


The Impact of Islamic Tolerance Awareness on Perceived Academic and Societal Tolerance: An Investigation Among University Students in the UAE

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of Islamic tolerance awareness on perceived academic and societal tolerance among university students in the United Arab Emirates. The study consisted of 422 participants representing diverse genders, age groups, academic levels, and specializations. Findings of the study reveal a high level of Islamic tolerance awareness among the participants, with no statistically significant demographic differences. While societal tolerance perceptions were largely equal across demographics, gender-based differences emerged in academic tolerance, with male students reported higher perceptions than females. Correlational analyses demonstrated strong interrelationships between tolerance awareness, academic tolerance, and societal tolerance, while regression results confirmed that awareness significantly enhances students' perceptions towards academic and social tolerances.

Keywords: Academic Tolerance; Higher Education; Islamic Tolerance Awareness; Multicultural Society; Social Cohesion; Societal Tolerance; United Arab Emirates; University Student



INTRODUCTION

Tolerance is one of the fundamental pillars of Islamic culture (Muhajir et al., 2025; Takdir & Sumbulah, 2024). It is clearly reflected in the texts of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Islam calls for mercy, cooperation, and respect for others regardless of their religion or cultural background. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) embodied this principle not only in his speeches but also in his behavior, serving as the best example for patience, forgiveness, and acceptance of others (Al Zu'abi, 2018; Defriza et al., 2025; Febriana et al., 2025; Hameed & Jabir, 2022; Munawaroh, 2025).

One of the manifestations of tolerance in the Qur'an is the verse in which Allah says: "Hold to forgiveness; enjoin what is right; and turn away from the ignorant" (*The Qur'an*, 2008, 7:199). This divine instruction to the Prophet (PBUH) and to all believers encourages forgiveness and avoidance of disputes with those who are argumentative. Similarly, Allah says: "So pardon them and overlook [their misdeeds]. Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good" (*The Qur'an*, 2008, 5:13). These verses offer a general directive for all believers.

The concept of tolerance is also deeply rooted in the hadith and the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "I served the Prophet (PBUH) for ten years. Not once did he say to me, 'Uff.' He never said to me about anything I did, 'Why did you do it?' or about anything I did not do, 'Why didn't you do it?'" (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 1997, Hadith 6038). Another hadith narrated by Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) states that the Messenger of Allah said: "Whoever does not show mercy to people, Allah will not show mercy to him" (*Sahih Muslim*, 2007, Hadith 2319).

In light of the intellectual and cultural changes the modern world is witnessing, there is an increasing need to reinforce the values of tolerance among university students, as they represent the most

influential segment in shaping the future of societies and building a civilized identity based on peace and coexistence (Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Chen & Hu, 2023; Liu et al., 2025; Wan Husin et al., 2021).

This study aims to investigate university students' awareness of the principle of tolerance as presented in Islamic culture through a survey study that examines their understanding of the concept, the sources through which they learn about it, and its reflection on their academic and societal behavior. The significance of this study stems from its moral and educational relevance in a multicultural environment such as the United Arab Emirates, where more than 200 nationalities live together in harmony and mutual respect.

In addition, religious, cultural, educational, social, and local factors also make this study significant. Religiously and culturally, tolerance is a core value in Islam, which emphasizes mercy, dialogue, and justice. Educationally and socially, university students are future leaders and key drivers of societal change. Nationally, the research aligns with the UAE's vision of being a global model for religious and cultural coexistence. Scientifically, the topic requires further field studies to accurately assess students' awareness and understanding of the principle of tolerance in Islam.

This study contributes to the literature on tolerance in multicultural society by empirically examining Islamic tolerance awareness among university students in the UAE. As a global higher education hub, the UAE provides a uniquely relevant setting in which Islamic ethical principles intersect with internationalized academic environments. While tolerance has been widely examined in Western countries, empirical research that operationalizes Islamic value-based awareness and assesses its influence on academic and societal perceptions in the Arab countries remains limited. By demonstrating that Islamic tolerance awareness is a strong predictor of both academic and social tolerance, this study extends the existing models of campus

climate and intercultural engagement, highlighting religious-moral awareness as a measurable and consequential dimension of inclusivity.

Related Studies

Recent research on multicultural higher education conceptualizes tolerance as a dynamic and socially embedded construct shaped by institutional climate, peer interaction, and students' sense of belonging. Foundational works show how exposure to diversity, reflection on cultural assumptions, and value-based learning contribute to more inclusive social judgments (Bennett, 2017; Deardorff, 2019; Muliadi et al., 2025; Piper et al., 2025). In addition, empirical studies demonstrate that students who develop stronger intercultural competencies exhibit higher levels of mutual respect, cooperation, and acceptance of cultural and religious differences (Odağ et al., 2016; Weda et al., 2022). These findings reinforce the view that tolerance emerges through the interaction of personal awareness and institutional context, positioning universities as key sites for cultivating intercultural and ethical capacities.

Comparative research from Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, and Jordan provides important contextual insight into the relationship between religious values, tolerance, and educational environments. In Indonesia and Malaysia, empirical studies show that Islamic education and value-based awareness can foster intercultural respect and social harmony when framed within pluralistic and civic-oriented pedagogies (Fahmi et al., 2025; Muhajir et al., 2025; Sulistyaningsih & Syamsiyah, 2025). Similarly, research from Indonesia highlight the role of moderate Islamic discourse (*wasatiyyah*) in shaping students' openness toward religious and cultural diversity among university students (Afwadzi et al., 2024; Mustakim et al., 2021; Nasir & Rijal, 2021; Subchi et al., 2022). Likewise, studies from Malaysia emphasize that Islamic moral

education positively influences students' attitudes toward ethnic and religious coexistence (Balakrishnan, 2017; Sabdin & Zulkefli, 2023). In Turkey research suggests that students' religious awareness can enhance social tolerance and civic engagement (Demir & Toprak, 2023; Demmrich et al., 2024). Studies from Jordan indicate that Islamic ethical values contribute to positive social cohesion and tolerance among university students (Alazeez et al., 2024; Al-Momani et al., 2024; Ebniya, 2024).

More recently, research in moral psychology and social identity theory suggests that individuals' moral frameworks significantly influence how diversity is perceived and evaluated, shaping responses to difference, inclusion, and social cohesion (Amit & Venzhik, 2025; Hadarics & Kende, 2018; Morris & Stewart, 2022). Emerging empirical evidence indicates that religious and cultural moral orientations can positively predict intercultural respect and inclusive perceptions when embedded within pluralistic and dialogical contexts (Muhajir et al., 2025; Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, 2023). By empirically examining Islamic tolerance awareness in a multicultural context, the present study aligns with and extends this international scholarship, contributing a culturally inclusive theoretical lens to debates on tolerance, campus climate, and intercultural relations in global higher education.

Research Problem

Although the principle of tolerance is one of the core values of Islamic culture, the contemporary reality shows an increase in manifestations of intolerance and closed-mindedness among some youth, whether within educational institutions or through social media platforms. This situation raises questions about the extent to which this principle is present in the consciousness of university students, especially in light of the current global interplay of cultures,

religions, and ideologies. Thus, the central research problem can be stated as follows:

RQ1. Are there significant variations in tolerance awareness, academic tolerance, and social tolerance among university students?

RQ2. To what extent does tolerance awareness affect academic and social tolerance?

Research Hypothesis

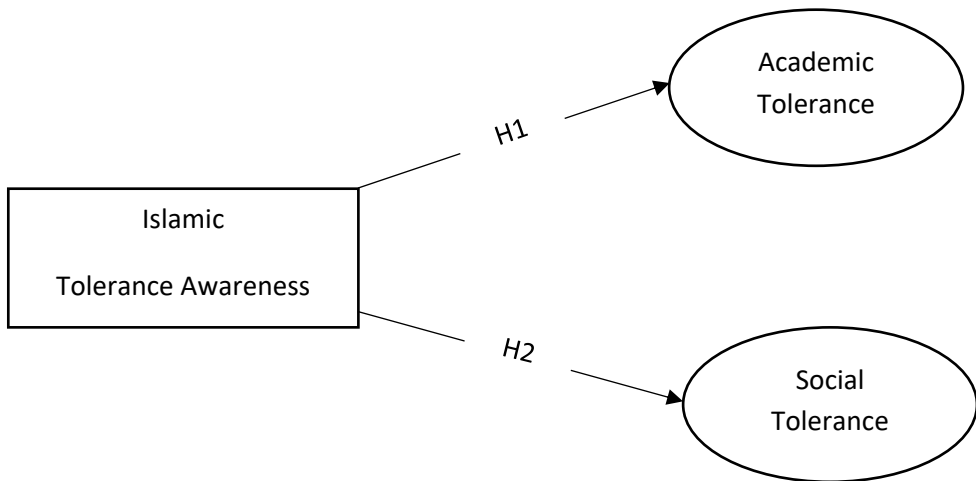
1. University students in the UAE do not differ in awareness of tolerance in Islam.
2. University students in the UAE do not differ in their perceptions towards academic tolerance.
3. University students in the UAE do not differ in their perceptions towards societal tolerance.
4. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between students' awareness of tolerance in Islam and their perceived academic tolerance.
5. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between students' awareness of tolerance in Islam and their perceived societal tolerance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework based on the fourth hypothesis stated above. The framework highlights the key constructs and their interrelationships. It serves as a conceptual guide by outlining how the independent variable, i.e. tolerance awareness, interact to influence the dependent variables, i.e. academic and societal tolerance.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework



Source: Authors' analysis.

The Key Concepts

As illustrated in the theoretical framework, the current study is based on three key concepts. The concepts are (1) Islamic tolerance awareness, (2) academic tolerance, and (3) social tolerance. Islamic Tolerance awareness refers to the understanding and practicing the core principles of tolerance in Islam. It includes respecting human dignity, freedom of belief, coexistence, kindness, and justice. In this study, the concept of Islamic tolerance awareness was measured through six the following six statements. In addition, by using five Likert scale, respondents were asked to express their agreement and disagreement with each statement.

1. I understand that tolerance is one of the core principles of Islamic culture
2. I know that Islam calls for respect for religious and cultural differences

3. I deal with others with a spirit of tolerance even if their opinions differ from mine.
4. I rely on the Quranic texts and the hadiths of the Prophet to understand the value of tolerance.
5. I realize that tolerance promotes community cohesion and peace.
6. I am keen to develop myself to have a deeper understanding of the value of tolerance in Islam.

The concept of academic tolerance refers to the commitment and practice of Islamic tolerance within the academic institutions. This includes among others, interacting with others from different cultures and religions, respecting the opinions of other people, students, and participation in tolerance activities. It was measured using five Likert scales of agreement and disagreement to the following seven statements:

1. I practice tolerance at the university in dealing with my colleagues from different cultural or religious backgrounds.
2. I respect different opinions during university discussions even if I don't agree with them.
3. I participate with my fellow colleagues in activities that call for tolerance and coexistence.
4. I see that the university environment promotes a spirit of tolerance among students.
5. I believe that university activities contribute to deepening my understanding of tolerance in Islam.
6. I participate in national initiatives to promote tolerance, such as the Year of Tolerance.
7. I see spreading a culture of tolerance among my colleagues as part of my personal responsibility.

The concept of societal tolerance refers to the tolerance promotion and practices in the UAE. It includes among others, cultural and religious diversity in the UAE, UAE laws and legislations

for supporting and promoting tolerance, and the nature of Emirati society. The concept was measured through five Likert scales of agreement and disagreement with the following four statements:

1. I notice that the Emirati society embodies the values of tolerance in practice.
2. I feel that the laws and legislation in the UAE support the culture of tolerance.
3. I believe that cultural and religious diversity in the UAE promotes peaceful coexistence.
4. I believe that the UAE sets a global model for implementing tolerance.

METHOD

Data Collection

This cross-sectional study employed a survey questionnaire developed and designed by the researchers using various references about tolerance in Islam in Arabic and English. The instrument was divided into four sections: the first section gathered demographic information (5 items), while the remaining 4 sections measured tolerance awareness (6 items), tolerance within the academic environment (7 items), and tolerance in society (4 items). The questionnaire was designed as bilingual questionnaire in Arabic and English using Google Forms and distributed in April 2025 via social media platforms, utilizing a convenience sampling method.

Convenience sampling was used in selecting participants. This approach was considered appropriate because the study focuses on identifying preliminary patterns and associations rather than producing population-level estimates. The student population under investigation is relatively homogeneous with respect to key characteristics relevant to the research questions, which reduces the risk of substantial sampling bias. In addition, the absence of a

comprehensive sampling frame and practical constraints related to access and resources limit the feasibility of probability-based sampling in this study. The use of convenience sampling is consistent with established practice in social science research. Nonetheless, the limitations of this approach in terms of generalizability are acknowledged, and future research should seek to extend the findings using probability-based sampling across more diverse student cohorts. Data collection lasted two weeks, yielding 438 responses. Of these, 16 were deemed invalid and excluded, leaving a final sample of 422 valid responses for analysis.

Correlation Matrix

The correlation matrix for the study variables reveals statistically significant and positive relationships among the variables categorized under Awareness, Academic, and Society (see Table 1). Within the Awareness dimension, all six items (Awareness1 to Awareness6) exhibit moderate to strong inter-correlations, with coefficients ranging from .515 to .755, all significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates a high level of internal consistency and suggests that these items effectively measure a common underlying construct. Similarly, the Academic dimension (Academic1 to Academic7) also shows substantial internal consistency, with notable correlations such as between Academic2 and Academic6 ($r = .640$), and Academic5 and Academic7 ($r = .651$), highlighting coherent relationships among academic variables.

The Society variables (Society1 to Society4) demonstrate strong mutual correlations, particularly between Society3 and Society4 ($r = .747$) and between Society2 and Society3 ($r = .753$), supporting the integrity of this construct. Cross-dimensional correlations also show significant associations, particularly between Society and Academic variables, such as Society3 with Academic7 ($r = .590$) and Society2 with Academic6 ($r = .547$), implying interconnectedness between societal influences and academic outcomes.

Table 1

Correlation Matrix

| N | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | |
|----|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|
| 1 | Awareness1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Awareness2 | .755** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Awareness3 | .593** | .515** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Awareness4 | .606** | .606** | .555** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Awareness5 | .669** | .668** | .697** | .629** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Awareness6 | .576** | .607** | .599** | .630** | .650** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Academic1 | .547** | .425** | .598** | .410** | .455** | .474** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Academic2 | .511** | .449** | .643** | .426** | .523** | .502** | .679** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | Academic3 | .310** | .282** | .434** | .391** | .239** | .385** | .557** | .591** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | Academic4 | .392** | .316** | .485** | .369** | .394** | .435** | .553** | .589** | .626** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | Academic5 | .322** | .350** | .491** | .374** | .364** | .454** | .575** | .527** | .627** | .651** | 1 | | | | | | | |

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| N | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | |
|----|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|----|--|
| 12 | Academ ic6 | .29 6** | .27 5** | .43 4** | .46 7** | .30 2** | .47 0** | .56 1** | .48 4** | .64 0** | .54 5** | .56 2** | 1 | | | | | | |
| 13 | Academ ic7 | .46 3** | .45 2** | .56 8** | .58 6** | .51 4** | .69 5** | .51 3** | .48 2** | .57 7** | .52 0** | .55 7** | .63 2** | 1 | | | | | |
| 14 | Society1 | .51 8** | .53 7** | .52 5** | .48 2** | .52 6** | .53 1** | .58 1** | .58 1** | .42 3** | .51 9** | .48 4** | .53 0** | .49 7** | 1 | | | | |
| 15 | Society2 | .48 5** | .54 4** | .49 9** | .48 8** | .50 6** | .55 1** | .63 1** | .51 9** | .45 0** | .52 7** | .47 2** | .54 7** | .53 2** | .75 3** | 1 | | | |
| 16 | Society3 | .49 3** | .51 2** | .47 8** | .52 2** | .54 9** | .50 7** | .44 9** | .46 8** | .35 2** | .44 1** | .48 1** | .48 1** | .53 9** | .59 0** | .58 7** | 1 | | |
| 17 | Society4 | .50 9** | .50 6** | .49 4** | .52 3** | .52 7** | .55 2** | .47 6** | .44 2** | .33 3** | .38 3** | .40 5** | .51 4** | .47 7** | .72 4** | .65 1** | .74 7** | 1 | |

Source: Primary data. Authors' analysis. Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Validity and Reliability Tests

The results of the validity and reliability tests presented in Table 2 indicate that the survey items are well-structured under three dimensions: Awareness, Academic, and Society. Factor loadings for all items exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.6, confirming that each item significantly contributes to its respective dimension. The eigenvalues for the Awareness (9.212), Academic (1.702), and Society (1.001) dimensions suggest that these factors meaningfully explain the variance in the data, with Awareness accounting for the largest share at 54.1%. Together, these findings support the construct validity of the model.

Reliability analysis further confirms the internal consistency of the items within each dimension. Cronbach's alpha values are 0.907 for Awareness, 0.901 for Academic, and 0.889 for Society, all of which are well above the recommended threshold of 0.7, confirming the reliability of the study instrument. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.923, and Bartlett's test of sphericity is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 5578.422$, $df = 136$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

Table 2

Validity and Reliability Tests

| Dimension | Item | Factor loading | Eigen values | % of variance | Cronbach's alpha |
|-----------|------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| Awareness | Awareness1 | .814 | 9.212 | 54.100 | 0.907 |
| | Awareness2 | .787 | | | |
| | Awareness3 | .678 | | | |
| | Awareness4 | .675 | | | |
| | Awareness5 | .826 | | | |
| | Awareness6 | .664 | | | |
| Academic | Academic1 | .652 | 1.702 | 10.009 | 0.901 |
| | Academic2 | .648 | | | |
| | Academic3 | .854 | | | |
| | Academic4 | .760 | | | |

| Dimension | Item | Factor loading | Eigen values | % of variance | Cronbach's alpha |
|-----------|-----------|----------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| | Academic5 | .759 | | | |
| | Academic6 | .694 | | | |
| | Academic7 | .581 | | | |
| Society | Society1 | .703 | 1.001 | 5.886 | 0.889 |
| | Society2 | .676 | | | |
| | Society3 | .718 | | | |
| | Society4 | .831 | | | |

Source: Primary data. Authors' analysis. Note: KMO = 0.923, $\chi^2 = 5578.422$, $df = 136$, $P < 0.001$

RESULTS

The Participants

The Table 3 presents a cross-tabulation of age groups by gender, showing that females consistently outnumber males across all age categories. The gender gap is most observed in the younger age groups, particularly among those aged 18–25, where females constitute 66.8% compared to 33.2% males. This trend continues in the 26–33 age group, with 65.1% females. In contrast, the older age groups (34–41 and 42 and above) show a more balanced distribution, though females still slightly outnumber males.

Table 3

Age Group and Gender Crosstabulation

| Age Group | Male (%) | Female (%) | Total (%) |
|--------------|----------|------------|-----------|
| 42 and above | 12(42.9) | 16(57.1) | 28(100) |
| 34-41 | 18(43.9) | 23(56.1) | 41(100) |
| 26-33 | 37(34.9) | 69(65.1) | 106(100) |
| 18-25 | 82(33.2) | 165(66.8) | 247(100) |

Source: Primary data. Authors' analysis.

Demographic Differences in Awareness of Islamic Tolerance

The Table 4 presents demographic differences in awareness of tolerance in Islam among 422 respondents, measured across gender, age, study level, and field of specialization. The findings show minimal differences in mean scores between males ($M = 4.7953$) and females ($M = 4.7741$), with a t -value of 0.515 and a p -value of 0.862, indicating no statistically significant gender difference. Similarly, age-related differences are small; the 34–41 age group had the highest mean awareness ($M = 4.8089$), while the 26–33 age group had the lowest ($M = 4.7469$), but the F -value (0.070) and p -value (0.429) show these variations are not statistically significant.

In terms of educational background, respondents with a Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) had the highest awareness ($M = 4.8085$), while those with pre-BA education had the lowest ($M = 4.6667$). Although this suggests a slight trend of increasing awareness with education, the F -value (1.419) and p -value (0.227) again indicate no significant difference. Regarding specialization, respondents from Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) reported a slightly higher mean ($M = 4.7876$) than those in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) group ($M = 4.7720$), but the t -value (-0.387) and p -value (0.567) confirm that this difference is not significant.

Table 4

Demographic Differences in Awareness of Islamic Tolerance (N = 422)

| Variable | N | Mean | SD | t or F value | p- value |
|-----------------|----------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Gender | | | | | |
| Male | 149 | 4.7953 | .39900 | 0.515 | 0.862 |
| Female | 273 | 4.7741 | .40832 | | |
| Age | | | | | |
| 42 and above | 28 | 4.8214 | .44428 | 0.070 | 0.429 |
| 34-41 | 41 | 4.8089 | .37186 | | |
| 26-33 | 106 | 4.7469 | .49078 | | |
| 18-25 | 247 | 4.7874 | .36398 | | |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-----|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| Study Level | | | | | |
| PhD | 17 | 4.6961 | .43794 | | |
| MA | 49 | 4.7347 | .44607 | | |
| BA | 17 | 4.7157 | .69163 | 1.419 | 0.227 |
| PGD | 309 | 4.8085 | .36351 | | |
| Pre-BA | 30 | 4.6667 | .49325 | | |
| Specialization | | | | | |
| STEM | 163 | 4.7720 | .43664 | -0.387 | 0.567 |
| HSS | 259 | 4.7876 | .38400 | | |

Source: Primary data. Authors' analysis.

Demographic Differences in Perceived Academic Tolerance

Table 5 presents the demographic differences in perceived academic tolerance measured by mean scores and analyzed using t-tests and ANOVA. Gender differences were statistically significant ($p = 0.019$), with males reporting slightly higher perceived academic tolerance ($M = 4.7191$) than females ($M = 4.6143$). However, when examining age groups, although slight differences in mean scores were observed, with the 34–41 age group reporting the highest perceived tolerance ($M = 4.7666$), the differences were not statistically significant ($p = 0.290$).

Similarly, variations by study level and specialization did not show statistically significant differences. Although PhD holders reported the lowest mean ($M = 4.4286$), and PGD students reported the highest ($M = 4.6856$), the overall differences in study level were not significant ($p = 0.061$). Differences in academic specialization (STEM vs. HSS) were also minimal and not statistically significant ($p = 0.130$).

Table 5

Demographic Differences in Perceived Academic Tolerance (N = 422)

| Variable | N | Mean | SD | t or F value | p- value |
|----------|-----|--------|--------|--------------|----------|
| Gender | | | | | |
| Male | 149 | 4.7191 | .46600 | 2.060 | 0.019 |
| Female | 273 | 4.6143 | .51649 | | |

| Variable | N | Mean | SD | t or F value | p- value |
|-----------------|----------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Age | | | | | |
| 42 and above | 28 | 4.7398 | .44340 | 1.254 | 0.290 |
| 34-41 | 41 | 4.7666 | .36527 | | |
| 26-33 | 106 | 4.6456 | .49614 | | |
| 18-25 | 247 | 4.6246 | .52700 | | |
| Study Level | | | | | |
| PhD | 17 | 4.4286 | .62678 | 2.266 | 0.061 |
| MA | 49 | 4.6152 | .48022 | | |
| BA | 17 | 4.6723 | .38054 | | |
| PGD | 309 | 4.6856 | .48973 | | |
| Pre-BA | 30 | 4.4714 | .58620 | | |
| Specialization | | | | | |
| STEM | 163 | 4.6740 | .47394 | 0.736 | 0.130 |
| HSS | 259 | 4.6371 | .51801 | | |

Source: Primary data. Authors' analysis.

Demographic Differences in Perceived Social Tolerance

Table 6 displays demographic differences in perceived social tolerance. Unlike the previous table on academic tolerance, none of the demographic factors showed statistically significant differences in perceived social tolerance. Gender differences, while slightly favoring males ($M = 4.7987$) over females ($M = 4.7564$), were not significant ($p = 0.165$). Age groups also demonstrated minimal variation, with the 42 and above age group reporting the highest perceived social tolerance ($M = 4.8214$), but with a non-significant p-value of 0.755.

Regarding study level, PGD participants had the highest mean score ($M = 4.7985$), while PhD holders again reported the lowest ($M = 4.6029$). However, this difference did not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.243$). Similarly, specialization in either STEM or HSS fields showed non-significant differences ($p = 0.262$), with HSS slightly higher in mean score.

Table 6

Demographic Differences in Perceived Social Tolerance (N = 422)

| Variable | N | Mean | SD | t or F value | p- value |
|-----------------------|-----|--------|--------|--------------|----------|
| Gender | | | | | |
| Male | 149 | 4.7987 | .43172 | .936 | .165 |
| Female | 273 | 4.7564 | .44937 | | |
| Age | | | | | |
| 42 and above | 28 | 4.8214 | .41865 | .397 | .755 |
| 34-41 | 41 | 4.8049 | .43486 | | |
| 26-33 | 106 | 4.7382 | .50283 | | |
| 18-25 | 247 | 4.7743 | .42101 | | |
| Study Level | | | | | |
| PhD | 17 | 4.6029 | .53076 | 1.370 | .243 |
| MA | 49 | 4.7245 | .43674 | | |
| BA | 17 | 4.7353 | .55531 | | |
| PGD | 309 | 4.7985 | .42362 | | |
| Pre_BA | 30 | 4.6833 | .51668 | | |
| Specialization | | | | | |
| STEM | 163 | 4.7577 | .45510 | -0.502 | 0.262 |
| HSS | 259 | 4.7799 | .43616 | | |

Source: Primary data. Authors’ analysis.

The Relationship Between Variables

The correlation matrix reveals strong and statistically significant relationships among the three variables: tolerance awareness, academic tolerance, and societal tolerance (see Table 7). Tolerance awareness is positively correlated with academic tolerance ($r = .651, p < .01$) and even more strongly with societal tolerance ($r = .731, p < .01$). Additionally, academic tolerance and societal tolerance are also strongly correlated ($r = .697, p < .01$).

Table 7

Correlation Matrix Between Variables

| Variable | a | b | c |
|------------------------|--------|---|---|
| a. Tolerance Awareness | 1 | | |
| b. Academic tolerance | .651** | 1 | |

| Variable | a | b | c |
|----------------------|--------|--------|---|
| c. Society tolerance | .731** | .697** | 1 |

Source: Primary data. Authors' analysis. Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Impact of Awareness on Perceived Academic and Social Tolerance

Table 8 illustrates the impact of tolerance awareness on perceived academic and social tolerance. This analysis is based on two models. In Model 1, tolerance awareness significantly predicts academic tolerance with a strong positive coefficient of 0.651 and a p-value less than .001. For Model 2, the result of the study demonstrates that tolerance awareness has a positive impact on perceived social tolerance, with a coefficient of 0.731 and a similarly significant p-value (<.001).

Table 8

Impact of tolerance awareness on perceived academic and social tolerance

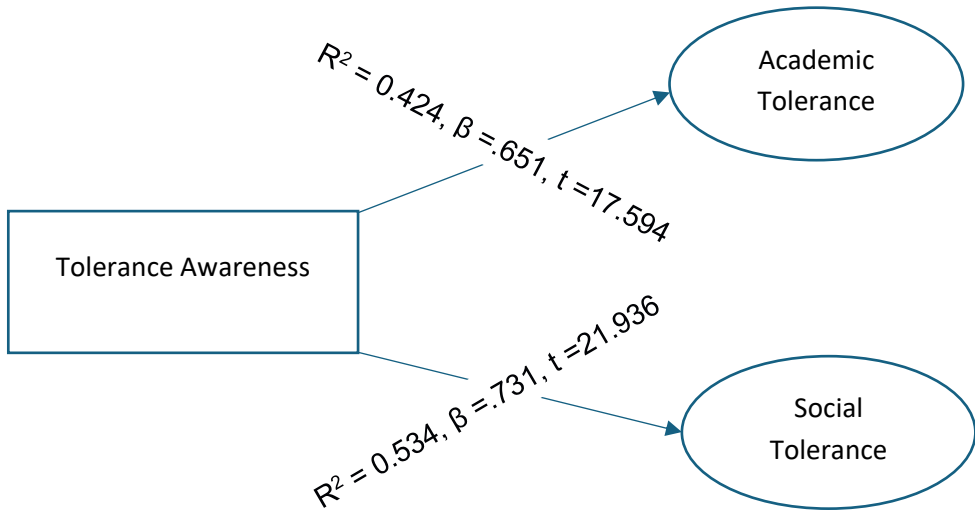
| Model | Dependent variable | Coefficient | p-value |
|-------|--------------------|-------------|---------|
| 1 | Academic Tolerance | 0.651 | <.001 |
| 2 | Social Tolerance | 0.731 | <.001 |

Source: Primary data. Authors' analysis. Note: Independent variable: Tolerance awareness.

Figure 2 represents the impact of tolerance awareness on perceived academic and social tolerance, as indicated by regression analysis. The figure shows two bars or lines corresponding to the strength of the relationships: one for academic tolerance and another for social tolerance. Tolerance awareness has a substantial positive impact on both outcomes, with a stronger effect on social tolerance (coefficient = 0.731) compared to academic tolerance (coefficient = 0.651). Both coefficients are statistically significant ($p < .001$), emphasizing the reliability of these effects.

Figure 2

Impact of Tolerance Awareness on Perceived Academic and Social Tolerance



Source: Primary data. Authors' analysis.

DISCUSSION

The current study investigates the impact of Islamic tolerance awareness on perceived academic and societal tolerance among university students in the UAE. The participants consisted of male and female students from different age groups, study levels, and programs. The findings indicate that there are no statistically significant demographic differences in awareness of Islamic tolerance among the respondents. The results of the study are in line with the previous studies that reported demographic factors such as ethnicity, religion, and gender make no significant difference on tolerance (Masruhah et al., 2017; Samho et al., 2021; Sulyman et al., 2024). Moreover, the findings confirm the first hypothesis one (H1) and suggests that a high and consistent level of awareness of Islamic tolerance among the participants with no significant demographic differences.

On the demographic differences of the perceived academic tolerance, the findings of the study indicate that, gender differences in perceived academic tolerance were statistically significant in favor of male participants as compared to the females. The results support previous studies (T. Kim & Kim, 2023; Settles & O'Connor, 2014) and suggest a modest gender-based disparity in how the academic environment is experienced. In contrast, age did not show a significant effect (OECD, 2024; Silver et al., 2021), indicating that age may not be a strong determinant of perceived academic tolerance. Differences based on study level approached significance, with PhD holders perceiving the lowest tolerance and Postgraduate Diploma students the highest. The findings are in line with the previous studies that reported the effect of academic level on tolerance (Campbell & Johnson, 2018; Lee, 2024). This suggests a potential trend worth further exploration. Meanwhile, academic specializations showed minimal variation and were not statistically significant. The findings reject partially the stated hypothesis two (H2) and suggest the influence of gender on the perceived academic tolerance among students.

On the perceived societal tolerance, the findings indicate that perceived societal tolerance among the participants is largely consistent across demographic variables, including gender, age, study level, and academic specialization. Although there were minor differences in mean scores, none of these differences were statistically significant. Similarly, variations in study level and academic specialization did not produce meaningful distinctions in perceived social tolerance. These results confirm the stated hypothesis three (H3) and suggest that, unlike academic tolerance, perceptions of societal tolerance are broadly uniform within this sample, with demographic factors playing little to no significant role in shaping these perceptions.

On the relationship among the variables, the findings highlight strong, statistically significant relationships in tolerance awareness,

academic tolerance, and societal tolerance, suggesting a tightly interconnected dynamic. The results of the study indicated that a higher tolerance awareness is associated with greater perceptions of both academic and societal tolerance, with the latter relationship being even more pronounced. In addition, the strong correlation between academic and societal tolerance implies that individuals tend to perceive these environments as tolerant environments.

The findings of the study revealed that increased tolerance awareness is associated with higher perceived academic tolerance. This suggests that individuals who are more conscious of tolerance are more likely to view their academic environments as inclusive and tolerant. This supports the idea that personal awareness of tolerance does not just reflect one's values but also shapes how welcoming or equitable they perceive their academic surroundings. The results of the study revealed a positive relationship between tolerance awareness and perceived societal tolerance. The findings revealed that awareness plays a crucial role in shaping broader societal perceptions. The results highlight the practical implication that promoting tolerance awareness may serve as a powerful tool in enhancing perceptions of inclusivity, not just in educational settings but also within society.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on tolerance, intercultural relations, and higher education by empirically demonstrating that Islamic tolerance awareness functions as a robust predictor of both academic and societal tolerance within a multicultural university context. By operationalizing Islamic tolerance awareness as a measurable construct, the study extends dominant models of tolerance and campus climate that have traditionally been grounded in secular or Western-centric frameworks. The findings support emerging theoretical perspectives that view moral and

religious value systems as integral components of intercultural competence and social perception, rather than as peripheral or inhibiting factors. In this regard, the study bridges Islamic ethical thought with sociological and educational theories of tolerance, offering a culturally inclusive analytical framework that enhances understanding of how moral cognition shapes academic interactions, social cohesion, and perceptions of inclusivity in diverse higher education environments.

In practical terms, the findings carry important implications for higher education policy and institutional practice, particularly in multicultural settings such as the UAE. The strong relationship between tolerance awareness and perceptions of academic and societal inclusivity suggests that universities can play an active role in fostering tolerant campus climates by integrating value-based education with intercultural pedagogy. Institutions may benefit from implementing structured programs that cultivate tolerance skills grounded in Islamic values while promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual respect. Furthermore, the observed gender differences in academic tolerance underscore the need for gender-sensitive institutional policies, mentoring initiatives, and inclusive teaching practices that address potential disparities in academic experience.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

Despite its theoretical and empirical contributions, this study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw causal inferences regarding the relationship between Islamic tolerance awareness and perceptions of academic and societal tolerance. While the findings demonstrate strong associations, longitudinal designs would be necessary to examine causal mechanisms and the development of tolerance awareness over time. Second, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce social desirability bias, particularly given the

normative prominence of tolerance discourse within the UAE context. Third, although the study identifies statistically significant gender differences in perceived academic tolerance, it does not directly measure structural or experiential factors, such as experiences of discrimination, perceptions of a “chilly climate,” or power asymmetries within academic spaces, that may underlie these differences. Finally, the study is situated within a single national and cultural context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other multicultural or Muslim-majority higher education systems.

Building on these limitations, several recommendations emerge for both practice and policy. Universities in the UAE may benefit from implementing structured tolerance-development programs grounded in Islamic ethical principles and intercultural pedagogy, aiming to translate value-based awareness into inclusive academic practices. The findings may also inform the design and refinement of campus climate policies and diversity and inclusion initiatives, ensuring that institutional strategies align with students lived experiences and perceptions of tolerance. Importantly, the observed gender differences in academic tolerance warrant targeted institutional attention, as they may reflect less favorable academic conditions for female student groups. Universities should therefore consider gender-sensitive interventions, mentoring structures, and participatory mechanisms that address perceived inequities and enhance academic belonging.

Future research should extend the present study in several directions. Longitudinal and experimental studies could examine the causal pathways linking religious tolerance awareness to academic and social outcomes, as well as the effectiveness of educational interventions designed to enhance tolerance skills. Cross-cultural comparative research across Muslim-majority and non-Muslim contexts would further clarify the extent to which the observed relationships are context-specific or generalizable across higher

education systems. Additionally, qualitative and mixed-method approaches could deepen understanding of the gendered dimensions of academic tolerance by exploring students lived experiences, perceptions of institutional power structures, and encounters with inclusion or exclusion.

CONCLUSION

The present study underscores the impact of Islamic tolerance awareness on academic and societal tolerance among university students in the UAE (Nafisi, 2018). Despite minor variations in mean scores, the results of the study indicate statistically no significant demographic differences in awareness of Islamic tolerance. This results reinforces the idea that tolerance is widely recognized and internalized among students in the UAE (Suwaidi, 2019). It also reflect the broader educational and cultural emphasis placed on these values in the UAE (Mazzucco & Alexander, 2023).

While societal tolerance perceptions appeared consistent across demographic categories, the study reveals notable gender differences in perceived academic tolerance, with male students reporting higher levels than their female counterparts. The differences in perceived tolerance across academic levels; particularly among PhD and postgraduate diploma students; point to potential underlying factors that merit deeper investigation.

The strong and statistically significant relationships among Islamic tolerance awareness, academic tolerance, and societal tolerance highlight the central role that awareness plays in shaping individuals' perceptions. The study confirms that higher levels of awareness contribute positively to perceptions of inclusivity and acceptance in both academic and social contexts. These findings offer valuable practical implications and suggest that enhancing awareness of Islamic tolerance could serve as a catalyst for promoting more

inclusive and cohesive environments. Ultimately, fostering tolerance education may not only support personal development but also strengthen the social cohesion within educational institutions and the wider society (Muhajir et al., 2025; Ghazali, 2016; Alhashmi et al., 2020; Aderibigbe et al., 2023).

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: I.I.M. & A.K.; Data curation: I.I.M. & A.K.; Formal analysis: I.I.M. & A.K.; Funding acquisition: I.I.M. & A.K.; Investigation: I.I.M. & A.K.; Methodology: I.I.M. & A.K.; Project administration: I.I.M. & A.K.; Resources: I.I.M. & A.K.; Software: I.I.M. & A.K.; Supervision: I.I.M. & A.K.; Validation: I.I.M. & A.K.; Visualization: I.I.M. & A.K.; Writing – original draft: I.I.M. & A.K.; Writing – review & editing: I.I.M. & A.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was approved by College of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Al Ain University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained before participants filled out the questionnaire for this study.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author due to privacy and ethical restrictions.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT and PaperPal to improve the clarity of the language and readability of the article. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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