

COMPARATIVE RELIGION & IDEOLOGY STUDIES FOR MULTI-RELIGION STUDENTS UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA: A REVIEW
(Pengajian Perbandingan Agama dan Ideologi dalam Kalangan Pelajar Pelbagai Agama di Universiti di Malaysia: Satu Sorotan)

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ABSTRACT

This review generally involved research in sociology of religion and education, which critically emphasizes the tendency toward ideology of atheism and agnosticism among multi-religious students that presents a complex challenge within the nation's multicultural religious background in Malaysia. This research is explanatory research which is used mixed methods research design. The methods used are Survey for quantitative and Systematic Literature Review (SLR) for qualitative. Focus of this research is four-fold, to evaluate the trend of the tendency, to determine the type challenges, the implications and the interventions for university context in this country. Drawing on recent studies, this review explores how atheistic and agnostic ideologies are perceived in Malaysia's ethnoreligious landscape, particularly in public universities where religious conformity is often culturally embedded. Although atheism remains a minority identity, the challenges lies in its undeniable statistical increase, driven by secular academic content, scientific literacy and modern

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demographic changes. This phenomenon also challenges national identity, particularly in relation to freedom of religion as well as cultural values, thereby giving rise to implications such as negative social effects and identity conflict. This review also emphasizes the importance of inclusive education as an intervention measure toward nowadays development of atheism and agnosticism ideology. Thus, highlighting Comparative Religion and Ideology (CRI) studies as MPU course as its promising preventative strategy for university students from different religious backgrounds at higher education levels. These required courses include critical thinking exercises, interfaith discussions, cross-cultural religious activities and sacred text analysis as a means of fostering mutual respect and understanding between students from various religious and non-theist backgrounds. This will effectively manage the ideologies of atheism and agnosticism by reducing prejudice and fostering intergroup religion harmony. Inclusive religious studies in higher education institutes are intended to foster religiously literate of multiracial societies and mutual understanding especially in Malaysia and global.

Keywords: Atheism; agnosticism; multi-religious; education; university

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini secara umumnya melibatkan penyelidikan dalam bidang sosiologi agama dan pendidikan, yang secara kritikal menekankan kecenderungan terhadap ideologi ateisme dan agnostisisme dalam kalangan pelajar berbilang agama, yang seterusnya menimbulkan cabaran kompleks dalam latar belakang keagamaan masyarakat majmuk di Malaysia. Kajian ini merupakan penyelidikan berbentuk penjelasan (explanatory research) yang menggunakan reka bentuk kaedah campuran (mixed methods). Kaedah yang digunakan ialah tinjauan (survey) bagi data kuantitatif dan Sorotan Literatur Sistematis (Systematic Literature Review, SLR) bagi data kualitatif. Fokus kajian ini adalah empat aspek utama, iaitu untuk menilai trend kecenderungan, mengenal pasti jenis cabaran, meneliti implikasi serta mencadangkan intervensi dalam konteks universiti di negara ini. Berdasarkan kajian-kajian terkini, sorotan ini meneroka bagaimana ideologi ateisme dan agnostisisme ditanggapi dalam landskap etno-agama di Malaysia, khususnya di universiti awam di mana kepatuhan agama sering berakar dalam budaya. Walaupun ateisme masih merupakan identiti minoriti, cabaran utama terletak pada peningkatan statistiknya yang tidak dapat dinafikan, didorong oleh kandungan akademik sekular, literasi saintifik dan perubahan demografi moden. Fenomena ini juga mencabar konsep keagamaan budaya serta kebebasan beragama, sekali gus membawa kepada implikasi seperti kesan sosial negatif dalam negara dan konflik identiti individu. Selain itu, kajian ini turut menekankan kepentingan pendidikan inklusif sebagai langkah intervensi terhadap perkembangan semasa ideologi ateisme dan agnostisisme. Dalam hal ini,

kajian Perbandingan Agama dan Ideologi (Comparative Religion and Ideology, CRI) yang ditawarkan sebagai kursus MPU diketengahkan sebagai strategi pencegahan yang berpotensi bagi pelajar universiti daripada pelbagai latar belakang agama di peringkat pengajian tinggi. Kursus wajib ini merangkumi latihan pemikiran kritis, dialog antara agama, aktiviti keagamaan rentas budaya serta analisis teks suci sebagai medium untuk memupuk rasa hormat dan kefahaman bersama antara pelajar daripada pelbagai latar belakang agama dan bukan teistik. Pendekatan ini dijangka dapat mengurus cabaran berkaitan ideologi ateisme dan agnostisisme secara berkesan dengan mengurangkan prejudis serta memupuk keharmonian antara kelompok agama. Secara keseluruhannya, pengajian agama yang inklusif di institusi pengajian tinggi bertujuan untuk membentuk masyarakat majmuk yang celik agama serta memperkukuh kefahaman bersama, khususnya di Malaysia dan juga di peringkat global.

Kata kunci: *Ateisme; agnostisisme; pelbagai agama; pendidikan; universiti*

INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the twenty-first century has pushed forward issues related religion to the centre of public and political debate. One of the most issues would be the emergence of Atheism and Agnosticism, a movement of unbelief in God or generally as religiously unaffiliated. Social-scientific studies of atheism and agnosticism have generally characterized this ideology as the lack of belief in a God's existence and uncertainty regarding the existence of the divine, respectively (Bullivant et al. 2019; Muhamad 2009; Sherkat 2008). While most of the global population identifies with a religious belief system, also a significant and growing number identify as religious disbelievers every year as reported by Pew Research Centre Report 2025 as shown in Figure 1. This trend shifted especially, in China, the United Kingdom, the United State and Japan (Bullivant 2019), the number of religiously unaffiliated people is rising by 270 million to 1.9 billion.

While in Malaysia, a multicultural and multireligious country with Islam as its primary religion, it also recognizes other religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Hinduism (Kamarzaman et al. 2024). Department of Statistic Malaysia (2020) reported percentage of no or unknown religion increased by 01.% make up total 1.8% or about 584 052 of the total population of Malaysian. Thus, the rise of atheism and agnosticism, presents unique challenges to the nation's religious orientation (Faisal, Mamat & Ahmad 2021; Duile & Aldama 2024). Thus this research, studies the ideology of atheism and agnosticism focusing on challenges, implication and intervention in the context of Malaysia university.

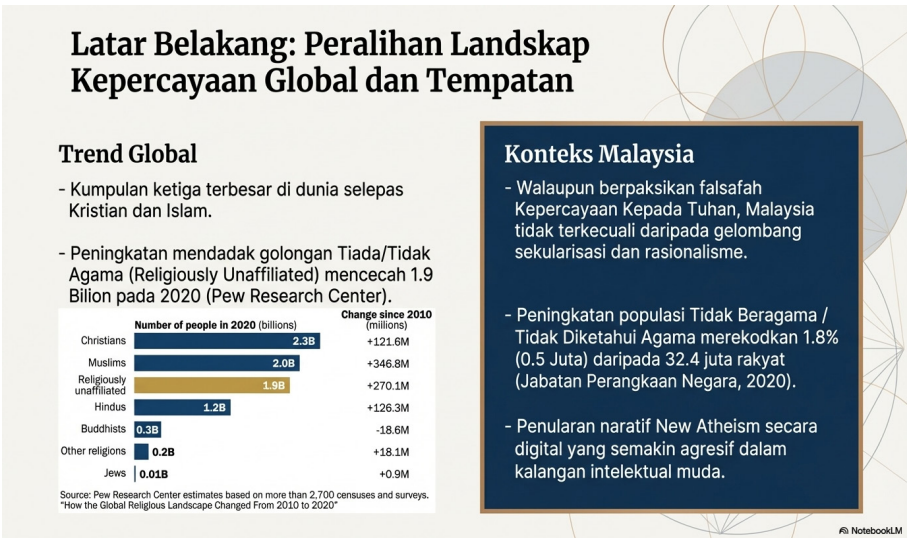


FIGURE 1 Global religious trend by Pew Research Centre Report 2025

Studies the unbelief ideologies such as atheism and agnosticism on multi-religious students with different religion background in Malaysian university are very critical for several reasons. First, measuring the tendency trend in university as preliminary data exploration. Secondly, exploring the challenges evolving socio-religious landscape in Malaysia, where religious beliefs have traditionally played a significant role in shaping cultural and ethical values (Duile & Aldama 2024). Thirdly, exploring the implication influencing the adoption of atheistic or agnostic viewpoints can inform proactive measures (Faisal, Mamat & Ahmad 2021). Fourthly, examining appropriate intervention via educational strategies to mitigate any potential of negative impacts especially in Malaysia context (Ramli, A. F et al. 2024). Thus this study, highlighted the need for religious education as a part of atheism and agnosticism prevention.

Several factors contribute to the rise of atheism and agnosticism, including cognitive, motivational and cultural learning mechanisms (John A. Mueller 2012; Razali et al. 2024). In Malaysia, these factors may be amplified by the increasing access to information and diverse perspectives through the internet and social media, as well as the exposure to secular ideologies within the educational system (Sherkat 2008), modern knowledge (Faisal, Mamat & Ahmad 2021). Personal experiences, psychological well-being and demographic factors such as age, gender and education level can also play a significant role in shaping religious beliefs (Wider et al. 2023; Rahimi et al. 2021). However, as Nodding's (2008) conducted his previous research affirms that religion aspects play a significant role in the lives of individuals which affect both believers and unbelievers. Religion is the main path in achieving unity,

harmony and become the reasons for an existence. Its also a connector and a binder for all elements of society to live in harmony and peace (Humaidi & Sahri 2020).

Thus, as this research focuses on the students of higher education level, educational interventions are essential for promoting understanding and respect among students from diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds (Sabdin & Zulkefli 2023). Inclusive education, which emphasizes equality and participation for all individuals, can be a valuable tool for fostering a harmonious environment in universities (Sabdin & Zulkefli 2023). By integrating multi-religious and ideology learning into inclusive education, institutions can shape an environment that accepts and respects differences and promote social cohesion (Siswantara et al. 2023). Additionally, neglecting spiritual education dimension in modern academic settings leads to a risk of producing intellectual individuals who in future may struggle with emotional instability, ethical ambiguity and lack of purpose (Zahid 2025). While the impact of loss of religion in people's live will bring conflict and destroy the order of humanity and the universe (Humaidi & Sahri 2020).

As this research specifically explores the ideology of atheism and agnosticism among Malaysian university students by examining its tendency trends, challenges, implications and potential interventions that emphasizes the suggestion of educational strategies for student from multi-religious and cultural background. Thus, offering suggestions for spiritual education development in higher education context. It will analysis the data and synthesize relevant literature to provide an overview of the current understanding of this topic, highlighting the importance of fostering religious tolerance, social cohesion and inclusive through education interventions strategy from previous research. This effort is in line with the agenda of Sustainability Development Goals (SDG) to build peaceful society by 2030 by addressing social needs through education. Thus, achieving goals for SDG 4 for attaining quality education and SDG 16 for peace, justice and strong institutions.

In a multi-religious context such as Malaysia, where diverse religious beliefs coexist, Comparative Religion and Ideology (CRI) education can play a vital role in fostering social cohesion, promoting understanding and critical thinking about diverse religious beliefs (Ibrahim et al. 2013). This subject learns about world religion such as Christian, Jewish, Buddhists, Hindus, others religion (Binti Ali 2020) and ideologies. For Malaysian university students, such educational interventions can promote national unity and harmony by bridging gaps between different religious communities (Yassin et al. 2020). While Zhao and Zhang (2024) proposed ideological and political education to foster tolerance and inclusiveness. Other research from Toni Foley (2025) has suggested that religious education in terms of interreligious

learning and teaching could be one possible way to successfully embed in our modern world. Its research also highlighted the interreligious leaning and teaching contribute to addressing the Australian educational goals for all and future of our world. Thus, by increasing awareness, enhancing dialogue skills, and challenging biases, comparative religion education can be an effective intervention (Bennett et al. 2021) for students from different religious and belief backgrounds.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

1. Quantitative

A quantitative approach grounded in a positivist orientation was adopted, utilizing a questionnaire instrument developed in accordance with the objectives of this study. This survey method and a cross sectional research design were employed to ensure data collection without bias, following the recommendations model of Berkers & Sieben (2020). Initially, questionnaires likert scale- 5 point were developed based on existing literature related to the element of the atheism and agnosticism. Initially, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was constructed based on existing literature related to elements of atheism and agnosticism. The respondents for this study will be selected using a stratified random sampling technique, based on the student quota across higher education institutions. The sample size will be determined according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), based on the total population of students in Malaysian higher education institutions. This quantitative approach will generate data in the form of percentages, frequencies and numerical values, which can be presented through models, graphs, charts, and tables. Such an approach is essential for illustrating and explaining prevailing social facts.

2. Qualitative

A qualitative approach grounded in a social constructivist epistemological orientation was employed to provide deeper explanations for aspects that could not be interpreted through the quantitative approach (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In this study, the qualitative approach utilizes a systematic literature review method to generate a set of indicators based on thematic analysis, categorization, and interpretative explanation, following the framework proposed by Naeem et al. (2023). A systematic literature review enables the development of reliable knowledge through the synthesis of findings from multiple research sources (Tranfield et al. 2003:220).

Research Sample

1. Quantitative

For the quantitative method, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to collect data for this study. A total of 400 university students from higher education institutions in the Klang Valley (a highly urbanized zone) were selected using this method. The selection of students was based on specific religious quotas within the institutions. In addition, respondents were required to possess prior knowledge of agnosticism and atheism. This requirement is crucial to ensure that respondents are able to provide accurate and informed responses to the questionnaire items. Failure to recruit appropriate respondents could compromise the quality of the data obtained. The total population of university students in Malaysia is approximately 1.2 million. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for a population exceeding 1,000,000, the minimum required sample size is 384 respondents. Considering a significance level of 5% and a confidence level of 95%, a total of 400 respondents were selected for this survey, exceeding the minimum requirement. Approximately 50 questionnaires were distributed to each selected higher education institution, including Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and others around Klang Valley.

2. Qualitative

For qualitative method, a comprehensive literature search was conducted using Scopus and Web of Science. Keywords such as (“atheism” OR “agnosticism” OR “nonbelief” OR “skepticism”) AND (“university” OR “college” OR “higher education” OR “tertiary”) AND (“students” OR “youth” OR “learners” OR “scholars”) AND (“Malaysia” OR “Malaysian” OR “Southeast Asia” OR “ASEAN”) AND (“belief system” OR “religion” OR “faith” OR “spirituality”). Various types of articles, including original research (qualitative and quantitative), systematic reviews, narrative reviews, meta-analyses, case studies were considered for this mini review. Below, we provide the inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies in this review article.

3. Inclusion Criteria

- i. Research exploring the atheism and agnosticism id
- ii. Eologies among Malaysian university students from different religious background, especially examining aspects of sociocultural, physiological, or educational challenges and potential interventions.
- iii. Research work focusing on educational strategies designed for multi-religious students, specifically in relation to understanding or addressing atheist and agnostic ideologies within the higher education of Malaysia contexts.
- iv. Review studies focus on the academic perspective on atheism and agnosticism in Malaysia in terms of religious tolerance, critical thinking and inclusivity in educational initiatives.

- v. Empirical or theoretical studies involving university students especially local students in Malaysia, including qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods research, policy analyses, or conceptual papers that discuss on atheism, agnosticism or non-religious identity.
- vi. Published research in academic theses, conference proceedings, and institutional publications with full-text access.

4. Exclusion Criteria

- i. Non-specific research which only discusses religious, spiritual perspectives, or specific religious belief and practices without mentioning non-belief perspectives specifically on atheism, agnosticism or non-theist identities.
- ii. Studies that lack an educational aspect, especially ideological education, teaching methods or multi-religious students in higher education.
- iii. Studies that lack a discussion on educational aspects, especially those that do not discuss teaching strategies, ideological education or multi-religion student engagement in higher education settings for atheism and agnosticism proactive preventions.
- iv. Non-scholar sources which are not subjected to academic peer review, such as blog entries, news pieces, opinions and grey literature.
- v. Research published in languages other than Bahasa Malaysia and English or lacking accessible translations, resulted in inaccurate analyses within this study's scope.

DATA ANALYSIS

1. For the quantitative, the data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and regression analysis. Descriptive analysis was conducted to determine frequency distributions, mean values, and standard deviations. Meanwhile, inferential analysis, specifically ANOVA and regression tests, was performed to examine differences in mean values and to obtain statistical indicators such as the F-value, significance level (p-value), correlation coefficient (R), coefficient of determination (R^2), standardized and unstandardized beta coefficients.

2. For qualitative, the data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis by Naeem et al. (2023), to identify patterns and themes within the data. Thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility and effectiveness in analyzing qualitative narratives particularly in social and behavioral research.

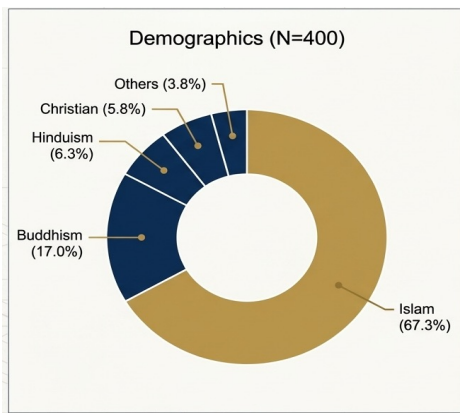
3. Thematic Analysis Process:

- i. Familiarization with Data: Article were read multiple times to gain an initial understanding.
- ii. Generating Initial Codes: Key phrases and concepts were coded to identify recurring topics.

- iii. Identifying Themes: Codes were grouped into broader themes, such as “misconceptions about vaping,” “peer influence,” and “accessibility factors”.
- iv. Reviewing Themes: Themes were refined to ensure clarity and relevance.
- v. Defining Themes: The final themes were articulated to align with the research objectives.
- vi. Interpreting Findings: The results were compared with existing literature to highlight similarities, differences, and new insights.

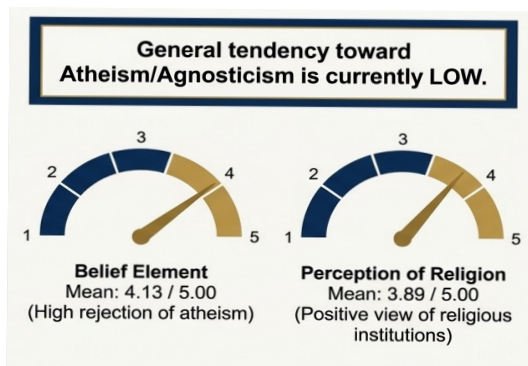
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Quantitative Finding



Frequency value: For religion, the majority of student is Islam. Followed by Buddhism. Hinduism, Christianity and other. Quota frequency of religion and ethnicity in University is constants with the national statistic of Malaysian in 2020.

FIGURE 2 Demographic profile



The general tendency toward atheism and agnosticism among students is statistically LOW.

This is evidenced by high mean scores in the "Element of Belief" (4.13/5.00) and a positive "Perception of Religion" (3.89/5.00), suggesting that the cognitive "Fitrah" remains resilient in the majority of the student population.

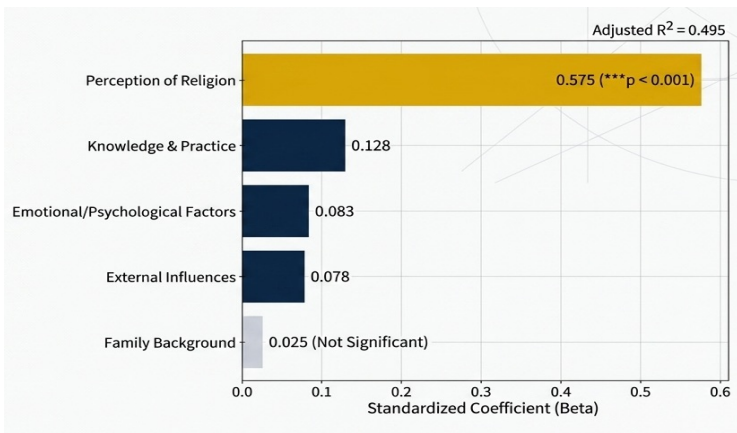
FIGURE 3 General tendency

	Islam	Christianity	Hinduism	Buddhism
Mean Belief	4.40 (Highest)	3.94	3.87	3.43 (Lowest)
Mean Perception	4.17	3.65	3.39	3.27
Overall Risk	Lowest	Low-Moderate	Low-Moderate	Moderate (Highest Risk)

Analysis of Variance: Islam records the highest consistency (Standard Deviation 0.27).

Minority groups especially Buddhism show greater variance (SD 0.5-0.7). This variance is primarily driven by higher exposure to rationalist intellectual circles, denominational diversity and rapid modernization

FIGURE 4 ANOVA Test- Significant variations by religious background



Dominant Predictor: "Perception of Religion" (Beta = 0.575, p < 0.001).

Statistical Significance: The model is highly significant (F = 79.142) and explains 49.5% of the variance in student tendencies (Adjusted R² = 0.495). Family tradition is no longer an absolute shield. Current intellectual perception shift paradigm of belief.

How religion is viewed to function logically, rationally and scientifically today is the undisputed primary determinant driving youth inclination toward atheism/agnosticism.

FIGURE 5 Regression analysis the dominant predictor of inclination

2. Qualitative Finding

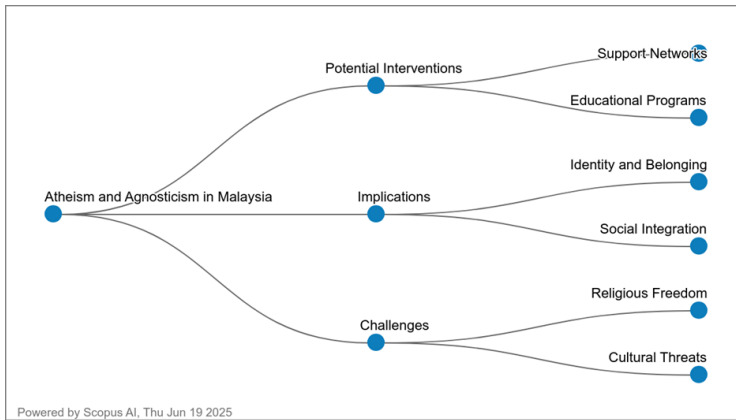


FIGURE 6 A general overview of atheism and agnosticism in Malaysia by using Scopus AI

Figure 6 illustrates three core themes suggested by Scopus AI library system. The core themes such as challenges, implications and potential interventions related to atheism and agnosticism in Malaysia. Thus, highlighting issues such as cultural threats, religious freedom, social integration, identity and belonging, educational programs and support network.

3. Challenges

i. Cultural Threats and Identity:

- Atheism in Malaysia is seen as a direct challenge to the national ideology, Rukun Negara, which emphasizes belief in God as a core principle. This creates a conflict with the ethnic Malay identity, which is closely tied to Islam. It also threatens the cultural dan heritage of religion (T. Duile et al. 2025).
- The phenomenon of atheism is relatively new in Malaysia, emerging more prominently with globalization. This has led to internal conflicts within individuals, often driven by emotional and psychological factors rather than scientific reasoning (Ramli et al. 2022).

ii. Religious Freedom:

- The Malaysian government has historically intervened in discussions about religious freedom, but not for non-religious freedom which limits the space for atheistic and agnostic ideology in this country (T. Duile et al. 2025).

4. Implications

i. Social Cohesion:

- The presence of atheism challenges the social cohesion in Malaysia's ethnoreligious society. The tension between maintaining religious harmony and addressing the rights of atheists creates a complex social dynamic (T. Duile et al. 2025)

ii. Identity and Belonging:

- The struggle for identity and belonging among atheists and agnostics is compounded by the societal expectation to conform to religious norms, leading to internal and external conflicts (Razali et al., 2024; Talip et al., 2023)

5. Potential Interventions

i. Educational Programs:

- There is a need for educational initiatives that promote understanding and tolerance of different beliefs, including atheism. Proper education and early prevention strategies can help address the misconceptions from atheism about religion and promoting social cohesion (Rockenbach et al. 2020).
- Effective interreligious learning involves respecting ground rules, encourages critical thinking, sharing religious experiences, listening compassionately, valuing difference, and identifying common sources can help in addressing misconceptions and fostering a more cohesion society (Freiberger, Oliver 2019; Ibrahim, H. 2013; Ibrahim, H. 2020).

ii. Support Networks:

- Encouraging harmony interfaith dialogue with others will promote broad support network and understanding between different belief systems thus reducing the individual social tensions and negative perceptions associated with religious (Ibrahim, H. 2020; Rockenbach et al. 2020).

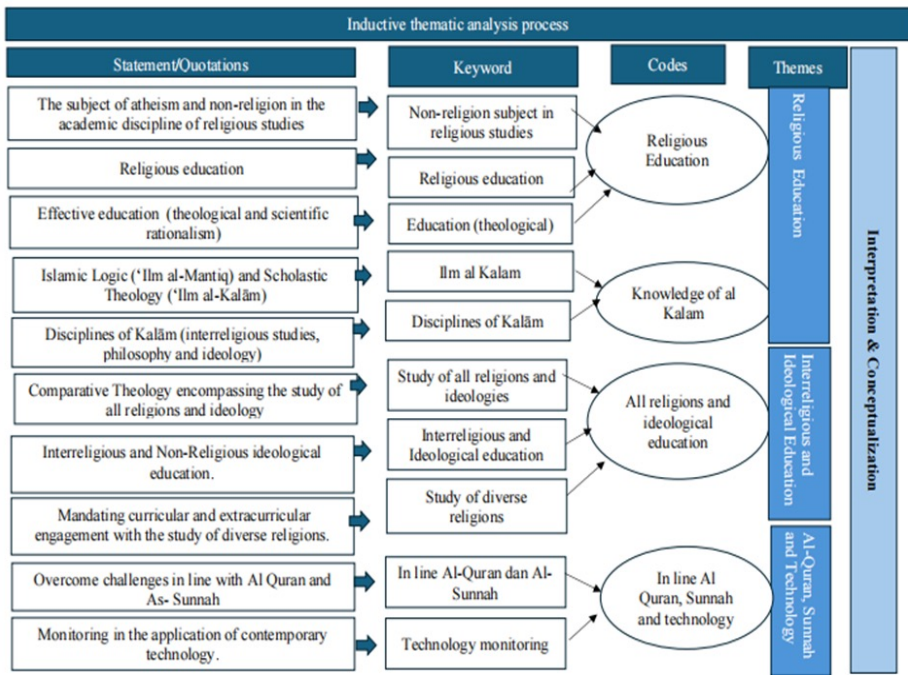


FIGURE 7 Inductive thematic analysis process

Based on figure 7 above, is the inductive thematic analysis process (Naeem et al. 2023) of systematic literature review from article that discusses suggestion of intervention regarding atheism, agnosticism and non-religions. From statement of each article, several keywords are generated which are then developed into codes, themes and concepts.

Theme 1: Religious Education

- There is a need for religious educational initiatives that promote understanding of religion teaching (Ramli et al. 2022). According to Cognitive Religious Theory, religious education enhances the individual’s cognitive capacity to comprehend religious doctrines, symbols, sacred texts, values, and practices that provide guidance for life (Greenway & Barrett 2022)
- Religion education exists as path to achieve peace, harmony and happiness as every religion teaches that God is the creator of the universe and everything will return to Him (Humaidi & Sahri 2020).

Theme 2: Comparative of Religion and Ideological Studies

- Effective interreligious & ideological learning involves respecting ground rules, encouraging critical thinking, sharing religious experiences, listening compassionately, valuing difference, and identifying common sources can help in addressing misconceptions and fostering a more cohesion society (Freiberger, Oliver 2019; Ibrahim et al. 2013; Ibrahim & Maidin 2020)
- Encouraging harmony interfaith dialogue with others will promote broad support network and understanding between different belief systems thus reducing the individual social tensions and negative perceptions associated with religious (Ibrahim & Maidin 2020; Rockenbach et al. 2020).
- Inter-religious dialogue is an interaction among the people from different religion in order to build mutual understanding and tolerance in the society (Ramli & Awang 2014).

Theme 3: al-Quran, al-Sunnah and Technology

- This theme emphasizes the summons of the Quran and the Sunnah as the primary foundation and normative standard for the proposed educational model (Daud et al. 2016). As Al Quran mentioned in surah Al Hujarat verse 13, “O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another.
- Comparative religion is field discussed by al-Quran as mentioned in surah Al Baqarah verse 4 and the story of the life of Prophets showed how da’wah conveyed by using comparative religion approached (Awang & Mat Zain 2021).
- Effective education is integrated with the use of technology as a medium of delivery (Anderson 2008)”.

The concept derived from all above themes in this systematic literature review is “Comparative Religion & Ideology education in Online Mode”. This concept is in line with quantitative finding in which “Perception Towards Religion” and “Knowledge & Pratices” are the dominants predictor of Atheism/Agnosticism inclination. Based on Cognitive Science of Religion Theory, perception or knowledge about religion could be change or increase by education. This type of religious education does not function

exclusively but inclusively, through comparative engagement with other religions and ideologies. This concept does not contradict the requirements of revelation, such as the Quran and the Sunnah (Kambali, Sintang & Abidin 2013). Digital technology serves as the primary medium for implementing the learning process, in line with the demands of global society and twenty-first century education. This enables the study of religion to be conducted in a flexible mode and accessible to all university students. Consequently, students' cognitive processes develop through interaction with revealed texts, managing differences and use of technology.

RESULT OF MAIN FINDINGS

The implementation of Comparative Religion and Ideology (CRI) education in university is purposely to promote interfaith dialogue, cultural studies, and philosophical engagement. Interfaith dialogue in this course would enhance dialogue skills, promoting peace and coexistence by understanding different religious perspectives between both atheistic and theistic (Ibrahim et al. 2013). This course also involved cultural studies that provide intersection of religion and culture interest, which examining how religious beliefs and practices are embedded together with cultural contexts in human society (DeLashmutt 2015). While philosophical engagement in this course will help students from different religious background engaging with contemporary philosophy and comprehensive ideologies understanding like atheism and agnosticism. (Ibrahim & Maidin 2020).

Therefore, the implication of Comparative Religion and Ideology (CRI) education preferred via online mode contributes to the development of the new curriculum with flexibility implementation. This inclusive curriculum is considered as an education strategy for multicultural religious phenomena and tackling contemporary global challenges.

CONCLUSION

For summary, this research explores the primary challenges concerning atheism and agnosticism among multi-racial students in Malaysian universities. The focus centers on four-fold, the trends tendency, the challenges, the implications and the potential interventions. In conclusion for all finding of each focus centres, Comparative Religion and Ideology (CRI) education can offer a superior all potential intervention mentioned by previous researchers by promoting understanding, empathy, support network, critical thinking about diverse religious beliefs and practices among multi-religious students, as it highlights the sociocultural dynamics of belief and non-belief.

This paper also reveals several research gaps where further investigation will be needed in the future. This review identifies various aspects of atheism and agnosticism within the Malaysian academic context, such as cultural threats, religious freedom, identity struggles, and the role of inclusive education, which have been well-documented in previous research. However, educational interventions remain limited in scope and often lack empirical validation within Malaysia's higher education system. Furthermore, existing literature tends to be descriptive rather than solution-oriented, offering few concrete frameworks for implementation. To address these limitations, future research should emphasize the development of localized educational models, and the way of implementation of inclusive frameworks that reflect Malaysian society's pluralistic values on the higher education level. Such research findings would enhance the implementation of interventions aimed at fostering critical dialogue, empathy, and coexistence among students from diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds.

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