Muslim Students' Perceptions of Post-Pandemic Learning in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped education, accelerating the adoption of online and hybrid learning. For Muslim students, this transition required balancing academic demands with religious principles. While online learning offers flexibility and diverse resources, challenges such as maintaining discipline, engagement, and religious commitments persist. Limited research explores how Islamic values influence Muslim students' adaptation to post-pandemic learning. This study examines their perceptions, focusing on opportunities, challenges, and coping mechanisms rooted in Islamic teachings. This study investigates Muslim students' experiences with post-pandemic learning, emphasizing Islamic elements. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data on students' backgrounds, learning perceptions, and challenges. A quantitative analysis, including mean, median, and frequency calculations, was applied. The study sample comprised Muslim students from Malaysian universities with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and educational levels. Findings reveal that most Muslim students perceive post-pandemic learning positively, aligning with Islam's emphasis on knowledge-seeking. They appreciate online learning for its flexibility, access to global resources, and the development of independent learning skills. Technology also facilitates engagement with scholars and peers, broadening their understanding of Islamic teachings. However, transitioning to online learning posed challenges, including motivation, time management, and social isolation. Many students relied on Islamic principles, such as patience, perseverance, and reliance on Allah SWT, to navigate these difficulties. They maintained structured routines, set academic goals, and practiced self-discipline, reflecting Islamic teachings on personal growth and discipline. Muslim students have demonstrated resilience in adapting to post-pandemic learning while upholding Islamic values. By addressing their challenges and enhancing supportive learning environments, post-pandemic education can better integrate Islamic principles, ensuring both academic success and spiritual well-being. Understanding these perspectives will help create inclusive educational models that cater to Muslim students' needs.

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INTRODUCTION

Quality education continues to be a crucial foundation for social advancement and individual growth in a world that is continually evolving. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the world of education, posing a threat to established educational models and necessitating creative solutions to ensure ongoing education. Examining students' opinions and experiences in adjusting to post-pandemic learning environments is crucial as nations work to recover from the disruption caused by the pandemic. This applies particularly to Muslim students. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on Quality Education emphasizes how important education is as a catalyst for achieving sustainable development (Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2022). SDG 4 aims to provide inclusive and equal access to high-quality education for all while also fostering opportunities for lifelong learning that empower people and promote social cohesion. The achievement of SDG 4 targets, however, is at serious risk because of extraordinary challenges.

Muslim-majority nations have been struggling to deal with the effects of the pandemic on their educational institutions (Ayub & Bhat, 2021). With their diverse Muslim populations, these nations face particular challenges that call for analysis. Understanding Muslim students' perspectives in these settings can help educators develop inclusive and effective educational practices as well as provide useful insights into the success of post-pandemic learning efforts (Zain, 2020). The pandemic has exacerbated existing educational inequalities, particularly among marginalized communities, including Muslim students. The transition to online and blended learning has posed significant challenges, such as limited access to technology, inadequate digital infrastructure, and varying levels of digital literacy. These challenges have had a profound impact on Muslim students, many of whom face additional barriers due to socioeconomic factors and cultural expectations. Moreover, the shift to remote learning has often disrupted the traditional modes of education that align with Islamic principles, such as communal learning and direct interaction with teachers (Al Lily et al., 2020).

Despite the growing body of research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, there remains a significant gap in understanding the specific experiences and challenges faced by Muslim students in post-pandemic learning environments. Much of the existing literature has focused broadly on the technological and pedagogical shifts necessitated by the pandemic, with limited attention given to the unique socio-cultural and religious contexts that influence the educational experiences of Muslim students. This oversight is particularly evident in Muslim-majority countries, where educational systems must navigate not only the logistical challenges of remote learning but also the cultural and religious imperatives that shape student engagement and learning outcomes (Ayub & Bhat, 2021; Zain, 2020).

Furthermore, there is a lack of studies that explore the intersection of digital literacy, access to technology, and educational equity within Muslim student populations (Othman & Kassim, 2018). Many Muslim students, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, face compounded disadvantages due to limited access to reliable internet and digital devices, which exacerbate pre-existing educational disparities (Al Lily et al., 2020). Additionally, the role of Islamic educational principles and values in adapting to new learning modalities has not been sufficiently examined (Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2022).

This study aims to fill these gaps by providing an in-depth analysis of the post-pandemic educational experiences of Muslim students in Malaysia. By focusing on their unique challenges and coping strategies, this research will offer valuable insights into developing more inclusive and effective educational practices that acknowledge and incorporate Islamic cultural and religious values. This, in turn, can contribute to achieving the broader goal of equitable and quality education for all, as envisioned by SDG 4 (Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many institutions to switch to online instruction (Adarkwah, 2021; Ali, 2020). For students, especially those from Muslim-majority nations like Malaysia, this has been a challenging period. Due to issues like limited internet access, a lack of technological knowledge, and cultural norms that prevent students from connecting with their teachers and peers online, online learning can be challenging in these nations (Dhawan, 2020). As a result, during the pandemic, Muslim students in Malaysia have experienced a variety of online learning experiences. Some students felt it was a positive experience since it gave them the freedom to learn at their own pace and in a more accommodating setting. Others have reported that it was a negative experience that resulted in feelings of loneliness, anxiety, confusion, worry, and academic difficulties.

The studies on Muslim students' opinions regarding post-pandemic higher education learning in Malaysia will be examined in this systematic review of the literature. This review's objective is to highlight the main difficulties and opportunities that Muslim students encounter in this setting and to offer suggestions for how higher education institutions might better support these students. To locate pertinent publications on Google Scholar, Academia, ResearchGate, and Scopus, the following search phrases were entered: "Muslim students," "student perceptions," "higher education," "Islamic element in education," "COVID-19," and "Malaysia." A total of eight articles met the inclusion criteria. All these peer-reviewed articles were published between 2020 and 2023. The relevance of the papers to the subject, the quality of the study, and the rigour of the methodology were taken into consideration when selecting them.

Table 1: Systematic Literature Review of Post-Pandemic Issues in Education

No	Author (S)	Year Of Publication	Country Being Studied	Findings
1	As'ad	2021	Indonesia	The transformation of Islamic education in the post-pandemic era presented five challenges, which are curriculum changes, pedagogical upskilling, updating students' learning management system, improvement of technology and infrastructure and cultural adaptation.
2	Zhao & Xue	2023	United Kingdom	Social and technical issues to international students, such as time zone differences, student disengagement, border control, travel restrictions and connectivity issues. Campus facility constraint.
3	Kamble et al.	2021	India	Internet connectivity, accessibility and comfort, online learning effectiveness, course content and interactions between students and instructors.
4	Rashid & Yadav	2020	India	Limited accessibility and ineffective student engagement. Need more training for educators in digital technology tools.
5	Pokhrel & Chhetri	2021	Across the world	The use of suitable and relevant pedagogy depends on the expertise and exposure to ICT for educators and learners. E-learning challenges are accessibility, affordability, learning pedagogy and educational policy.
6	Sintema	2021	Zambia	With limited technology resources, the academic performance of the students dropped in 2020.
7	Omar et al.	2021	UAE	To create successful teaching and learning experiences, 3 areas need to ensure high student engagement, effective communication, and positive experiences.
8	Viola et al.	2020	United States	Many students desire to take online classes for psychology students however, the quality and methods of instruction in the psychology field need to be examined.

Source: Author (2025)

The review's findings indicated that Muslim students in Malaysia have a variety of concerns regarding higher education after the pandemic. One of the major concerns is limited internet access. It is challenging for Muslim students to participate in online learning in these circumstances since many of them do not have consistent access to the internet. Additionally, there is a lack of technological familiarity. Many Muslim

students find it challenging to use online learning platforms because they are unfamiliar with the technology involved. Online engagement is also discouraged by cultural norms in various Muslim communities. These traditions often prevent students from communicating with their lecturers and peers online. Due to this, it may be challenging for students to form bonds with their peers and receive the assistance they require from their lecturers. Moreover, there were numerous online distractions through students' social media, including constant notifications from TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp, which caused them to forget their assignments, tests, quizzes, and classes.

For students who are used to learning in a face-to-face setting, online learning can cause feelings of loneliness and anxiety. Learning online might be more challenging for some students, especially those who lack motivation or have learning difficulties. This particularly impacted disabled students with visual impairments, hearing impairments, or autism, as they require special guidance from their tutors and lecturers. Most students from lower-income families found it difficult to learn at home as they did not have enough books, e-books, tablets, earphones, laptops, or smartphones to fully engage in online learning. These difficulties led to isolation and avoidance of online classes. They also struggled to focus and engage in learning when lecturers asked them to complete online quizzes and course activities.

According to the review, learning in post-pandemic higher education presents a variety of challenges for Muslim students in Malaysia and Indonesia. In order to ensure that students have access to high-quality education, these issues must be addressed. Giving students greater support is one way to deal with these challenges. Seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim. Allah commands every Muslim to seek knowledge in the Quran:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمۡ تَفَسَّحُواْ فِي ٱلۡمَجَٰلِسِ فَٱفۡسَحُواْ يَفۡسَحِ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمۡۖ وَإِذَا قِيلَ ٱنشُزُواْ فَٱنشُزُواْ يَرۡفَعِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مِنكُمۡ وَٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡعِلۡمَ دَرَجَٰتٍۚ

"O you who have believed, when you are told "Arise", then arise; Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees, and Allah is acquainted with what you do."

Surah al-Mujadalah, 58: 11

In this verse, Allah commands every believer to acquire knowledge, and He will raise the status of those who seek and acquire knowledge. Knowledge is a way to paradise, and those who are granted knowledge hold a much higher status than those who are ignorant. This is clearly stated in a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah RA, where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

من سلكَ طريقًا يطلبُ فيهِ علمًا سلكَ اللَّهُ بهِ طريقًا من طرقِ الجنَّةِ وإنَّ الملائكةَ لتضعُ أجنحتَها رضًى لطالبِ العلمِ

"Whoever takes a path in search of knowledge, Allah will cause him to walk in one of the paths to paradise. Indeed the angels will lower their wings in great pleasure with the one who seeks knowledge."

Narrated Abu Dawd: 3641

The hadith above explains the importance of seeking knowledge in Islam. Muslims are encouraged to seek not only religious knowledge but also knowledge in pure sciences, social sciences, technology, engineering, and other fields. In acquiring knowledge, one should have a sincere intention (*ikhlas*). *Ikhlas* means doing something solely for the sake of Allah. This is supported by a hadith narrated by Anas ibn Malik RA, in which the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

<div dir="rtl">

طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ، وَمَنْ أَعْطَى الْعِلْمَ لِغَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَلَّدَ الْخَنَازِيرَ

الْجَوَاهِرَ وَاللُّؤْلُؤَ وَالذَّهَبَ

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"Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim and he who imparts knowledge to those who do not deserve it, is like one who puts a necklace of jewels, pearls and gold around the neck of a swine."

Narrated Ibn Majah: 224

This hadith teaches that every Muslim should seek knowledge not only for personal benefit but also for the betterment of the *ummah*. To create an effective online learning environment, higher learning institutions must ensure students have reliable internet access, provide training on the use of technology, and enhance the virtual classroom environment to encourage online interaction. Adjusting the curriculum is another important strategy for addressing these challenges. This may include incorporating more interactive elements, increasing opportunities for student collaboration, and offering greater flexibility in completing assignments. Lastly, it is essential to collaborate with local organisations and religious authorities to address cultural norms that may discourage online communication. This can involve raising awareness of the benefits of online education and the importance of supporting students in this new learning environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method was chosen to systematically explore the attitudes, challenges, and solutions of Muslim students in Malaysia regarding post-pandemic learning. A questionnaire-based approach was used to collect structured and quantifiable data, ensuring consistency in responses. Purposive sampling was employed to select Muslim students enrolled in higher education institutions in Malaysia, ensuring diversity in terms of gender, age, educational background, and cultural context. Data collection was conducted through a Likert scale questionnaire designed based on a systematic literature review. Quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and frequency distributions, was applied using statistical software like SPSS or Excel to effectively interpret the findings.

Muslim students in Malaysia were the subjects of a study investigating their attitudes, challenges, and solutions in post-pandemic learning. The research methodology was based on a questionnaire supported by a systematic literature review. This section provides a detailed explanation of the research framework, questionnaire design, sampling procedure, and data analysis methods. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree." Its construction was informed by literature reviews, as summarized in Table 2.0.

Diagram 1: Questionnaire Structure

Sources: Author (2025)

https://doi.org/10.24191/jcis.v11i1.9
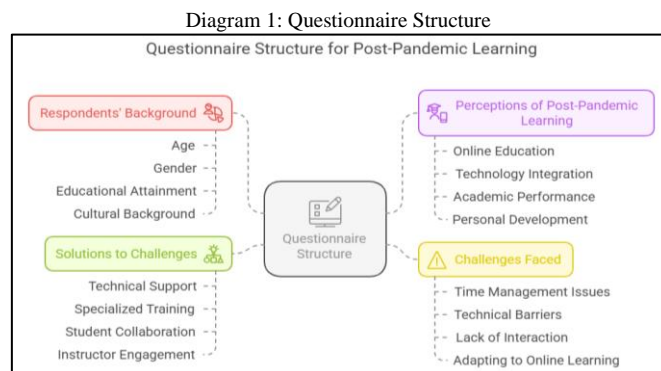
Four sections made up the questionnaire: respondents' backgrounds, perceptions of post-pandemic learning, challenges faced, and solutions to those challenges. The background section collected demographic details, such as age, gender, educational level, and cultural background, to identify variations in responses. The perceptions section examined students' attitudes toward post-pandemic learning, covering topics such as online education, technology integration, academic performance, and personal development. The challenges section focused on difficulties faced by students, including time management, technical barriers, lack of face-to-face interaction, and adaptation to online learning. The solutions section explored possible strategies for overcoming these challenges, with respondents ranking options such as enhanced technical support, specialized training, student collaboration, and greater instructor engagement. Responses were analyzed using a Likert scale to assess the feasibility of each solution.

Purposive sampling was used to select respondents who met specific criteria: Muslim students in Malaysian higher education institutions with experience in post-pandemic learning. The study aimed for diversity in gender, age, educational background, and cultural background to ensure a representative sample. Quantitative analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics, including means, medians, and frequency distributions, to identify trends in student responses. Statistical tools like SPSS or Excel were used for efficient data processing and interpretation. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the study. Respondents were informed about the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality measures. Informed consent was obtained before data collection to protect participant privacy. The research adhered to institutional ethical standards and relevant legal frameworks, ensuring compliance with ethical principles.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Section A of the questionnaire deals with students' background. 64 respondents voluntarily participated in this study. The respondents were students from UiTM Sarawak who were registered in the Academy of Islamic Studies (ACIS). They were purposely chosen because of the high inclusion of academic values in the ACIS syllabus and curriculum. Referring to Diagram 1, 79.7% of the respondents were aged between 18 and 20 years old. Only 18.8% of the respondents were aged between 20 and 22 years old, and 1% were between 23 and 25 years old.

The study's age distribution, as shown in Diagram 1, can be deemed appropriate for a number of reasons. Firstly, the target population of respondents between the ages of 18 and 20 can be justifiable if the study's goal is to research a particular phenomenon or behaviour within a certain age range, such as youth preferences or behaviours. This age range generally corresponds to late adolescence or early adulthood, a critical developmental period with distinctive traits and experiences. Secondly, it is suitable in terms of accessibility and sample size. The large percentage of respondents who were between the ages of 18 and 20 (79.7%) shows that it was simpler to recruit this group for the study. It is possible to increase the statistical power and generalizability of the results within a given age range by using a larger sample size. Thirdly, by focusing on a smaller age range, the study may be able to obtain greater homogeneity among the respondents in terms of life experiences, educational attainment, cultural influences, and societal standards. This homogeneity can lessen confounding variables and enhance the study's internal validity.

Diagram 2: Age of respondents
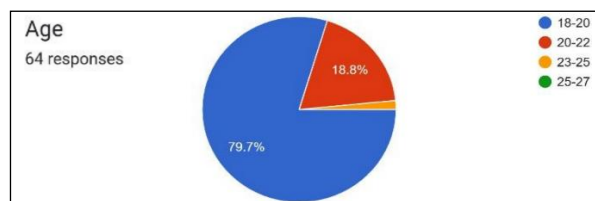
Source: Author (2025)

Section 2 of the questionnaire describes students' perceptions of the implementation of post-pandemic face-to-face higher education learning. Table 2 provides a summary of their perceptions.

Table 2: Summary of students' perceptions of implementing post-pandemic face-to-face higher education learning

No	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Face-to-face learning in higher education is essential for effective knowledge acquisition, including the integration of Islamic teachings	1.6%	1.6%	12.5%.	42.2%	42.2%
2	I believe face-to-face learning, with a focus on Islamic education, will provide a better understanding of religious principles and values.	1.6%	0%	10.9%	40.6%	46.9%
3	I feel excited about returning to face-to-face higher education learning, where I can engage in discussions about Islamic teachings with instructors and fellow students.	1.6%	0%	20.3%	45.3%.	32.8%
4	Face-to-face learning will help me build stronger relationships with my peers and instructors while nurturing my Islamic identity.	0%	0%	14.1%	45.3%	40.6%
5	Face-to-face learning will allow for more interactive discussions on Islamic topics and collaborative activities that promote spiritual growth	0%	0%	10.9%	57.8%	31.3%
6	I am concerned about the potential health risks associated with returning to face-to-face learning, but I value the importance of integrating Islamic education in my studies.	0%	3.1%	29.7%	46.9%	20.3%
7	Face-to-face learning will provide a sense of normalcy and routine in my academic life, along with a deeper connection to Islamic teachings	0%	0%	12.5%	54.7%	32.8%
8	Face-to-face learning will improve my motivation and engagement in the educational process, especially when it includes Islamic perspectives.	0%	0%	12.5%	48.4%	39.1%
9	I believe face-to-face learning, with an emphasis on Islamic education, will enhance my social and communication skills, aligning with Islamic values of compassion and respect.	0%	0%	15.6%	53.1%	31.3%
10	Face-to-face learning will offer better opportunities for networking and forming professional connections within an Islamic educational framework.	0%	0%	10.9%	51.6%	37.5%

Source: Author (2025)

Following the epidemic, face-to-face higher education learning with a focus on the incorporation of Islamic teachings has received generally positive feedback, according to the analysis of student responses. Face-to-face instruction is overwhelmingly seen by students as essential for effective knowledge acquisition (84.4%) and for fostering a greater understanding of religious principles and values (87.5%). Additionally, there is a lot of enthusiasm (75.9%) among students about going back to face-to-face instruction since it enables lively discussions about Islamic beliefs with teachers and peers.

Additionally, students are aware of the potential for face-to-face instruction to foster their Islamic identity (85.9%) and build closer relationships (85.9%). They think that face-to-face instruction encourages lively discussions on Islamic subjects (89.1%) and group projects (88.3%), which enhance spiritual development. While students are worried about the health risks of going back to in-person instruction (50%), they also see the value of integrating Islamic education into their academics (67.2%). Face-to-face instruction, especially when it incorporates Islamic perspectives, is thought to increase motivation and engagement (87.5%) and promote a sense of routine and normalcy (87.5%). Students also anticipate that in-person instruction will improve their social and communication skills (84.4%) and provide networking opportunities within an Islamic educational framework (88.1%).

Overall, the data show that students have positive perceptions of face-to-face higher education learning after the epidemic, particularly when Islamic teachings are emphasised. They believe that it is essential for effective learning, religious comprehension, connection building, spiritual development, and personal growth. Students appreciate the advantages of face-to-face interaction highly and anticipate it bringing a sense of normalcy, motivation, and enhanced abilities while expressing concerns about health risks.

The next section examines students' challenges in implementing post-pandemic face-to-face higher education learning. Table 3 provides a summary of this section.

Table 3: Summary of students' challenges in implementing post-pandemic face-to-face higher education learning

No	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I am worried about maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment during face-to-face classes while also adhering to Islamic guidelines on cleanliness and hygiene.	0%	3.1%	50%	35.9%	10.9%
2	Adjusting to the new face-to-face learning format after online learning might be challenging for me, particularly when incorporating Islamic teachings.	0%	10.9%	35.9%	35.9%	17.2%
3	The limited availability of resources and facilities due to the pandemic might hinder the face-to-face learning experience, including accessing Islamic literature and references	0%	3.1%	46.9%	37.5%	12.5%
4	The potential for class disruptions due to future outbreaks or lockdowns concerns me, impacting both general and Islamic education.	0%	1.6%	45.3%	35.9%	17.2%
5	Managing the balance between face-to-face classes and personal responsibilities, including religious obligations, may pose a challenge.	0%	7.8%	39.1%	34.4%	18.8%
6	I am concerned about the effectiveness of face-to-face learning in terms of accommodating diverse learning styles, particularly within an Islamic educational context	0%	7.8%	43.8%	34.4%	14.1%
7	Adapting to a more structured schedule and fixed class timings might be difficult after the flexibility of online learning, considering Islamic prayer times and other religious commitments	1.6%	3.1%	43.8%	34.4%	17.2%
8	The transition from virtual communication to face-to-face interactions might be uncomfortable for me, especially when discussing sensitive Islamic topics.	1.6%	15.6%	43.8%	32.8%	6.3%
9	Overcoming the fear or anxiety associated with public gatherings and crowded spaces might be a challenge while maintaining Islamic principles of modesty and privacy	4.7%	7.8%	39.1%	29.7%	18.8%
10	Balancing social distancing protocols and maintaining an interactive learning environment may be challenging, while also respecting Islamic principles of physical distancing.	0%	7.8%	43.8%	32.8%	15.6%

Source: Author (2025)

The examination of the students' responses reveals a number of worries and potential obstacles associated with face-to-face higher education learning after the epidemic, particularly within the setting of Islamic educational institutions. Despite the fact that people have a generally positive attitude, it is essential to keep in mind the following points of concern regarding maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment while adhering to Islamic norms on cleanliness and sanitation raised by a sizeable percentage of students, specifically fifty percent (50%) of the total. Many students expect difficulties in transitioning to the new format: 35.9% of students anticipate difficulties in adjusting to the move from online learning to face-to-face classes, particularly when Islamic teachings are incorporated into the curriculum.

A significant percentage of students (37.5%) believe that the availability of resources and facilities, including access to Islamic literature and references, may be restricted due to the current epidemic. Class

disruptions caused by outbreaks or lockdowns concern a sizable percentage of the students (35.9%), who worry about the possibility of their classes being disrupted in the future. Students also acknowledge the difficulty of maintaining a healthy balance between attending face-to-face sessions and tending to personal responsibilities, such as fulfilling religious obligations (34.4% of students). In terms of the effectiveness of face-to-face learning, 34.4% of students express worries regarding its ability to accommodate varied learning styles within an Islamic educational framework. This represents a considerable number of students who express these issues.

Meanwhile, adjusting to a structured timetable seems to be an issue, as 34.4% of the respondents anticipate having trouble adapting to a more regimented schedule with fixed class timings, especially when considering the hours of Islamic prayer and other religious commitments. The transition from virtual communication to face-to-face encounters is expected to be challenging for a percentage of students (32.8%), particularly when addressing sensitive Islamic subjects. Students believe that overcoming fear or anxiety associated with public gatherings and crowded settings while adhering to the Islamic norms of modesty and privacy may be difficult (29.7% of students). Additionally, students anticipate facing difficulties balancing social distancing procedures with maintaining an engaged learning environment while still observing Islamic rules of physical distancing (32.8%).

In general, students have positive perceptions about face-to-face higher education learning with a focus on Islamic teachings after the epidemic. Yet, there are numerous issues and obstacles that have been identified. Among these are concerns regarding personal safety and the availability of resources, as well as difficulties in balancing various obligations and adjusting to new learning formats. In order to facilitate a successful transition to face-to-face learning while simultaneously embracing Islamic beliefs and providing an enriched educational experience for all students, it will be necessary to understand and address these concerns. Effectively understanding and addressing these concerns will be crucial.

The following step is to recognize the recommendations made by students about the implementation of post-pandemic face-to-face higher education learning. A summary of this section is included in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Summary of students' suggestions for implementing post-pandemic face-to-face higher education learning

No	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Providing regular COVID-19 testing and vaccination facilities on campus, considering the importance of health in Islamic teachings.	0%	0%	25%	43.8%	31.3%
2	Implementing smaller class sizes to ensure physical distancing and better student-teacher interactions, with specific consideration for Islamic education requirements	1.6%	3.1%	35.9%	45.3%	14.1%
3	Offering a hybrid learning model that combines face-to-face and online components, allowing for flexible Islamic education delivery to accommodate different student needs.	0%	0%	31.3%	43.8%	25%
4	Providing mental health support services that address the emotional challenges of returning to face-to-face learning while incorporating Islamic counselling principles.	0%	0%	32.8%	42.2%	25%
5	Investing in upgraded ventilation systems and other necessary infrastructure to improve air quality in classrooms, aligning with Islamic teachings on maintaining a clean environment.	0%	0%	21.9%	43.8%	34.4%
6	Conducting regular surveys to gather student feedback, specifically regarding the integration of Islamic education, and address concerns promptly.	0%	1.6%	28.1%	56.3%	14.1%
7	Encouraging transparent communication between students, faculty, and administration to address any issues related to Islamic education effectively.	0%	0%	26.6%	46.9%	26.6%

8	Organizing orientation programs that focus on helping students adjust to the new face-to-face learning environment while also highlighting the importance of Islamic education	0%	1.6%	28.1%	50%	20.3%
9	Promoting flexible attendance policies to accommodate students who might still face health or personal challenges, considering the significance of Islamic religious practices	0%	0%	23.4%	46.9%	29.7%
10	Offering technology integration and digital tools that support the integration of Islamic education, fostering student engagement with religious texts and resources	1.6%	0%	21.9%	46.9%	29.7%

Source: Author (2025)

Students offer a variety of recommendations and preferences for face-to-face higher education learning after the epidemic, with an emphasis on adopting Islamic principles. The takeaway from the analysis is that students have a substantial agreement (43.8%) that frequent COVID-19 testing and vaccination facilities should be given in universities. This is in alignment with the significance that Islamic teachings place on health. The vast majority of students, 45.3%, agree that it is vital to establish smaller class sizes to minimise the risk of infection and to improve student-teacher relationships, with a particular focus on taking into consideration the requirements of Islamic education.

Students indicate agreement (43.8%) with the concept of establishing a hybrid learning model that mixes face-to-face and online components. This would provide flexibility in the delivery of Islamic education, accommodating the varying needs of students. Regarding mental health support, 42.2% of students agree that universities should offer counselling services that address the emotional challenges of returning to face-to-face learning, incorporating Islamic counselling principles. A significant percentage of students (43.8%) also believe that investing in upgraded ventilation systems and other infrastructure to improve air quality aligns with Islamic teachings on cleanliness and environmental well-being. Moreover, students express strong support (56.3%) for conducting regular surveys to gather feedback on the integration of Islamic education and to promptly address any concerns, ensuring a more inclusive and responsive learning environment.

Students also emphasise the importance of transparent communication between students, teachers, and administration (46.9%) to effectively address concerns related to Islamic education. Additionally, orientation programmes are seen as beneficial in helping students adjust to the post-pandemic face-to-face learning environment while reinforcing the significance of Islamic education. This sentiment is shared by 50% of the student body. Regarding flexible attendance policies, 46.9% of students agree that universities should accommodate those facing health or personal challenges, particularly in relation to Islamic religious practices. Furthermore, students have a positive outlook on the integration of technology (46.9%), supporting the use of digital tools to enhance Islamic education by facilitating engagement with religious texts and learning materials.

Overall, students prioritise health measures, interactive learning environments, flexibility, mental health support, modernised infrastructure, effective communication, and technology integration. By incorporating these elements into post-pandemic face-to-face higher education—especially with an emphasis on Islamic teachings—institutions can create a more enriching and supportive learning experience.

CONCLUSION

This study focused on students' perspectives, challenges, and potential solutions regarding post-pandemic face-to-face higher education learning, particularly with an emphasis on Islamic principles. The respondents, aged 18 to 25, primarily fell within the 18–20 age group and came from diverse backgrounds. Overall, students held positive views on face-to-face learning, valuing it for knowledge acquisition, religious understanding, relationship-building, and spiritual growth. They expressed enthusiasm about

discussing Islamic principles in an in-person setting. However, students also acknowledged challenges, including ensuring a safe learning environment, adjusting after online learning, and balancing personal commitments. To address these concerns, they suggested routine COVID-19 testing, smaller class sizes, hybrid learning models, mental health support, improved infrastructure, and clearer communication channels.

In conclusion, this research highlighted students' generally optimistic perspectives on post-pandemic face-to-face higher education learning, particularly regarding the incorporation of Islamic teachings. Students expressed enthusiasm and recognised the intellectual and spiritual benefits of in-person interactions. However, they also acknowledged the challenges related to health and safety, adapting to new learning formats, and balancing academic and personal responsibilities. Their insights provide valuable guidance for developing an inclusive and supportive learning environment that effectively integrates Islamic teachings while addressing the diverse needs of students in this age group.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Sheela Faizura Nik Fauzi conducted the research and wrote the article. Noor Muthaah Mohamad Ali Adaha conceptualised the central research idea and provided the theoretical framework. Sheela Faizura Nik Fauzi and Noor Muthaah Mohamad Ali Adaha designed the research and supervised its progress. Miranti Eka Puteri oversaw the review and revisions and approved the article submission.

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