should be able to create meaning as they interact with each other, with their teachers, and with the environment that surrounds them.

Finally, Aminah and Asl (2015) stated that social constructivism makes it clear that learning is a social process given that it neither occurs within an individual person nor is it developed by some significant external force. This assertion is in direct alignment with the type of learning that is admired in the modern world, where interactions, collaborations, and other social activities are promoted in the learning environment. Close scrutiny of the principles of social constructivist learning theory shows that, before knowledge is internalized and then used by individuals, it is first constructed in the social domain. When this statement is linked to the learning of the Islamic studies in the elementary schools within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, then it can be concluded that the teaching methods employed in classroom should incorporate various aspects of promoting critical thinking to foster learning process, since students are able to discover basic religious principles, facts and other concepts by themselves. Therefore, utilizing social constructivism in learning environments can be said to both encourage guesswork among the learners and to promote intuitive thinking in them as well. As a result, students will be able to change their behaviors by adopting the positive attributes from individuals in their immediate surroundings. The educators' role in this case will be to produce the learning environment that will only elicit the desired response of acquiring positive behaviors.

Cognitive Constructivism. According to Kalina and Powell (2009), teachers in the United States of America are required to employ constructivist principles while teaching students in their respective classrooms. However, the term “cognitive constructivism” can trigger ambiguous reactions from educators who are directed to use

teaching methods that specifically promote cognitive learning approaches among the students in the classrooms. Cognitive constructivist learning theory is formulated to explain the acquisition of substantial individual thought requirements, as explained by Kalina and Powell (2009). As these authors noted, cognitive constructivism specifically associates itself with the process in which knowledge is processed. This learning theory relies on the process of processing information based on significant elements that are linked to the cognitive process in the minds of individuals since cognitivists perceive learning as an internal mental process.

A discerning look at the provisions of cognitive constructivism shows that this learning theory is built on the basic provisions of the two fundamental epistemological tenets aforementioned above. These two tenets have significant functions in maintaining the external nature of the knowledge and the common belief in the existence of independent reality. Cognitive constructivist learning theory can be linked to the process of learning religious education in the Saudi Arabia-based elementary schools. However, this is only applicable when considering that cognitive constructivism is of the perspective that understanding knowledge, such as the religious education in the current research in the Kingdom, is brought about by both accurate internalization and constructive process of external reality.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that cognitive constructivism provides that the knowledge internalization process depends on the accuracy of the cognitive processes and the structures in the natural world. Nonetheless, the work of a teacher involves structuring the content of the learning activity as a way of helping learners to

develop the capacity as well as skills of learning better. The assertion that people can understand reality is seen as the main difference between cognitive constructivism and other types of constructivism, such as radical and social. In addition, the learning of religious education in elementary schools in Saudi Arabia is considered a significant process found in both internalization and construction and even in the reconstruction of external reality. According to Kimmerle, Cress, and Held (2010), the internalization of knowledge refers to the process of “learning by doing.”

A closer look at Islam in the elementary schools within the Kingdom shows that it is a basic process directed toward developing with accurate internal models and with replicas of several external structures that are believed to exist in the natural world. Notably, learning perspectives are focused on different aspects in cognitive constructivist framework. The first provision is to focus on the procedures of learning and the second is to focus on the symbolization or representation of the learned concepts. This can be linked to the procedures and symbolization of learning religious knowledge in the elementary schools. In comparison, the third focus is on learning, whereas the representations in the second focus are organized in the mind of the individual learner.

Radical Constructivism. Radical constructivism or experimental learning theory is different from cognitive constructivism. Unlike cognitive constructivism, which only embraces the first two philosophical tenets, radical constructivism considers the first three epistemological tenets of constructivism. Proponents of radical constructivism believe that this learning theory is built on the idea that the process of acquiring knowledge has adaptive features. Based on the provisions of radical constructivism, these

same adaptive features are expected in the knowledge acquisition process within the elementary schools in Saudi Arabia. This process is based on the notion that students participate actively in the classrooms by thinking critically to the prompts posed by the teachers. The minds that are involved in thinking critically rather than memorizing are said to be “experientially based” and differs from the provisions of cognitive constructivism theory in the sense that a mind reflects primarily on the external reality in the natural world as explained by Grant (2016). Because of the reflective learning, there is an additional indication that shows the acceptance of the fourth epistemological tenet by radical constructivists.

Therefore, radical constructivism can be said to recognize that religious knowledge in the elementary schools in the Kingdom can be sourced from different instances of social interaction. The emphases of the aforementioned philosophical tenets are structured in such a way that they define the principles that lead to the maintenance of Islamic education’s internal nature and also to the fact that external reality is not understandable to elementary school students, regardless of teaching style. Therefore, it can be said that, because the experience of people with various factors in the surrounding environment is mediated by their senses, reality is not knowable to the individuals in the Kingdom’s elementary schools. However, it should be understood that the senses of elementary school students are not adept when it comes to providing representations of these different, albeit accurate, external forms. Although a closer look at radical constructivism shows that experience is essential while constructing Islamic knowledge in the elementary schools in the Kingdom, constructed knowledge cannot be said to

represent the external natural world accurately, as shown by the provisions of this learning theory. Based on Chiva et al. (2010), adaptive learning is a form of learning that involves some improvements, or rather developments, of the clear order through the self-organization process.

However, radical constructivism dictates that knowledge in the learning environment is not believed to be objective truth; instead, it is suppressed by its adaptive nature. This assertion can be linked to the acquisition of religious knowledge in the Kingdom, whereby assertions—such as there is no way that internal knowledge can match the external reality as proposed in cognitive constructivism—are made. Instead, according to the proponents of this particular theory, radical constructivism is perceived as a significant model of experiences. To achieve the benefits of radical constructivism, viable models of experience are supposed to be created in students with the impact or influence in the specific context in which the learning activity is experienced. These experiences are the ones that help learners to become self-actualized and autonomous as they interact with others. Nevertheless, viable models of experience are supposed to be created in students with the impact or influence in the specific context in which the learning activity is experienced to achieve the benefits of radical constructivism. Therefore, radical constructivism can be said to defend religious knowledge as belonging to the person who knows, not to the external world of reality.

Applications of Constructivism in Modern Learning

Piaget's theory of constructivism influences the teaching of religious studies in such a way that teachers are supposed to prepare a curriculum plan. This helps to enhance

both the logical and the conceptual growth of the students. Based on this theory, teachers must stress the vital function that either the connections or the experiences in the learning environment have on the students' academic development process. Ültanir (2012) explained that Piaget's constructivist theory is of the opinion that individuals tend to both produce knowledge and form meaning from the life experiences that they obtain in their surroundings. It is justifiable that since teaching religious education is based on the production of knowledge and its form of meaning, the experience of religious studies is significant to students during the learning process. Based on this theory, Woo and Reeves (2007) maintain that assimilation and accommodation are significant elements for the creation of/and construction of the students' new knowledge. In the case of this particular research, the knowledge that is being accommodated or assimilated is that of religious studies.

Assimilation refers to the act of appreciating the new knowledge before adopting it into one's daily life experiences (Cress & Kimmerle, 2008). In this regard, assimilation of the religious studies can be said to be the process through which religious learners incorporate the new learning experiences into the old experiences that they had before. As a result, assimilation of the experiences allows religious learners to have a newly developed outlook with the capability of rethinking their previous misunderstandings in the course provisions and then conducting an evaluation of the most important concepts. This process can be summarized as influencing the students' perceptions toward the course provisions of the religious education.

In contrast, Woo and Reeves (2007) stated that the accommodation of knowledge refers to the process through which either the world or the new experiences are reframed within the mental capacity that is already in existence. Religious students tend to conceive a precise new way that shows the manner in which the world is operating. According to Piaget's perception on the theory of constructivism, if things in the social lives of people are not in direct alignment with the operations of the context in the world, those individuals have to both accommodate and reframe the anticipations expected with the results (Woo & Reeves, 2007). This means that religious students accommodate the religious knowledge based on the daily events that occur within the world. With the increased globalization in the current digital world, the occurrences on different corners of the globe only take microseconds to move from one point to another.

A discerning analysis of Piaget's theory of constructivism shows that it only addresses the way learning happens, not the critical factors that influence it. With close reference to Liu and Chen (2010), the provisions of this theory depict the significance of the roles that educators play in the learning process of students. Specifically, Piaget's constructivist theory defines the role of teachers as facilitators who only come in to assist in the students' process of understanding the concepts. Therefore, it can be said that religious teachers only have the role of assisting students in understanding the religious course concepts as provided in the syllabus. The focus in the classroom should be shifted towards students during learning from the teachers. This assertion means that rather than starting by telling the students about the topic of the day, teachers start by asking impromptu questions in a kind of brainstorming session. Instead of giving answers that

correspond to the religious studies curriculum, as facilitators, religious teachers create rooms for learners to develop conclusions on their own, rather than waiting to be told.

Piaget's theory of constructivism also provides that facilitators engage learners in continuous conversations to create learning experiences that are open enough to accommodate new directions that address the students' learning needs. The teachers who utilize this approach aim to ensure that learners develop critical thinking skills that are also effective. Religious teachers, for instance, can encourage their students to think critically about different course provisions within their academic levels. Consequently, according to Butler and Cuenca (2012), as facilitators, religious teachers should be coaches, mentors, and consultants. There are many effective strategies that religious educators can use to develop the critical thinking levels of students in the learning environment. One of these strategies is to foster active learning through collaborative approaches and discussion groups. It is significant to understand that when students work together within these strategies, they tend to help one another in solving problems from the given topics. For that reason, Piaget's constructivist theory is imperative in the entirety of learning religious studies in the contemporary classroom surroundings.

Islamic Education

Courses of Islamic Studies

Islamic education is comprised of five different courses, namely, Tawheed, Quran, Fiqh, Hadith, and Tafseer. Each course of the Islamic studies is comprised of different provisions based on the foundations laid to define it as discussed below.

Tawheed. According to Salim, and Abdullah (2015), Tawheed is regarded as the foundation of the Islamic faith, and one cannot be said to be a Muslim if the individual does not exhibit this principle. The primary meaning of Tawheed is based on the existence of only one God. While conducting doctoral-level research, Alotaibi (2014) asserted that Tawheed classes tend to focus on teaching students the basic concept of Islam that there is only one Allah Almighty, and that He has no companion. Thus, it can be stated that the major objective of teaching Tawheed courses in the Islamic education classes is to communicate the belief perceived to be correct to the hearts of the religious students (Alotaibi, 2014). It is important to understand that a Tawheed class tends to warn students against violating the basic principles of their religion because violation of this principle for the Islam believers is of great consequence to their religious lives as it results in the nullification of their faith in Islam.

In the research conducted by Salim, and Abdullah (2015), it was found out that Tawheed was essential in guiding Muslims to follow the straight path by encouraging them to implement the commandments of Allah fully. Observing Allah's commandments was found to have positive effects on not only the behavior but also the determination of Muslims as it is an important principle to the education systems. Furthermore, Salim, and Abdullah (2015) stated that students have to understand the concepts of Tawheed very well for the future of the Islamic society to be very strong. However, appropriate methodologies should be employed to ensure that effective strategies are incorporated while teaching in Tawheed class to foster a proper understanding of the concepts to stimulate both the thoughts and actions of the students.

Quran. Quran refers to the central religious written text of the Islam religion. According to Alotaibi (2014), the Quran has not been changed or even just one of its many words altered despite being more than fourteen centuries old. The Quran forms the necessary foundation of not only Islam's doctrine but also the legislative framework of the Muslims. As Alotaibi (2014) noted, training students to read correctly is among the main purposes of teaching Islamic concepts in the Quran classes. In addition, increasing the scientific outcome of the provided teachings is also another goal that teachers in the Quran classes aim at attaining. Students should read the Quran as it is essential in their pursuit of getting significant information that helps them get a comprehensive understanding of the human psychology as well as behavior. While reviewing different performed studies, Sadeghi (2011) found out that Quran had a very strong voice of inspiration helpful in reducing the problems of patients resulting in the reduction of both stress and worries among them. Because of the inspirational atmosphere created by Quran verses in the classroom, it can be asserted students are inspired by this course resulting in the reduced stress and worries among them.

Fiqh. Based on the assertions made by Alotaibi (2014), the Fiqh class is built on the foundation of teaching students the best ways that they can behave ethically in not just one or two but in all aspects of their lives as well as helping them get the full understanding of the ethical doctrines. The concepts of the Fiqh class are important in the lives of the students as they enlighten them on how they can relate with both self and other people in the society. Fauzan (2017) emphasizes on these assertions by defining Fiqh as either a system or a set of the rules that are used in governing the relationship of

humans with Allah, neighbors and other creatures within the environment. It should be remembered that the relationship between a human being and God is one of the Muslim's devotions to the Creator. In addition, carrying out His commands and also avoiding His prohibitions are other Muslim devotions to Allah (Fauzan, 2017). Therefore, the characteristics of Fiqh have a strong emphasis on the accurate understanding of the law's provision in the Islam domain. Besides, Fauzan (2017) noted that the ability to carry out religious worship in not only good but also the true way in the daily life of the humans is another area that Fiqh classes emphasize.

Tafseer. Tafseer refers to the explanations made to the provisions of the Quran. This Islamic religious education course aims at enabling students to have a proper understanding of the legal provisions of the Quran. Besides, ensuring that learners have a good understanding of the meanings of the Quran deeply is another objective of a Tafseer class, as explained by Alotaibi (2014). In most cases, Tafseer classes involve coming up with the legal provisions from the Quran to increase both the vocabulary volume and the Islamic ideas of the students in the class. This goal is achieved by subjecting students to the explanations of the meanings of various words as well as sentences as presented in the Quran. Therefore, a Tafseer course is essential in promoting students' understanding of the Quranic concepts.

Hadith. The term "Hadith" refers to the precise words that were spoken by Prophet Mohammad. The aim of this course in the Islamic Religious study is to give comprehensive elaborations of the teachings of the Quran. Also, providing a walkthrough for the students studying the religious concepts in each area of the living a certain kind of

life that adheres to the Islamic teachings is another that can be associated with a Hadith class. Notably, the objective of Hadith is to offer proper training of students on the best ways that they can use to devise rules as well as all the provisions of the Islamic teachings that come from the Prophet Mohammad. Apart from confirming to the mental side and even taking into account the process of devising provisions, a Hadith class has a tendency and a mandate of developing the emotional aspect of the students. According to Yahya et al. (2017), students were expected to put in efforts that would enable them to memorize Hadith in this course. Therefore, it can be stated that memorization is one of the dominant methods of teaching the hadith-related subjects in the religious learning environments.

Teaching Islamic Studies in Saudi Arabia

Religious education in Saudi Arabia is emphasized at every level of the Saudi Arabian school system. Jamjoom (2010) asserted that when a student failed in any of the five courses in Islamic studies, then the individual would be required to repeat the entire academic year. This factor shows how serious every course in the religious education is in the society of Saudi Arabia. But it should be noted that learning Islamic studies does not consume the entire time of the students' activities in the schools since there are also other subjects such as science, mathematics, and languages being taught in the schools as well.

However, an approximation of 30% of the total classroom hours spent by students is specifically allotted to learning courses of Islamic studies in the elementary schools (Jamjoom, 2010). In both intermediate and secondary education levels, the total amount

of hours dedicated to teaching Islamic education concepts is reduced to approximately 24% of the students' classroom hours, as asserted by Jamjoom (2010). Nonetheless, it is significant to note that the emphasis on the concepts and principles of Islam is beyond the sections of the classroom hours that are stated to be explicitly teaching religious courses since the teaching of all subjects in schools at each academic level is dictated by Islam. For instance, Jamjoom (2010) explained that even sciences and humanity subjects are contained within the layers of not only the Islamic thought but also its philosophy.

The Importance of Islamic Studies in Saudi Arabia

According to Jamjoom (2010), religion is considered as the foundation of every educational decision made within the boundaries of Saudi Arabia. Among all religions present in the world today, Islam still dominates with the lion's share of the population residing in Saudi Arabia adhering to its provisions. It should be noted that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is among the countries built on the religious concepts and principles of Islam. For instance, the philosophy of Saudi Arabia is mirrored by the country's constitution which highlights that "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic state with Islam as its religion; God's Book and the Sunnah [ways and practices] of His Prophet, peace be upon him, are its constitution, Arabic is its language" (Jamjoom, 2010, p. 547). This makes the practice of teaching Islamic studies a very important task in the country as it is directly associated with teaching students both the constitution and the philosophy of the country. To be specific, Islamic studies entails different aspects such as the five courses aforementioned above that are essential in directing the lives of the individuals.

To begin with, Islamic studies is a career subject in which getting proper education can lead to securing a formal employment position to serve as the source of income to the individuals. The subject provides basic skills to learners enabling them solve different social problems requiring not only religious understanding but also critical thinking. Moreover, the need to observe the rule of law and fostering good relationships between man and God is another objective that Islamic studies delivers to the students. This is justified by the fact that learners are able to live in harmony with their neighbors as well as the creatures present in their surroundings once they are equipped with the fundamental concepts and religious principles taught in schools.

Methods for Teaching Islamic Education in Saudi Arabia

There are several methods that Islamic teachers are employing today when teaching students concepts of religious studies in Saudi Arabia including the narrative method, role model method, preaching method, practical training method, iterative method, and education technology method. However, the extent to which these methods are being employed to teach religious courses in Saudi Arabia is still unclear. This is because there are very few studies that ventures into this topic and the current research will be aimed at obtaining relevant and valid data on the methods of teaching Islamic education being employed by the teachers today and why teachers utilize them. Here is a brief explanation of some of the methods used to teach Islamic education to students within Saudi Arabia.

Narrative method (Expository Approach)

The narrative or expository teaching method involves telling stories during the classroom hours as a form of equipping students with certain desired concepts with the aim of creating a significant intellectual impression on the students. According to Alismail (2015), storytelling techniques revolve around a given theme of interest that an instructor desires to teach students. A closer look at the Quran, as a course in the Islamic studies, shows that there are numerous stories of the apostles as well as their companions described comprehensively. It is the set of these stories that are extracted from the Holy Quran to pass the intended message to the learners when teaching religious education. Apart from the apostles and their companions, the Holy Quran is comprised of the stories about the life of the Holy Prophet that teachers use to pass both concepts and principles of Islam to students in Saudi Arabia and in other parts of the world whose societies appreciate the Islam religion as their way of life. Apart from making stories real, narratives invoke emotions helping the students not only learn but also retain information in a better way (Butcher, 2006).

The narrative or expository method is facilitated by the teacher as the main speaker engaging in the role of telling stories to the students. Besides, there are instances that teachers can ask a student to narrate a certain story from the Holy Quran to other students or even invite a religious leader like an Imam to come pass significant Islamic concepts to the students through narration. Furthermore, the narrative method can be done by either creating the stories as they are told or by reading directly from either a secondary source like textbooks or a primary source like the Holy Quran. The narrative

method has been found important in improving the literacy learning of the students. According to Miller and Pennycuff (2008), storytelling is one of the efficient strategies that incorporate the aesthetic approaches of understanding instructions, and it has the ability to motivate students to keep on connecting with their learning process.

Narrative method is in direct alignment with the provisions of constructivism as evidenced in the literature map in Figure 1 that constructivism views learning as a form of creating meaning from the people's experience. Despite being one of the most commonly known teaching methods of Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia, the extent to which narrative method is employed by the Islamic teachers is still unclear. This creates a gap for the current study to determine the usage of this teaching method in religious classes in Saudi Arabia and why teachers are utilizing it and if it is being utilized to a significant scale.

Role Model Method

Teaching by role modeling refers to the practice of teaching students by providing the living examples of the way people either adhered to or failed to be adhered to follow the concepts and principles being taught are impacted by their choices in the real world situation. Role models are known for influencing the both the academic and personality growth of the students as explained by Narinasamy and Logeswaran (2015). In this method, the teacher presents the main idea and selects the individual that successfully achieved something by following the provisions of the concept being taught. A role model for a student can be a classmate, a teacher, or even a person outside the classroom domain. When the role model is a teacher, the individual is expected to live by the

example in the society as his or her behaviors both in school and outside the school will a form a significant part in influencing the behavior of the students expected to live within the religious provisions.

Bashir et al. (2016) asserted that a teacher can only become a role model if one is attentive enough towards the academic growth of the students and also provides equal importance to their individual growth. Thus, it can be stated that teachers employing role modeling teaching method tend to practice what they teach their students. It should be remembered that teachers educate learners about the significant doctrines of Islam as well as the rules of Allah, and they live by these doctrines and respect these rules. However, Sanderse (2013) reviewed relevant pedagogical and psychological literature to find out if teachers were modeling admirable character traits effectively. In this qualitative research, Sanderse (2013) noted that role modeling was being used on rare occasions as the only teaching approach and that a very small percentage of the adolescent students recognized their teachers as models. When drawing examples of other desired people in the society, students are encouraged to emulate the ethical behaviors of their teachers since they are mirrors of the good people living in the true relationship between man and Allah, neighbors and the creatures in their respective environments.

Therefore, role modeling can be termed as one of the teaching methods that give students the platforms to link the concepts studied in classrooms with the real-life application of the course provisions in the society. But again, teaching students religious courses using role modeling technique can sometimes be challenging in the sense that the selected role models fail to live up to the moral expectations stated in the learning

environment. However, it is justifiable that role model method attains the goals and objectives of constructivism learning theory since it involves students gaining knowledge from the individuals' experiences. Just like the narrative method, there are no published studies depicting the extent to which the role modeling teaching method is being employed in teaching Islamic education within the boundaries of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the main aim of the current research is to fill this gap and even determine the reasons why teachers employ it in the classrooms.

Preaching Method

Based on Alotaibi (2014), the Holy Quran provides a recommendation of a very influential approach concerning the teaching process. This approach involves different methods including but not limited to the preaching and giving pieces of advice. Preaching is a teaching method of religious studies that has a very strong effect on the students' religious, psychological as well as the social development perception. Besides, Alotaibi (2014) suggested that there was a need for the teachers to realize the importance of preaching method in the education of students because it would help them to develop the proper preparations concerning the mental and social growth of the students. Thence, the use of preaching method for teaching Islamic education would not only help learners to gain interactive abilities but also achieve mental development. Just like the narrative method, the preaching method can be practiced by a teacher inviting a religious leader in the formal classroom to exclusively talk about the Islamic concepts and principles as stipulated in the Holy Quran. The clergy person or even the teacher makes connections between verses of Quran and the concepts of the Islamic studies to provide a blend of the

topic as well as the religious doctrine from the examples drawn directly from the Quran and other materials affiliated with the Islamic religion.

The aim of preaching teaching method is to reinforce the Islamic education concepts through the use of religious context since clergy are perceived as having vast knowledge in their respective religions. Muslims believe that it is God who made the society to have the responsibility of giving directions to the young people by teaching them properly and preaching method that can be used as technique of forbidding wrongdoing like oppressing others in the society to better the lives of people (Alotaibi, 2014, p. 8). But again, research about preaching method in teaching Islamic studies within the boundaries of Saudi Arabia remains unexploited area since there are no published studies covering the extent to which this method is employed in the country's educational system. Besides, no researcher has explored the reasons why teachers might end up using or not using the preaching method while teaching Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia. Thus, there is a research gap in the existing literature that the current study is aiming to fill with its findings.

Practical Training Method

This method refers to the process of teaching by practice and application as it involves the teachers encouraging their students to put the course concepts that they learn within the school learning environment into practical use in their lives. It should be remembered that students can employ the course provisions in every social interaction that they make. Therefore, it is perceived that teaching by practice and application is a method which is capable of encouraging instructors to give relevant instructions to the

students to engage in practicing what they have learned in the classroom. Having a closer look at the Islamic doctrines show that there are several examples of teaching by practice found in the Holy Quran and Islamic teachers are expected to employ the criteria used in the Holy Quran to teach their students.

For instance, Rahman (2018) provides a hadith of Allah's Apostle, who went in the mosque, and another man also entered the mosque and started praying. After the man thought that he had finished praying, he went to greet the Prophet, but the Prophet returned his greetings and told the man to pray again as he had not prayed. After praying for the second time, the Prophet told the man to go back and pray as he had not yet prayed. This situation occurred three times until the man finally said to the Prophet "By Him Who sent you with the Truth, I cannot offer the prayer in a better way than this. Please, teach me how to pray" (Rahman, 2018, p. 11). At this juncture, the Prophet then said to the man:

When you stand for Prayer say Takbir and then recite from the Qur'an (of what you know by heart) and then bow till you feel at ease. Then raise your head and stand up straight, then prostrate till you feel at ease during your prostration, then sit with calmness till you feel at ease (do not hurry) and do the same in all your prayers. (Rahman, 2018, p. 11)

What the Prophet directed the man in this Hadith is an example of teaching by the application. Practical training method is relevant in constructivism domain as its provisions are similar to the theory's learning locus that the learning process involves both individual and social construction of knowledge. This is expected of the Islamic

education in the contemporary Saudi education system, but the current literature does not have a clear image of the extent that Islamic teachers are employing this method. Thus, there is a need for comprehensive research to be conducted with the aim of determining if teaching by practice and application is among the methods being currently employed in the Islamic education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Iterative Method

The iterative methods of teaching classroom concepts by teachers encouraging their students to repeat specific educational concepts with a goal of helping them not only internalize but also memorize the provisions and concepts of the course for a very long time. This shows that students of Islamic education are encouraged by their teachers to repeat certain concepts from the Islamic doctrines and courses to enhance their understanding of the Islamic education. In most cases, the iterative teaching method is employed when learners are still in their early stages of learning in the elementary learning environments. This helps them to build a very strong foundation for both knowledge and understanding in their religious courses, thus, confirming the purpose of education in constructivism learning theory domain. Based on Dessai, and Kamat (2012), iterative teaching method was found to be a state of art approach that helped students in improving both their performances and knowledge base. Similar to the teaching methods discussed above, the extent to which iterative teaching method is employed by the Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia is not clear, and this current research aims at filling this gap by identifying the precise methods that teachers pass religious knowledge to their respective students.

Education Technology Method

The rapid advancement of the modern technology in the current century is impacting almost every aspect of the human life and education cannot be an exception. Today, there are numerous education technology practices that teachers are using to foster the students' understanding of the course provisions. For instance, the use of the electronic books is gaining much popularity today when it comes to personal reading reducing the over-reliance on the print books (Jones, & Brown, 2011). In most cases, the use of technology in teaching tends to replicate other teaching methods but in the digital form rather than the traditional approaches. Taking an example of the preaching method, Islamic teachers are using the videos of the Imams and other religious leaders to pass the religious concepts to the students by playing them in the learning settings.

The aim of using technology in classrooms is to promote the efficiency of learning in the current digital era. According to Campbell (2012), digital storytelling helped students to increase their engagement levels including the self-perception and confidence in classrooms. Given that educational technology method involves creation of a learning environment that fosters students' participation, it can be said to be appreciating the role of teachers under constructivism learning theory domain. Nonetheless, the application of the technology in teaching Islamic education within Saudi Arabia is an area that has not been researched. Therefore, the current study aims to close the literature gap by identifying the teaching methods being used by the Islamic teachers today and the rationale behind them.

Justification for Using Stated Teaching Methods

The strict requirements teachers are expected to adhere to while teaching Islamic education course concepts dictate the methods adopted for their use in the classroom. Research conducted by Alwadai (2014) found that teachers used lecture methods while teaching Islamic courses in elementary schools due to a requirement to cover the course content being taught within a specific timetable. Similarly, Islamic teachers are therefore required to adhere strictly to not only the scope but also the sequence of the course content (Alwadai, 2014). This means that the choice of methods used while teaching Islamic education in Saudi Arabia is limited, as instruction is based on the timetable and course structure rather than the effectiveness of approaches aiming to enhance students' levels of understanding the concepts. This restricts teachers in maximizing their potential, as they will be focused on covering the course concepts within a given duration of time without paying as much attention to the level of students' understanding. This approach does not leave enough room for instructor to effectively promote the students' understanding of the case due to the tight schedules they are expected to follow. It should be understood that to improve the understanding of the Islamic concepts among students in the learning environment, teachers are supposed to initiate appropriate mechanisms that are learner-centered.

The current teaching methods employed are iterative in nature and effective in enhancing classroom understanding of the course concepts among students. According to Dessai and Kamat (2012), a series of iterations offer the students opportunities to not only learn but also understand any unclear concepts to achieve the desired goal of

improving the learning outcomes. The iterative teaching and learning model can assist teachers in identifying students experiencing similar challenges, and these students can be grouped together to receive the proper assistance with the reversed instructions (Dessai & Kamat, 2012). The discussion here should not be focused on the appropriateness of the iterative methods used in teaching and learning in classrooms, but rather, whether the methods adopted are iterative in nature to offer students with more potent learning opportunities. The iterative methods employed in this context are similar to recitation where students are required to repeat certain phrases of the course content in order to memorize the knowledge. This is not the kind of iterative model that should be adopted in Saudi schools to enhance students' understanding of course content in Islamic education.

However, the current literature is unclear about this concept since there is no single study that focuses on the nature of iterations adopted by Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia. Majority of the current teaching methods, such as preaching, recitation, role modeling, and narrative methods, improve the student-teacher relationships through face-to-face interactions in classrooms. According to Gehlbach et al. (2016), there is a possibility of greater affinity and thus the formation of closer relationships between the student and teacher that occurs when people perceive themselves to be similar to one another. A closer look at the role modeling teaching method shows that students are influenced by the behaviors of their teachers, and they can end up emulating such behaviors if they find their teacher interesting. This way, students tend to become closer to their teachers, resulting in an improved relationship between the teachers and their students. But again, the majority of currently used methods, such as preaching and

narration, are instructional in nature. It is a common notion in the education domain that instructional teaching methods only require teachers to give instructions, as students do not actively engage in the learning process other than listening and following guidelines set by the instructors. Instructional teaching methods are unfair to students as they not only limit their understanding of the course concepts but also limit development of the students' critical thinking ability, thus, not effective in the modern educational systems.

Though the existing literature is clear about ways to improve classroom collaborations and the relationship between teachers and students, there are no studies published previously that justify why teachers will employ certain methods to teach courses of Islamic education with the purpose of improving the teacher-student relationships. Perceptions that there is a lack of efficient alternative approaches to be adopted in the classrooms are associated with numerous challenges. For instance, Alfaki and Khamis (2014) described numerous challenges ranging from difficulties experienced by teachers to issues faced by students concerning the use of interactive whiteboards in classrooms. Difficulties such as lack of enough technical support and teachers' incompetency in using the interactive whiteboards can change teachers' perceptions towards using them and make them continue relying on traditional methods instead of adopting the modern ways that are more challenging to use. However, teachers face a significant number of difficulties when adopting new technologies in the learning environments due to a lack of necessary skills and knowledge to use the technology in question.

Teachers that are well-trained in using interactive whiteboards will likely establish a good learning environment that will also encourage learners to appreciate the role of this technology in improving their learning outcomes. Thus, stating that the use of alternative teaching methods is associated with endless challenges merely serves as a scapegoat in this case and lacks enough ground to justify the argument. Again, it is not clear in the literature the extent to which teachers claim that alternative methods of teaching are posing great challenges to be adopted in the learning environment; that is why they are mostly utilizing traditional methods today when teaching course concepts of Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia.

Limitations for Islamic Teaching Methods

The teaching methods currently being used to teach students Islamic education courses in Saudi Arabia are, in fact, obstacles to improve learners' critical thinking (Alwadai, 2014). According to Dessai and Kamat (2012), the current educational system requires teachers to focus on teaching students a given set of course content and, thereafter, completing the assessments to determine the amount of the knowledge that students might have gained during that period. The expectation is that students will remember the information taught by the teacher and also improve their individual knowledge base where deemed necessary to prepare well for the assessments conducted at different stages throughout the course curriculum (Dessai & Kamat, 2012). In the same way, Alwadai (2014) observed that 98% of the teachers that responded in his study said that there was pressure for Islamic teachers to cover the classroom content within a given course timetable based on both the scope and sequence of the content. This is opposed to

the need for teachers to improve the students' understanding of the course concepts so that students can apply the learned knowledge within their lived environment as they relate with other people in their precise social settings.

An Islamic education course should enhance the learners' perceptions towards other people and improve their critical thinking capabilities as ways of solving contemporary issues in the communities rather than imparting them with theoretical knowledge that has little significance in the world outside classrooms. Continuing to assess students' results in the memorization of course concepts only increases students' abilities to pass the awaited assessment tests with little or no retention of the material. This is opposed to the general aim of the Islamic courses that calls for the improvement of students' knowledge to enhance their relationships with God, their neighbors, and other creatures within their immediate environments.

Modern Teaching Approaches

Modern teaching approaches are based on advancing technology and differ with the traditional approaches that were being used to teach religious concepts in ancient times. Mortensen and Nicholson (2015) asserted that flipped classrooms stimulated greater learning in schools and could be perceived as the modern twenty-first-century approach in today's teaching endeavors. This means that teaching approaches evolve with time and are relevant at a certain period; therefore, teaching methods used today can be significant for current teaching and learning needs but may not necessarily be significant in the near future. As such, there is always a need to keep reviewing and improving upon teaching approaches whenever it is necessary.

Need for Modern Teaching Methods When Teaching Islamic Studies

Teachers often find it difficult to teach students in modern classrooms using the currently rigid educational system of adhering to the course timetable based on the scope and sequence of the classroom concepts. The findings of research conducted by Nufiar and Idris (2016) showed that Islamic teachers made appropriate lesson plans which were not only considerate but also measured and prepared within ample time. However, the kind of methods that these teachers used in classrooms were found to be either generally incompatible or inconsistent with the existing methods in the lesson plan (Nufiar & Idris, 2016).

Teachers should utilize only the approaches that are consistent and compatible with the proposed methods in the lesson plans. Lesson plans are useful tools that provide directions to teachers and are not prepared for the sake of presenting them to the educational stakeholders as evidence of the progress of teachers' work. To overcome this challenge, appropriate changes should be made in the educational sector to give teachers the scope to teach more effectively by using appropriate teaching methods that will be compatible and consistent with the specific methods outlined in their lesson plans. This is important as emerging technology is affecting almost every aspect of human life, and the education sector is one of the most rapidly changing fields.

Secondly, the rapid advancement of modern technology is shifting the way students are taught through the creation of new teaching platforms that can be used in classrooms to achieve the learning goals. Alahmari and Kyei-Blankson (2016) conducted empirical research on the implementation of e-learning systems in teaching K-12 public

schools in Saudi Arabia and discovered that the utilization of classroom technology resulted in the increased teachers' satisfaction levels. The precise technology that they researched was characterized by not only easier content delivery but also the facilitation of student learning, as well as encouragement of peer collaboration and communication between teachers and parents (Alahmari & Kyei-Blankson, 2016). This means that all schools within Saudi Arabia should begin to shift away from the traditional teaching approaches and implement more useful technologies in their learning environments to enjoy the different benefits, including, but not limited to, the enhanced communication and collaboration among educational stakeholders. This will improve the general performance of the students, and it is also interesting to note that the shift in the education sector towards technology-based programs is improving the levels of students' engagement and motivation in classrooms.

Thirdly, modern teaching methods through the help of technologies increases the levels of engagement among students in the classrooms. The use of electronic technology devices, such as iPads in the classrooms, encourages students' learning engagement, resulting in the active learning process within classrooms that eventually paves the way for the success of the learners (Mango, 2015). Student engagement is significant in the classrooms, and lack of it can have negative impacts on student success. However, it is clear that one way that teachers can increase the engagement levels of their students is through the use of digital devices in their classrooms. There are numerous ways in which these digital devices can be used in classrooms to teach Islamic courses in the learning environments. For instance, teachers can use any multimedia tools, such as animations,

graphics, videos, and audio, to tell the stories found in the Holy Quran while teaching the Hadith course to Islamic education students in elementary school settings.

Use of Technology as a Teaching Tool

The rapid advancement of modern technology in the current century is impacting almost every aspect of human life, and education cannot be an exception. According to Goundar (2014), students tend to be interested in online resources such as social media sites instead of textbook chapters, prompting educators to spend a lot of time monitoring their activities. For instance, it is a common observation in the public domain that children who are addicted to playing video games are likely to be thinking about their favorite games even when they are attending classes. Today, teachers are employing many newly emerged educational technology practices in their classes to foster the students' understanding of course provisions. The Saudi Arabian government has also started encouraging the adoption of technological gadgets in schools to help teachers administer their duties without much difficulty and make the students more engaged with their academic curriculum.

Types of Technologies Used in Saudi Schools

Each school in Saudi Arabia tries to adopt the most appropriate technologies to benefit its students in terms of increased levels of motivation, engagement, and understanding. Although not all schools have standard technological devices to attain this goal, some approaches to teach using modern innovative tools are more common in public and private schools than other technologies. In a research study conducted on various aspects of digital technology in Saudi Arabia's schools, Al-Faleh (2012) found

that slide projectors, smartboards, cameras, data shows, overhead projectors, mobile phones (smartphones), computers, and the internet were the most commonly used tools. Furthermore, teachers also reported that the application of e-mail, videos, movie projectors, television, multimedia, virtual classes, and digital cameras were among the digital technologies available to learners in various secondary schools within Saudi Arabia (Al-Faleh, 2012). The availability of educational technologies is essential in modern classrooms to improve the efficiency of learning and teaching, given that the current generation of students is inclined towards using digital platforms.

Moreover, the availability of digital technologies is dependent on the type of school and the attributes of students in the learning environment. For instance, Alfaraj and Kuyini (2014) listed computers, tablets, and projectors as the available technological tools in Saudi Arabian institutions for learners who have Down's syndrome. In addition, Alfaraj and Kuyini (2014) also observed DVD players, cell phones, and loudspeakers within the sampled schools. This shows that schools in Saudi Arabia value the importance of offering quality education to their students by adopting assistive technologies in special cases in order to help learners with different disabilities. Numerous types of technologies are currently being applied in the teaching and learning methods of several courses across Saudi Arabia.

Technologies Appropriate to Teach Islamic Courses

Despite the development of numerous technological devices to be used in different levels of the educational systems across the world, not all types are suitable to teach every academic discipline. For example, some technologies are good fits for

teaching mathematical concepts, some are better for the purpose of enhancing understanding of scientific disciplines, and others are more effective for teaching languages and humanities. However, some technologies can improve students' understanding irrespective of the subject being taught. According to Zedan et al. (2014), the traditional way of teaching is the most dominant mechanism for teaching religious courses in Muslim countries because the use of educational technology has been overlooked for many years based on the assumption that Islamic knowledge is a sacred message. Notwithstanding this statement, the use of Microsoft PowerPoint has proved effective through its visual elements, in both pedagogical and religious terms, for teaching Islamic studies (Lari, 2014; Zedan et al., 2014). Kapi et al. (2017) confirmed this assertion, stating that multimedia teaching tools such as PowerPoint aid in the use of both visualization and interaction techniques when applied to various e-learning projects within classrooms.

Role of Technology in Teaching Islamic Courses

Innovators develop incremental or radical technologies with certain aims and objectives to influence the human life. Kapi et al. (2017) stated that the application of multimedia in the education sector has been found to be an effective teaching tool that makes Islamic studies and other subjects not only less abstract but also less theoretical, thus making these subjects easier to learn and capturing the requirements of students. Further, Lari (2014) explained that the utilization of technology in classrooms significantly enhances learning by offering a new and improved understanding of the course topic and also by motivating students. Therefore, technology is proving to be an

essential tool, determined by researchers to foster learning and teaching processes to increase the academic attainments of learners.

It is worth noting that each form of technology is precisely associated with certain benefits to modern classrooms. For instance, the use of electronic books is gaining much popularity for the purpose of personal reading, thus reducing over-reliance on print books (Jones & Brown, 2011). Electronic books can provide Islamic students with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the topics that their teachers are to cover in future classes, enabling them to understand the relevant course concepts easily. In most cases, the use of technology in classrooms tends to replicate other teaching methods in a digital format, as opposed to traditional approaches. For example, utilizing the preaching method, some Islamic teachers play videos of the Imams and other religious leaders in learning environments in order to pass religious concepts to students.

The aim of using technology in classrooms is to promote the efficiency of learning in the current digital era. According to Campbell (2012), digital storytelling helps students to increase their engagement levels, including their self-perceptions and confidence in the classroom environment. Given that the educational technology method involves the establishment of a classroom that fosters student participation, the role of educators under the learning theory of constructivism should be appreciated. Nonetheless, the application of technology in teaching Islamic education in Saudi Arabia is an region that has not yet been researched. The current study is aiming at filling this literature gap by identifying the teaching methods currently applied by the Islamic teachers as well as the rationales behind them.

Barriers to Islamic Teachers' Use of Classroom Technology

Although many educational processes in various countries, such as Saudi Arabia, have invested in the adoption of information and communications technology (ICT) in their educational systems, the implementation process has been slow. According to Albugami and Ahmed (2015), numerous barriers have hindered the adoption of ICT programs in Saudi Arabia, including but not limited to lack of enough space, inadequate resources, high maintenance costs, insufficient ICT skills, absence of effective training programs, and lack of clear ICT policies. Almalki and Williams (2012) categorized these barriers into three broad categories: teacher-related factors, institutional factors, and extrinsic factors. The factors related to teachers include their lack of confidence, insufficient teacher competence, and negative attitude (Almalki & Williams, 2012).

It has been commonly asserted in the public domain that a confident teacher is less panicky while using technological tools during classroom sessions as compared to the less confident ones (Wang, Chen, & Levy, 2010). On the other hand, teachers' incompetence is a great obstacle to the adoption and application of technology, given that these tools require teachers to dedicate their time and other resources in order to get most out of them. Lastly, a teacher should have a positive attitude before employing any educational technological device in order to do so successfully. This is because teachers with negative perceptions of a particular technology will not dedicate their time and efforts to better the learning tool into a useful device that can help enhance students' levels of understanding.

Inefficient training, lack of enough time, lack of local technical support, and management barriers are among the school factors that most commonly prevent the adoption and implementation of educational technology in schools, as explained by Almalki and Williams (2012). First, a shortage of time is considered to be a common issue that teachers face in relation to implementing technologies in their classrooms across the globe (Almalki & Williams, 2012). According to Al Mulhim (2014), this barrier is evidenced by a shortage in the time available for teachers to prepare their teaching resources as well as the time stipulated for the same teachers to attend adequate ICT training.

The amount of time allocated to any task is crucial to the success or failure of that project; when limited time is reserved for teachers to prepare the resources required for teaching with educational technology, the outcome is likely to be negative (Al Mulhim, 2014). Teachers need certain duration to align all the course provisions with the technology to be used. For instance, a teacher will need a certain amount of time to prepare PowerPoint slides, a comprehensive multimedia tool, in order to include not only visual elements but also speaker notes to gain partial achievement compared to the normal lecturing and other traditional methods of teaching. Failure to allocate enough time to preparation might cause some of the essential elements of the tool to be omitted, making the device ineffective with regard to its ability to achieve the desired goals.

Furthermore, extrinsic factors include local culture, insufficient funding support, and lack of appropriate planning. Without sufficient funding, it is difficult for schools to provide the hardware and software of educational technology; this makes it challenging

to encourage teachers to use technological devices when technological resources are inadequate (Almalki & Williams, 2012). Undoubtedly, lack of enough resources can further develop or change teachers' perceptions of technology, impacting their confidence and attitudes. Unless these challenges are resolved, the implementation rates of educational technologies will remain very low in Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, this study aimed to identify the specific methods that Islamic teachers use while teaching religious courses in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, this study will identify the technological tools used by Islamic teachers as well as the reasons for which these teachers employ the most frequently utilized devices.

Relationship between Constructivism, Technology, and Teaching Islamic Studies

As stated above, constructivism is a learning theory that is built on the principle that people tend to construct both their individual knowledge and understanding through different platforms, such as direct experience or having reflections on their experiences. This kind of learning is perceived to promote critical thinking among learners. According to Alhamuddin and Bukhori (2016), teachers who like using instructional activities in the learning atmosphere play an important role in influencing the lack of critical thinking abilities among students at the elementary schools. Teachers are supposed to motivate students to develop comprehensive critical thinking skills that will help them to make appropriate decisions (Alhamuddin & Bukhori, 2016). In their research, Alhamuddin and Bukhori (2016) found that the role of teachers not only involves transfer of knowledge to students based on their own competencies, they are also expected to transfer knowledge in line with the individual characteristics of each student while reflecting the given

instructional styles. This statement is a reminder of activeness in classrooms as discussed in the provisions of constructivist learning theory.

There are numerous areas where the provisions of constructivism theory can be used with a close association with modern technology while teaching religious education and other disciplines. According to Koohang et al. (2009), constructivist concepts are applied in the e-learning processes to foster the adoption of numerous programs that involve practices such as collaborative reflection. While associating the concept of constructivism with technology, it is clear that modern day technology provides a much needed platform for enhancing the way people experience different things in the world. According to Sabzian et al. (2013), technology has modified the methods of both teaching and learning.

Using the advancing technology of this century, an individual from one geographic location can easily interact with another individual on the opposite side of the world. It is noteworthy that because of their effectiveness and efficiency in enhancing students' understanding of the desired course concepts, numerous educators are adopting technology-based teaching methods (Denton, 2012). Using the example of Islamic studies, it can be stated that religious teachers can utilize the current technology that is designed for learning activities to improve the critical thinking ability of their own students where Islamic concepts are concerned. Therefore, a strong relationship clearly exists between the provisions of constructivism, technology, and the teaching of Islamic education within the schools in the current century.

Conclusions Drawn from the Literature Review and the Research Gap

The existing literature is not clear on the reasons that Islamic teachers give regarding particular teaching methods that they employ in the classroom settings when teaching religious course concepts. There are two groups of published studies in the existing literature which attempt to give reasons for the use of certain teaching methods. Some previously published studies, such as Alwadai (2014), stated that current teaching methods employed by the teachers are obstacles to encouraging students to think critically; however, it is not clear as to why teachers still use these methods or even why the government still allows the use of such methods at a time when these are not beneficial to students. Critical thinking is required in modern society in numerous aspects as a way of solving different challenges in the lives of people.

Elsewhere, there are studies conducted, such as those by Dessai and Kamat (2012), that found the positive significance of iterative models in the learning environments, some of which are employed by Islamic teachers to teach the contents of religious courses. Nonetheless, the same research observed that the current educational system is assessment-oriented, meaning that it does not offer students the needed platform to think outside the course content. Despite the unclear trends in the existing literature, there is no research that has been conducted that specifically covers the teaching methods used when teaching Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia or reasons as to why teachers adopt different teaching methods in this context. Nufiar and Idris (2016) reported that teachers tended to employ different methods to those presented in their lesson plans, but the reason for this act or the specific teaching methods used are not

covered by the authors. Based on the meager amount of information presented in previously published studies, there is clearly a need for comprehensive research in this area that can highlight the specific methods that teachers of the Islamic studies use in classrooms and their reasons for the preferred methods. Therefore, the current research aimed at filling this gap. Precisely, this research is focused on offering reasons why teachers utilize specific teaching methods when teaching Islamic education in Saudi Arabia and if these methods contribute to enhancing students' learning outcomes.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This is the third chapter of this dissertation; the researcher aimed at providing comprehensive information on various aspects of the methodology that would be employed, including the research design, data collection method, and process, as well as the data analysis criteria.

Overview

As mentioned previously, the intention of conducting this qualitative research was to extensively examine the currently used teaching methods employed in elementary schools of Saudi Arabia for teaching religious courses. This methodology was considered the most suitable for this study based on the assertions made by Creswell (2012, p. 16) that qualitative research is pertinent in addressing the research problem when the researcher is not aware of the variables but needs to explore them. A keen look at the existing literature shows that many previous studies, such as Alotaibi (2014), utilized quantitative approaches; thus, there are few qualitative studies examining the methods employed to teach Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that qualitative researchers focus on understanding the way individuals interpret and attribute rationale to their experiences, constructing the world they live in. Therefore, this research utilized a qualitative research methodology to explore methods employed by Saudi Islamic teachers, from their own perspective.

The study adopted a multiple case study design and the researcher conducted interviews with teachers in both public and private schools to add depth to the study. The results of the research were projected to be useful when identifying the most common

teaching methods applied by Islamic teachers. Creswell (2012, p. 4) asserted that educational research is significant in the sense that it suggests improvements for practice. Thus, identifying which teaching methods were being employed, and why, was perceived to be essential in helping better understand the approaches of Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia. Employing the results obtained from any educational research allows teachers and other personnel in the education sector to become more effective in their professions (Creswell, 2012, p. 4). Therefore, the findings of the current research were projected to be used when establishing standards for an efficient teaching process and identifying exceptional teaching methods in Islamic studies.

Research Questions

The study focused on two research questions, which are as follows, to reach its aims and objectives:

1. What methods are currently used to teach religious education in elementary schools in Saudi Arabia?
2. Why do elementary religious course teachers in Saudi Arabia use these methods?

Research Design

Numerous research designs can be used under a qualitative methodology. However, the multiple case study research design was employed in this study. According to Yin (2017, p. 45), a case study is a type of empirical research that presupposes investigating a given phenomenon in depth in the real situation, meaning that researchers aim to investigate and understand real-life situations. Most commonly, a case study is utilized when a clear inter-relation lacks between the phenomenon under exploration and

its context (Yin, 2017, p. 45). Assessing this assumption with the purpose and significance of this study, there is an unclear association between the teaching methods employed by Islamic educators in Saudi Arabia and students' understanding. Therefore, a case study design was utilized in the current study to investigate the teaching methods employed in teaching Islamic studies and the reasons for their use. When there are two cases that may demonstrate different results for the study, it is recommended to use a multiple case study approach. In particular, Yin (2017, p. 90) explained that a multiple case study research design is adopted when the study involves a review or at least two cases. In this case study, Islamic teachers working in both public and private schools were invited for the interview sessions. The rationale for choosing a multiple case study approach is that Islamic teachers apply different teaching methods.

To begin with, public school teachers are employed by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, while teachers in private schools are hired by either the owner of the school or the principal, which presupposes different employment requirements. Although in both situations mentioned above, Islamic teachers are required to have at least a bachelor's degree in religious studies, in government schools, they must pass two standardized tests and an interview with the Ministry of Education to be employed; this is not the situation in private schools (Ministry of Education, 2019). Apart from this, private school teachers are employed on a temporary basis, while public school teachers are employed by the ministry on permanent terms. Chughati and Perveen (2013) have established that the teachers working in the public schools are not only more flexible but also satisfied with their teaching hours and school conditions compared with their

colleagues in the private schools. This can be applied in Saudi Arabia since job satisfaction difference has a great impact on the teachers' performance levels. Thus, there was a need for conducting multiple-case study analyses involving both public and private schools in Saudi Arabia. The results were then compared and contrasted during data analysis before drawing an appropriate conclusion about teaching methods employed by Saudi Arabian Islamic teachers.

Research Methods and Procedures (Data Collection)

Setting

There is a need for qualitative studies to be conducted in natural settings. According to Mohajan (2018), qualitative research allows the researcher to investigate both meanings and insights in a given situation because it is inductive in nature. Therefore, this type of study can be perceived to be a descriptive model occurring in a usual setting that enables the researcher to obtain some details from high involvement in the real life (Mohajan, 2018). For this study, the natural setting was the school atmosphere, where the Islamic teachers employ various teaching methods during the religious studies course. The interviews were conducted in both public and private schools located within the boundaries of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital city.

Population

Before settling for any given sample size in the qualitative research, it is important to consider various factors, including data saturation. Data saturation indicates to the situation during data collection and analysis does not result in any new theme (Lowe et al., 2018). According to Fugard and Potts (2015), one of the most fundamental

factors that researchers consider when making decisions about the sample size is “the population theme prevalence for the least prevalent theme desired to be seen” (p. 680). In this study, the researcher expected relatively few prevalent themes and sub-themes from the data (transcripts) collected from the interviewees. A total of 20 teachers of Islamic studies were interviewed, 10 from private schools and 10 from public or government schools. However, all 20 research respondents were required to have either a master’s degree in religious studies or at least 5 years’ experience of teaching Islamic studies in their respective school systems. The respondents were selected from various backgrounds and teaching levels (based on the grades they teach) in Saudi Arabia. In addition, Padilla-Díaz (2015) suggested that, to collect accurate data, participants in the educational research should exemplify the phenomenon under study. Therefore, the Islamic teachers included in this research were required to be identified as competent by the principals of their respective schools.

Sampling Strategy and Procedure

As mentioned above, the research respondents of this study were Islamic teachers that had been identified by school principals as high quality and competent educators. Therefore, it was important to employ a sampling strategy that would directly correspond to the purpose of this study. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), there are various ways of sampling the population to collect the data required in any research. To gain a clear insight into the teaching methods used by religious teachers in Saudi Arabia, criterion sampling was employed to select the participants before the data collection process. While there are several strategies of purposeful sampling, the criterion sampling

strategy helps identify all the cases that meet certain predetermined criteria perceived to be significant in a study (Palinkas et al., 2015). The researcher had a clear plan for gaining access to the desired respondents, as he contacted the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia before using criterion sampling to recruit the target and potential respondents that met the research criteria. Specifically, the researcher identified schools (both private and public) that had at least two Islamic teachers with either the required educational qualifications or the minimum work experience mentioned above. This was only done after the researcher obtained the school names within Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The Ministry of Education helped the researcher contact the principals of the selected schools. This group of principals, in turn, provided the email addresses of the Islamic teachers (that met the study's criteria) in their respective schools to the researcher. In each case, ten respondents were identified, but the interviews were conducted with consideration of data saturation. The researcher notified the respondents about their selection to participate in the proposed research through emails, and they were expected to confirm their participation in this study by accepting the invitation via the same emails or decline the invitation.

Once 20 respondents confirmed their attendance, both information leaflets and consent forms were sent to each participant to detail the study's intentions. The researcher also apprised the respondents of the potential risks they might be exposed to when taking part in the study. All such necessary details were appropriately addressed in the information leaflet, including the topic and purpose of the research, the participants' expectations and responsibilities, and the potential risks they might be exposed to during

the research process. After being provided with the information leaflets and consent forms, the respondents were given opportunities to ask any questions regarding the study over a 14-day period before signing their consent. After receiving the signed consent forms, the researcher started with collecting data from the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

The 20 teachers of Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia, who were willing to take part in the given study, participated in semi-structured interview sessions to provide vital information concerning the research topic. According to Pathak and Intratat (2016), semi-structured interview allows useful data to be collected when there is a relatively small sample size, making it easy to conduct the analysis of the qualitative data. Such interviews are also appropriate in studies that can benefit from the open framework and when more significant data can be obtained from focused communication between the researcher and participants (Pathak & Intratat, 2016). The researcher thus utilized semi-structured interviews to be able to include probing, key questions, besides other relevant doubts—that might have arose during the interview sessions—to better clarify the topic under research.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p. 189), online interaction, as a natural platform for qualitative studies, is growing at a rapid pace, with one of the advantages of such an approach being the elimination of geographical limitations. Thus, all the interviews were conducted online on the Zoom platform. This tool helped in creating a good rapport between the researcher and respondents. Each teacher involved in the research was given a 45-day period to select the most appropriate time for their

participation in the study. This ensured that the respondents took part in the research as per their convenience, so as not to interfere with their concentration while responding to the interview questions.

Ethical Considerations

To address ethical considerations arising out of human subjects' use in the study, the approval of Ohio University's institutional review board (IRB) was sought.

According to Cacchione (2011, p. 1), IRBs were developed for upholding the safety and protecting the rights and welfare of human research subjects. The Board approved the study's purpose and methodology, and granted it with IRB approval number 18-X-91.

The researcher then obtained informed consent from the respondents before confirming their eligibility of participating in the study. They were also sent emails with basic details about the study, prior to commencing the process of data collection. This approach gave the participants the liberty to accept or reject the invitation to take part in the study. In addition, the selected respondents were informed that they could withdraw from this research at their convenience without providing any reason for their decisions; participating in the research was optional. To this end, the participants were only required to send an email to the researcher for confirming their withdrawal from the process, before their interview sessions began.

Another important consideration in this research was the personal data collected from the participants. The confidentiality of data provided by a study's subjects is a significant issue in adhering to research ethics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 188). For this reason, all the participants were guaranteed that the information they provided during

their interviews would only be used for the purpose of the research and would not be made public under any circumstances.

Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, their transcripts were made before starting with the data analysis. The participants were assigned code names for the anonymity of their responses. The information on the interview transcripts was then analyzed at different stages of coding that involved the identification of the patterns in the data and sorting of the patterns into various themes and sub-themes. According to Stuckey (2015), coding is a process that qualitative researchers employ during the data analysis process, but it is time consuming and requires creativity to be conducted. In most cases, the coding process presupposes researchers reading through the findings to create patterns, categorizing the findings into codes, and using memos to organize and interpret the data. In this particular study, the constant comparative approach that was utilized was the analysis and comparison of data. This involved the division of data into several relevant categories, specifically open and axial coding.

Transcribing Data

The collected interviews were transcribed to convert the audio responses from the participants into the text format. A total of three linguistic experts in both Arabic and English languages were involved during the whole process. Among the three individuals, two were invited to translate the responses from Arabic to English, while the third was required to reverse-translate the English transcripts into Arabic. All three translators signed agreement forms confirming their willingness and readiness to adhere to the

confidentiality of the responses. It was also possible to transcribe the data using computer software or hiring a transcribing agency, but this could have interfered with the accuracy or confidentiality of the data. The 20 interview transcripts developed by the researcher were then sent to the interviewees for validation. However, each transcript file was assigned with code names from P1 to P20 to enhance the interviewees' anonymity.

Organizing the Data

Before the coding process begun, the data was organized in a suitable way for the analysis process. The researcher read through each transcript multiple times to establish the key messages from the responses before importing all the 20 transcripts to the NVivo 12 software for coding. Using this software, two cycles of coding were performed: the first cycle involved open coding, and the second cycle, axial coding. In particular, data are organized based on the themes and sub-themes identified from the responses.

Open Coding

Open coding was the first cycle of the coding process employed in this study while analyzing data to generate themes and sub-themes. According to Saldaña (2015, p. 115), this coding method is also referred to as the initial coding, and it breaks down the qualitative data collected into distinct parts before examining them closely and comparing their differences and similarities. In this particular research, there were 20 different transcripts to be considered when developing its themes and sub-themes. Therefore, as Saldaña (2015, p. 115) posits how open coding allows a researcher to comprehensively reflect on the content and nuances of data collected from respondents, this seemed to be the most effective method for data analysis. However, the researcher

aimed at remaining open to every possible theoretical direction suggested by the data interpretation. At this stage, all themes and sub-themes from the transcripts were identified and coded appropriately by following a detailed open coding process. The open coding process had the role of creating a good starting point, giving the researcher much-needed analytic leads that were useful not only for further investigation but also for envisioning the next direction that this research took.

Axial Coding

After conducting the open coding process, the researcher proceeded to perform axial coding on the collected data. This completed the analytic work from the initial coding process. The aim of axial coding is basically to reassemble the provided data that may have split or fractured as the researcher conducted the initial coding process; this type of coding is done more strategically compared with open coding (Saldaña, 2015, p. 244). In this study, the researcher applied axial coding to determine the specific codes assigned to the most important as well as the least important themes during the analysis of the data transcripts. The purpose of conducting axial coding after completing the open coding process was to reorganize the obtained dataset from the previous steps. It involved eliminating synonyms in the transcripts, removing redundant codes, and selecting the specific codes that represented the most important themes from the data collected. Therefore, the output of the axial coding process was used to link the study's themes and sub-themes.

Credibility

Credibility is one of the essential features that any qualitative research should exhibit. Based on the assertions made by Tracy (2010), it can be defined as the “trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of the research findings” (p. 842). It is clear that any researcher aims to provide a set of trustworthy and plausible results after engaging in the process of conducting a study. The essence of producing a trustworthy and plausible study is ensuring that its findings are accurate and adoptable by other scholars. According to a study by Tracy (2010), thick descriptions and triangulation mechanisms are proven strategies for achieving credibility in a study. Hence, this research adopted a thick description mechanism, whereby the researcher engaged in an in-depth discussion—that explicated the methods of teaching Islamic studies in both private and public schools in Saudi Arabia, as well as the reasons religious education teachers gave for employing their preferred approaches—to achieve high levels of credibility in the findings.

Transferability

The present research, being of a qualitative nature, has limited applicability elsewhere. The generalization of findings is not recommended in qualitative studies, as qualitative research presupposes having its findings specific to the given context (Petty et al., 2012). This creates the need for using either purposive sampling or thick descriptions of the data as a way of determining the degree to which the research findings will be applied to the larger context in different settings of the target audience. Therefore, in this

study, transferability was aimed at determining the applicability of the findings of the research in their respective settings.

Validity

Validity is a highly important factor for confirming the accuracy of the collected and interpreted data in any research. According to Cho and Trent (2006), transactional and transformational validity are the two main categories of validity in research studies, and member checking is one of the most common approaches used to enhance transactional validity in qualitative research. It is a validation technique that presupposes forwarding the findings of the research to the respondents to check their accuracy and resonance with the participants' experiences (Birt et al., 2016). In this case, the researcher sent the interview transcripts to the respondents before coding to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts to allow more clarifications if the respondents considered it necessary (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Cho and Trent (2006) perceived validity as a transactional process comprising the methods of adjusting misunderstandings and fixing them to improve the level of accuracy in not only reporting the findings but also analyzing the results. The researcher also conducted a pilot study to check the significance of the research questions in addressing the study topic as a way of ensuring the validity of the responses.

Reliability

Reliability is crucial in the research of any kind, and Golafshani (2003) defined it as the “extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study” (p. 598). This means that the study is reliable if its findings can be replicated under similar circumstances using the same procedure. The

present study relied on the concepts of data saturation to attain reliability. Fusch and Ness (2015) stated that the failure of the research to achieve data saturation influences negatively its quality in terms of validity. In contrast, O'Reilly and Parker (2013) argued that it is inappropriate to adopt data saturation as a generic quality marker when considering both transparency and epistemological issues. However, the aim of this study was to reach the data saturation point to minimize the possibility of compromising on the study's reliability.

As highlighted by Saunders et al. (2018), data saturation indicates that, after collecting or analyzing a given amount of data, further data collection or analysis is considered unnecessary. This refers to a point at which further interviews would not yield new categories of data, but instead, reproduce the already developed themes. As stated in the data collection section, the primary plan was to interview ten respondents from each case described, but the researcher kept collecting and analyzing data from the respondents even there were no new themes emerging from the responses since all interview sessions had already been scheduled.

Role of the Researcher

In any study, researchers play several roles that are collectively aimed at achieving the desired results. Creswell (2012, p. 16) stated that literature may yield little information concerning the phenomenon under study, making the researcher learn more from the study participants through exploration. For this reason, in the present study, the researcher played different roles, including, but not limited to, being an interviewer, recorder of data, and analyzer of the findings obtained from the respondents, thus

requiring substantial efforts for effectiveness. However, the researcher in this study is a graduate student in the field of education and is well equipped with important knowledge and skills in educational research. Based on the researcher's education background, it can be asserted that he already had extensive knowledge on the teaching methods used in Islamic education in Saudi Arabia. Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p. 189) also noted that a qualitative researcher in any online study must consider such factors as the effect of the research setting and the software operations on the process of collecting data. Therefore, the researcher had to consider all these critical issues when collecting data from Islamic teachers using an online medium.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study had to face several limitations during the processes of sampling, data collection, and analysis of the findings.

Limitations

To begin with, the absence of an adequate number of previously published studies on the subject made it difficult for secondary data to be used as a way of acknowledging the findings from multiple cases. Apart from this, some respondents were unwilling to engage in the member-checking process or delayed sending their feedback, causing inadequate data to be used during the analysis stage. Finally, some participants used ambiguous wording, making it difficult to properly comprehend the replies and conduct an accurate analysis.

Delimitations

Apart from the limitations, there were some delimitations associated with this research as well. The most significant of these was the inclusion of 20 respondents as a maximum number. The researcher continued collecting information after attaining data saturation since all interview sessions had already been scheduled. A total of ten elementary schools located within Riyadh in Saudi Arabia were involved, with each institution presenting two representatives in the participants' list.

Chapter Summary

In this third chapter, the researcher aimed to give a clear description for the techniques and approaches that were used at different stages of collecting and analyzing the data and using them to support the key assertions to ultimately arrive at research findings. The study is qualitative in nature and employed the multiple case study approach for data collection. Furthermore, interviews were conducted among teachers of Islamic studies, both in private and public schools, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The researcher contacted the principals of the selected schools to inform them of the intention to have their teachers take part in the study. The initial communication between the researcher and interview respondents aimed at getting their personal email addresses to inform them of the steps that followed for completing the research study, particularly their involvement in data collection. To confirm the validity of the data, member checking was conducted to verify that all the responses to be analyzed were true records of the respondents and that they were accurate as a way of confirming the validity of the data. The next step was the data analysis. This step involved open and axial coding at the

stage of theme identification and data organization. Each coding technique aimed at attaining a given goal to help in the identification of the common themes and sub-themes. This qualitative analysis was used in this research to develop findings related to the teaching methods of religious education in Saudi Arabia. Thick description was used in the study to achieve high levels of research credibility. Apart from that, the data saturation technique was adopted to ensure reliability. The findings from the data collected from the interviews were complemented by information gathered from available, relevant literature.

Chapter 4: Results

Overview

This study focused on determining the various methods used by Islamic teachers in the elementary learning environments in Saudi Arabia. A multiple case study design was employed by the researcher during the data collection process, and the findings obtained are recorded in this chapter. Even though data saturation was reached after interviews with only 12 participants, the researcher continued to interview Islamic teachers from the two institutions included in this study, as the participants had already included the sessions in their schedules. After the 12th interview session, the researcher noticed that the participants were echoing responses that were already given by their colleagues. Therefore, it was unlikely that additional themes would emerge from the 13th interview session. The transcription sheets were assigned alphanumerical codes starting from P1, P2, P3, ..., P19, and P20, in order to ensure the anonymity of the participants and make the data analysis process easy (since some teachers had the same first names). Thereafter, the researcher divided findings into six different themes for further analysis.

Data Analysis

The researcher read through each transcript multiple times to establish key messages from responses before importing all 20 transcripts into NVivo 12 software for coding. After the files were imported into the software, two coding cycles were conducted: the first cycle entailed open coding, and the second cycle involved axial coding. In particular, data were organized based on the themes and sub-themes identified for data coding and analysis.

First Cycle Coding

In this study, the first cycle of the coding process was open coding, in which the researcher engaged in the early analysis of data to derive themes and sub-themes by importing all 20 transcription files into NVivo 12. According to Saldaña (2015, p. 115), the open coding process is also referred to as initial coding, and it breaks down the qualitative data collected into distinct parts before they are examined closely, then determines their differences and similarities. The researcher separated the information into six different themes. More specifically, the researcher divided the data into the following themes: teaching methods used for Islamic courses; reasons for using the teaching methods; classroom procedures for teaching Islamic courses; strategies used for effective teaching of Islamic courses; barriers to employing effective teaching methods; and differences between private and public schools.

The next phase involved breaking down the principal themes into sub-themes. However, not all themes were divided into sub-themes, as some already were precise enough to depict a single meaning from the information required. For instance, the reasons for adopting teaching methods were not subdivided, as the researcher believed that the theme already was specific. However, a theme such as teaching methods used by Islamic teachers was broken down further into lecturing method, narrative method, teaching by practice, iterative method, role modeling, preaching, indoctrination, and recitation method. Therefore, the open coding process created an initial point, giving the researcher much-needed analytic leads that were useful not only for further investigation, but also for envisioning the next direction that this research took.

Second Cycle Coding

After conducting the open coding process, the researcher proceeded with axial coding during the second cycle coding. This process is an extension of the analytic work from the initial coding process, as explained by Saldaña (2015, p. 244). The major aim in conducting second cycle coding was to reassemble the provided data that may have split or fractured as the researcher conducted the initial coding process. Second cycle coding through the axial approach was done more strategically when compared with open coding (Saldaña, 2015, p. 244). The researcher applied it to determine the specific codes that were assigned to the most important themes throughout the study, as well as the codes assigned to less important themes that were identified during the data analysis of the transcripts. The researcher reorganized the obtained dataset from the previous steps, eliminating synonyms in the transcripts, removing redundant codes, and selecting specific codes that represented the most important themes from the collected data. More specifically, this step required that the researcher re-read responses from the transcripts for each research question and confirm whether the initial coding was accurate.

Respondents Introduction

A total of 20 participants with different demographic traits were approached and interviewed for this study. Even though an equal number of teachers from both public and private institutions were included, the respondents were of different ages and had different teaching experiences. However, only 8 participants (P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19, and P20) out of the 20 individuals interviewed were females, as indicated in Table 1, which summarizes the demographic data of the respondents.

Table 1*Demographic Data of the Participants (N = 20)*

Participant	Gender	Age (y)	Highest educational degree	Teaching experience (y)	Institution type	Interview duration (min)
P1	Male	43	MA	17	Public	48
P2	Male	34	BA	8	Public	44
P3	Male	35	BA	10	Private	41
P4	Male	36	BA	9	Public	43
P5	Male	40	MA	14	Public	39
P6	Male	39	MA	13	Public	42
P7	Male	46	BA	20	Private	39
P8	Male	38	MA	12	Private	38
P9	Male	33	BA	7	Private	46
P10	Male	36	BA	11	Private	42
P11	Male	40	BA	15	Public	43
P12	Female	37	MA	12	Private	37
P13	Female	36	BA	10	Private	35
P14	Female	32	BA	7	Public	34
P15	Female	29	BA	5	Private	36
P16	Female	43	MA	16	Public	38
P17	Female	36	BA	9	Private	31
P18	Male	35	BA	8	Public	42
P19	Female	33	BA	7	Public	34
P20	Female	34	BA	7	Private	35

Interview Length. The total time allocated for conducting interview sessions is important in the research process. In this study, all 20 participants were interviewed at different times on different days, since the researcher wanted to ensure that the respondents had enough time and the data collection process was efficient. Based on the interview duration data in Table 1, the total time for all the sessions, the mean duration, the range of interview duration, and the modal duration were calculated and presented in Table 2.

Table 2*Analysis of Interview Duration*

Gender	Total #	Total interview duration (min)	Mean interview duration (min)	Standard deviation	Range of interview duration (min)	Modal value of interview duration (min)
Male	12	507	42.25	2.773	38–48	42
Female	8	280	35	2	31–38	34 and 35
Total	20	787	39.35	2.4925	31–48	42

Next, the differences between the interview lengths of males and females are determined in Table 2 to account for the cultural sensitivity assertions based on the notion that it is difficult to interview a female person in Saudi Arabia whom an interviewer does not know personally. As seen from Table 2, interview sessions with female participants were of shorter durations than interviews with male participants. The average duration for female teachers ($n = 8$) was 35 min (minimum = 31 min; maximum = 38 min), and the average duration for male teachers was 42.25 min. Further, the maximum duration for female participants was equal to the minimum duration for male participants (that is, 38 min).

The average interview duration for the entire study group was 39.35 min. This duration seems apt, as short interviews may lead to the collection of insufficient data and longer ones might lead to repetition of information after data saturation is reached. Overall, the shortest interview was 31 min (P17, female), while the longest one was 48 min (P1, male). The modal duration (most frequent duration) was 42 min (P6, P10, and

P18), but two respondents each were interviewed for 34 min (P14 and P19), 35 min (P13 and P20), 38 min (P8 and P16), 39 min (P5 and P7), and 43 min (P4 and P11).

Respondents

Altogether, 20 participants were involved in this study, and their responses are as follows:

P1. P1 was a 43-year-old male Islamic teacher in a public school at the time of this study. He reported that, at the time, he was teaching four Islamic courses: Tawheed; Quran; Fiqh; and Hadith. Despite failing to provide a direct response when asked what teaching methods he used, the participant said that he used the whiteboard often and that he started each lesson with an introduction while outlining teaching goals. The participant said he relied on lecturing and repetition methods, as indicated by his statement that he would read a section of the Quran, then ask his students to repeat it after him. The obstacles that P1 cited that prevented him from engaging in effective teaching included unavailability of teaching materials, overly large class sizes, and small classrooms. However, he reported some differences between public and private schools in the sense that private institutions were better at teaching because parents followed up and asked about their children's progress. Moreover, private schools had slightly more teaching materials available, a lower number of students per class, and typically higher-quality students. Furthermore, P1 noted that technology was very important, as it made the teaching process more comfortable, but the major problem was that it was not available all the time in classrooms.

P2. P2 was a 34-year-old male Islamic teacher with eight years of teaching experience at the time of the study who said that he employed lecturing and repetition methods, with each session taking between 20 and 25 minutes. The reason that he cited for using these methods was to ensure that his students could easily memorize course concepts, as he believed that repeating information would make students develop a better understanding. On effective teaching methods, the respondent said that he learned such approaches from his experience early in his teaching career, not from his university training. However, he believed that technology, such as interactive whiteboards, is an essential tool for teaching, as it could improve communication with students both inside and outside classrooms. The interviewee also pointed out some significant differences between public and private schools in terms of classroom sizes, number of students, and availability of essential teaching materials. He cited overly large class sizes as the principal obstacle to employing effective teaching methods, but noted that technological tools such as projectors were helping him address these challenges.

P3. With 10 years of teaching experience, this 35-year-old Islamic teacher at a private school cited lecturing and teaching as examples of primary methods that he used in the classroom. However, the participant clarified that different Islamic courses required different teaching methods, as some concepts were inflexible and required specific approaches. Despite showing mastery of his preferred techniques, P3 asserted that the training offered at his university was not enough to equip him with effective methods for teaching religious courses, and that he received little advice during his internship. P3 also noted that technology is an essential tool in current learning, but that

few available devices significantly impact teaching Islamic education at his school.

Furthermore, the respondent could not answer whether he preferred teaching in private or public schools because he once taught at another private school that also had numerous obstacles, including a lack of necessary teaching materials. However, the respondent was aware of practices that his colleagues used at better private institutions. Thus, he stressed that each school was different, regardless of being government-owned or private.

P4. P4 had been teaching for nine years and was working at a public school at the time of this study. He asserted that he always used lectures in his classes because Islamic course content is about students' beliefs, which were difficult to address using other teaching methods. He said that the lecturing method fit well with the 45-minute class sessions, as well as the course content. Nevertheless, P4 observed that students' concentration level decreased 20 minutes into each lesson, so he tried to engage his students through his teaching as much as possible. Furthermore, the participant believed that the concept of cooperative learning was an effective strategy, but not practical in his classroom, as it required more time to organize groups and teach each group differently. Despite holding a bachelor's degree qualification, P4 said that he learned effective teaching methods only through experience, as he did not have vast knowledge about other methods employed in classrooms when he graduated. In addition, P4 responded that technology was an essential tool in classrooms, as it enhanced communication between teachers and students, but noted that it was time-consuming. He did not observe any differences between private and public schools, stating that teaching experience depended on the individual school and the institution's ownership type. However, he did state that a

common problem with many private schools was that the principals of such institutions encouraged teachers to manipulate students' test results.

P5. With a master's degree qualification and 14 years of teaching experience, P5 was a male Islamic teacher in a public school at the time of this research. He said that he used the lecturing method in which he asks students to read the content before he made comments about the topic. He also used a cooperative learning strategy, in which he provided group assignments, asserting that it motivated students. He cited a lack of teaching materials, overly large class sizes, and a lack of support from school administrators as major obstacles to effective teaching. However, he felt better teaching in a private school because it had all the essential teaching materials available in the classroom. Finally, P5 stated that he rarely practiced what he learned from his university training and that his most effective teaching methods were learned entirely through personal experience. He also noted that the training offered at the Ministry of Education was too short, as the principal of his school would not allow him to participate in the entire training session.

P6. At the time of this study, P6, a male Islamic teacher in a public school, had a master's degree qualification with 13 years of experience. The participant stated that he tried to practice with his students to make detailed explanations about the lessons apart from the normal lecturing process. However, role modeling was the major method that he used. P6 further stated that using specific methods when teaching was beneficial to his students because changing approaches too often can confuse learners. However, he appreciated the role of group discussions and the use of technological devices such as

PowerPoint slides as effective teaching strategies. Despite acknowledging the presence of enough training sessions in Saudi Arabia for Islamic teachers, P6 said individual teachers should work hard to improve their standards and become more effective. He said that he developed into a better teacher only after several years of experience following graduation. He also hinted at the scarcity of financial resources and large numbers of students in small-size classrooms as major barriers to adopting effective teaching strategies. He also mentioned a lack of teachers as a challenge because teachers of the Arabic language at his school also were required to teach religious courses.

P7. P7 was the oldest (46) Islamic teacher among the 20 interviewees, with 20 years of experience; he was teaching at a private school at the time of the study. The respondent said that he uses multiple teaching methods, such as lecturing, indoctrination, and iterative approaches. P7 said the principal reason for using multiple methods was that all Islamic courses differed from each other, thereby requiring different approaches to deliver their content. Furthermore, students' needs and capabilities also differed. For instance, he mentioned the use of cooperative learning strategies, noting that they could be either productive or ineffective based on the number of students, learning environment, and curriculum. As for obstacles to the use of effective teaching methods, P7 cited overly large class sizes and small classrooms. He also said the curriculum was too extensive for the teaching time allotted. Elsewhere, the respondent believed that technology was a very important tool for very long lessons, as it saved time, but that it still was not widely available in schools.

P8. P8 cited the use of lecturing and repetition methods while teaching Islamic courses because he believed that these approaches were good fits for elementary students. He said that he found no other methods to be effective, and that these methods were already enough to teach religious studies. Having been a teacher for 12 years, P8 had gained enough experience to become effective in his profession, but noted that he made annual adjustments to his methods to address any problems. He said that a major problem was interference from the Ministry of Education, which asked teachers to use unrealistic methods in the classroom. Although he did not mention the precise impacts that technology made in classrooms, the respondent said that it was effective for both teachers and students for many reasons.

P9. During his seven years of Islamic education, P9 stated that he varied teaching methods based on course content, but did not have a specific method that he always used for each lesson. He also mentioned that cooperative learning was a perfect strategy that did not benefit all teachers and students, as it worked well for some lessons, but did not impact others positively. The respondent also cited some obstacles to effective teaching, including the fragility of students' faith, lack of role models, parents and school administrators' influence, and the presence of ineffective teachers. Furthermore, the participant asserted that he learned effective teaching methods from his experience teaching at schools and mosques, but not from his university training, which was more theoretical than practical. Furthermore, university courses did not fit his culture and reality. He also explained that an effective method was one that involved students' participation, wherein they interacted with teachers. He also said that school

administrations' failure to differentiate between effective and ineffective teachers affected education quality. Finally, P9 mentioned that technology helped save time and effort during lessons.

P10. At 36 years old, P10 has acquired 11 years of teaching Islamic studies in private school. He said that he used multiple teaching methods for religious courses as a way to avoid boredom among students, and that his choices were based on course content. As part of his daily routine, P10 said that he started by asking questions before launching student discussions on a topic, but hinted that he used indoctrination and repetition to help students read properly during Quran lessons. The interviewee stated that letting students conduct their own research was helpful, but that students' abilities dictated teaching methods. Despite the new generation of students being interested in technological learning forms, P10 observed that schools and their administrators were interested only in responding to letters and emails from the Ministry of Education, while ignoring the need for essential learning resources in classrooms. This teacher said he learned some teaching methods during his university training, but that he could not apply these methods during lessons for various reasons. However, P10 did not find anything wrong with the Islamic education curriculum and said that it fit well with students' needs. Teaching in a private school, P10 said that he gained solid experience there because essential teaching tools were available and that private schools were interested in motivating their students and making them work hard with their teachers. Throughout his teaching career, P10 said that he experienced a series of obstacles, such as overly large class sizes and small classrooms.

P11. P11 was a male Islamic teacher in a public school with a bachelor's degree qualification who had 15 years of teaching experience at the time of this study. The respondent reported using lecturing, but stated that a single method was not appropriate for all students in a classroom. However, he said that challenges such as small classrooms, as well as personal problems among students, affected the appropriateness of teaching methods for Islamic courses. He also highlighted the need for in-depth research on ways to help poor students improve. Furthermore, P11 stated that classroom teaching materials were lacking at his school and that some teachers only cared about completing the curriculum and not about helping weak students improve. They promoted such students to the next grade based on minimum passing criteria without considering their academic merits. Furthermore, the participant said that he used technology when teaching weak students, but at the time of this study, the respondent had abandoned technology, as he said that it consumed too much time. P11 also said that he enhanced his knowledge of active learning from both his experience and from training sessions that the Ministry of Education offered. To maintain his knowledge and teaching skills, the participant reported investing in online learning.

P12. At the time of the interview, P12 was 37 years old, with a master's degree in religious education and 12 years of teaching experience, working at a private school. P12 was teaching only Quranic courses and reported that other Islamic courses were being taught by Arabic language teachers at her school. The methods that she used to teach were based on the types of students that she had in the classroom, as she employed different methods for fast learners and slow learners. Furthermore, the respondent said

that she used technological devices, such as reading pens, to enhance students' understanding of course concepts. Repetition was the most common method that P12 used in teaching her students, in which she read a passage first before asking students to repeat after her. She cited poor communication as a major obstacle to adopting effective teaching. She noted times when she needed to discuss students' academic development with their parents, but could not facilitate teacher-parent communication. Also, the respondent identified limited time allocation for Quranic courses as a barrier to effective teaching methods, as she only had 45 minutes to teach each class. She said that other factors, such as family pressures, also hindered learning, as some parents told their children that they needed to focus more on science or math courses instead of Islamic education. The interviewee reported having gained few skills from her professional training and learned more from her experience concerning the best ways to teach the Quran.

P13. With a bachelor's degree in Islamic studies, P13 was a 36-year-old female religious teacher at a private school who had taught for 10 years at the time of this interview. She said that she used stories, discussion questions, and worksheets after dividing classrooms of students into study groups while teaching Islamic courses. These strategies enabled P13 to understand the needs of her students since she believed that her methods were effective in raising female students' attention levels. However, the interviewee stressed that learning by playing was a better method for achieving such goals with primary school students. Furthermore, P13 stated that a large number of tasks assigned to female teachers, overly large class sizes, and small classrooms were the

principal barriers that hindered effective teaching. Nevertheless, she noted that technology could help aid the teaching process, emphasizing the idea that the most important thing was not to assign Islamic teachers tasks that conflicted with their primary teaching duties.

P14. At 32 years old, P14 had been teaching Islamic courses for seven years at a public school, having attained a bachelor's qualification in religious teaching. She said that she selected her teaching methods based on content, but that generally, she cited preaching, learning by providing examples, lecturing, discussions, and cooperative learning as her principal methods. Her rationale for using these approaches was that they were similar to those that the Prophet and his friends used. Apart from her preferred teaching methods, P14 stressed that stories, examples, and discussions were methods that she found to be effective. The respondent said that she learned these methods from experience and through some training sessions that the Ministry of Education offered. Despite appreciating technology's role as a tool for teaching and learning, P14 cited an overly lengthy curriculum, overly large class sizes, small classrooms, short class periods, and a lack of essential teaching materials as major barriers to effective teaching.

P15. P15 was the youngest out of all 20 respondents, with five years of experience teaching Islamic education at a private school. Throughout her teaching career, P15 used several methods to teach Islamic courses and stated that the best way to teach the Quran was to use peer evaluation, which allowed students to correct their classmates within the group. Moreover, the participant explained that the most successful teaching methods entailed the use of dialogue, discussions, and error-correction methods.

Similarly, P15 noted that a hot seat and a map of concepts also were essential approaches for teaching religious courses, while concluding that the storytelling style was a great way to relay information to students. According to P15, some of these methods were used because they were the most successful ones for communicating course concepts with little effort. To her, effective teaching methods – such as dialogue, discussions, and map concepts – allowed information to be imparted to students easily, so that they would not forget concepts and become familiar with the lesson. This respondent also cited obstacles to effective teaching, noting that the most notable obstacles for religious courses were based on time constraints, as such lessons could be more interesting, but for the limited periods allotted. Finally, P15 appreciated technology’s role as a teaching tool, but warned against depending on it entirely, as teachers needed to listen to their students for proper guidance.

P16. As a 43-year-old female Islamic teacher in a public school with a master’s degree qualification and 16 years of experience, P16 showed much awareness of interview prompts during the sessions. She said that she used storytelling and practical application because of her extensive experience and numerous opportunities to test these methods. She found that her students responded to these methods better, compared with more modern learning strategies. The participant said that dividing female students into groups to extract the lesson’s concept map was an effective teaching method, as it better conveyed information to students. She said that a very busy daily teaching schedule, e.g., six hours daily, was a major obstacle to effective teaching.

Also, other tasks assigned to the teacher besides teaching – such as waiting for families to pick up their children, extracurricular activities, and school radio broadcasts – wasted teachers' time and effort. She noted that technology was essential to facilitating the education process, but noted that private and public schools were vastly different in terms of providing educational materials and classrooms equipped with modern devices such as smart boards, laptops, and projectors. Such provisions for education were very limited at government schools.

P17. This respondent was a 36-year-old female Islamic teacher in a private school with nine years of teaching experience. She said that she used discussions and lectures, and even asked her students to teach lessons sometimes. She said that such approaches made students feel like active participants in the process and helped them remember what they learned. She also noted that methods requiring students to engage in many tasks through participation such as cooperative learning were more effective. She also acknowledged that she did not have enough of an understanding of effective teaching when she graduated, but had acquired her teaching skills through her own efforts and experience. The participant said that overly large class sizes, lack of proper learning materials, and an overly lengthy curriculum that is difficult to cover during a single semester were major barriers to effective teaching. P17 concluded that despite technology's importance in learning, it was not always available to Islamic teachers and had cost her both effort and money to use it.

P18. According to P18, the methods used to teach religious courses differed depending on content. For instance, the interviewee said that he used lecturing, recitation,

and map concepts when teaching the ranks of religion in Tawheed, but that Fiqh lessons involved practical techniques such as ablution and prayers. P18 said the principal reason why he used different teaching methods was not to simplify content, but to increase students' level of understanding. The respondent found that searching for an explanation of course content and summarizing lessons in the form of concept maps elicited greater participation among students, making it an effective teaching method. The interviewee emphasized the need for teachers to apply effective strategies to achieve teaching goals because professionals only engage in theoretical studies at universities. P18 also cited large numbers of students in the classroom and that a lack of certain teaching materials and time to prepare lessons were principal barriers to effective teaching. Additionally, P18 said that technology helped facilitate teachers' efforts significantly, but noted that his school only provides about 60% of this technology, so he had to use his own. The respondent also compared private and public schools, observing that facilities in private schools were more reliable and that students in public schools were more motivated to learn than those in private schools. Nevertheless, the individual opined that education in government schools was better, even with a shortage of teachers.

P19. P19 was a 33-year-old female Islamic teacher in a public school with a bachelor's degree qualification and seven years of teaching experience. The respondent reported using stories and visual presentations through projectors and linking devices with headphones when teaching religious courses. Furthermore, P19 said she created competition within classrooms in which a role-playing approach was used. To account for her preferred teaching methods, P19 stated that she was teaching at the elementary

level, in which children loved stories and had a good connection between images and information. She also incorporated competitions in classrooms to enhance the speed of developing skills and self-esteem among the student population. However, the participant asserted that she believed that the practical application of several lessons was effective in teaching Fiqh courses. Elsewhere, P19 stated that effective teaching methods encourage active learning. She also observed that obstacles are minimized in modern schools because of numerous assistive technologies, such as projectors and smartboards. P19 cited overly large class sizes and a lack of teaching tools as barriers to effective teaching. Furthermore, she said that technology was essential to facilitating classroom tasks and reduces costs, effort, and learning time.

P20. At the time of the interview, P20 was a 34-year-old female Islamic teacher working at a private school. She had a bachelor's degree qualification and had been teaching for seven years. P20 said she used several methods, including lecturing, telling stories, and repetition. Her perception was that teaching methods in all their forms are complementary and that it is not enough for a teacher to have only one method or generalized steps for teaching for all lessons. To support her assertion, P20 stated that she employed lecturing methods when she taught statements, but said stories and repetition were necessary for communicating difficult information or listening to an anthem, respectively. On the reasons for using her preferred methods when teaching religious education, P20 said that both content and the volume of female students were factors. Nonetheless, P20 acknowledged that technology enhances teaching methods significantly, owing to their efficacy in this area.

Findings

Key findings were obtained from the collected data after analyzing the information via the NVivo 12 software program. Similarities in the interviewees' responses were used as the basis for formulating themes since all 20 transcripts were reviewed before the researcher conducted both the coding process. The researcher created six themes based on the responses captured in the interview transcripts. Initially, a total of 25 codes were derived, and the researcher compared these codes with the literature findings in Chapter 2. The themes that were formulated after the transcripts were imported to the NVivo 12 software for data analysis, as shown in Appendix B.

Theme 1: Teaching Methods used for Islamic Courses

Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia use different teaching methods while teaching religious courses in both public and private schools, as illustrated in the following findings:

- Finding 1: Eleven participants identified the lecturing method as the primary approach that Islamic teachers use in teaching religious courses in Saudi Arabia.
- Finding 2: Eleven participants identified the narrative method as the primary method that Islamic educators use in teaching religious courses in Saudi Arabia.
- Finding 3: Nine respondents reported teaching by practice as the main or among the primary teaching methods employed during religious course lessons.
- Finding 4: The iterative method was reported to be used by half of the interviewees when teaching religious courses.
- Finding 5: Three out of 20 respondents stated that they had been using role

modeling teaching methods for religious courses.

- Finding 6: Although not highly popular, the preaching method is one of the teaching methods used by Islamic teachers during religious lessons in Saudi Arabia, as reported by two participants.
- Finding 7: Although not popularly used, the recitation method is one of the teaching methods employed by Islamic teaching during religious lessons in Saudi Arabia, as reported by one participant.
- Finding 8: Although not popularly used, the indoctrination method is one of the teaching methods employed by Islamic teachers during religious lessons in Saudi Arabia, as reported by one participant.

Theme 2: Reasons for Using the Stated Methods

Various factors account for Islamic teachers' choice of teaching methods when teaching religious courses in Saudi Arabia, and these are as follows:

- Finding 1: The rigid nature of Islamic courses is attributable to the adoption of inflexible methods readily employed by the teachers.
- Finding 2: The perceived efficacy of teaching paradigms influences Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia.
- Finding 3: Islamic teachers are inclined to reflect on the abilities of their students, the available tools, and classroom size when finalizing a teaching method.
- Finding 4: Islamic teachers believe that the methods their teachers used to teach them while they were students are still relevant in the modern learning environments.

Theme 3: Classroom Procedures for Teaching Islamic Courses

Classroom procedures and strategies mentioned by Islamic teachers during the teaching of religious courses in Saudi Arabia are helpful as the researcher found out that lesson transitions are essential in enhancing the effectiveness of teaching methods when used appropriately.

Theme 4: Strategies Used for Effective Teaching of Islamic Courses

Various strategies are used by Islamic teachers to enhance the effective teaching of religious courses in Saudi Arabia; these are as follows:

- Finding 1: Use of classroom technology was identified as a helpful learning tool in religious lessons by 19 out of 20 respondents, although some reported that they were not using it.
- Finding 2: Most Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia did not understand the concept of cooperative learning or group discussions in classrooms.
- Finding 3: Motivational techniques were identified as essential strategies that increase students' engagement levels in classrooms, facilitating their understanding of religious courses.

Theme 5: Barriers to Employing Effective Teaching Methods

Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia face a set of barriers while teaching religious courses, which are as follows:

- Finding 1: Fourteen participants reported that the training offered to Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia is inadequate to enhance the teaching levels of religious courses, and they have improved their knowledge and skills through experience.

- Finding 2: Ten respondents identified inflexible Islamic education curriculums as a significant barrier to employing effective teaching methods in both public and private schools in Saudi Arabia.
- Finding 3: Eight participants identified the high student-to-teacher ratio as a significant barrier to employing effective teaching methods for religious courses.
- Finding 4: Eight participants identified insufficient financial resources as a significant barrier to employing effective teaching methods for religious courses.
- Finding 5: Three respondents reported the small number of Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia as a barrier to adopting effective teaching methods since the ones who are present are overworked, and at times, Arabic teachers are requested to teach religious courses.
- Finding 6: Three respondents reported small classroom sizes and spaces as a barrier to adopting effective teaching methods for religious courses in Saudi Arabia.
- Finding 7: Two respondents reported family issues and other external factors as a barrier to adopting effective teaching methods for religious courses in Saudi Arabia.
- Finding 8: One participant depicted substandard scheduling procedures as a hindrance to implementing effective religious teaching practices in Saudi Arabia.

Theme 6: Differences Between Private and Public Schools

The following differences were identified between private and public schools based on the teaching of religious courses in Saudi Arabia:

- Finding 1: Nine respondents stated that most private schools have proper teaching tools and equipment compared with public schools.
- Finding 2: Eight participants highlighted that the administration in private schools had more involvement in teachers' activities than the situation observed in public schools.
- Finding 3: Only one participant from private schools identified the differences in the influence of parents on the academic progress of children in private and public schools.
- Finding 4: Several participants from public schools identified the differences in the number of students taught by a single Islamic teacher in private and public schools.

Description of the Themes

Description of Theme 1 (Teaching Methods used for Islamic Courses)

The first theme covered the teaching methods that were reported as being used by the respondents and 100% of the participants provided clear answers to the research question. After relevant data were coded from all the files, different methods were found to be associated with varying frequencies of references as they were traced from different files. Table 3 shows the teaching methods that were reported to be used by Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia. This meant that some teachers applied multiple methods of teaching Islamic education, while others only relied on one method, as indicated in Appendix C.

Table 3*Teaching Methods used for Islamic Courses*

Teaching Method	Quote from the participant
Lecturing method	“I always do lectures in my teaching because the content of Islamic courses is about student beliefs, and it is hard to do it by different teaching methods. So, I just explain the lesson then ask student to read the text in the book” (P4).
Narrative method	“Tafseer lessons: The narrative style is often used and discussed in the meanings of the vocabulary until the student reaches the correct meaning of Quran tasks” (P18).
Teaching by practice	“The only course I can do my best (on) is Fiqh because I can teach some practices, and in this course, I can ask students to practice physically in the classroom. So, this is the main reason that makes me or enforces me to sometimes choose the method which is in the curriculum” (P1).
Iterative method	“I use iterative methods, and sometimes I ask one student to read, I mean the best student to read, and I let other students repeat what he read after him” (P1).

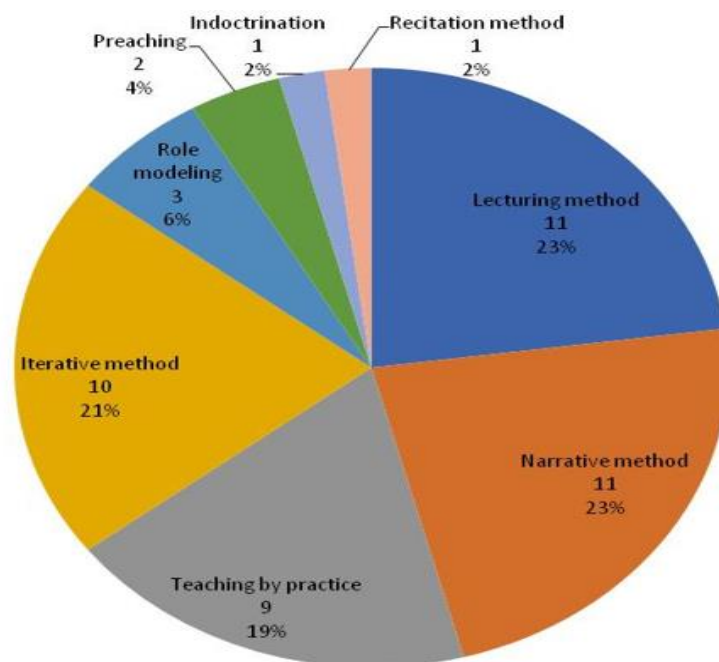
Table 3 Continued

Role modeling	“I would like to say that Islamic teachers must be role models for their students. I met with certain teachers, I mean Islamic teachers in my school, who smoke, and students also meet him sometimes when he is smoking. This shocked them because in their mind, it is surprising how Islamic teachers who should be their role models smoke” (P6).
Preaching	“In Tafseer, I only use preaching” (P17).
Indoctrination	“In teaching Quran, indoctrination helps students read in the right way” (P10).
Recitation method	“The method differs from one topic to another. For example, studying the ranks of religion in Tawheed, I use the method of recitation” (P18).

According to the information obtained from the transcript for P8, the lecture method is the most popular way of teaching Islamic courses. Figure 2 shows a pie chart that visualizes the distribution of teaching methods used by Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 2

Pie Chart Showing the Number of Islamic Teachers that Reported to Use Each Teaching Method Mentioned



A closer look at Figure 2 shows that the majority of teachers (11) indicated that they used lecturing and narrative methods followed, in descending order, by the iterative method, teaching by practice, role modeling, and preaching. However, recitation and indoctrination methods hold very little space in the table, as they were reported by the fewest number of respondents.

As shown in Appendix C, the participants who engaged in responding to this study used multiple methods for teaching the contents of religious courses in Saudi Arabia's schools. This is evident from the fact that there were 55 references in the NVivo

12 software for lecturing and narrative teaching methods that were each reported in 11 files, even though the total number of participants was 20. For instance, P1 asserted that “teaching Tafseer just focus on giving little lecture then answer the book activities or questions together with the students”. This response explains why Islamic teachers tend to apply the most effective teaching method while teaching precise courses rather than relying on a given method when teaching all the courses. P18 explained:

The method (of teaching Islamic courses) differs from one topic to another. For example, when teaching the ranks of religion in Tawheed, I use the method of lecture and recitation and the method of mapping concepts. For Fiqh lessons, such as prayer and ablution, practical lessons are used, and when teaching about Hajj, a video or the anthropomorphic work of the Kaaba can be used to explain it directly. For Tafseer lessons, the narrative style is often used and the meanings of the words are discussed until the student understands the correct meaning of Quran tasks.

Description of Theme 2 (Reasons for Using the Stated Methods)

Multiple findings were obtained based on this theme that is comprised of rationale that Islamic teachers believe prompt them to adopt certain teaching methods. For instance, it was depicted that Islamic courses are inflexible and dictate specific methods to be employed by teachers. This might shed light on why eight different methods were reported to be applied by participants. For instance, P1 said:

The problem with the Quran lesson is that there are only a few methods that I can use while teaching the Quran. So, I just read The Quran and let them read after

me, and then I tell them to read and correct their pronunciation if there is something wrong in their reading...teaching the Tawheed is also inflexible because we just talk about beliefs”.

Further, P11 was recorded as saying that “there is no creative way of teaching Islamic education...whether you teach in formal schools or mosques, the popular way is lecturing. So, we find it difficult to find a way that works for students” (P11, 2019). Thus, some respondents believe that the contents of Islamic courses are so rigid that they dictate the type of methods that teachers have to use when conducting religious education lessons in their classrooms.

Some respondents stated that they used specific methods of teaching Islamic studies because those methods were effective in attaining their classroom goals. From the transcripts, it was noted that the effectiveness of the teaching method impacts the choice of Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia. According to P15, “Some of these methods were used because they are the most successful for communicating information and increase students’ understanding without much effort” (P15, 2019). Similarly, P17 explained that “I use these methods because I feel they make students active and help them remember what they have to learn”. Moreover, P20 described her reason for selecting her teaching methods as follows:

I use several methods: lecturing (when teaching statements), stories (when communicating difficult information), and repetition (when listening to an anthem or reading words; this is for the first primary grade). This means that the teaching

methods in all their forms are complementary, and it is not enough to have one or to generalize them for all the lessons.

In support of this finding, P18 confirmed that

I determine my teaching method based on whether a given method can simplify the content and increase the level of understanding. For example, on the subject of the attribute of prayer, I chose the practical method instead of the recitation method because it allows students to relate course concepts and usual activities and it is also faster to understand”.

Therefore, it seems that some Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia choose their teaching method for religious studies based on the confidence they have in the method in terms of achieving different aims, such as helping students understand with ease or helping them stay attentive during the lessons, as summarized by P13 when she said that she chose her preferred method for “...its effectiveness in getting the attention of female students”.

A considerable number of participants also mentioned that their most preferred or effective teaching methods were based on the nature of their students. This is represented by the finding that Islamic teachers tend to consider the characteristics of their students before selecting a teaching method. For example, P12 clarified that

I use different teaching methods in my teaching career based on the types of students I have in a classroom. In the case of a good student, I would ask them to individually come to my table and read, so that they would not feel shy. On the other hand, in the case of a weak student, I would ask them to download an application that can help them read correctly and I would also ask them to practice

at home. In the case of weak students, I always instruct them to write down the content discussed in the Quran lesson as homework. Writing down the content can help them to memorize the correct way of reading”.

In addition, P19 stated that students’ traits should be considered before a teaching method is chosen

Primary students are at an age where they love stories and can form a good connection between the image and the information...students of this age love competition, as it helps them to gain skills and prove their abilities to others”.

Moreover, some respondents associated the choice of their teaching methods in classrooms to the belief that they are the best methods since they were also taught using the same approaches while in school. According to P14, she used her methods of choice because they formed the set of methods that was used by the Prophet and his friends.

Description of Theme 3 (Classroom Procedures for Teaching Islamic Courses)

A total of seven participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P9, and P10) described various actions that they engage in before and after employing their favorite teaching methods in their respective classrooms. P1 said that “I usually provide an introduction before I start teaching the course contents. The introduction session includes writing on the whiteboard the goals of the lesson that I will teach. I always write down one or two goals...” Further, P10 noted that “A teacher can start with some questions and discussions...it is important for the teacher to connect the current lesson with the previous one”. To connect lessons of the Islamic courses, teachers tend to review the contents of the previous lessons at the beginning of each class, as explained by P7.

Not all Islamic teachers tend to adopt a static classroom procedure of introducing the course content after setting the goals of the lessons. For instance, P2 clarified that some course contents do not require an introduction by the teacher: "...sometimes I try to catch their attention by asking questions in the beginning. However, concerning some hard contents such as 'Zakat', students find it difficult to understand financial issues, so you need to explain the meaning to them". In the same way, some teachers argued that teaching course contents for too long would result in lesser concentration among learners, as mentioned by P4:

I think students' attention span is very low, and they can only focus for like 20 minutes...so I should say what I want to say or explain in 20 minutes, because if I take more time they will get lost in the process.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that all the seven participants who appreciated the role of appropriate transition sessions between lessons were males with an average age of 37.57 years and a mean of 11.71 years of teaching experience. Additionally, the average duration for these participants' interviewing sessions was 43.29 minutes, but their responses had different percentage coverage as indicated in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Percentage of Phrases Covering the Theme for Each of the Seven Participants

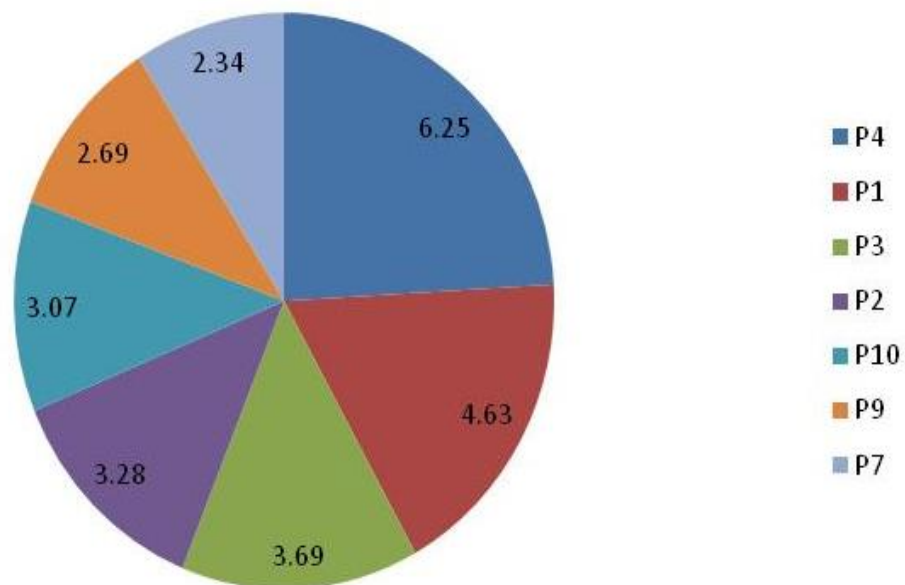


Figure 3 is a pie chart that represents the percentage of phrases corresponding to the theme that were obtained from the transcripts of the seven participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P9, and P10).

Description of Theme 4 (Strategies Used for Effective Teaching of Islamic Courses)

Different from the teaching methods, strategies are approaches that Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia use to enhance the learning of religious courses in classrooms.

Some teachers tend to employ appropriate technological devices as tools of learning to supplement their preferred teaching methods, while others invest in discussion groups or other motivational mechanisms. For instance, P18 stated that “technology is very impressive and facilitates the effort made by the teacher” while P19 asserted that

Technology is a new task in education today and facilitates the task and delivers it with the least cost, effort and time. It is available in modern and new schools, but its application must be monitored and students must be educated about its negative aspects and only allowed to use specific programs.

Despite the use of technology emerging as an appropriate and popular strategy of teaching religious courses among Islamic teachers, some participants pointed out the challenges that are associated with technology. For instance, P15 stated that

As for technology, it is wonderful to use it, but also, we should not depend entirely on it...and it is not like for displaying information only. We need to listen to our students, understand their ideas and beliefs, and correct any errors. We must also not forget that our students might receive knowledge from unreliable sources, whether it is people who follow them on social media or an anonymous source.

It should be noted that the strategies employed by Islamic teachers to supplement their selected teaching methods have to be suitable for the specific Islamic courses, given that all the strategies are not applicable to all the methods. P9 emphasized on this by saying that

The idea of cooperative learning is perfect, but the problem is that if it suits with some teachers, it does not mean it should suit others. Besides, if it works with some subjects, it does not have to work with all subjects. I agree that the idea is perfect, especially when students look for information by themselves. The best method should focus on the methods that work for the students and not the one that only focuses on modern ways.

Alternatively, P12 appreciates the role of rewards in increasing the motivational level of students: “I also motivate student by giving gifts to anyone who memorizes the paragraphs that I ask them to memorize every week”.

Description of Theme 5 (Barriers to Employing Effective Teaching Methods)

This theme presents a set of the barriers that teachers experience while employing their selected methods for teaching religious courses, as illustrated by the pie chart in Figure 5. From the coding of this concept, this theme was supported by numerous findings such as teachers’ training, curriculum, and resources available, impact the effectiveness of teaching methods employed by Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 5

Number of Islamic Teachers that Responded to Barriers Preventing the Use of Appropriate Teaching Methods

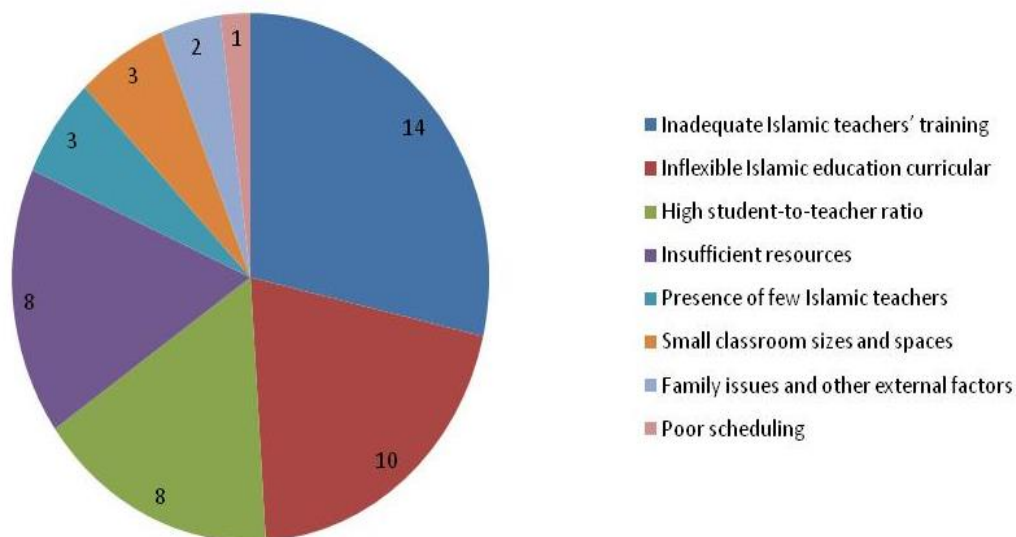


Figure 5 shows the number of participants that identified different barriers that prevent them from using effective teaching methods. According to Figure 5, inadequate Islamic teachers' training and inflexible Islamic education curriculum are the major barriers that respondents face. According to P1, the biggest challenge that affects proper utilization of appropriate teaching methods is "a lack of enough and efficient courses for pre-service teachers, since the majority of teachers including me learn these teaching methods during their work as teachers" (P1, 2019). This statement was echoed by P9, who said that

I learned from my experience and my teaching at schools and at the mosque...in terms of teaching methods, I learned nothing from the university. It was more theoretical than practical. Also, these courses at the university did not fit our culture and our reality.

Thus, had the Islamic teachers received effective training at tertiary institutions, they would not have waited until they started teaching to enhance understanding of the best teaching methods.

The high number of students in the small classrooms was found to be another barrier for Islamic teachers in employing effective teaching methods. P2 explained this as follows

I think the main problem is the number of students in the classroom. For example, I have 40 students in one of my classrooms. So, I cannot focus on their differences in just 45 minutes of teaching. With this number of students, it is impossible to be creative or use different teaching methods. So that is why I usually use the strategy of reading and learning in my teaching.

Further, P12 reported that having 35 students in her class makes it impossible to “check their reading one by one in 45 minutes”. While talking about the barriers affecting the use of effective teaching methods in schools, P17 also mentioned the large number of students in the classrooms and proposed a maximum of 20 students per classroom as being optimal for the use of appropriate teaching methods.

A lack of sufficient Islamic teachers has prompted teachers of other subjects to teach Islamic courses. For instance, P10 clarified that

I remember from my experience in private school, where one teacher who used to teach English language was asked to teach Islamic courses. This teacher found it very hard, and to make it worse, he was assigned to teach elementary school students.

In addition, poor scheduling of the Islamic courses was reported as another barrier to the adoption of effective teaching methods by Islamic teachers. For example, P1 reported that

One important thing is that the method that I use depends on the time of the course. So, if it is like after 5 hours of the start of the day, I am tired and just let anyone read and I make comments, but yeah, I mean in the beginning of the day I try to be active. Or, sometimes, at the end of the day, if I am tired I just ask a student to answer questions in the book or to do their homework in class, and just grade their work.

Moreover, family issues were also mentioned as barriers that prevent Islamic teachers to adopt effective teaching methods in Saudi. For instance, P16 stated that “We need parents to help us and follow up and check the performance of their children in schools”. These issues include the failure of some parents to follow up with the academic developments of their children in schools.

Description of Theme 6 (Differences Between Private and Public Schools)

The information obtained from all transcripts that were coded under this section indicates that there are some differences in the learning environments between private and public schools in Saudi Arabia in terms of the roles of teaching tools and equipment, parents, school administrations, and the ratio of students to teachers. One of the findings

under this theme states that despite teaching Islamic courses using the same curriculum, teachers in private schools are provided with a better environment for teaching religious education than their counterparts in public institutions. For instance, P10 stated that

one of the obstacles in public schools is that classrooms are not configured. In this case, if teachers want to use technology or any tool different from the ones provided in the classroom, they must bring their own devices and pay for them using their financial resources, and unfortunately sometimes this would not be appreciated from the administration...in private schools, lack of enough teachers is the main obstacle as sometimes they ask Islamic teachers to teach other subjects and request Arabic or special education teachers to teach Islamic courses”.

Figure 6

Differences Between Private and Public Schools

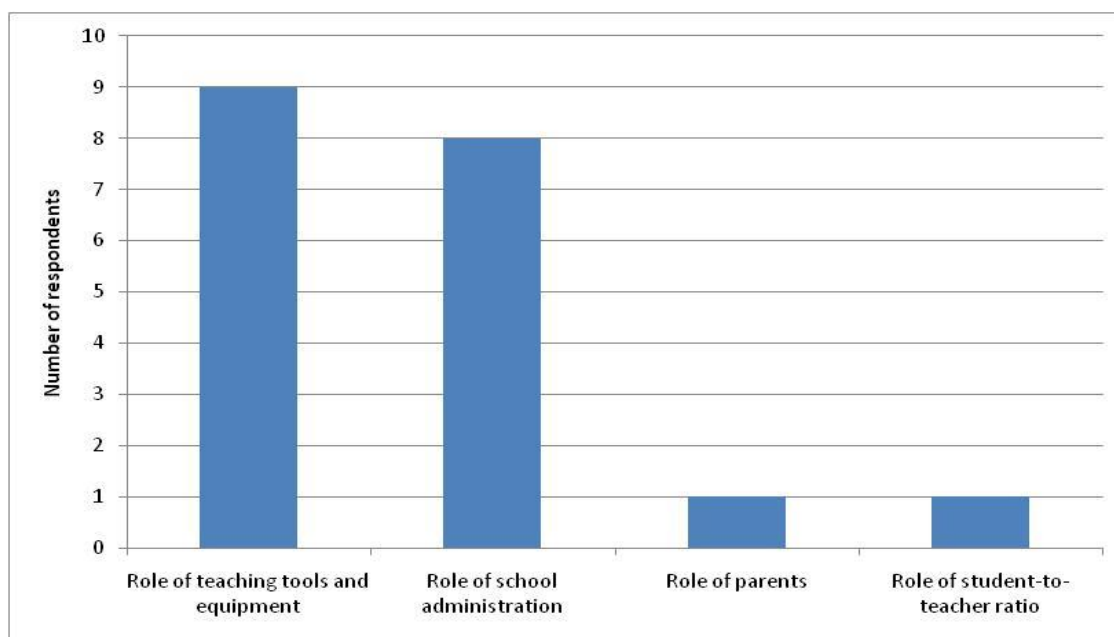


Figure 6 shows the number of Islamic teachers that responded on various differences between public and private schools. According to Figure 6, 9 and 8 teachers mentioned the major differences between the two types of schools as the availability of teaching tools and equipment and the role of the school administration, respectively. Nonetheless, the influence of parents and the ratio of students to teachers in schools were also highlighted as other differentiating factors between teaching in public and private schools.

As aforementioned, public and private schools teaching Islamic studies differ majorly in the classroom tools and equipment. P16 stated that she had the opportunity of teaching at both public and private schools, and noted that the major advantage of private schools in Saudi Arabia is “a vast difference in terms of providing educational materials and classrooms equipped with modern devices such as smart boards, laptop and projectors. As for government schools, these possibilities for education are very limited”. Even P4 had a similar perception: “...I know there are some good private schools that I think are better than public schools in terms of the tools in classrooms and the quality of students”. Similarly, P18 said that

The only difference between public and private schools is based on the tools that are available in the classrooms and the learning environments are facilitated by different facilities and equipment such as tables. For example, teachers in private schools feel more comfortable while at work than their counterparts in the public schools because they are provided with comfy furniture”.

Furthermore, the conduct adopted by the administration in private schools was found to be different from the ones observed in public schools. P12 responded that “the administration in private school evaluates teachers most of the time, but almost no one evaluates Islamic teachers in public schools”. According to P1, private schools are better than public schools administration asks teachers to attend classes of their colleagues that are more experienced as a way of increasing their knowledge and skills in teaching Islamic courses. Elsewhere, P12 noted that “...female students in public schools are more motivated to learn than female students in private schools. I think education in the government school is better even with a shortage of teachers compared to private schools”.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 involved presentations of the research findings obtained during the interview sessions conducted with 20 Islamic teachers in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. All the research participants provided a wide range of perceptions towards the process of teaching religious courses in the country, given that 8 different methods were found to be used in teaching Islamic studies in the Saudi’s elementary schools. Precisely, lecturing, narrative, teaching by practice, iterative, role modeling, preaching, indoctrination, and recitation methods were identified as the commonly used teaching methods for religious courses in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents cited their beliefs in the relevance of the approaches and rigidity of the Islamic curricular as the major factors influencing the choice of their preferred methods. At the same time, multiple teachers appreciated the role of cooperative learning, motivating students, and using

technological devices in classrooms in fostering learners' understandings of the concepts. This translated to the emergence of 8 barriers, including high students-to-teacher ratio and the small size of the classrooms, that were found to hinder the adoption of effective teaching methods among Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia. Finally, the availability of technological tools and equipment and the role of school administrations were reported to be the major differences between public and private schools in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

In this chapter, the researcher presents a discussion of the findings obtained from the interviews based on the study questions. To justify the thoroughness of the responses, the results are organized based on the two research questions guiding the dissertation. Furthermore, the chapter is divided into various segments concerning the themes derived from the study findings, since there are segments responding to the pair of research questions and the discussion of the emergent themes. Moreover, the implications of this study were presented alongside its limitations. To conclude this chapter, recommendations for future studies are made to provide a way forward in terms of attaining more robust findings concerning the teaching methods for religious courses instituted in Saudi Arabia.

General Overview

The education sector is dynamic; many changes are made annually to improve students' comprehension levels regarding the course contents. However, students' precise academic needs are determined by conducting in-depth research projects on specific topics; as one of these research projects, the current study identifies the teaching methods used in Saudi Arabia by religious teachers when teaching Islamic courses. For instance, the findings of this study can be considered by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia when seeking to identify the learning needs connected to religious courses. A total of six themes were obtained from the data collected during the interview sessions. However, each theme formulated during the data analysis process was associated with several findings, resulting in the derivation of 27 findings from the six themes.

All the collected data were linked to the principles of the constructivist theory of learning. According to Bada and Olusegun (2015), the constructivist perception of learning means encouraging learners to be active during lessons through various strategies, such as experimentation and solving real-world problems to gain more knowledge. Therefore, this study aimed to identify different methods elicited for teaching Islamic courses in Saudi Arabia and to understand their justification of using these methods; however, the results were analyzed from the perspective of constructivism learning theories.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

Question one generated eight findings, meaning that several approaches were identified as the primary teaching methods that Islamic educators of religious courses use in Saudi Arabia-based learning environments. This research question aimed at acquiring primary data on the specific methods used in classrooms today, given the changes observed in students' characteristics and learning needs. One of the significant areas where changes are emphasized by many stakeholders in the education domain globally is the method employed by teachers while in the learning environment. As mentioned above, lecturing, narrative, teaching by practice, iteration, role modeling, preaching, indoctrination, and recitation methods were identified to be used by different Islamic teachers in public and private schools, irrespective of the educators' genders. Thus, this study confirmed that students are subjected to numerous teaching methods while taking part in Islamic courses in classrooms. However, the frequency of using the methods

mentioned above differed from one method to another since the number of participants that reported using the stated approaches also varied.

The most prevalent religious teaching strategy in Saudi Arabia employed to build the capacity of students during ongoing lessons is the lecturing method. Apart from being used to teach a large population of students, lecturing allows teachers to preemptively prepare for the lessons before the learners arrive (Hubbard, 2012). Hubbard (2012) complimented this assertion by explaining that the role of a teacher who uses the lecturing method is verbally conveying course contents to enhance the level of the students' understanding of the already completed assigned readings. However, Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia reported having been using the traditional form of lecturing method in which students were not allowed to participate in the process of creating knowledge during lessons. All respondents who confirmed using the lecturing method stated that they were unable to create a collaborative environment when using the lecturing method that would have aligned it with the provisions of the social constructivism model. According to Hubbard (2012), in this theoretical framework, people construct knowledge through both interpretation and synthesis of ideas. Thus, the lecturing method can be even more popular among the Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia when they actively involve learners during lessons through collaborative activities to make the approach appropriate for achieving their primary objective of increasing the students' level of understanding of religious course content.

As stated above, the lecturing method identified in this study as the principal approach among Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia does not involve the active

participation of the students. However, Khalid and Azeem (2012) explained that listening to a lecture provides students with platforms to construct new knowledge, given that the constructivist's perception of learning involves encouraging students to employ active techniques during the process of creating knowledge. In this research, it was found that teachers do not encourage their learners to reflect and talk about classroom activities and how their understanding of the course contents changes as the lessons progress during lecturing. Thus, the precise ways that teachers conduct lecturing sessions in the learning environments of Islamic courses in Saudi Arabia remained unclear, although most reported using the lecturing method during this study. Khalid and Azeem (2012) stated that educators should ensure that they have clear understandings of the students' preexisting conceptions to properly guide all activities that would address and even build on them. Through lecturing, the role of the Islamic teachers is modified as students are encouraged to construct knowledge instead of reproducing the already existing set of facts.

Similarly, the narrative method was identified by 11 out of the 20 Islamic teachers that took part in this study, meaning that it is another major teaching method employed in religious education. All participants who mentioned this style stated that it encompasses a myriad of employable techniques, including but not limited to the creation of stories in classrooms or through the recitation of primary or secondary sources, such as textbooks. Nevertheless, teachers cited numerous challenges, such as a lack of necessary learning tools to create a favorable environment that enhances students' likelihood of interpreting and synthesizing course contents to increase their understanding when this method is

used. Yet, the narrative method is associated with social constructivism theory, regardless of the procedure used. To be precise, as Hubbard (2012) stated, social constructivism provides that knowledge is not an external phenomenon that should be developed by students.

Half of the Islamic teachers confirmed using iterative methods when teaching different religious education courses. As discussed in Chapter Two, the iterative teaching method is especially useful in elementary learning environments where children are still in the stage of formative learning. However, this method denies students the opportunity to construct a solid foundation whereby they can pursue the attainment of knowledge while securing a thorough understanding of their religious courses. This is attributed to the method's approach of teachers asking learners to repeat classroom concepts several times until they memorize them.

Teaching by practice is another method that was identified among the most used techniques in disseminating Islamic education courses in Saudi Arabia. Islamic teachers can be said to employ this criterion based on its closeness to the provisions of the radical constructivism theory. Matanluk et al. (2013) explained that the radical constructivist approach necessitates that learners are not only active but also knowledgeable. This attribute enables teachers to create learning processes that involve the active construction of information in which there is no transferring of knowledge across the students' minds. Instead, teaching by practice allows students to construct meaningful information on the course contents through the selective experience that enables them to create further conceptual structures to visualize the learned concepts. However, the major challenge

reported during this study was that teaching by practice is only applicable to a single Islamic course, Fiqh, while teachers could not use it when teaching the other four courses of Islamic education in Saudi Arabia.

Apart from the most popular teaching methods discussed above, three respondents identified role modeling as a method they use while teaching religious courses in Saudi Arabia. This method involves teachers serving as good examples to children inside and outside classrooms, as well as encouraging them to be like other successful individuals either in their local communities or on a global scale. Through this form of learning, students create knowledge from their interactions with others and the environment, confirming the provisions of social constructivism. Nevertheless, the major challenge associated with this method is that some teachers in learning environments depicted undesirable behaviors that contradicted the provisions of the course content. For instance, one participant reported that he used to teach with a colleague who was a smoker, hardening his task of teaching students against substance abuse.

A total of three participants confirmed that they used preaching and recitation methods in classrooms while teaching Islamic courses. Like lecturing, both preaching and recitation are collaborative since they allow learners to participate during lessons as a way of enhancing their comprehension of Islamic concepts. However, Islamic teachers observed that numerous factors, such as lack of teaching tools, challenged their desire to incorporate the active participation of students during classroom lessons. Thus, the two methods were not exploited to their maximum potential of enabling learners to construct knowledge in their classrooms.

Finally, the identification of the indoctrination method during the interview sessions in this research's data collection process was the most unexpected finding. Although only one participant mentioned it, the results indicated that some religious teachers employ this approach when teaching Islamic courses in Saudi Arabia. This disparity is evident because the indoctrination method is only aimed at uncritically instilling a set of beliefs in an ideology in people (Momanu, 2012). To be specific, students subjected to this teaching method are not invited into the knowledge creation process, resulting in the assertion that indoctrination is contrary to the provisions of constructivist learning theories.

Research Question 2

The second research question was framed to identify the specific reasons that teachers in elementary schools in Saudi Arabia used the stated teaching methods when providing religious education concepts. As mentioned above, a set of three findings was identified concerning the question; the respondents commented on the rigidity of the courses, effectiveness of the methods, and characteristics of learners.

Most of the research participants asserted that Islamic courses are inflexible, dictating the methods teachers employ in classrooms. According to the responses analyzed in this study, it is challenging to adopt a new teaching method for course content that requires a specific approach. For instance, it is expected that teaching Fiqh content, such as lessons on ablution, must involve teaching by practice to increase the level of comprehension among students. This statement confirms the observation that the contents of Islamic courses are so rigid that teachers are restricted to selecting a perfect

methodology to use in classrooms. However, the global transition in the learning needs and the rapid embrace of the constructivist theoretical frameworks encourage teachers to be creative. According to Al-Karasneh and Saleh (2010), having creativity traits enables teachers to lead their classrooms in the most appropriate ways, allowing them to cope with daily changes and preparing them not only to face the future but also adhere to the developments required for their students' success. Therefore, a conclusion that can be drawn concerning the Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia is that they do not employ high creativity levels to identify alternative and effective practices through which religious courses can be taught, irrespective of their rigidity.

As evident from the findings of this research, the success of the teaching methods influences the preferences of Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia. According to Ganyaupfu (2013), learners can only build a good understanding of the main course contents more efficiently when they are involved in solving various problems during class activities. Any process of learning should be characterized by “investigating, formulating, reasoning, and using appropriate strategies to solve problems” (Ganyaupfu, 2013, p. 33). Thus, in this case, an effective teaching method engages students to participate actively rather than becoming an audience for the presentations provided by the course teachers. A closer look at the identified teaching methods in Question One above shows that Islamic educators in Saudi Arabia prioritized approaches that would prompt students to perform certain activities, including repeating phrases during lectures, answering questions, or engaging in practical exercises while learning about various religious concepts. However, the indoctrination method was found to be an exception in this study:

it does not allow learners to contribute to the knowledge creation process since students are asked to remember information instead of being tasked to perform activities for the better understanding of the course contents.

It was mentioned that Islamic teachers are only driven by the time allotted for each lesson and the course content while selecting the teaching method to use and do not consider the characteristics of their students before selecting a teaching method. Paolini (2015) explained that educators should be able to build positive relationships with their students both inside and outside classrooms. Connecting with students to the extent of influencing their lives both personally and professionally requires educators not only to be student centered but also show high levels of respect for the learners' backgrounds, beliefs, and ideologies (Paolini, 2015). Therefore, Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia should use specific teaching methods and abandon others. The teachers should aim to ensure that they are linked to their students optimally by being sensitive to their attributes. As a result, religious instructors tend to employ appropriate methods that allow them to use differentiated instruction, emphasize open communication, show cultural sensitivity, and provide positive feedback to the learners as a way of enhancing their academic performance. Thus, the characteristics of students in classrooms comprise a significant factor in determining the type of teaching method that Islamic teachers select while providing course content for religious education in Saudi Arabia.

Last, the participants cited that they used the stated methods because of the belief that they are appropriate given that they were also taught using them when they were students. Teachers' beliefs are significant in influencing the choices that teachers make in

classrooms. Unless the teachers that use specific methods are taught on the weaknesses and strengths of their preferred approaches, they are unlikely to abandon them as a way of adjusting to the current learning needs. Since the students' needs are changing globally, it is important for teachers to only utilize the teaching methods that enhance the levels of learners to understand course concepts rather than believing that the methods that they were taught with are still relevant in the today's learning environment.

Discussion of the Emergent Themes

Despite this research having two primary study questions, numerous themes emerged during the data analysis process. The researcher found it suitable not to ignore them but to discuss such information in this section to clarify the new topics emerging from the study. Thus, the two questions that were to be answered from the collected data have already been covered. However, the education sector is characterized by frequent improvements that are aimed at increasing learners' levels of understanding. To achieve this objective, a set of four themes (i.e., classroom procedures, strategies for effective teaching, barriers for effective teaching, and differences between private and public schools) were formulated from the responses received from Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia.

Classroom Procedures for Teaching Islamic Courses. Only one finding was obtained in this theme. Notably, the effectiveness of the adopted teaching methodologies was augmented through the incorporation of lesson transitions when used appropriately. Among the 20 study participants, 7 identified a list of common practices that they adhere to during lessons to facilitate both course transitions and teachings. They described

different actions that they engaged in both before and after using their preferred teaching methods. Most commonly, all seven participants in this category stated the importance of having introductory sessions before talking about the main lesson's content. It is through the introduction that teachers set lessons' goals and objectives. In their research, Meyer et al. (2010) found that students who perceived objectives associated with such activities and contents could be enacted in the lesson instead of relying solely on the teachers' intentions for the class. In addition, teachers that align their objectives with the class enactment offer students increased opportunities for engaging with the intended course content of that lesson (Meyer et al., 2010). For this reason, it can be said that setting lesson objectives before the teaching process is a good transition session that familiarizes students with the course contents to be taught.

Not all teachers understand ways of creating practical goals that would enable students to align their provisions with the lesson activities. Meyer et al. (2010) noted that there is a need for teachers to understand the process of stating objectives and aligning instruction appropriately during the introductory sessions of the lesson. To achieve this desire, teachers should be offered training programs that would not only emphasize the significance of setting objectives for the lessons but also provide an essential reflection on the criteria of selecting activities that adequately address the stated aims. In this case, the 13 teachers who did not apply transitional activities in classrooms justify the need for such training workshops in Saudi Arabia.

Strategies for Enhancing Effective Teaching. A total of three findings were generalized in this section as the major strategies that Islamic teachers recognized to help

enhance the effective teaching of religious courses in Saudi Arabia. The use of classroom technology, cooperative learning, and motivational techniques was not categorized as teaching methods since they were perceived only to aid the process of knowledge creation under specific teaching methods as required by constructivist learning theories.

To begin with, the use of classroom technology was identified as a helpful tool of learning in religious lessons by 19 out of 20 respondents. Several technological devices, such as projectors, laptops, reading pens, and interactive whiteboards, were mentioned in the responses obtained from the interviewees. According to Kapi et al. (2017), the use of multimedia devices in the education sector enhances effective teaching since the tools render the course contents less abstract and theoretical, making these subjects much easier to learn while retaining the interest of students. However, most respondents cited a lack of sufficient technological tools, internet access, and financial support that would enhance the learning of Islamic courses in their classrooms. It is essential to understand that technological devices can be used as teaching tools alongside any of the eight teaching methods applied by teachers, as identified in this study. Thus, there is a need for schools in Saudi Arabia to increase the availability of technological devices in schools to aid in teaching Islamic studies.

Although 12 participants identified cooperative learning as an effective teaching strategy and the researcher referenced it 14 times during data analysis, most Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia did not understand its concept in classrooms. Organizing students to work together in groups is a perfect strategy that can increase their levels of engagement with the course content. This assertion is based on the idea that students tend

to learn when the concepts they have about the specific course are challenged in the constructivist learning environment, giving them opportunities to notice and understand new ideas, as well as construct more complementary knowledge concerning the particular subject they are studying. However, most of the Islamic teachers in this study were against the principles of cooperative learning since they claimed that this strategy was time-consuming given the limited time scheduled for lessons on religious education. They perceived that cooperative learning is all about allowing students to answer questions from the course books in unison. Moreover, some participants expressed that the large populations of students in the classroom did not favor cooperative learning since it would be challenging to manage the groups. Nevertheless, the main conclusion that emerged from this theme is that there is a need for Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia to be trained on the concepts of cooperative learning and how to conduct it best, irrespective of the limited time and space in classrooms, since it is a good strategy that can result in effective teaching when applied appropriately.

Finally, different motivational techniques were identified as essential strategies that increase students' engagement levels in classrooms to enhance their understanding of religious courses. Despite mentioning them in the interview sessions, the responses obtained from this research indicated that teachers did not employ strategies that would motivate their students in classrooms. Motivational strategies have profound effects on learners' levels of engagement when applied appropriately. Astuti (2016) researched the motivational strategies of successful teachers and found that various strategies influenced the students' motivation. She categorized them into five major clusters, including teacher

behavior, the selection of learning activities, a supportive learning environment, the usefulness of the course, and the process of providing feedback (Astuti, 2016, p. 1).

These results indicate that Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia are not able to influence their learners' motivation since they lack support from the schools' administrations despite having an understanding of the outcome of motivational teaching approaches on students' learning, as well as their behaviors. It is encouraging that most of the teachers were aware of the best motivational strategies that could be used during lessons in Islamic courses to enhance students' ability to participate in the process of creating knowledge. Therefore, addressing some barriers that prevent Islamic teachers from employing appropriate classroom strategies will be essential in enhancing the effective teaching of religious courses in Saudi Arabia.

Barriers to Employing of Effective Teaching. The researcher expected that the process of teaching Islamic courses would not be an easy task, despite Islam being the predominant religion in the country. As found during the data analysis, eight factors were reported to be the main barriers against Islamic teachers using effective teaching methods in classrooms. First, the researcher found that Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia were subjected to inadequate training programs that did not address all the requirements for teaching religious courses in classrooms. Thus, most of the teachers improved their knowledge and skills through experience, as they stayed in the profession for some time. The acquisition of inadequate knowledge during teachers' training in tertiary institutions limits the ability of the newly graduated teachers to explore their maximum potential as

they accomplish the pursuit of enhancing understanding levels of course concepts among students.

According to Gorozidis and Papaioannou (2014), there is a need for teachers to be motivated to enroll for significant training programs, given that school innovations are increasingly becoming essential reforms for improving education; the world is switching from teacher-centered practices to more creative student-centered methods. Based on the findings of this study, the government of Saudi Arabia should motivate teachers to participate in in-service training sessions that will add to their existing knowledge. Besides, the curriculum for training religious teachers in the country should be revised to accommodate the current learning needs that encourage the adoption of student-centered approaches in classrooms. Thus, the current training programs failing to meet contemporary teaching needs is a significant barrier for teachers to use effective teaching techniques.

Moreover, some respondents identified the inflexible Islamic education curriculum as a significant barrier to employing effective teaching methods in both private and public schools in Saudi Arabia. The primary argument depicted from the research findings is that some course contents required teachers to use specific teaching methods to enhance students' level of understanding. For instance, teaching Fiqh could not be done effectively using any other approach without incorporating the teaching by practice method. Buldu and Shaban (2010) explained that the rigid curriculum denied teachers the freedom to choose appropriate activities to include in their lessons. This assertion directly aligns with the study findings that Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia are

not in the position to adopt better approaches that would increase students' participation in classrooms because of the inflexible curriculum. Thus, there is a need for the country to revise its religious studies curriculum to accommodate the needs of the contemporary education process.

In addition, the high student-to-teacher ratio was found to be another significant barrier to employing effective teaching methods for religious courses. Precisely, teachers reported having been subjected to teaching large numbers of students within the stipulated time frame for lessons. According to Ajani and Akinyele (2014), learners in large classes receive too much instruction from their teachers, reducing their engagement levels because of reduced individual attention. Precisely, increased students' population in classrooms is challenging for teachers to use appropriate student-centered methods. As a result, teachers are forced to use teacher-centered methods that are ineffective in enhancing critical thinking abilities among students in modern learning environments.

Insufficient financial resources in the institutions emerged as another barrier for Islamic teachers to employ effective teaching methods in religious classes. Some respondents reported that their schools did not give them enough financial resources to acquire essential teaching tools that would facilitate their preferred methods. To be precise, school administrations would ask them to purchase the teaching aids that they required from their personal resources, and no refunds would be made. A lack of financial support discourages teachers from being committed in their pursuit of adopting the most appropriate teaching methods that would enhance the understanding levels of their students. As a result, teachers become dissatisfied with their profession. As

Zeinabadi (2010) explained, intrinsic job satisfaction is essential in contributing to organizational citizenship behavior, as it motivates teachers to display positive teaching traits. It is expected that teachers would be encouraged to further use their financial resources to purchase teaching aids if school administrations compensate them thereafter.

Furthermore, three respondents reported that Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia are few compared to the increasing number of students to be taught religious concepts in the country. Thus, the small number of Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia was categorized as a barrier to adopting effective teaching methods—as the ones who are present are overworked and, at times, Arabic teachers are requested to teach religious courses. All three participants that highlighted this challenge stated that they could have employed better teaching methods had there been more teachers to share classrooms with, as it is strenuous teaching Islamic studies in the whole school if you are the only religious teacher available. The teacher's workload is influential on the academic achievements of the learners, given that those instructors that are overworked are unlikely to be energetic, insightful, and resilient as required in the effective teaching environment (Ayeni & Amanekwe, 2018). It is, therefore, necessary for the responsible stakeholders in Saudi Arabia's educational sector to ensure the number of Islamic teachers in both private and public schools is increased to reduce the reported understaffing.

In addition, the issue of small classroom sizes and spaces emerged as a significant barrier to adopting effective teaching methods for religious courses in Saudi Arabia. Small-sized learning environments limit the ability of teachers to employ approaches to their choices because of the congested spaces that make learners uncomfortable. Besides,

learning in small classrooms make it impossible for both teachers and students to navigate through different ends of the room as required by specific teaching methods, such as when using the teaching by practice method in a Fiqh lesson. Having a large space enough to comfortably accommodate all learners is significant in not only enhancing movements but also allowing the free circulation of fresh air, which results in making learners active. Thus, expanding the sizes of classrooms in Saudi Arabia is one of the ways that can be adopted to increase the use of using effective teaching methods.

Moreover, a pair of respondents reported family issues and other external factors as a challenge that impacts adopting effective teaching methods for religious courses in Saudi Arabia. To be specific, the participants mentioned that some parents interfered with the teachers' duties by dictating the promotion of their children to the next class even if the results of their assessments did not meet the minimum requirements. However, the teachers admitted that they lacked fundamental information and training on the best ways to work with parents for the benefit of improving students' academic outcomes. Also, the issue of some learners lacking family support in terms of providing necessary resources was raised in this study. According to LaRocque et al. (2011), families are vital in the creation of a school environment that meets the needs of children. For this reason, there is a need for teachers to create an excellent collaborative relationship with parents as it is the missing link between teaching and students' academic achievements.

Last, the study findings show that substandard scheduling procedures hinder Islamic teachers from implementing effective religious teaching practices in Saudi Arabia. As revealed in the results, Islamic education in Saudi Arabia is allocated a few

lessons within a week in the classroom timetables of different academic levels. One participant mentioned having to teach religious courses only thrice in a week, making it challenging to adopt appropriate methods that would involve students' active participation in the knowledge-creation process. Besides, the maximum time allotted for each lesson was 45 minutes. Teachers cited experiencing challenges in covering all the contents of the five Islamic courses within the short period provided in the timetables.

Differences Between Private and Public Schools. The last theme that emerged from the findings of this study concerned four differences that Islamic teachers stated to exist between private and public schools as far as teaching religious courses in Saudi Arabia is concerned. First, the two cases studied differed in terms of the availability of the teaching tools and equipment. Specifically, the teachers observed that most private schools had proper teaching tools and equipment, compared to public schools. It is a common observation in the education domain that funding differs in the two types of learning institutions. Unlike public schools, which rely on government resources budgeted for each financial year, private learning centers are financed by individuals that can release funds at any time to purchase significant tools and equipment necessary in the classrooms. As private schools were categorized as institutions characterized by better teaching tools and equipment, compared to what was observed in the majority of the public schools, it was concluded that teachers in private institutions were placed in a better position to explore many teaching methods while seeking to adapt the best option for their use.

Second, the two cases in this study differed in the way administrations managed teachers. According to the participants, the school management of private institutions had more involvement in teachers' activities than that of public learning centers. The results reveal that principals in private schools used different evaluation tools to assess the work of their teachers. Besides, teachers were monitored closely in terms of the activities they engaged in while in and out of school environments and their work rate. However, none of the participants reported having had the same experience while teaching in public schools. Educational supervision is a vital process that results in the teacher's professional development (Shakuna et al., 2016). In particular, Shakuna et al. (2016) stated that the main aim of educational supervision is to assist teachers in enhancing their performance levels in teaching, as it focuses mainly on their activities. Consequently, instructors that continuously receive feedback from their supervision sessions tend to make the necessary adjustments that eventually lead to the increased ability to offer appropriate teaching services. Therefore, Islamic teachers in private schools in Saudi Arabia are likely to be performing highly because of the various supervision measures adopted in their surroundings. On the contrary, the shallow supervision frequency of teachers' activities in public schools can be associated with the poor performance of the professionals.

Third, there is a difference between the way parents involve themselves in the academic progress of their children in private and public schools in Saudi Arabia. Based on the findings of this study, parents whose children learn in private institutions have established follow-up mechanisms that enable them to understand the academic

development of the students. This assertion means that parents in private schools have higher expectations for their children's education outcome compared to the parents whose children learn in public schools. It is for this reason that some parents opt to take their children to private schools given that such institutions have better learning environments, including less number of students, compared to public ones. Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) explained that parental expectations play an important role in the academic success of learners. The groups of students whose parents depict high expectations achieve higher educational attainments in terms of high scores in standardized classroom tests and persistence in schools than the ones whose parents hold lower expectations (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Teaching children whose parents expect high grades in school intrinsically motivates teachers. However, respondents in this study complained about the influence that parents, mostly of children in private schools, had on manipulating the test results of their children to depict positive academic development. Thus, it can be summed up those high parental expectations in private schools prompt teachers to award students credits that they do not deserve.

Last, several participants from public schools identified the differences in the number of students taught by a single Islamic teacher in private and public schools. Specifically, teachers in private schools teach a smaller number of students within any given classroom, compared to the large population that teachers in public schools teach at a school of the same building space. As aforementioned, spacious learning environments with a reduced number of students are strategic in encouraging teachers to use effective

teaching methods, as learners not only are active during lessons but also have enough space to move.

Limitations

The scope of the research topic limits the relevance of its results in cultural contexts and educational processes similar to the Saudi Arabian ones. This limitation is justified by the nature of the responses obtained from the interview sessions, which suggests inadequate training of religious course teachers in the Saudi Arabian universities. This focus on Saudi Arabia may limit the number of countries that could benefit from this study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to document various methods that Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia currently use while teaching religious courses in elementary schools. It was determined that an individual could not teach effectively without understanding the implications associated with each teaching method that the person considers to apply in classrooms. As a result, two research questions were formulated to attain the stated purpose. Precisely, the researcher was interested in answering two questions: “What methods are currently used to teach religious education in elementary schools in Saudi Arabia?” and “Why do elementary religious course teachers in Saudi Arabia use these methods?” To answer the research prompts, this research relied on interviewing teachers from both private and public schools.

The researcher of this study used relied on the multiple case study approach in identifying the teaching methods that Islamic teachers use in Saudi Arabia. The two cases

in this research were the private and public school contexts. The primary reason for using the multiple case study approach is based on the findings of the pilot study, which depicted some differences between private and public learning institutions regarding the teachers' activities and involvement in the students' educational attainment. After obtaining a clear research design, the researcher used interviews as a tool for collecting data from 20 teachers in all the identified institutions within Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The process of collecting data was challenging at first, as some participants did not provide precise answers to the interview questions asked. To deal with this problem, the researcher developed a series of probes that helped in eliciting more detailed, as well as elaborate, responses to the main questions. Having attained saturation before conducting all the interview sessions, the researcher found it necessary to continue interviewing the remaining respondents, as the sessions had already been scheduled. Furthermore, the coding process and the constant comparative approach were utilized during the data analysis process to help in sorting the obtained results into themes that would later be used to provide meaning to the findings. Also, the researcher used Nvivo 12 software to code the collected data. The coding was done to perfection, as it resulted in six themes that formed the basis of the study's main findings. Moreover, the researcher used existing knowledge in the current literature to account for the findings obtained during this study.

Review of the Study's Results

The findings obtained indicate that Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia do not have sufficient knowledge of the learning and teaching theories that are best at enhancing

students' levels of understandings. For instance, the participants did not know the importance of using constructivism theory in teaching, as they were not concerned about inviting their students to actively participate during the process of knowledge creation in classrooms. Instead, the participants reported being constrained with numerous barriers that did not allow them to create active teaching processes. Precisely, Islamic teachers reported that they lacked proper training and appropriate internship programs while in colleges and universities, which could have enabled them to enhance their teaching skills in practice. Factors such as large classroom sizes or a high number of students and inadequate resources also emerged as significant challenges to them in adopting effective approaches in religious classrooms.

Methods such as lecturing and the narrative and iterative approaches were reported to be the main techniques that Islamic teachers used to teach different religious studies courses. In particular, respondents reported they use their preferred methods because the course contents are inflexible. Some teachers stated that their beliefs drove them, as they were taught during their learning days using the same approaches. Apart from answering the two research questions, the researcher identified a list of four emergent themes: classroom procedures, strategies for effective teaching, barriers for adopting effective teaching methods, and differences between private and public schools in Saudi Arabia.

Implications

The findings from this study have cause to offer various insights to educational stakeholders in Saudi Arabia. Both the government and elementary schools will be

required to make some adjustments to the way they conduct educational processes to accommodate the listed recommendations. At the center of changes will be the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia adopting the recommended measures. Besides, the school administrations and Islamic teachers will use the results obtained in this study to improve their performance levels regarding the aim of overcoming the stated barriers. Thus, this study will add knowledge to the existing literature to help educational stakeholders in Saudi Arabia understand all implications connected with teaching methods that Islamic teachers employ to aid formulating appropriate policies.

Recommendations for Practice

After analyzing the data obtained from the teachers, the researcher identified the following recommendations for practice:

- Based on the findings that most of the challenges affecting the adoption of effective teaching methods arising from the underqualification of teachers, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia provides all teachers in each learning institution professional licenses. Thereafter, the government should enforce the renewal of those licenses periodically, such as after every two years. This strategy will ensure that teachers keep on reviewing the best practices of enhancing students' levels of understanding as they improve themselves in the process.
- The government should enhance the training programs to customize the contents to the current learning needs. The pre-service training sessions in tertiary institutions should be enhanced to provide teachers with new knowledge on

teaching and learning theories, such as constructivism. At the same time, internship programs for all teacher students should be regularly evaluated and individuals provided with feedback containing suggestions for improvements.

- The rules for employing teachers in Saudi Arabia should be revised to allow graduates to apply for and be offered teaching positions in both private and public schools with the same qualifications. Thus, standardized tests should be conducted after one year of practice in any learning institution in the country.
- Following the barrier of high student-to-teacher ratio, the Saudi Arabian government is advised to recruit more Islamic teachers in its public schools to reduce the ratio to an optimum figure that would allow teachers to adopt effective teaching methods and prevent Arabic teachers from engaging in teaching religious courses.
- To address the challenge of classroom size and a large number of students, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia develops a policy instructing all learning institutions not to exceed a certain number of learners—for instance, about 25—in a defined classroom size to prevent congestion.
- The Ministry of Education should consider combining contents that appear common in Islamic courses to reduce the volume of the curriculum. This will relieve teachers of the pressure of completing an extensive syllabus within a short period, as it was reported.
- The government should increase the availability of essential technological tools and equipment for teaching all subjects, including Islamic studies, in all public

schools in Saudi Arabia. However, this should be accompanied by comprehensive training programs for the teachers on the best ways to use the provided resources in creating both physical and virtual environments strategic for cooperative learning.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is important for educators to use effective methods of teaching Islamic students in their learning environment, as this results in enhancing learners' levels of understanding of religious concepts. Conducting further research in this teaching domain will help Islamic teachers become better educators than they are today, resulting in not only an increase in learners' academic achievements but also the presence of an informed Saudi community. The results and conclusions of this study have enabled the researcher to formulate three recommendations for future research. Conducting the proposed three studies will allow education stakeholders in Saudi Arabia to understand the various trends concerning learners' changing needs in relation to the teaching methods that Islamic teachers use in classrooms. Appropriate measures can then be adopted to align the teaching methods used with learners' needs. The proposed future studies are as follows:

- A qualitative research could be done to examine the relationship between student engagement levels and the teaching methods of Islamic studies currently employed in Saudi Arabia.
- Qualitative research could be conducted to further investigate the impact of the identified barriers to adopting effective teaching methods among Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabian elementary schools.

- A quantitative research could be conducted to examine the relationship between the teaching methods used for Islamic studies and their impact on the students' achievement in relation to the scores on standardized tests.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

<p style="text-align: center;">جامعة ولاية أوهايو (موافقة مع التوقيع)</p> <p>عنوان البحث: ميثاق حقوق التريسي المستخدمة للتريسي العفورات البيئية في المملكة العربية السعودية</p> <p>الباحث: أحمد عسري</p> <p>IRB: 18-X-91</p> <p>يتم بؤلك من أحد باحثي جامعة أوهايو للمشاركة في البحث لكي تتمكن من تحديد ما إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة في هذا المشروع ، يجب أن تعلم ما هو المشروع ، بالإضافة إلى المعايير والفوائد المحتملة من أجل اتخاذ قرار مستنير. تعرف هذه العملية بالموافقة المسبقة. يصف هذا النموذج الغرض من المشروع البحثي وأهدافه وسدعه المحتملة ومخاطره كما يشرح كيف سيتم استخدام ومعالجة معلوماتك في هذا النموذج وإبلاغ أسئلة حول الدراسة ، سيطلب منك التوقيع عليه. يسمح لك بذلك بمشاركتك في هذه المعلومات الشخصية الخاصة بالدراسة. يجب أن تتفق نسخة من هذا المستند لإبلاغك معك.</p> <p>ملخص الدراسة</p> <p>سيكون الغرض من هذه الدراسة الوعوية هو وصف طرق التريسي المتعلقة بالتريسي العفورات البيئية ، وسوف يستكشف ميراث البعض لاختيارهم في العنصر الإضافية في المملكة العربية السعودية. أملاً أن تسهم دراستي في زيادة الوعي حول طرق التريسي المتعلقة في دورات الدراسات البيئية بين المعلمين. سيكون من المفيد للمعلمين في جميع أنحاء المملكة العربية السعودية لمساعدتهم على معرفة الاتجاهات الحديثة والحالية التي يجب اتباعها في التعليم. كما أنه سيساعد المعلمين على اتخاذ التعليم الإلزامية الحديثة لهذا العالم الحديث ثم إجراء التغييرات المطلوبة في التعليم إذا لزم الأمر مع الحفاظ على المعايير التقليدية في الاعتبار.</p> <p>شرح الدراسة</p> <p>يتم إجراء هذه الدراسة لأن طرق التريسي تسمى لوزاً مبدأً في نقل المعرفة من المعلم إلى الطالب، ومن ثم يصبح من المهم للبيئة معرفة طرق التريسي المتعلقة المستخدمة للتريسي العفورات البيئية لطلاب المدارس الإضافية في المملكة العربية السعودية. إذا وافقت على المشاركة ، سوف يتم طرح بعض الأسئلة حول تجربتك في تريس العفورات البيئية.</p> <p>المخاطر والمضيقات</p> <p>لا يتوقع أي مخاطر أو مضيقات</p> <p>في الله</p> <p>الدراسة مهمة لأنها توفر مبرراً لاتخاذ قرارات مستنيرة في التغييرات المناسبة القابلة للتطبيق في نطاق التعليم في المملكة العربية السعودية من أجل تحقيق الكفاءة المثلى في توفير التعليم الجيد في المدارس الإضافية ، لا سيما في التورات البيئية.</p> <p>السرية والسجلات</p> <p>سيقوم البحث باستخدام أجهزة التسجيل المسووع لتسجيل جلسات المقابلة. سيتم تخزين الملفات السمية المسجلة ، ثم يتم تخزينها في جهاز الكمبيوتر الشخصي للباحث ومحامي بواسطة كلمات مرور عالية الأمان من أجل تقليل فرص فقدان هذه البيانات الحيوية. بالإضافة إلى إمكانية الوصول عن المصروح به إليها باستخدام كلمة مرور آمنة.</p> <p>بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، في حين سيتم إبلاغ كل جيد للحفاظ على سرية معلوماتك المتعلقة بالدراسة ، قد تكون هناك ظروف يجب مشاركة هذه المعلومات معها.</p> <p>الوكالات الفيدرالية ، على سبيل المثال مكتب حماية حقوق الإنسان ، التي تحصل مسؤوليتها حماية المواضيع الشريفة في البحث ؛ * <u>OU</u> ؛ بما في ذلك مجلس المراجعة المؤسسية ، وهي لجنة تشرط على البحث في (OU) معطو جامعة أوهايو *</p>	<p>بيان الاستخدام المستقبلي</p> <p>إن يتم استخدام البيانات / العينات التي تم جمعها كجزء من هذا البحث ، حتى لو تمت إزالة المعلومات ، في الدراسات البحثية المستقبلية</p> <p>معلومات الاتصال</p> <p>إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة بخصوص هذه الدراسة ، يرجى الاتصال بالمحقق أحمد عسري as272916@ohio.edu</p> <p>أو المستشار د. بوجين جيست geist@ohio.edu</p> <p>إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة بخصوص حقوقك كمشارك في الأبحاث ، يرجى الاتصال بالمشكور كريس هيبو ، مدير امتثال البحوث ، جامعة أوهايو (740)593-0664 or hayhow@ohio.edu</p> <p>بالتوقيع أثناءه ، فإنه توافق على ما يلي</p> <p>قرأت نموذج الموافقة هذا (أو تم قرأته لك) وتم إعطائك الفرصة لطرح الأسئلة وإجابتي عليها</p> <p>تم إخبارك بالمخاطر المحتملة وتم توضيحها بما يوجبك</p> <p>أنت تفهم أن جامعة أوهايو ليس لها أية أموال مخصصة لأي إصابات قد تحصل عليها نتيجة للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة .</p> <p>عمرك 18 سنة أو أكثر</p> <p>مشاركتك في هذا البحث متطوعة بالكامل</p> <p>لديك الحق في الانسحاب في أي وقت. يمكنك ترك الدراسة في أي وقت ؛ إذا قررت التوقف عن المشاركة في الدراسة ، فإن تكون .</p> <p>هناك فترة خفية وأن نمسر أي مزايا يحق لك الحصول عليها</p> <p>الاسم والتوقيع: </p> <p>التاريخ: 12/16/2019</p>
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Appendix B: Coding Table Derived from the NVivo Software

Theme	Codes	Included in the Literature View	Themes Formulated
Teaching methods used for Islamic courses	<i>Lecturing method</i>	Yes, but with limited data	The majority of the Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia use lecturing, narrative, or iterative methods while teaching religious courses either in public or private schools <i>(Answers the first research question)</i>
	<i>Narrative method</i>	Yes, but with limited data	
	<i>Teaching by practice</i>	Yes, but with limited data	
	<i>Iterative method</i>	Yes, but with limited data	
	<i>Role modeling</i>	Yes, but with limited data	
	<i>Preaching</i>	Yes, but with limited data	
	<i>Indoctrination</i>	Yes, but with limited data	
	<i>Recitation method</i>	Yes, but with limited data	
	Reasons for using the teaching	Why teachers use their preferred teaching methods	

methods	employed by teachers	<i>(Answers the second research question)</i>	The effectiveness of the teaching method impacts the choice of Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia	<i>(Answers the second research question)</i>
			Islamic teachers tend to consider the characteristics of their students before selecting a teaching method <i>(Answers the second research question)</i>	
Classroom procedures for teaching	Effectiveness of the classroom procedures used	No	Appropriate transitions are important in enhancing the effectiveness of the teaching methods used	<i>(Answers the first</i>

			<i>research question)</i>
Strategies used for effective teaching of Islamic courses	<i>Use of classroom technology as tools of learning</i>	Yes, but with limited data	Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia use appropriate strategies to ensure the effectiveness of their teaching methods
	<i>Cooperative learning</i>	No	<i>(Supplementary information)</i>
	<i>Motivational techniques</i>	No	
Barriers for employing effective teaching methods	<i>Inadequate Islamic teachers' training</i>	No	Numerous factors, such as teachers' training, curriculum, and resources available, impact the effectiveness of the teaching methods employed by Islamic teachers in Saudi Arabia
	<i>Inflexible Islamic education curricula</i>	No	
	<i>High student-to-teacher ratio</i>	No	<i>(Answers the second research question)</i>
	<i>Insufficient</i>	No	

	<i>resources</i>		
	<i>Presence of few Islamic teachers</i>	No	
	<i>Small classroom sizes and spaces</i>	No	
	<i>Family issues and other external factors</i>	No	
	<i>Poor scheduling</i>	No	
Differences between private and public schools	<i>Role of teaching tools and equipment</i>	No	Despite teaching Islamic courses using the same curriculum, teachers in private schools are subjected to a better environment for teaching religious education than their counterparts in public institutions
	<i>Role of school administration</i>	No	
	<i>Role of parents</i>	No	
	<i>Role of student-to-teacher ratio</i>	No	

(supplementary information)

Appendix C: Coding Table

Themes and codes	Files	References	Created On	Modified On	Present in literature review
Reasons for teaching methods	18	27	1/7/2020 11:24 AM	1/7/20 20 4:05 PM	Yes but with limited data
Classroom procedures for teaching Islamic courses	7	11	1/7/2020 11:01 AM	1/7/20 20 4:06 PM	No
Teaching methods used for Islamic courses	0	0	1/7/2020 11:03 AM	1/7/20 20 11:20 AM	-
<i>Lecturing method</i>	11	13	1/7/2020 11:05 AM	1/7/20 20 4:00 PM	Yes but with limited data
<i>Narrative method</i>	11	12	1/7/2020 11:05 AM	1/7/20 20 3:10 PM	Yes but with limited data
<i>Teaching by practice</i>	9	10	1/7/2020 11:56 AM	1/7/20 20 4:05 PM	Yes but with limited data
<i>Iterative method</i>	10	11	1/7/2020 11:03 AM	1/7/20 20 3:54 PM	Yes but with limited data
<i>Role modeling</i>	3	5	1/7/2020 1:25 PM	1/7/20 20 4:18 PM	Yes but with limited data

<i>Preaching</i>	2	2	1/7/2020 1:26 PM	1/7/20 20 2:06 PM	d data Yes but with limite d data
<i>Indoctrination</i>	1	1	1/7/2020 12:38 PM	1/7/20 20 12:38 PM	Yes but with limite d data
<i>Recitation method</i>	1	1	1/7/2020 11:04 AM	1/7/20 20 2:11 PM	Yes but with limite d data
Strategies used for effective teaching of Islamic courses	0	0	1/7/2020 11:06 AM	1/7/20 20 11:19 AM	No
<i>Use of classroom technology as tools of learning</i>	19	24	1/7/2020 11:07 AM	1/7/20 20 4:17 PM	Yes but with limite d data
<i>Cooperative learning</i>	12	14	1/7/2020 11:07 AM	1/7/20 20 4:08 PM	No
<i>Motivational techniques</i>	4	4	1/7/2020 1:06 PM	1/7/20 20 2:22 PM	No
Barriers for employing effective teaching methods	0	0	1/7/2020 11:08 AM	1/7/20 20 11:18 AM	-

<i>Inadequate Islamic teachers' training</i>	14	19	1/7/2020 11:33 AM	1/7/20 20 4:19 PM	No
<i>Inflexible Islamic education curricular</i>	10	15	1/7/2020 11:34 AM	1/7/20 20 4:21 PM	No
<i>High student-to-teacher ratio</i>	8	8	1/7/2020 11:33 AM	1/7/20 20 3:58 PM	No
<i>Insufficient resources</i>	8	12	1/7/2020 11:32 AM	1/7/20 20 3:12 PM	No
<i>Presence of few Islamic teachers</i>	3	4	1/7/2020 12:29 PM	1/7/20 20 3:14 PM	No
<i>Small classroom sizes and spaces</i>	3	4	1/7/2020 11:32 AM	1/7/20 20 3:59 PM	No
<i>Family issues and other external factors</i>	2	2	1/7/2020 1:12 PM	1/7/20 20 4:21 PM	No
<i>Poor scheduling</i>	1	1	1/7/2020 11:41 AM	1/7/20 20 11:48 AM	No
Differences between private and public schools	0	0	1/7/2020 11:09 AM	1/7/20 20 11:19 AM	-
<i>Role of teaching tools and equipment</i>	9	12	1/7/2020 11:35 AM	1/7/20 20 3:13 PM	No

<i>Role of school administration</i>	8	12	1/7/2020 11:37 AM	1/7/20 20 3:50 PM	No
<i>Role of parents</i>	1	1	1/7/2020 11:36 AM	1/7/20 20 1:14 PM	No
<i>Role of student-to-teacher ratio</i>	1	1	1/7/2020 11:35 AM	1/7/20 20 2:42 PM	No



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