

## Case Study: The Concept of 'Religious Tolerance' in the Socio-Religious Construction of Islamic Schools in India

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### Abstract

#### History

*Received*

01 August 2023

*Revised*

02 December 2023

*Accepted*

04 December 2023

#### Keywords

*Islamic School,*

*Religious*

*Tolerance,*

*School*

*Management,*

*Strategies and*

*Challenge.*

This study explores the strategies and challenges involved in managing religious tolerance in Islamic schools in India. This study specifically examines the implementation of education in Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System and Al Hira International Islamic School, both of which follow Islamic principles. The study utilizes a descriptive qualitative survey methodology to gather insights from key stakeholders such as school administrators, teachers, and students. By employing this methodology, the research seeks to understand the strategies Islamic the school employs to promote religious tolerance and identify the obstacles they face. Since Islam is a minority religion in India, these schools encounter unique challenges. findings will contribute to the existing knowledge on religious tolerance in the Indian educational landscape and provide valuable insights for school administrators, policymakers, and educators. Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System and Al Hira Islamic School is a model for promoting religious tolerance by implementing best practices in curriculum design, interfaith dialogue, and creating an inclusive environment. By adopting these strategies, the school fosters an environment where students understand Islam comprehensively, engage in positive interactions with other faiths, and experience the benefits of a diverse and inclusive community. Additionally, the management of these schools prioritizes religious tolerance, allowing students to adapt and coexist harmoniously with the majority Hindu community. The study examines the educational practices of these schools in alignment with their vision and mission. It proposes strategies for implementing religious tolerance-based education, which can serve as a blueprint for Islamic schools in minority countries.



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 : <https://doi.org/10.47766/idarah.v7i2.1773>

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## INTRODUCTION

Religious tolerance is an essential component of education, especially in Islamic schools in India, which strive to foster an inclusive and harmonious learning environment (Srinivasan et al., 2019). Regarding religious tolerance, India's diverse religious landscape presents unique challenges and opportunities (Bhat & Kandasamy, 2023). Multiple religious communities, such as Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, and Buddhism, create a dynamic environment in which diverse beliefs and practices coexist (Nazar et al., 2017; Visakh et al., 2021).

These communities' interactions shape the prevalent religious tolerance in India (Jha, 2018). Due to the country's lengthy history of diverse religious traditions that have evolved and interacted over centuries, historical factors play a significant role in determining religious tolerance (Kronstadt, 2018; Osella & Soares, 2020). Shared festivals and rituals contribute to interreligious understanding and dialogue via cultural factors. However, political factors can also impact religious tolerance, as power dynamics and sociopolitical contexts can affect the relationships between religious communities (Chandhoke, 2021; Sullivan, 2019). Given its historical significance and implications for religious tolerance within the context of Indian society as a whole, the relationship between the Muslim community and other religious groups in India is of particular importance (Ellwood-Lowe et al., 2020; Fuller, 2016).

However, the strategies employed to manage religious tolerance and the challenges Islamic schools face in the Indian context have received scant scholarly attention (Alabdulhadi, 2019; Bertram-Troost & Miedema, 2017). This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the strategies employed by Islamic schools and the obstacles they face in promoting religious tolerance among students.

The historical factors influencing religious tolerance in India are complex and multifaceted (Hoffman, 2020). Various historical periods of religious coexistence, syncretism, and conflict have shaped India's current dynamics. The legacies of empires such as the Mughals and the British have profoundly impacted interreligious interactions and tolerance (Kanwal & Ali, 2020). The Mughal period, known for its religious pluralism, fostered cultural exchange and interfaith dialogue. However, British colonial rule introduced divisive policies and communal tensions (Muhammad, 2020). Recognizing these historical factors is crucial for understanding the present-day obstacles and prospects of promoting religious tolerance in India. This research examines the strategies Islamic schools employ to cultivate religious tolerance and the challenges they face (Gupta, 2019; Hook et al., 2017; Kalin & Siddiqui, 2020).

The concept of religious tolerance is the acceptance and respect for different religious beliefs, practices, and traditions without necessarily adopting them oneself (Broo et al., 2019). Drawing upon existing literature and scholarly perspectives, we will delve into the multidimensional aspects of religious tolerance, including its ethical, social, and educational dimensions (Spierings, 2019). This discussion will lay the foundation for understanding the challenges and strategies of managing religious tolerance in Islamic schools (Anwar & Saleem, 2019; Fahy & Bock, 2019).

This research was conducted at Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System in Mumbai and Al Hira International Islamic School in New Delhi. Both schools carry the Islamic concept. Education implementation in both schools is full of challenges because Islam is a minority religion in India. The school's existence refers to tolerance-based management which indirectly creates tolerant graduates among the majority Hindu community. This research attempts to profoundly analyze the implementation of education carried out by the two Islamic schools in reference to the vision and mission of the school. Furthermore, this research tries to describe the concept of strategies that can be used to implement religious tolerance-based education. This concept can be used in policy-making for Islamic schools in minority countries.

## **METHOD**

This research adopts a qualitative survey descriptive approach, employing semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to gather data from key stakeholders in selected Indian Islamic schools. The participants will include school administrators, teachers, and students from diverse backgrounds. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, while questionnaires will be distributed to capture a larger sample size. The data collected will be analyzed thematically, identifying common themes and patterns related to strategies and challenges in managing religious tolerance. The research data was also collected through a gradual survey conducted in several schools in India. To enhance the survey results, interviews were conducted with several school principals. Additionally, discussions were held with various community figures who deeply understand the history of Islamic development in India.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Socio-Religious Dynamics in the Indian Context**

Religious tolerance in Islamic schools refers to the acceptance, respect, and coexistence of diverse religious beliefs, practices, and traditions within the educational environment (Memon, 2011). Religious tolerance involves creating an atmosphere where students and staff, regardless of their religious affiliation, are

willing to understand, appreciate, and engage with individuals from different religious backgrounds (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2016; Spierings, 2019). Religious tolerance within Islamic schools promotes mutual respect, empathy, and open-mindedness, while valuing the rights of individuals to practice their religious beliefs freely (Lahmar, 2020). It aims to establish an inclusive and harmonious space where religious diversity is embraced and students develop the necessary skills and attitudes to navigate a pluralistic society with empathy and understanding (Anwar & Saleem, 2019).

Religious tolerance holds great significance in Indian Islamic institutions as they play a vital role in shaping students' values, attitudes, and beliefs. It is crucial for fostering peaceful coexistence and social harmony in Indian society. Firstly, religious tolerance contributes to developing diverse and inclusive learning environments. By embracing religious diversity and promoting tolerance, these institutions create an accepting and respectful environment for students from different religious backgrounds. This environment encourages dialogue, understanding, and collaboration among students, fostering a sense of unity and mutual respect. Secondly, religious tolerance in Islamic institutions aligns with Islamic principles and teachings. Compassion, justice, and reverence for others are emphasized regardless of religious beliefs.

Cultural and political factors significantly impact religious tolerance in India (Michelutti, 2020). The country's rich cultural heritage and diversity create a favorable environment for interfaith dialogue and understanding. Shared celebrations, customs, and cultural practices often act as catalysts for fostering interreligious harmony and dialogue. However, political factors, including political identity and electoral concerns, can influence religious tolerance. Past instances of communal violence and discrimination underscore the challenges of maintaining religious harmony. According to Manullang, Husin and Shaukat the relationship between the Muslim community and other religious groups is pivotal to promoting religious tolerance, shaped by historical, cultural, and political influences (Orba Manullang et al., 2021; Shaukat & Pell, 2020; Wan Husin et al., 2021). Recognizing and addressing these factors is essential for effectively managing religious tolerance and cultivating an inclusive coexistence within society.

### **Case Studies (Exemplary Practices)**

Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System in Mumbai is an exemplary model for promoting religious tolerance through proactive measures that create an inclusive and supportive atmosphere. The school's policies prohibit discrimination based on religious beliefs, allowing students to express their identities freely.

Celebratory events are organized to honor and embrace the diverse religious traditions within the community. By prioritizing inclusivity, the school ensures that students of all religious backgrounds feel valued and respected, fostering positive attitudes toward religious diversity. Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System comprehensive implementation of inclusive policies makes it a beacon for other institutions aiming to cultivate an environment of religious tolerance.

Figure 1: Comparative Analysis

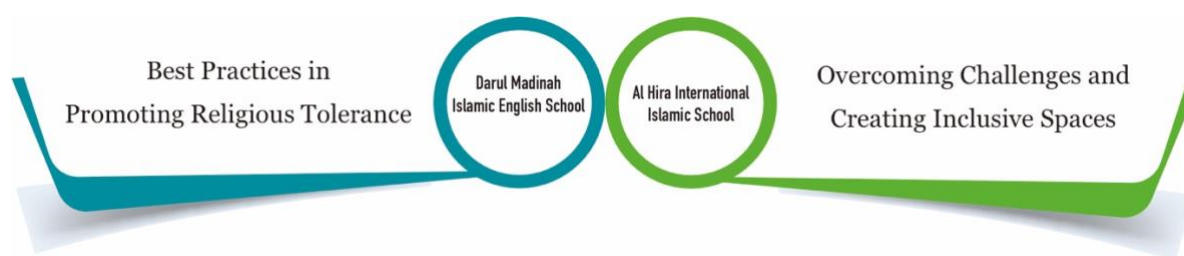


Figure 1 describes Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System is a recognized institution that empowers students to become responsible and valued citizens of India. Focusing on quality education and continuous improvement, the school prepares students to navigate life's challenges. Emphasizing community commitment, the school encourages social responsibility and utilizes innovative practices and technology to enhance teaching and learning. The school promotes religious tolerance by implementing best practices in curriculum design, interfaith dialogue, and fostering an inclusive environment. Students understand Islam comprehensively, engage in positive interfaith interactions, and develop the skills necessary to thrive in a diverse world. Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System exemplifies the transformative power of promoting religious tolerance in education.

Tabel 1: School Vision and Mission

Dar-ul-Madinah	Al-Hira Islamic International School
Mission	
<p>Dar-ul-Madinah aims to provide quality education by developing the character, intellect and competencies of students in an environment that promotes teaching, learning and achievement of the highest standards.</p>	<p>The vision of Al-Hira Islamic International School is to promote education that integrates both religious and modern aspects while also developing a comprehensive and structured syllabus for Islamic studies. Additionally, the school aims to establish guidelines on effectively running an Islamic school.</p>

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Curriculum

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<p>Dar-ul-Madinah's education system maintains the conventional formal education stream with modern disciplines. Primarily, the system has been built to educate the budding generation by providing quality modern education along with traditional values and ethics. Apart from following the regular curriculum, we focus on character building to equip students with high moral values and confidence to sustain the challenges ahead.</p>	<p>The school's mission is to provide support and encouragement to all educational institutions managed by Muslims. It seeks to establish a committee comprising members nationwide to address educational issues through regular meetings and conferences. The school also conducts teacher training programs and acknowledges their contributions. Furthermore, it organizes inter-collegiate competitions in various fields such as elocution, essay writing, Qira'at, quizzes, science exhibitions, abacus, karate, kung-fu, and cricket, with participation from Islamic schools nationwide.</p>
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Al Hira International Islamic School aims to promote education that encompasses both religious and modern aspects. They strive to develop a comprehensive Islamic studies curriculum and establish guidelines for managing Islamic schools. The organization plans to create a committee comprising members from different countries to address education-related issues through regular meetings and conferences. They also aim to provide teacher training programs and acknowledge their contributions. Inter-collegiate competitions will be held, involving various categories such as public speaking, essay writing, Quran recitation, quizzes, science exhibitions, abacus, karate, kung fu, and cricket. Through this holistic approach, the organization seeks to support Muslim educational management and offer students opportunities for growth in diverse fields.

### Challenges in Managing Religious Tolerance

Managing religious tolerance in Indian Islamic schools presents several challenges, including societal prejudices and stereotypes, sectarian tensions, interreligious conflicts, policy implications, and the legal framework.

Tabel 2: Open Coding

Open Coding	Synthesis
<p><i>"One of the major hurdles we face in managing religious tolerance in Indian Islamic schools is the prevalence of societal prejudices and stereotypes. These deep-seated biases and misconceptions about Islam and Muslims are obstructing the development of a tolerant environment."</i></p> <p><i>"When we associate Islam with extremism or perceive Muslims as fundamentally different, it leads to discrimination and marginalization. To overcome these prejudices, we must increase awareness, promote education, encourage intercultural dialogue, challenge misconceptions, and foster understanding among communities."</i></p>	Societal Prejudices and Stereotypes
<p><i>"As the principal of this school, I want to address an issue that poses a significant threat to religious tolerance in our educational environment. We are aware that sectarianism and interreligious conflicts, especially when religious interpretations and practices differ within our Muslim community, can lead to divisions and tensions. These tensions disrupt the harmony among students and impact our overall school environment." Informant 5</i></p> <p><i>"It is crucial for all of us - students and teachers alike - to engage in open dialogue. We must foster an atmosphere of mutual respect, focusing on our shared values rather than differences. We can bridge these gaps through understanding each other's perspectives." Informant 3</i></p> <p><i>"We will introduce interfaith dialogues as part of our curriculum and establish conflict resolution mechanisms within the school framework. These initiatives aim to mitigate challenges posed by interreligious conflicts and promote a more harmonious coexistence within our school community. Informant 8</i></p>	Sectarianism and Interreligious Conflicts
<p><i>"Legal frameworks governing religious freedom and educational practices require careful consideration for inclusivity and respect for diverse beliefs. To overcome these challenges, it is crucial that we collaborate closely with educational policymakers, fellow administrators, and community stakeholders. We aim to create an environment that fosters religious tolerance and respects each individual's beliefs." Informant 1</i></p>	Policy Implications and Legal Framework

Addressing religious tolerance issues in Indian Islamic schools requires a multifaceted approach involving educational stakeholders, policymakers, community leaders, and religious scholars. Key strategies include raising awareness and understanding, fostering interreligious dialogue, implementing inclusive policies, creating open discussion spaces, forming alliances with community organizations,

and involving parents/guardians in the process. Providing teachers with adequate training and support can enhance inclusivity and harmony within the educational environment. Regular evaluation of these initiatives will help measure their effectiveness for future improvements. By taking a comprehensive approach that includes proactive measures like interfaith dialogue and inclusive curriculum design coupled with community engagement, Indian Islamic schools can foster a culture of acceptance, contributing to a harmonious educational environment.

### Strategies for Managing Religious Tolerance



Figure 2: Strategies for Managing Religious Tolerance

Figure 2 describes various proactive measures, interfaith dialogue and collaboration, curriculum design, and community engagement can be utilized to develop strategies for managing religious tolerance in Indian Islamic schools. These strategies seek to cultivate an inclusive environment, promote mutual understanding and respect, and foster community partnerships.

#### 1. Taking Preventative Actions: Cultivating an Inclusive Environment

The effective management of religious tolerance in Islamic institutions necessitates the creation of an inclusive and welcoming environment. This can be achieved by implementing proactive measures aimed at fostering a sense of belonging and promoting respect for diversity. For instance, Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System can adopt policies that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on religious beliefs and practices. Engaging students in joint celebrations of festivals, collaborative group projects, and sporting events can encourage interaction among individuals from diverse religious



backgrounds. Furthermore, providing students with opportunities to express their religious identities and engage in their respective religious practices within the school setting can significantly contribute to cultivating a sense of belonging among them.

## 2. Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation

Active participation in interfaith dialogue and cooperation is vital in promoting religious tolerance effectively. Islamic schools play a significant role in organizing interfaith dialogues, seminars, and workshops that bring together students, teachers, and representatives from diverse religious communities. These platforms offer opportunities for participants to express their opinions, foster mutual understanding, and dispel misconceptions. Building relationships based on respect and trust among religious communities is crucial for creating an environment where students can appreciate diverse perspectives and values. Through interfaith dialogue, individuals can communicate their beliefs, customs, and experiences, thus promoting mutual understanding and breaking down stereotypes. Collaborative initiatives involving students from various religious backgrounds in community service activities encourage teamwork and empathy and further enhance interfaith harmony.

## 3. Curriculum Development, Fostering Comprehension and Respect

Incorporating a curriculum that promotes comprehension and respect for diverse religious traditions is crucial for fostering religious tolerance in Islamic schools. To achieve this, schools can develop inclusive curricula that educate students about various world religions' beliefs, practices, and contributions. By providing accurate and balanced information, students can gain a broader perspective, overcome stereotypes and biases, and reinforce the values of religious tolerance. Additionally, integrating lessons on peace, empathy, and compassion into the Islamic education curriculum further supports the principles of religious acceptance and respect. By including comparative religion studies, students develop a deeper appreciation for the diversity of faiths and cultivate awareness and respect for other religious traditions.

The emphasis on Al Hira and Darul Madinah teacher training programs highlights the significance of having educators who can effectively impart religious knowledge with a moderate approach. By providing training and recognizing their contributions, the school aims to ensure that teachers are well-equipped to guide students in understanding and practicing their faith in a balanced and moderate way. The school's objective to establish guidelines for

managing Islamic schools suggests a commitment to creating an environment that fosters religious moderation. These guidelines likely include promoting tolerance, respect, and open-mindedness, encouraging students to engage in critical thinking and dialogue while upholding Islamic teachings.

#### 4. Partnerships and Community Outreach

Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System places great importance on interfaith dialogue and collaboration to promote religious tolerance. The school actively partners with local religious communities, organizing interfaith gatherings, seminars, and workshops. These platforms provide opportunities for students from diverse religious backgrounds to interact, fostering mutual respect and understanding. By encouraging open-mindedness and constructive dialogue, Dar-ul-Madinah creates an environment that embraces tolerance and acceptance. Through interfaith collaboration, relationships are built, and stereotypes are dismantled, thereby contributing to religious tolerance within the school and the broader community.

Al Hira implements proactive measures to foster an inclusive and supportive atmosphere for all students. The school's policies strictly prohibit discrimination based on religious beliefs or practices. Students are encouraged to freely express their religious identities while participating in celebrations that recognize the diverse religious traditions represented within the school community. By actively promoting inclusivity, Dar-ul-Madinah ensures that students of all faiths feel valued and respected. This promotes religious tolerance among students by creating a sense of belonging and cultivating positive attitudes toward religious diversity.

### **Recommendations for Effective Management of Religious Tolerance**

Dar-ul-Madinah Islamic School is committed to promoting religious tolerance through interfaith dialogue and collaboration. The school actively partners with local religious communities and organizes interfaith gatherings, seminars, and workshops. These platforms facilitate interaction between students of diverse religious backgrounds, encouraging the exchange of ideas and fostering mutual respect. Dar-ul-Madinah cultivates tolerance and acceptance by creating an environment that values different perspectives and constructive dialogue. This interfaith collaboration helps build relationships, break down stereotypes, and promote religious tolerance within the school and the broader community. The school serves as a model for promoting religious tolerance through effective curriculum design, interfaith dialogue, and community building. By implementing these best practices, Dar-ul

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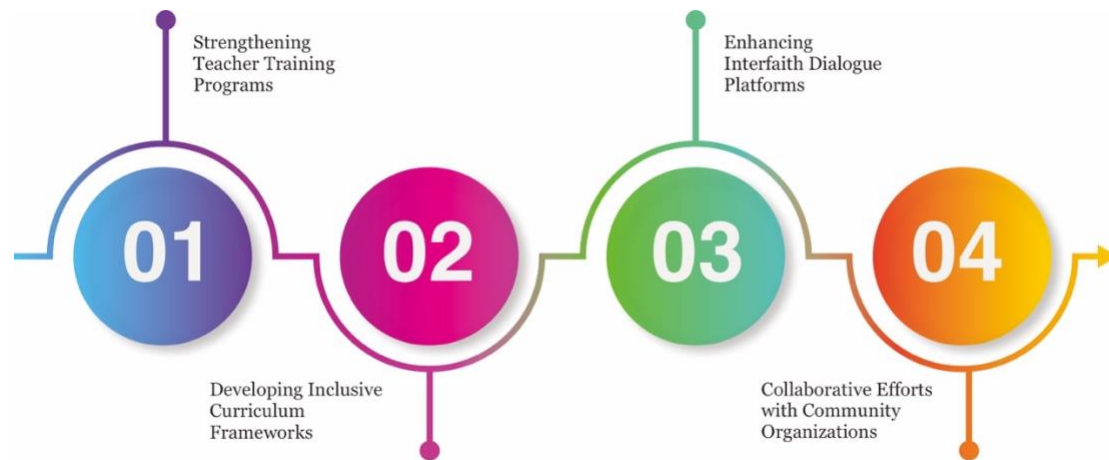
Madinah international Islamic School System provides students with a comprehensive understanding of Islam, positive interfaith interactions, and the skills needed to navigate an increasingly diverse world. Al Hira International Islamic School exemplifies the transformative power of promoting religious tolerance in an educational setting.

In the vision of Al Hira, religious tolerance is an important aspect. The school aims to promote education based on religious and modern aspects, indicating a balanced approach incorporating religious teachings while embracing contemporary knowledge and practices. Developing a comprehensive Islamic studies curriculum emphasizes the importance of understanding and learning about Islamic principles and values moderately and inclusively.

The vision of Al Hira reflects a commitment to religious tolerance by combining religious teachings with modern education, promoting tolerance and respect, and equipping teachers to teach Islamic principles in a balanced and inclusive manner. Al Hira School's approach to education combines religious teachings with modern aspects, promoting a comprehensive curriculum encompasses traditional Islamic education and contemporary knowledge. The organization aims to develop a deep understanding of Islamic studies among students, emphasizing religious literacy and fostering tolerance within the Islamic faith. By integrating religious teachings with modern education, the school seeks to provide a well-rounded educational experience that prepares students for the challenges and opportunities of the modern world.

Al Hira aims to establish guidelines for managing Islamic schools and promoting religious tolerance, diversity, and inclusivity. These guidelines ensure that affiliated schools create a supportive educational environment for students of different backgrounds. The school emphasizes teacher training programs to foster religious tolerance in the classroom and equip educators with the necessary skills. By blending religious and modern education, providing guidelines, and emphasizing religious tolerance, Al Hira takes a comprehensive and scientific approach to education, preparing students to navigate the modern world while upholding their religious values.

Figure 3: Effective Management of Religious Tolerance



The Islamic School (Al Hira and Darul Madinah) places a premium on interfaith dialogue and collaboration to promote religious tolerance. The school establishes partnerships with local religious communities by organizing interfaith gatherings, seminars, and workshops. These platforms facilitate interaction between students of various religious backgrounds, nurturing mutual respect and comprehension. By promoting open-mindedness and constructive dialogue, Al Hira International Islamic School and Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System cultivates an environment that is tolerant and accommodating. Inter-faith collaboration fosters relationships and dispels stereotypes, fostering religious tolerance within the school and the broader community.

Al Hira Islamic International and Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System also take proactive steps to foster an inclusive and supportive environment for all students. School policies prohibit discrimination based on religious beliefs or practices. Students are encouraged to express their religious identities freely, and various religious traditions are celebrated. By actively promoting inclusivity, Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System ensures that all students feel valued and respected. This fosters religious tolerance among students by instilling a sense of community and cultivating positive attitudes toward religious diversity.

To promote education that integrates both religious and modern aspects, a comprehensive and balanced curriculum for Islamic studies should be developed. This curriculum should cover religious teachings and subjects like science, mathematics, languages, and social sciences. Collaboration between experts in Islamic education, scholars, and educators is crucial in structuring a logical and progressive syllabus that includes Quranic studies, Hadith, Islamic history, ethics, jurisprudence, and Arabic language. Guidelines on running Islamic schools should address

infrastructure, administration, curriculum development, teacher recruitment and training, student welfare, and community engagement. It is essential to provide resources, support networks, and recognition to Muslim-managed schools. Establishing a committee can facilitate collaboration, while teacher training programs and inter-collegiate competitions can enhance the quality of education and promote healthy competition among students. These initiatives collectively improve the inclusivity and overall quality of Islamic schools, benefiting both students and the community.

Inviting moderate religious figures to speak at schools provides insight into moderate practices within particular religions and reduces tensions between religious groups. Establishing partnerships with local religious institutions permits joint events and visits to houses of worship, thereby promoting mutual understanding and respect. In addition, providing opportunities for research or cross-religious studies enables students to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the various perspectives within the major religions. Implementing these measures will considerably improve harmonious communication in education and promote a moderate understanding of religion in India.

## CONCLUSION

The study comprehensively investigated religious tolerance in Indian Islamic schools (Al Hira International Islamic Schools and Dar-ul Madinah international Islamic School System), including its vision mission definition, significance interview, socio-religious dynamics, strategies for promotion, and associated challenges. It highlighted the role of religious tolerance in cultivating an inclusive learning environment that fosters interfaith dialogue and equips students for a diverse society. The study recognized the need to address societal prejudices, sectarian tensions, and policy implications within the diverse Indian context. Strategies identified included fostering inclusivity through curriculum design and collaboration with community organizations. The study also acknowledged challenges such as societal prejudices, sectarian tensions, and policy implications that hinder harmonious coexistence. Overcoming these challenges requires concerted efforts from educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders to promote awareness, education, and dialogue. The research emphasized managing religious tolerance, specifically within Indian Islamic schools, through proactive measures that celebrate diversity while nurturing respect among students. Effective approaches involve inclusivity and collaboration among stakeholders.

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