

# THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES COURSES IN PREVENTING EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS AT PRINCE SATTAM BIN ABDULAZIZ UNIVERSITY<sup>1</sup>

## O PAPEL DOS CURSOS DE ESTUDOS ISLÂMICOS NA PREVENÇÃO DO EXTREMISMO E DO TERRORISMO ENTRE ALUNAS DA UNIVERSIDADE PRÍNCIPE SATTAM BIN ABDULAZIZ

**ZAINAB AHMED AL-SAEED MOHAMED**

Department of Islamic Studies - College of Arts and Sciences - Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

[z.mohamed@psau.edu.sa](mailto:z.mohamed@psau.edu.sa)

**ALI MANSUR OTHMAN HABIB**

Department of Islamic Studies - College of Arts and Sciences - Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

[Dr.ali28@hotmail.com](mailto:Dr.ali28@hotmail.com)

**Received:** 17 Aug 2023

**Accepted:** 25 Nov 2023

**Published:** 12 Dec 2023

**Corresponding author:**

[z.mohamed@psau.edu.sa](mailto:z.mohamed@psau.edu.sa)



**Abstract:** The research aimed to investigate the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The descriptive research methodology was utilized, as it is suitable for the nature of the study. The sample comprised (192) male and female students from the theoretical and practical colleges in Wadi Al Dawasir, randomly selected from the study population to verify the study's questions and objectives. A questionnaire was designed as a tool for collecting data from the study sample. The study found that the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among female students was very high. The means of activating the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University were very high, according to the research sample. The study also revealed statistically significant differences between the means of grades of the study sample in the dimensions and the overall score of their responses regarding the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. Based on these results, the researcher recommended several recommendations, including increasing the number of hours for Islamic Studies courses to cover all aspects of the curriculum. The current curriculum plans limit the study hours for each course to

only two hours, negatively impacting the achievement of course objectives.

**Keywords:** Islamic Studies Courses. Extremism and Terrorism. University Students.

<sup>1</sup> "This project was supported by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University under the research project (2022/02/22577)."

**Resumo:** A pesquisa teve como objetivo investigar o papel dos cursos de Estudos Islâmicos na prevenção do extremismo e do terrorismo entre estudantes do sexo feminino na Universidade Príncipe Sattam bin Abdulaziz. Utilizou-se a metodologia de pesquisa descritiva, por ser adequada à natureza do estudo. A amostra foi composta por (192) estudantes do sexo masculino e feminino das faculdades teóricas e práticas de Wadi Al Dawasir, selecionados aleatoriamente da população do estudo para verificar as questões e objetivos do estudo. Um questionário foi elaborado como ferramenta de coleta de dados da amostra do estudo. O estudo concluiu que o papel dos cursos de Estudos Islâmicos na prevenção do extremismo e do terrorismo entre as estudantes do sexo feminino era muito elevado. Os meios para ativar o papel dos cursos de Estudos Islâmicos na prevenção do extremismo e do terrorismo entre as estudantes da Universidade Príncipe Sattam bin Abdulaziz foram muito elevados, de acordo com a amostra da investigação. O estudo também revelou diferenças estatisticamente significativas entre as médias das notas da amostra do estudo nas dimensões e a pontuação global das suas respostas relativamente ao papel dos cursos de Estudos Islâmicos na prevenção do extremismo e do terrorismo entre estudantes do sexo feminino na Universidade Príncipe Sattam bin Abdulaziz. Com base nestes resultados, o investigador recomendou várias recomendações, incluindo o aumento do número de horas dos cursos de Estudos Islâmicos para cobrir todos os aspectos do currículo. Os atuais planos curriculares limitam as horas de estudo de cada curso a apenas duas horas, impactando negativamente a concretização dos objetivos do curso.

**Palavras-chave:** Cursos de Estudos Islâmicos. Extremismo e Terrorismo. Estudantes Universitários.

## 1. Introduction

Societal security, a multifaceted concept spanning politics, sociology, and international relations, focuses on safeguarding a society's core values, institutions, and way of life. In our interconnected world, beyond traditional military concerns, societal security considers broader aspects like well-being, resilience, and community cohesion. It addresses diverse threats, including economic instability, environmental challenges, cultural identity crises, and cyber threats. Protecting societal security requires a holistic approach that encompasses physical safety as well as the social, economic, and cultural bonds within communities. As the global landscape evolves, the importance of societal security grows, influencing policies and strategies to foster stability amid diverse challenges (Hama, 2017).

Societal security is attained by upholding the correctness of human thinking, steering clear of erroneous cultural influences and misguided beliefs, and avoiding deviant and extremist behaviors. Such behaviors pose a threat to the security and stability of society. Achieving this requires a profound awareness of faith, the capability to discern between right and wrong, and the motivation to continually acquire knowledge (Al-Zogbi & Al-Madi, 2022; Theiler, 2003).

Various forms of intellectual extremism are evident in contemporary social reality, arising from differences in perspectives and orientations. This results in conflicts between intellectual currents, the proliferation of a culture of violence, the neglect of dialogue

etiquette and its principles, and a steadfast adherence to individual viewpoints. Notably, intellectual extremism has become widespread in Arab and Islamic societies, encompassing various aspects of life. Compounding the peril is the fact that a significant majority engaged in intellectual extremism consists of young individuals, driven by impulsiveness and enthusiasm. Given their inclination toward imitation and emulation, this demographic emerges as a significant segment of society susceptible to these influences (Al-Qahtani, 2020; Davydov, 2015).

Addressing extremist ideologies goes beyond the implementation of stringent laws; it involves fostering diverse cultural environments, particularly within educational institutions. This is accomplished by promoting intellectual pluralism that aligns with societal values, activating cultural and intellectual dimensions, and laying the groundwork for a dialogical approach and acceptance of others (Afzal, 2021; Al-Mulhim, 2009; Dima, 2019; Wintrobe, 2006).

Higher education stands as a pivotal pillar in the formation of individuals, assessing their behaviors, and shaping their thoughts and attitudes. It exerts positive effects on both individuals and society by grounding personal identity and fostering sound thinking. This includes eradicating deviant thoughts and misguided attitudes and replacing them with accurate ideas. The role of higher education in bolstering intellectual security and addressing intellectual deviations encountered by students has emerged as an urgent necessity and a crucial requirement in the context of contemporary challenges (Al-Azzam, 2018; UNESCO, 2022).

The realization of this role necessitates the comprehensive development of university curricula, with a specific focus on Islamic curricula. Such enhancement should involve the incorporation of methods and resources that enable students to cultivate sound scientific thinking and actively reject deviant and extremist ideas. This strategic approach empowers students to counteract the ideological invasion of extremism, which aims to undermine societal values and cohesion.

Universities are inherently intertwined with the realities and challenges of society, making the relationship between the university and society a fundamental concern that requires active engagement. The university is tasked with a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of society and its intellectual components, grounded in its scientific and cultural responsibilities. This active involvement is essential for contributing to the realization of expected intellectual security (Al-Mulhim, 2009; Martini et al., 2020). Notably, Islamic Studies

courses bear a significant burden in this regard, playing a crucial role in shaping human thought and guiding behavior and emotions based on correct religious principles. They aim to fulfill the purposes of Islam in organizing both individual and societal life (Al-Qahtani, 2012).

Chenoweth et al. (2019) defined terrorism as criminal violence with the intent to intimidate a population or coerce a government. The Islamic Fiqh Council, in its session held by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Makkah in January 2002, provided a definition: "Aggression committed by individuals, groups, or states, unjustly and without right, against humanity, its religion, blood, mind, or wealth. This includes acts of aggression such as highway robbery, spreading fear among people, blocking paths, and any act of violence or threat carried out as part of an individual or collective criminal project aimed at instilling terror or intimidating people by causing harm to their lives, freedom, or property. It also encompasses causing harm to the environment, public or private facilities, and properties, or endangering national or natural resources" (Ayoub, 2015; Schmid, 2011).

Extremism and terrorism are connected, with terrorism being the outcome and result of extremism. Extremism, according to Ibn Sīdah (2000), represents the ultimate and excessive inclination towards a particular belief or ideology, refusing to settle on a moderate stance. It is characterized by the exceeding of legal limits in any matter. Haydar (1996) defines extremism as a closed-minded approach marked by an unwillingness to accept or tolerate beliefs divergent from one's own. Al-Rayyan (2016) offers another perspective, describing extremism as the rigid adoption of a position toward an idea, issue, or ideology, attempting to establish its presence within an individual or group's environment.

Countering terrorism faces numerous challenges and difficulties that affect the effectiveness of its methods. Some of these challenges include the weakening of religious values among many individuals, ignorance of religious rulings and Islamic creeds, and a gap between religious scholars and youth. This gap may be due to differences in age groups or variations in ideologies. Cultural invasion, extremism, and religious fanaticism are obstacles encountered by intellectual security in society (Ismayil & Karadogan, 2022).

Moreover, weaknesses in family upbringing, represented by insufficient monitoring and care for children by parents, family disintegration, and deficiencies in education at educational institutions, where the emphasis on the educational aspect overshadows the importance of the educational aspect, are all difficulties and challenges that hinder the

achievement of intellectual security despite the significant efforts made in this regard (Al-Azzam, 2018).

The literature identifies prominent social motivations for extremism, which simultaneously act as obstacles to intellectual security. These include the absence of an effective role for civil society institutions, the deviation of media channels, their strong contribution to misleading youth under slogans and names without basis, as well as the weakness of the culture of diversity. The spread of racism fueled by hatred, the non-acceptance of others, and the failure of educational programs and curricula to provide a balanced educational vision are all factors that contribute to the challenges faced by intellectual security (O'Hanlon et al., 2023; Othman, 2017, Peels, 2023)

Several studies have explored the multifaceted aspects of extremism and intellectual security within educational contexts. Al-Qahtani's (2020) investigation focused on identifying the causes of violence and extremism among students with disabilities at King Saud University, revealing factors such as negative peer influence and a sense of despair. Hameed's (2018) study in Iraq delved into the role of university curricula in combating takfiri ideologies, finding no significant gender-based differences among faculty members. Al-Azzam (2018) examined the role of higher education in promoting intellectual security at Hail University, identifying challenges but noting a high degree of agreement among faculty members. Adwan (2017) explored student councils' role in promoting intellectual security among Palestinian university students, uncovering university-based variations in perceptions. The Kafi Study (2009) emphasized the importance of educational curricula, particularly the "Tawhid" course in Saudi Arabia, in establishing intellectual security. Al-Hussein's (2009) investigation at Naif Arab University assessed the role of social studies curricula in promoting intellectual security, revealing moderate significance according to social studies teachers, with limited resources being a significant obstacle.

The efficacy of Islamic Studies courses in mitigating extremism and terrorism is evident in the enhancement of intellectual security among students. This is achieved by updating and modernizing these courses and curricula, with a particular emphasis on religious, educational, and cultural dimensions. The preparation of these courses should align with a comprehensive vision that addresses the cognitive frameworks required by students. These courses aim to cultivate critical thinking skills by presenting informative materials encompassing both historical and contemporary knowledge. Additionally, they strive to develop students' abilities in critical thinking, analysis, and inference, enabling them to

interpret events and situations they encounter. This approach contributes to advancing intellectual security from a modern perspective (Al-Azzam, 2018; Ayman & Rakan 2022; Khattak et al., 2014).

Islamic Studies courses possess the potential to establish secure thinking foundations in university students by reinforcing correct beliefs. These courses address social, political, and economic issues within a moderate religious context, avoiding extremes. Grounded in established and clear Sharia texts, they contribute to shaping a balanced worldview. A study on members of certain extremist Islamic groups in specific countries found that the lowest percentage of these members were uneducated, with the highest percentage being university students (Khaidir & Suud, 2020). Notably, this trend was more pronounced among students of modern universities that lack a focus on Islamic courses. Conversely, the incidence of extremism was nearly absent among students of universities with a curriculum rooted in religious principles. This underscores the idea that individuals with a religious education are less susceptible to adopting extremist ideologies. It highlights that individuals, armed with both knowledge and religious commitment, can harmonize their perspectives on both faith and worldly matters, resulting in sound thinking, purified motives, and noble intentions (Kafi, 2009).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has demonstrated clear attention to educational curricula, linking them to Islamic values in terms of objectives and content. This has had a significant impact on fortifying the youth against intellectual deviation, except for a few individuals for other reasons unrelated to the adopted educational curricula. The commitment to this approach requires educational curricula to instill pure creed in the minds of the youth, with a detailed explanation, and to exclude all atheistic theories that ridicule the unseen. The curricula also aim to purify them from linguistic pitfalls that may appear in some courses in experimental sciences such as physics, biology, and chemistry (Kafi, 2009).

In the Department of Islamic Studies, students undergo a comprehensive curriculum designed to address extremism and terrorism. The foundational "Creed (1)" course explores the pillars of faith, emphasizing their significance and providing evidence for their foundations, while "Creed (2)" at the second level delves into atheism in the names and attributes of Allah. Advanced courses include "Sects and Heresies," examining religious reconciliation, Judaism's impact on Islam, and insights into various belief systems. "Contemporary Sects and Trends" analyzes the origin and spread of intellectual sects, and "Call and Accountability" focuses on effective communication and challenges faced by those

calling to Islam. "Sharia Politics and International Relations" explores principles of relations between Muslims and others, emphasizing peace, while "The Jurisprudence of Call" covers the virtues of Islam in creed and addresses crises related to creed, Sharia, and ethics, providing a comprehensive understanding of the jurisprudential aspects of the call to Islam at the eighth level.

Education in general, and university education in particular, is among the most crucial factors relied upon in building sound thinking, correcting misconceptions, and purifying minds from intellectual impurities to confront this intellectual invasion. This is achieved by fortifying individuals with correct ideas and orientations that work towards the development of society and the realization of its elevation and prosperity. Hence, the problem of this research emerges, which is to understand the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among female university students, from the perspective of female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. Based on the context provided, the research problem can be formulated in the following questions:

1. What is the current role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among university students, particularly from the perspective of female students?
2. What are the strategies for activating the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among university students, according to the viewpoint of female students?
3. Does the perception of the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism vary among the study sample based on differences in variables such as gender and academic specialization?

## **2. Methodology**

### *Research Model*

The current researcher used the descriptive survey method to verify the accuracy of the assumptions. This method was considered suitable for such studies, aiming to acquire knowledge about the role of Islamic Studies courses in reducing extremism and terrorism among female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University.

### *Research Sample*

The study community consists of female students from the Department of Islamic Studies at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University in the colleges of Wadi Al Dawasir, totaling

1170 students during the study period in the first semester of the academic year 2023. The sample size for the survey was 65 female students to verify the reliability and validity of the study tool. The main study sample consisted of 192 female students from the theoretical and practical colleges of Wadi Al Dawasir, randomly selected from the study community to investigate the study's questions.

#### *Data Collection Tool*

For data collection, the researcher developed a questionnaire to investigate the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The initial version of the scale consisted of 28 items distributed across two axes. The first axis included 21 items aimed at understanding the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremist ideas. These were divided into three dimensions: the first dimension focused on the role of Islamic Studies courses in promoting intellectual security, comprising 7 items; the second dimension addressed the role of Islamic Studies courses in rejecting extremist ideas, comprising 7 items; and the third dimension explored the role of Islamic Studies courses in promoting citizenship values and peaceful coexistence in society, comprising 7 items. The second axis of the questionnaire included 7 items to identify suggestions for making Islamic Studies courses more effective in preventing intellectual extremism among female students. Each item had five choices ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, according to the Likert pentad scale, with quantitative expression (5-4-3-2-1) in order.

The researcher presented the questionnaire to 5 faculty members specializing in the Principles of Islamic Education. According to the researcher, the experts' agreement percentages on the questionnaire items indicated that the items were suitable for the nature of the study sample, aligned with their characteristics, and related to the study's objectives and axes. The instructions were clear, with agreement percentages ranging from 80% to 100%. This suggests that the questionnaire is reliable.

To verify the correlation of each item's score with the overall score of the respective axis, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated between the score of each item and the overall score of the axis to which it belongs. It was found that the correlation coefficients for each item with its dimension and axis were positive and statistically significant at a significance level of 0.01 or less. This indicates internal consistency among the statements of the axis, the total score for each dimension and axis, and their suitability for measuring what they were designed to measure.



The reliability of the study tool was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, where the overall reliability coefficient was high at (0.979). The reliability coefficients ranged from (0.901 to 0.981), indicating that the questionnaire has a high level of stability and can be relied upon in the field application of the study.

#### *Data Analysis*

To analyze the study results, IBM SPSS v.20 software was used, and the following statistical methods were employed: Mean and standard deviation were used for descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to calculate internal consistency, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess reliability.

### 3. Results

To answer the first question 'What is the current role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among university students, particularly from the perspective of female students?', the researcher calculated the mean averages and standard deviations for the responses of the study's sample on the first axis and its dimensions in general. Then, these calculations were performed for all items in the three dimensions. The following table illustrates this:

**Table (1)** Means, standard deviations, and the level of the actual role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University

Dimensions	Mean	SD.	Percentage	Level	Ranking
The role of Islamic Studies courses in enhancing intellectual security	4.56	0.597	91.2%	Very High	1
The role of Islamic Studies courses in rejecting extremist ideas	4.34	0.724	86.8%	Very High	2
The role of Islamic Studies courses in promoting citizenship values and peaceful coexistence in society	4.31	0.769	86.3%	Very High	3
Overall score for the first axis	4.42	0.648	88.4%	Very High	—

The table presents findings on the impact of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The overall mean for the first axis, encompassing various dimensions, is 4.42. Within this axis, the dimension of the role of Islamic Studies courses in enhancing intellectual security

holds the highest rank, with an average score of 4.56, indicating a very high impact. The dimension of rejecting extremist ideas follows closely, ranking second with an average score of 4.34, also signifying a very high impact. The dimension of promoting citizenship values and peaceful coexistence in society takes the third position, with an average score of 4.31, reflecting a very high impact as well. The mean scores and standard deviations for individual items within each dimension were calculated to provide a detailed breakdown of the results.

**Table (2)** Means, Standard Deviations, and Level of the Reality of the Role of Islamic Studies Courses in Preventing Extremism and Terrorism among Female Students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz

N.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage	Level	Ranking
First: The Dimension of the Role of Islamic Studies Courses in Enhancing Intellectual Security						
1	The courses emphasize the moderation and balance of Islam	4.43	0.78	88.6%	Very High	2
2	They call for rejecting all forms of bias	4.44	0.74	88.8%	Very High	1
3	They call for avoiding extremism in issuing judgments	4.33	0.96	86.6%	Very High	5
4	They emphasize avoiding issuing judgments without legal evidence	4.17	1.08	73.4	High	7
5	They warn against entering into areas of doubt	4.24	0.96	74.8	Very High	6
6	They reject ideas contrary to social values and Islamic virtues	4.42	0.84	88.4%	Very High	3
7	They adopt moderation and balance in religious discourse	4.35	0.90	87%	Very High	4
The overall average for the first dimension		4.34	0.72	86.8	Very High	
The second dimension: The role of Islamic Studies courses in rejecting extremist ideas						
8	The courses highlight the negative effects resulting from students adopting extremist ideas.	4.72	0.56	94.4%	Very High	1
9	The courses cite religious texts prohibiting extremism and fanaticism.	4.58	0.67	91.6%	Very High	3
10	They emphasize the religious rulings for students regarding issues	4.47	0.82	89.4%	Very High	6

	of extremism and excommunication.					
11	The courses include methods for preventing ideological extremism.	4.56	0.63	91.2%	Very High	4
12	They call for collaboration among members of society to confront extremist ideas.	4.56	0.63	91.2%	Very High	4
13	They clarify the prohibition of unjustifiably taking lives and the danger of intimidating the innocent.	4.41	0.93	88.2%	Very High	7
14	They warn against affiliating with extremist groups.	4.55	0.78	91%	Very High	5
	The overall average for the second dimension	4.56	0.59	91.2%	Very High	
<b>Thirdly: The Role of Islamic Studies Courses in Enhancing Citizenship Values and Peaceful Coexistence in Society</b>						
15	It instills the importance of preserving the nation's achievements and resources.	4.08	1.12	81.6%	High	6
16	It emphasizes the obligation of obedience to authority and the prohibition of violating public order.	4.25	0.99	85%	Very High	5
17	It encourages peaceful coexistence with others.	4.38	0.76	87.6%	Very High	2
18	It fosters a culture of dialogue and respect for others' opinions.	4.34	0.85	86.8%	Very High	4
19	It calls for the virtue of benevolence towards non-Muslims.	4.47	0.70	89.4%	Very High	1
20	It reinforces the principle of equality in rights and duties.	4.36	0.85	87.2%	Very High	3
21	It instills the importance of preserving the nation's achievements and resources.	4.07	1.17	81.5%	High	7
	The overall average for the second dimension	4.31	0.76	86.3%	Very High	
	The overall average for the first dimension	4.42	0.648	88.4%	Very High	

The table presents a detailed analysis of the study's findings on the impact of Islamic Studies courses at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University in preventing extremism and terrorism among female students. Across three dimensions, namely 'Enhancing Intellectual Security,' 'Rejecting Extremist Ideas,' and 'Promoting Citizenship Values and Peaceful Coexistence,' the study indicates consistently high ratings. Notably, the dimension of 'Enhancing Intellectual Security' achieved an overall mean of 4.34, emphasizing the success in promoting moderation. The 'Rejecting Extremist Ideas' dimension garnered an overall mean of 4.56, showcasing a high level of success in countering extremist ideologies.

Similarly, the 'Promoting Citizenship Values and Peaceful Coexistence' dimension achieved an overall mean of 4.31, reflecting a commendable accomplishment in fostering citizenship values. The study concludes that the Islamic Studies courses at the university have effectively fulfilled their objectives, emphasizing intellectual security, rejection of extremism, and the promotion of citizenship values among female students.

To answer the second question 'What are the most prominent suggestions to make Islamic Studies courses more effective in combating extremism and terrorism from the students' perspective?', the mean scores and standard deviations of the study sample's responses to the items of the second axis were calculated as illustrated in the following table.

**Table (3)** Mean and Standard Deviation of Proposals to Make Islamic Studies Courses More Effective in Combating Ideological Extremism and Terrorism among Female Students from Their Perspective

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage	Level	Ranking
Connecting the Course Content to the Reality of Society and its Intellectual Problems	4.56	0.68	91.2%	Very High	2
Incorporating Islamic Studies courses with the study of Islamic national figures in various fields, serving as positive role models for students.	4.46	0.76	89.2%	Very High	6
Including contemporary topics in the curriculum that promote values of patriotism, defending the country, and respecting its systems as a religious duty.	4.54	0.77	90.8%	Very High	3
Periodic review of the course materials to ensure purification from any elements that may	4.55	0.70	91%	Very High	3

lead to bias, extremism, or fanaticism.					
Developing Islamic courses to enhance critical thinking among students, enabling them to judge the ideas presented to them.	4.45	0.82	89%	Very High	7
Increasing the number of hours for Islamic Studies courses to cover a broader range of intellectual security topics.	4.60	0.62	92%	Very High	1
Including various activities in Islamic Studies courses to measure the impact of the courses on the behavior of female students.	4.49	0.72	89.8%	Very High	5
The Overall Score	4.48	1.44	89.6%	Very High	

Table 3 outlines the study sample's evaluations of Axis 2, focusing on proposals to enhance the effectiveness of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism among female students. The evaluations, ranging from 4.33 to 4.60, all received very high ratings. Notably, Paragraph 6, advocating for an increased number of hours in Islamic Studies courses to cover a broader range of intellectual security topics, secured the top rank with an average of 4.60. Following closely, Paragraph 1, suggesting a connection between course content and societal realities and intellectual problems, received an average of 4.56, also earning a very high rating. Paragraph 5, which proposed the development of Islamic courses to enhance critical thinking, ranked slightly lower with an average of 4.45 but still received a very high rating. The overall average for Axis 2 was 4.48, with a standard deviation of 1.44 and a relative weight of 89.6%, indicating a very high level of effectiveness according to the study sample's perspective.

To answer the third question 'Does the reality of the role of Islamic Studies courses in countering extremism and terrorism differ based on the different assessments of the study sample according to the variation in the academic track variable?', the independent samples t-test was used to examine the significance of differences between the means of scores for female students participating in the study regarding the reality of the role of Islamic Studies courses in countering extremism and terrorism based on the variation in the academic track. The results are presented in the following table:

**Table (4)** Results of the t-test to detect the significance of differences between the mean scores of female students in the study sample based on the academic track variable (Theoretical College, Practical College)

Dimensions	Theoretical Colleges		Practical Colleges		t-value	Sig.	In Favor of
	M	SD	M	SD			
1 The role of Islamic Studies courses in enhancing intellectual security	4.13	0.81	4.50	0.52	2.79	0.01	Practical Colleges
2 The role of Islamic Studies courses in rejecting extremist ideas	4.61	0.65	4.62	0.49	1.36	Not Sig.	_____
3 The role of Islamic Studies courses in promoting citizenship values and peaceful coexistence in society	4.24	0.85	4.41	0.61	1.64	Not Sig.	_____
Overall Degree	4.43	0.73	4.52	0.48	2.14	0.05	Practical Colleges

Table 4 presents significant variations in mean scores among the study sample students in the first dimension (enhancing intellectual security) and the overall axis score concerning their perceptions of the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremist ideas, based on the academic track variable. Notably, in the first dimension, the "t" values were 2.79, indicating statistical significance at the 0.01 level, favoring practical college students. Similarly, for the overall score, the "t" values were 2.14, demonstrating statistical significance at the 0.05 level, also in favor of practical college students. However, the table indicates no statistically significant differences in the second dimension (belonging) and the third dimension (community participation) between students of theoretical and practical colleges, with "t" values ranging from 1.36 to 1.64, which are not statistically significant.

#### 4. Discussion

The first question's results indicate a very high level of effectiveness in Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremist ideas among female students. This underscores the significance of countering extremist thinking not only through strict laws but also by creating diverse cultural environments, particularly within educational institutions like universities. The approach to combating extremist thinking involves fostering intellectual diversity aligned with societal values, activating cultural and intellectual aspects, promoting a dialogical approach, and encouraging acceptance of others. This finding aligns with several previous study results (Al-Azzam, 2018; Liht & Savage, 2013; Sikimić et al., 2019; Skiple, 2020).

The positive role of Islamic Studies courses in reducing extremism and terrorism among female students is attributed to the considerable efforts of educational institutions in

the Kingdom, particularly universities. This includes initiatives by educational structures within these institutions, both educational and non-educational, which significantly contribute to enhancing intellectual security. The researcher also attributes this positive outcome to the active participation of female students in university activities and events, fostering a sense of responsibility, enhancing intellectual awareness, and strengthening their national identity, thereby cultivating a culture that prioritizes intellectual security.

The obtained result aligns with Al-Ghamdi's (2018) and Abdellatif's (2023) studies, affirming that Saudi universities effectively convey moderate thought to students, embodying the true essence of religion by instilling Islamic culture through sound logic and proper education. The universities serve as safeguards against misconceptions, protecting students from deviant ideas and extremist thinking. This is consistent with Suleiman's (2006) findings, emphasizing the significant role of educational institutions in activating teachers to promote intellectual security for students. Activities aimed at this objective are well-executed, utilizing diverse educational methods effectively.

Regarding peaceful coexistence and acceptance of others, the results indicate an elevation in the role of universities in rejecting violence and promoting peaceful coexistence in society. Positive tolerance, a fundamental element in Islamic teachings and a goal of Islamic studies courses is emphasized. This finding aligns with Al-Oqaili's (2020) study and correlates with Al-Dheeb and Abu Sa'ilek's (2019) and Aljehani's (2023) findings, reflecting varying degrees of agreement among female students on the effectiveness of Islamic studies courses in promoting intellectual security, depending on their specializations.

The positive perception of courses in enhancing various dimensions of intellectual security from the students' perspective is attributed to the success of the courses in reinforcing these dimensions. Faculty members play a significant role in enhancing intellectual security among students. However, these results differ from Al-Qartoun's (2007) study, which suggests that the scarcity of curriculum topics immunizing students with moderation and centrism and the lack of emphasis on the good treatment of non-Muslims' rights in Saudi Arabia could contribute to insufficient focus on sympathizing with terrorists in preventing violence and terrorism.

The outcomes of the second question indicate that, according to the research sample, the axis of "Ways to Activate the Role of Islamic Studies Courses More Effectively among Female Students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University" achieved a very high level. All items within this axis received exceptionally positive evaluations, consistent with Hameed's

(2018) study and Aziz et al. (2016), which emphasized the reformulation of certain topics in university curricula as a crucial means to prevent Takfiri ideological extremism. Hameed suggested enhancing curricula with concepts related to interfaith relations, and public relations, and appealingly presenting information.

These positive results are attributed by the researcher to the awareness among female students regarding the pivotal role of Islamic courses in promoting intellectual security, thanks to the distinguished educational efforts of the university. Furthermore, the findings reflect the university management's dedication to the continuous development of Islamic courses and the meticulous selection of the most qualified faculty members for delivering these courses.

The results also highlight the student's awareness of the importance of activating the role of Islamic Studies courses in preventing extremism and terrorism. This is evident in the proposals submitted by the students, such as "Linking the course content to the reality of society and its intellectual problems" and "Developing Islamic courses to cultivate critical thinking among students so they can judge the ideas presented to them." These proposals underscore that the axis of "Proposals to make Islamic Studies courses more effective in preventing extremism and terrorism among female students" has received a distinguished level of approval from the research sample's perspective.

In this academic study, the third question focused on the perceptions of female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University regarding the impact of Islamic Studies courses on countering extremism and terrorism. The results revealed statistically significant differences in average scores among female students, particularly in the dimension of rejecting extremist ideas, with practical colleges showing higher scores. This finding is consistent with various study results (Al-Rabai, 2009; Al-Jedaiah, 2021; Llorent-Bedmar et al., 2020).

However, the results contrast with a study by Al-Hussein (2009), which found no statistically significant differences among social studies teachers regarding the role of social studies curricula in promoting intellectual security. The researcher attributes these differences in female students' scores to the social environment, suggesting that females may exhibit less interest in political and public issues, focusing more on social and academic matters. Additionally, societal conservatism in Wadi Al-Dawasir was identified as a factor restricting the lifestyles of females compared to males.



Regarding the academic specialization variable related to citizenship and peaceful coexistence, the study found no statistically significant differences. This result aligns with a study by Al-Mulhim (2009), indicating that there were no significant differences in the role of university education in promoting intellectual security among female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University based on variables such as age and academic level.

The lack of statistically significant differences in the dimension of citizenship and peaceful coexistence among female students is attributed to several factors. These include the religious commitment of Saudi society to Islamic teachings, emphasizing positive treatment of others and prohibiting aggression, even towards those with different religious beliefs. The presence of a substantial number of non-Muslim expatriates contributing to the Saudi economy and the recent openness of Saudi Arabia to individuals from diverse backgrounds were also identified as contributing factors fostering peaceful coexistence.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researcher proposes several recommendations. First, there is a need to emphasize the role of universities in addressing ideological extremism through the organization of seminars and conferences. Additionally, comprehensive data should be collected on both curricular and extracurricular activities aimed at bolstering intellectual security among students. Second, it is suggested that Islamic Studies curricula undergo continuous development, integrating contemporary concepts and issues that influence intellectual security. This requires regular updates to the content and descriptions of these curricula. Third, to ensure a thorough understanding of the subject matter, the researcher recommends an increase in the number of hours allocated to Islamic Studies courses, as the current two-hour limit per course may hinder the achievement of curricular objectives. Fourth, there is a proposal to extend the study of specific Islamic Studies courses, particularly those addressing extremist ideologies, from Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University to other Saudi universities, thereby promoting intellectual security nationwide. Fifth, it is advised to encourage further research on intellectual security, specifically focusing on the role of academic courses such as Islamic Studies in strengthening the intellectual resilience of youth. Finally, the researcher advocates for the practical application of study results related to intellectual security, urging the implementation of suggestions and recommendations to enhance the overall educational process and achieve its objectives.

### Acknowledgment:

"This project was supported by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University under the research project (2022/02/22577)."

### References

Abdellatif, M. S. (2023). The Role of the National Day Activities in Promoting the National Identity of University Youth (A Field Study on Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University Students). *Journal for Educators, Teachers, and Trainers*, 14(3), 521-532.

Adwan, K. (2017). *A proposed vision for developing the role of student councils in enhancing intellectual security among Palestinian university students*. South Central Library, Palestine.

Afzal, M. (2021). *A global effort to counter extremism through education*. The Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-global-effort-to-counter-extremism-through-education/>

Al-Azzam, M. (2018). The role of university education in enhancing intellectual security from the point of view of faculty members at the University of Hail. *International Specialized Educational Journal*, 7(2), 105-135.

Al-Dheeb, A., & Abu Sa'ilek, I. (2019). The importance of intellectual security and the role of Islamic culture courses in enhancing its dimensions among students of Majmaah University. *Journal of Human and Administrative Sciences*, 18(10), 201-270.

Al-Ghamdi, A., & Ali, A. (2018). A Proposed Framework for the Role of Saudi Universities in Educating Students to Reject Terrorism. *Educational Journal of the College of Education in Sobag*, 53(53), 263-288.

Al-Hussein, A. (2009). *The role of social subjects curricula and their teachers in the middle and secondary stages in enhancing intellectual security A descriptive survey study from the point of view of teachers of social subjects in the middle and secondary stages*. The first national conference on intellectual security, King Saud University, Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Chair for Intellectual Security Studies.

Al-Jedaiah, N. A. (2021). The Role of Intellectual Security in Countering Extremism and Terrorism. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(8), 15-35.

Aljehani, H. A. (2023). The Role of Universities in Fostering Tolerance Values in Students. *Migration Letters*, 20(S9), 492-507.

Al-Mulhim, B. (2009). *Universities and the intellectual security industry, (a sociological reading of the relationship between universities and intellectual security in Saudi society)*. A research presented to the National Conference on Intellectual Security "Concepts and Challenges", in the period from 22-25 Jumada al-Awwal 1430 AH, Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Chair for Security Studies Intellectual at King Saud University.

Al-Mulhim, B. (2009). *Universities and the production of intellectual security: A sociological reading of the relationship between universities and intellectual security in Saudi society*. Paper presented at the National

---

*Conference on Intellectual Security "Concepts and Challenges". 22-25 Jumada Al-Awwal 1430 AH, Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Chair for Intellectual Security Studies at King Saud University.*

Al-Oqaili, H. (2020). The role of universities in peaceful coexistence and rejection of violence, a socioanthropological study (Tikrit University as a model). *Sociology Journal*, 4(2), 35-88.

Al-Qahtani, B. (2020). The role of the university in enhancing the intellectual security of students with disabilities to face the challenges of extremist ideology. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Sciences, Qassim University*, 14(12), 150-177.

Al-Qahtani, S. (2012). *Intellectual security in the curricula of Sharia sciences in the intermediate stage (the third average) and the degree of their response to contemporary challenges from the point of view of supervisors and teachers of the curricula of Sharia sciences*. Master Thesis, Institute of Education, International Islamic University - Malaysia.

Al-Qartoun, F. (2007). *The role of high school students through the role of curricula, the role of teachers, and the role of school activities in activating students towards confronting terrorism*. Master Thesis, Naif Arab University for Security Sciences.

Al-Rabai, M. (2009). *The role of academic curricula in enhancing the concepts of intellectual security among university students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. The first national conference on intellectual security, King Saud University, Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Chair for Intellectual Security Studies.

Al-Rayyan, J., & Dhakir, M. (2016). *The Extremists: The Rise of Intellectual Extremism, Its Causes, Effects, and Treatment Approaches*. Dar Al-Nukhba.

Al-Zogbi, M. & Al-Madi, I. (2022). The role of intellectual security in preventing extremism. *The Arab Journal for Scientific Publishing*, 2(10), 43-50.

Ayman, A., & Rakan, A. (2022). Religious Extremism in a Multifaceted Context. *Journal of the Sociology and Theory of Religion*, 13(1), 223-238. <https://doi.org/10.24197/jstr.1.2022.223-238>

Ayoub, A. (2015). *Encyclopedia of the Beauties of Islam and Refutation of the Suspicions of the Ignorant*. Dar Ilaf International for Publishing and Distribution.

Aziz, A. A., Ibrahim, M. A., Shaker, M. H., & Nor, A. M. (2016). Teaching Technique of Islamic Studies in Higher Learning Institutions for Non-Arabic Speakers: Experience of Faculty of Quranic and Sunnah Studies and Tamhidi Centre, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 4(4), 755-760.

Chenoweth, E., English, R., Gofas, A., & Kalyvas, S. N. (Eds.). (2019). *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*. Oxford University Press.

Crenshaw, M., & LaFree, G. (2017). *Countering terrorism*. Brookings Institution Press.

Davydov, D. (2015). The causes of youth extremism and ways to prevent it in the educational environment. *Russian Social Science Review*, 56(5), 51-64.

Dima, O. (2019, March). The concept of societal security and its implications on Romania's national societal security. In *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference Strategies XXI "The complex and dynamic nature of the security environment"-volume ii* (pp. 43-49). Carol I National Defence University Publishing House.

Hama, H. (2017). State security, societal security, and human security. *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*, 21(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973598417706591>

Hameed, S. (2018). University Curricula and Their Role in Liberating from Takfiri Ideas in Post-ISIS Iraq: A Perspective from University Instructors (A Case Study of the University of Mosul). *Kirkuk University Journal of Humanities*, 13(2), 1-70.

Haydar, K. (1996). *Violence and Religious Extremism in the Arab World. Gulf Development Forum, The Phenomenon of Violence and Extremism*. Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting, January 11-12, 1996.

Ismayil, E., & Karadogan, E. (Eds.). (2022). *Media and Terrorism in the 21st Century*. IGI Global.

Kafi, A. (2009). *The role of educational curricula in establishing intellectual security - the standardization course in the secondary stage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a model, research presented to the first national conference on intellectual security "Concepts and Challenges"*. In the period from 22-25 Jumada al-Awwal 1430 AH, Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Chair for Intellectual Security Studies at the University of King Saud.

Khaidir, E., & Suud, F. M. (2020). Islamic education in forming students' characters at Ashofa Islamic High School, Pekanbaru Riau. *International Journal of Islamic Educational Psychology*, 1(1), 50-63.

Khattak, M. K., Khattak, K. F., Muhammad, N., Khattak, A. K., Matiullah, M., & Khan, K. U. (2014). Encountering Terrorism through Islam and Psycho-Social Communication in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. *Pakistan Library & Information Science Journal*, 45(1), 30-96.

Liht, J., & Savage, S. (2013). Preventing violent extremism through value complexity: Being Muslim being British. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 6(4), 44-66. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.6.4.3>

Llorent-Bedmar, V., Palma, V. C. C. D., & Navarro-Granados, M. (2020). Islamic religion teacher training in Spain: Implications for preventing Islamic-inspired violent radicalism. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 95, 103138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103138>

Martini, A., Ford, K., & Jackson, R. (2020). Encountering extremism: a critical examination of theoretical issues and local challenges. In *Encountering extremism* (pp. 1-18). Manchester University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526136619.00005>

O'Hanlon, R., Altice, F. L., Lee, R. K. W., LaViolette, J., Mark, G., Papakyriakopoulos, O., ... & Kumar, N. (2023). Misogynistic extremism: a scoping review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 00(0), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380231176062>

Othman, I. (2017). Extremism and Religious Intolerance "Its Causes and Factors Leading to It". *Journal of the College of Education, Libyan International University, Benghazi University*, 28(12) 30-55.

Peels, R. (2023). What Is It to Explain Extremism? *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2023.2255902>

Pillar, P. R. (2023). Counterterrorism. In *Security Studies* (pp. 452-467). Routledge.

Schmid, A. P. (2011). The definition of terrorism. In *The Routledge Handbook of terrorism research* (pp. 39-157). Routledge.

Sikimić, M., Lalić, V., & Čeranić, P. (2019). The prevention of radicalization, violent extremism, and terrorism through the Republika Srpska education system. *Žurnal za bezbjednost i kriminalistiku*, 1(2), 25-38. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5937/zurbezkrim1902025S>.

Skiple, A. (2020). The importance of significant others in preventing extremism: The philosophy and practice of the Swedish Tolerance Project. *Young*, 28(4), 422-438. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308820914828>

Suleiman, I. (2006). *The role of school administrations in enhancing the intellectual security of students, a field study on public education schools in Riyadh*. Master Thesis, Naif Arab University for Security Sciences.

Theiler, T. (2003). Societal security and social psychology. *Review of International Studies*, 29(2), 249-268. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0260210503002493>

UNESCO. (2022). *The higher education we want: youth voices on the futures of higher education*. UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Wintrobe, R. (2006). Extremism, suicide terror, and authoritarianism. *Public Choice*, 128, 169-195. DOI: [10.1007/s11127-006-9059-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-006-9059-3)