



The Opinions of Theology Faculty Undergraduates and Graduates on Interdisciplinary Learning

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Abstract

Interdisciplinary learning improves cognitive skills and increases motivation for learning and teaching in higher education. Interdisciplinary education, which requires the collaboration of different disciplines, contributes to the development of students by integrating disciplinary knowledge and providing a multidimensional perspective. Thus, interdisciplinary education has become an alternative approach to discipline-centered education in higher education. Interdisciplinary learning is necessary for postmodern life because it eliminates the limitations of disciplinary education. The complex nature of the problems posed by postmodern life requires the collaboration of many disciplines. Current political, economic, social, religious, and legal issues are too complex to be solved from the perspective of a single discipline. Discipline-centered education may not be sufficient to provide solutions to current problems or to equip students with problem-solving skills. For this reason, this study reveals that interdisciplinary learning, which is increasing in higher education, can also be applied to higher religious education. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the outcomes of interdisciplinary learning in higher religious education through a sample training. In the academic year 2023/2024, an interdisciplinary training was conducted on the common problems of theology and other disciplines, and the results were revealed through the views of 16 participants. The research was conducted as a case study by using the qualitative research method, and the research data were coded under four themes: (1) need for interdisciplinary learning in higher religious education, (2) disciplines associated with higher religious education, (3) outcomes of interdisciplinary learning, and (4) suggestions for interdisciplinary education. According to the research findings, the participants believe that courses in higher religious education have interdisciplinary content, that interdisciplinary education is necessary in higher religious education, and that interdisciplinary learning contributes to personal and professional development. It is recommended that studies be carried out using alternative approaches to improve higher religious education.

Keywords

Religious Education; Higher Education; Higher Religious Education; Interdisciplinary Education; Interdisciplinary Learning

Highlights

- This study reveals the possibilities and results of interdisciplinary learning in higher religious education through exemplary training.
- The curricula of higher religious education can be offered with an interdisciplinary approach.
- This study searches the opinions of students and graduates of the Theology Faculty about the example of interdisciplinary education.
- The participants think that the courses in theological education have interdisciplinary contents.
- The participants believe that interdisciplinary learning will be beneficial for the personal and professional development of theology students.

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S. Development Goals

4 Quality Education

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İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencileri ve Mezunlarının Disiplinlerarası Öğrenme Hakkındaki Görüşleri

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Öz

Yüksek öğretimde disiplinlerarası öğrenme, bilişsel becerileri geliştiren aynı zamanda öğrenme ve öğretme motivasyonunu artıran bir yaklaşımdır. Çeşitli disiplinlerin iş birliğini gerektiren disiplinlerarası eğitim yaklaşımı disiplinler bilginin entegrasyonunu sağlaması ve çok yönlü bakış açısı kazandırması yönüyle öğrencilerin gelişimine katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu sebeple yüksek öğretimde disiplin merkezli eğitime alternatif olarak disiplinlerarası eğitim uygulamaları giderek artış göstermektedir. Disiplinlerarası öğrenme, disiplinler eğitimin sınırlılıklarını ortadan kaldırarak günümüz yaşamı için bir gereklilik halini almıştır. Postmodern yaşamın sebep olduğu sorunların karmaşık doğası, çok sayıda disiplinden yararlanmayı gerektirmektedir. Günümüzdeki siyasi, ekonomik, toplumsal, dini ve hukuki meseleler tek disiplinin bakış açısıyla çözülemeyecek kadar karmaşıktır. Disiplin merkezli eğitim güncel sorunlara çözüm getirmek ve öğrencilere problem çözme becerisi kazandırmakta yetersiz kalabilmektedir. Bu sebeple yüksek öğretimde artış gösteren disiplinlerarası eğitim yaklaşımının yüksek din öğretiminde de uygulanabileceğini temellendirmeye çalışan bu araştırmanın amacı yüksek din öğretiminde disiplinlerarası öğrenmenin sonuçlarını örnek bir eğitimle ortaya koymaktır. İlahiyat ve diğer disiplinlerin ortak problemleri üzerine 2023-2024 öğretim yılında İlahiyat fakültesi öğrencileri ve mezunlarına yönelik disiplinlerarası bir eğitim uygulaması gerçekleştirilmiş ve eğitimin sonuçları 16 katılımcının görüşleriyle tespit edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Çalışma nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan görüşme yöntemi ile gerçekleştirilmiş ve durum çalışması olarak desenlenmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları dört ana tema altında sunulmuştur: (1) Yüksek din öğretiminde disiplinlerarası öğrenme ihtiyacı, (2) ilahiyat eğitiminin ilişkili olduğu diğer disiplinler, (3) disiplinlerarası öğrenmenin sonuçları ve (4) disiplinlerarası eğitime ilişkin öneriler. Araştırmada katılımcıların yüksek din öğretiminde yer alan ders ya da ders içeriklerinin disiplinlerarası nitelikte olduğu, ilahiyat eğitiminde disiplinlerarası eğitimin gerekli olduğu, disiplinlerarası öğrenmenin kişisel ve mesleki gelişime katkı sağladığı yönünde görüş taşıdığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Araştırma sonunda, yüksek din öğretimini geliştirmeye yönelik alternatif yaklaşımların uygulanabilirliğini ortaya koyan benzer çalışmaların gerçekleştirilmesi önerilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Din Eğitimi; Yüksek Öğretim; Yüksek Din Öğretimi; Disiplinlerarası Eğitim; Disiplinlerarası Öğrenme.

Öne Çıkanlar

- Yüksek din öğretiminde disiplinlerarası öğrenmenin imkânı ve sonuçları örnek bir eğitimle ortaya konulmaktadır.
- Yüksek din öğretimi müfredatının disiplinlerarası yaklaşımla sunulabileceği savunulmaktadır.
- Disiplinlerarası eğitim örneği ile ilahiyat öğrencileri ve mezunlarının görüşlerine başvurulmuştur.
- Katılımcılar ilahiyat eğitiminde yer bulan derslerin disiplinlerarası içerikte olduğunu düşünmektedir.
- Katılımcılar disiplinlerarası öğrenmenin ilahiyat öğrencilerinin kişisel ve mesleki gelişimi için fayda sağlayacağını düşünmektedir.

Atıf Bilgisi

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S. Kalkınma Amaçları

4 Nitelikli Eğitim

Lisans

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Introduction

The concept of interdisciplinarity first appeared in the 1920s and has been found primarily in the social sciences since 1945.¹ Interdisciplinarity first began in scientific research and then spread to the field of education.² In this regard, interdisciplinarity is an educational and research paradigm that has emerged to solve complex problems that transcend the boundaries of a single discipline.³

The concept of interdisciplinarity is defined as an innovative learning and teaching model,⁴ an interactive teaching strategy,⁵ and curriculum change that develops learning skills and competencies. Interdisciplinarity combines knowledge from disciplines that are usually quite disparate, and the interdisciplinary approach is based on two ways: First, it involves having students gain a universal perspective by acquiring information from many fields rather than thinking from the perspective of a single discipline. Second, it recognizes that interdisciplinary knowledge has become a postmodern necessity for solving societal problems that cannot be understood from the perspective of a single discipline.⁶ In an interdisciplinary approach, each discipline evaluates a particular problem or an issue from its own perspective.⁷ This way, the intersecting dimensions of complex issues, especially social issues, become visible, and scientific information can be examined from a holistic perspective, eliminating the monopoly of any single discipline.⁸

The impact of globalization has made modern life constantly change, with information spreading and becoming increasingly integrated.⁹ Therefore, educational programs train people to respond to the needs of society and adapt to the current innovations. Societies resort to interdisciplinary approaches, which use the knowledge and experience of different disciplines to increase student motivation.¹⁰ However, interdisciplinarity is generally considered a research method in scientific studies in Türkiye.¹¹ Few studies have

¹ Bilal Toprak, "Geçmişimizi Doğru Anlamak: Din Bilimleri ve Arkeoloji Bağlamında Disiplinlerarası Çalışmaların Gerekliliği", ed. İbrahim Aşlamacı et al. (Uluslararası Yüksek Din Öğretimi Sempozyumu, Malatya: İnönü Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2019), 2/522.

² Rudite Andersone - Inate Helmane, "Interdisciplinary Education in Multicultural Environment", *Rural Environment Education Personality* 11 (2018), 30.

³ Vivek Shandas - Stephan Edward Brown, "An Empirical Assessment of Interdisciplinarity: Perspectives from Graduate Students and Program Administrators", *Innovative Higher Education* 41 (2016), 411.

⁴ Ramona Fernanda Ceriotti Toassi - Alzira Maria Baptista Lewgoy, "Integrated health practices I: An innovative experience through inter- -curricular integration and interdisciplinarity", *Communication Health Education* 20 (2016), 449.

⁵ Kudrin Alexei, "Liberal Arts and Sciences in the Russian University Education System", *National Research University Higher School of Economics* 4 (2015), 62.

⁶ Karri A. Holley, *Understanding Interdisciplinary Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education* (New Jersey: Wiley InterScience, 2009), 11-12.

⁷ Emrullah Ülgen, "Akademik Tefsir Araştırmalarında İnterdisipliner Yöntem ve Önemi", *Bingöl Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 5/10 (February 2017), 14.

⁸ Faik Kanatlı - Yunus Emre Çekici, "Nermi Uygur Penceresinden Okuma Sorunsalına Felsefi Bir Yaklaşım" (XI. Uluslararası Dil, Yazın, Deyişbilim Sempozyumu, Sakarya: Sakarya University, 2011), 275.

⁹ Andersone - Helmane, "Interdisciplinary Education in Multicultural Environment", 25.

¹⁰ Özden Yarımca, "Disiplinler Arası Yaklaşımına Dayalı Bir Durum Çalışması", *Akademik Bakış Dergisi* 25 (2011), 1.

¹¹ Ülgen, "Akademik Tefsir Araştırmalarında İnterdisipliner Yöntem ve Önemi"; Şebnem Aslan et al, "İslam'ın Kadın Liderliğe Bakışı: Disiplinlerarası Nitel Araştırma", *Iğdır Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8 (2015), 71-107; Hüsnü Ezber Bodur, "İnterdisipliner Etkileşim Çerçevesinde Siyer Yazıcılığı" (Siret Sempozyumu I, Ankara: TDV İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2012), 472-495.

advocated interdisciplinarity in religious education and have highlighted the need for interdisciplinary research.¹² This study differs from previous research by focusing on interdisciplinarity in higher religious education. This study aims to reveal the need for interdisciplinary learning in higher religious education by conducting interdisciplinary training.

1. Problem

Interdisciplinary education is a process in which students integrate information, techniques, tools, ideas, perspectives, concepts, and theories from two or more fields to explain a phenomenon, solve a problem, or produce a product.¹³ This approach addresses topics that require multiple viewpoints and dimensions in discussion.¹⁴ In this respect, interdisciplinary education is neither content nor subject but the process of synthesis through the interpretation of any topic, question, issue, or theme.¹⁵ The integration of disciplinary perspectives is not an end in itself but a means to an end. The goal and outcome of integration are to achieve an interdisciplinary perspective and foster cognitive development.¹⁶

Interdisciplinary learning develops four cognitive skills: (1) The acquisition of disciplinary views on a topic, (2) the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge that forms the basis of interdisciplinary problems, (3) the integration of divergent views among two or more disciplines, and (4) the use of integrated knowledge for cognitive development.¹⁷ Interdisciplinary education does not require one discipline to be superior to another or the use of other disciplines to support one discipline. Instead, it involves acquiring information and perspectives from different disciplines and contributing to cognitive development through their integration. In this regard, the interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning is much more effective than the traditional disciplinary approach for developing students' competencies and life skills.¹⁸

In the late 20th century, social scientists began to highlight interdisciplinarity as an important component of college education.¹⁹ In recent years, many universities that had a traditional structure in the past have made significant changes to their curricula. Interdisciplinarity has emerged as a solution when constructing a modern curriculum in higher education.²⁰ In this case, the interdisciplinary approach addresses the limitations of

¹² Mustafa Öcal, "Türkiye'de Din Eğitiminin Geleceği", *Din Eğitimi ve Sorunları*, ed. Mustafa Köylü (İstanbul: DEM Yayınları, 2022), 503-533; Nurullah Altaş, *Din Eğitimi* (Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2022), 261-262.

¹³ Anderson - Helmane, "Interdisciplinary Education in Multicultural Environment", 26.

¹⁴ Abd. Rahim Razaq et al., "Development of Islamic Education: The Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Approaches", *Al-hayat: Journal of Islamic Education (AJIE)* 4/1 (2020), 63.

¹⁵ Julia T. Klein, *Interdisciplinarity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press., 1990), 188.

¹⁶ Veronica Boix Mansilla, "Assessing student work at disciplinary crossroads", *Change* 37 (2005), 15-16.

¹⁷ Serkan Aslan - Birsan Aybek, "Multicultural Education on Tolerance and Critical Thinking Skill", *International Journal of Educational Methodology* 6/1 (2019), 44.

¹⁸ Shamba Chatterjee - Sucheta Das, "Interdisciplinary Education Trends in School and Higher Education: A Review", *Advances in Science Education*, ed. Hari Shankar Biswas et al. (Australia: Lincoln Research and Publishing Limited, 2021), 15.

¹⁹ Marilyn Stember, "Advancing the social sciences through the interdisciplinary enterprise", *The Social Science Journal* 28/1 (1991), 2-3.

²⁰ Victoria Millar, "Interdisciplinary Curriculum Reform in the Changing University", *Taeching in Higher Education* 21/4 (2016), 472.

traditional disciplinary programs and mitigates some of the disadvantages associated with specialization in a single discipline.²¹

Although the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach in higher education is evident, specific suggestions are needed for its implementation. Two models are proposed for interdisciplinary higher education. The first involves a faculty member familiar with integrated disciplines, while the second focuses on modern integration of disciplines. The second model is more commonly used to meet the need for interdisciplinary knowledge.²² Theologians typically specialize in a single discipline, which complicates the application of the first model. On the other hand, a few suggestions have been made how to implement the second model: The first involves academicians from non-theological disciplines teaching in higher religious education and, similarly, theologians teaching other disciplines. Second, the curriculum in faculties of theology could be restructured to include elective courses from other social science disciplines, allowing students to develop in areas of personal interest.²³ Another suggestion is that interdisciplinary problems should be addressed by at least one academician from a discipline other than theology, alongside theologians. This will require a fundamental overhaul of curricula and teaching methods in higher religious education. This need for renewal and restructuring has been emphasized in research on religious education.²⁴ Current problems should be integrated into the theological curriculum and addressed using Islamic references.²⁵ At the same time, new approaches should be applied instead of traditional teaching methods. The narrational teaching method, deeply rooted in Islamic educational tradition, is insufficient for contemporary conditions and may even threaten modern religious education.²⁶ This study suggests identifying courses in current higher religious education that belong to disciplines that can provide solutions to current problems and then presenting these topics with an interdisciplinary approach. The core characteristics of the interdisciplinary approach involve integrating different disciplines, addressing common problems discussed across fields, and ideally fostering collaborative research among scholars from various disciplines.²⁷ In this case, disciplines related to the problems of theological education need to be identified. Nearly 30 disciplines have been identified as related to theology, religious studies, and developing cognitive skills and

²¹ Nurullah Altaş, *Din Eğitimi* (Ankara: Nobel Yayınları, 2022), 261-262.

²² Holley, *Understanding Interdisciplinary Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education*, 6.

²³ Toprak, "Geçmişimizi Doğru Anlamak: Din Bilimleri ve Arkeoloji Bağlamında Disiplinlerarası Çalışmaların Gerekliliği", 2/526.

²⁴ Ramazan Buyrukçu, "İlahiyat Fakültelerinin Yeniden Yapılandırılması Problemi" (Türkiye'de Yüksek Din Eğitiminin Sorunları Yeniden Yapılanması ve Geleceği Sempozyumu, Isparta: Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 2004), 509-520; Cemal Tosun - Recai Doğan, "İlahiyat Fakültelerinin Yeniden Yapılanması Üzerine" (Türkiye'de Yüksek Din Eğitiminin Sorunları Yeniden Yapılanması ve Geleceği Sempozyumu, Isparta: SDÜ İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 2004), 487-507; Şakir Gözütok, "İlahiyat Fakülteleri için Alternatif Program" (Türkiye'de Yüksek Din Eğitiminin Sorunları Yeniden Yapılanması ve Geleceği Sempozyumu, Isparta: Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 2004), 559-566.

²⁵ Mustafa Köylü, "Çağdaş Bir Eğitim Yaklaşımı Olarak Aktif Eğitim Modeli (İlahiyat Fakültesi Örneği)" (Isparta: Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 2004), 33.

²⁶ Hakan Olgun - Şeyma Altın, "Din Araştırmalarında Disiplinlerarası Etkileşim: Kur'an'ın Anlaşılmasına Dinler Tarihi Perspektifli Yaklaşım", *Yüksek Din Öğretimi* (İstanbul: DEM Yayınları, 2022), 588.

²⁷ Holley, *Understanding Interdisciplinary Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education*, 4-5.

competencies.²⁸ Interdisciplinary education on common problems which are also subjects of related disciplines will be beneficial. Students will gain a deeper understanding of multiple disciplinary perspectives on the same topic, recognize the intersections or divergences, and develop new interdisciplinary insights. The intersection of disciplines on a shared topic facilitates intellectual maturation by enabling analysis, comparison, and confrontation of different perspectives.²⁹ The interdisciplinary approach focuses on a core theme or topic and allows students to make connections between seemingly unrelated fields (i.e., to acquire/organize information more personally).³⁰ Therefore, the same topic can be analyzed in depth from a disciplinary perspective, points of divergence or overlap between disciplines can be identified, and students can gain interdisciplinary knowledge and perspective.

2. Aim

The aim of this study is to reveal the need for interdisciplinary learning in higher religious education. To achieve this, the study implements an interdisciplinary education program and surveys the undergraduate learners' views on it. The content of the education comprises course topics from Islamic sciences that are taught in a discipline-centered manner in higher religious education. The issues within Islamic sciences are explored through consecutive or simultaneous lectures delivered by both theology academicians and scholars from non-theological disciplines. Due to the challenge of having two academicians lecture simultaneously in traditional theology education, the courses are designed to be consecutive. However, one course features the voluntary participation of two academics simultaneously. The disciplines and content of the interdisciplinary education are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Content of Interdisciplinary Education

Theological discipline	Non-theological discipline	Subject
Kalam	Psychology	Problem of good and evil
Hadith	Sociology	Sexual deviation
Quran Reading and Recitation	Music	Maqams
Islamic Law	Economy/finance	Stock Exchange
Sufism	Philosophy	Emergence of Sufism

At the end of the education program, participating students were asked to share their views on the interdisciplinary education they received. The research seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What are the participants' opinions on the need for interdisciplinary learning in higher religious education?
2. What are the participants' views on the outcomes of interdisciplinary learning in higher religious education?

²⁸ See. Quality Assurance Agency, *Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies* (Gloucester: The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2014), 13-14.

²⁹ Lana Ivanitskaya et al., "Interdisciplinary Learning: Process and Outcomes", *Innovative Higher Education* 27/2 (2002), 101

³⁰ Lana Ivanitskaya et al., "Interdisciplinary Learning: Process and Outcomes", *Innovative Higher Education* 27/2 (2002), 99.

3. Method

The method of the research is a case study, which falls under qualitative research designs. Case studies examine all factors (e.g. people, environment, processes) associated with a situation using a holistic approach focusing on how these factors influence and are influenced by the situation.³¹ This research is designed as a case study to explore how participants are impacted by interdisciplinary learning. It is based on a real educational setting that incorporates interdisciplinary learning. Case study analyzes a situation in depth in its real context.³²

Data was collected using focus group interview. The purpose of focus group interviews is to understand participants' thoughts and feelings about a topic, product, or service.³³ In this study, focus group interviews were employed to gain insights into participants' views on interdisciplinary learning. Ethics committee approval was obtained from the Social Sciences Ethics Committee of Necmettin Erbakan University.

3.1. Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 4th-year students from the Faculty of Theology at Necmettin Erbakan University, as well as graduates from the years 2022 and 2023. Participants were selected using the criterion sampling method, a purposive sampling method.³⁴ The criteria for inclusion required participants to have completed or be currently studying in their 4th year. This criterion ensures that participants have sufficient experience in theological education to evaluate the interdisciplinary education provided in the study.

Participants in the focus group interviews share a common experience related to the research topic.³⁵ Therefore, the study group was determined on a voluntary basis from the 20 individuals who had participated in the interdisciplinary education. A group size of 6-8 people is ideal for focus group interviews.³⁶ Consequently, two separate focus group interviews were conducted with 16 participants, eight in each group. The characteristics of the participants are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants' Characteristics

Variables	f
Gender	
Female	9
Male	7
Age	
22-32	13
33-43	2
44-54	1
High School	
Imam Hatip High School	12

³¹ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 73.

³² Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Designs and Methods* (Los Angeles: Sage Publication), 17.

³³ Ali Yıldırım - Hasan Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 2018), 158.

³⁴ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 122.

³⁵ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 158.

³⁶ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 164.

Anatolian High School	1
Health High School	1
Open Education High School	2
Classroom	
4th grade	9
Graduate	7
Total	16

3.2. Data Collection

A semi-structured interview form and a personal information form were used to collect research data. Semi-structured forms, which consist of open-ended questions, provide more in-depth data. The interviews were conducted at the Faculty of Theology and were recorded using a voice recorder. The recordings were subsequently transcribed by the researcher, and the data were prepared for analysis.

3.3. Data Analysis

The research data were analyzed using content analysis. The purpose of content analysis is to identify concepts and themes that can explain the data. To achieve this, the data must first be conceptualized, organized, and thematized.³⁷ The analysis involved identifying codes, deriving categories from these codes, and extracting themes from the categories. The NVivo10 analysis software was used for data analysis. The research data were coded under four main themes, with participant statements included in each theme. Male participants were coded as M1, M2, ...M7, and the female participants as F1, F2, ...F9.

To ensure the internal reliability of the study, the data were also analyzed by a second researcher to ensure the internal reliability of the study. In addition, participant characteristics, research environment, and the process of data analysis were explained in detail to ensure the external reliability of the research. The internal validity of the research was ensured by paying attention to the consistency of the findings and results and their compatibility with the theoretical framework. External validity pertains to the generalizability of results in similar situations. However, direct generalization is challenging in qualitative research due to varying social contexts. All stages of the qualitative research should be detailed for the reader to understand the generalizability of the findings.³⁸ Therefore, the stages of the research have been explained above.

4. Findings

The research findings are organized into four themes: Need for interdisciplinary learning in higher religious education, the disciplines associated with higher religious education, outcomes of interdisciplinary education, and suggestions for interdisciplinary education.

4.1. Need for Interdisciplinary Learning in Higher Religious Education

The research findings reveal that all the participants agree on the need for interdisciplinary knowledge and perspective in theological education. They highlighted

³⁷ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 242.

³⁸ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 271-272.

several reasons for this need, including the interdisciplinarity of religion, the secular understanding, the professional development of theologians, the complexity of daily life, and the strengthening of religious faith.

Table 3: Reasons for Interdisciplinary Learning in Higher Religious Education

Interdisciplinarity at the core of religion (f=4)	<p>“We always try to keep away from (non-theological) disciplines. However, they already exist in the religion itself and in the Quran and the Sunnah... They are at the center of religion, but we have removed them as if they were separate fields. We need to reunite them.” M3</p> <p>“A theologian should have interdisciplinary knowledge because our religion is completely interdisciplinary. Because our religion is also beyond science and Islam encompasses all sciences, we definitely need interdisciplinary education.” F1</p>
<p>The participants emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge within religion and expressed strong support for interdisciplinary religious education. They pointed out that the concept of interdisciplinarity is supported by references in the Quran and the Sunnah, which are foundational texts for religious education. The participants’ statements indicate that while interdisciplinary education facilitates the acquisition of diverse knowledge, it also offers additional perspectives beyond mere knowledge.</p>	
Responding to secular view (f=3)	<p>“The Tafsir scholar said, ‘You must understand something before you accept it.’ Even non-believers must understand something before they can accept it. Therefore, opening your mind to different areas is crucial.” F9</p> <p>“We will face not only believers but also non-believers. More unbelievers will ask us questions, because when we tell the believers ‘what is allowed and what isn’t, they say ‘okay’. Because unbelievers will ask ‘why?’, knowing not just the religious aspects, but also other would be better.” F8</p>
<p>The research findings indicate that individuals with a secular worldview tend to disregard religious references. Consequently, answers and solutions supported by verses and hadiths are often insufficient to persuade them. Instead, they find religious knowledge, which incorporates data from various disciplines, to be more satisfactory.</p>	
Self-improvement (f=4)	<p>“A theologian needs to have interdisciplinary knowledge. Just as tafsir is connected to Arabic, theology is also connected to other disciplines. We have also discussed with friends whether studying logic and philosophy is necessary and it is very necessary.” M5</p> <p>“Suppose a tafsir professor comes to us and explains Surah Ali Imran. Having another tafsir professor come and explain the same thing and make the same interpretations doesn’t do us any good. We should be able to make different expositions and modernize our knowledge by constantly improving ourselves.” M6</p>

Participants expressed that acquiring interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding would significantly contribute to both the personal and professional development of theologians. The emphasized that religious education requires active interaction among individuals and that religious knowledge must be updated to align with contemporary

conditions. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the necessity for theologians to have knowledge across various fields.

Complexity of daily life (f=2)	“Because the problems we face in daily life and society are the subjects of many fields, an interdisciplinary perspective is necessary for everyone. Questions, problems, and solutions do not refer to a single field.” F9
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Solving the problems of modern life necessitates the integration of multiple disciplines. Participants identified various crises and issues, including economic, political, moral, social, and health-related concerns.

Enhancing one’s own religious knowledge and belief (f=5)	“When an ordinary verse asks us to ‘look at the sky’, we just look at the sky and tell ourselves that ‘Allah created it’, but scientific researchers says that the deeper they look into the sky, the more evidence they find for Allah. I think that they impress believers even more with science.” F5 “Interdisciplinary knowledge is enriching not only for inviting non-Muslims to Islam, but also for Muslims. When we see that Islam intersects with other sciences beyond what we learn (in theological education), we are more satisfied.” F6
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Participants believe that interdisciplinary knowledge in religious education strengthens believers’ faith and structures religious understanding. They also noted that the integration of religious knowledge with other sciences positively impacts those studying theology.

4.2. Disciplines Associated with Higher Religious Education

Participants were asked about the disciplines associated with theological education. Their responses highlighted a range of sub-disciplines from the social sciences, natural sciences, and health sciences. Notably, all participants agreed on the necessity of incorporating knowledge from other disciplines and believed that interdisciplinary learning would greatly benefit religious education.

Table 4: **Disciplines Related to Higher Religious Education**

Astronomy (f=1)	“A theologian knows astronomy, namely the science of the heavens because it is called ‘Nujum’ (stars). Stars are used for finding direction. If you don’t know that, you can’t navigate or understand certain things.” M3
Medicine/health (f=6)	“Fiqh encompasses all aspects of life and should play a role in contemporary issues such as determining the type of medical procedures and the use of pesticides. However, Fiqh alone may not be sufficient to address these modern concerns comprehensively.” M5 “I think supporting fiqh with medicine, economics, and law is both relevant and essential, for these are encountered in daily life.” F2 “Medicine is a fundamental issue in Islamic law as well as IVF and organ donation...” M4
Sociology/Psychology (f=8)	“For example, we need to learn about psychology. If we become teachers, we might encounter psychological problems of learners in our classes. We need to know how to

	<p>approach them from a religious perspective. Therefore, we need to benefit from both religious studies and psychology.” M1</p> <p>“You also need to know sociology, the nature of humans and society. The East is not the same as the West, nor is the Black Sea region the same as Central Anatolia. When we talk to society about religious issues, we have to look at the social structure and unite the two.” M3</p>
Philosophy/Logic (f=4)	<p>“We definitely need philosophy. Theology, Sufism, and philosophy are interwoven sciences. Debates have been going on for a long time about which one is the source discipline. These are things we definitely need to learn.” F1</p> <p>“What we call tafsir is actually a productive activity, and so are hadiths. You need to have a strong ability to think. I think that philosophy and logic complement tafsir.” M5</p>
Veterinary (f=2)	<p>“Islamic law uses mathematics to calculate zakat. Islamic law also uses veterinary medicine, such as when making a sacrifice. Has the animal lost teeth or not? Is the animal sick or not?” M3</p>
Folklore (f=3)	<p>“I am interested in Anatolian culture and Turkish folk music. I have read many articles. I did not know there was such a discipline as folklore. It is directly related to us (theology). ... Even folk songs have religious motifs. Neşet Ertaş has a folk song called Mevlana. You have got to be blind not to see the Sufi influence in this poem.” M5</p>
Economy/finance (f=2)	<p>“I think it is both relevant and essential to support fiqh with medicine, economics and law as these are encountered in daily life.” F2</p>
Music (f=2)	<p>“The Holy Quran has direct reference to music. It has advice and encouragement from the Prophet... The effect of the call to prayer in the Suleymaniye Mosque is not the same as that in the mosque in this neighborhood.” M5</p>

The research findings show that the theology learners are aware of the contemporary issues and believe that merely teaching of religious knowledge is insufficient for effective religious education. As 4th-year undergraduate and graduate students, they demonstrate a solid grasp of their courses and course content. They recognize that religious topics and the curriculum of higher religious education are interconnected with other disciplines, particularly noting sociology and psychology are the two disciplines that the participants mentioned frequently. Although the curriculum includes courses on the psychology of religion and the sociology of religion, these courses are not perceived as adequately meeting students' needs.

4.3. Outcomes of Interdisciplinary Learning

Participants were asked about the positive and negative aspects of interdisciplinary theological education. None of the participants expressed a negative opinion on it. This indicates that interdisciplinary education has positively impacted students and is considered beneficial.

Table 5: Outcomes of Interdisciplinary Learning

Various perspective (f=5)	<p>“(With interdisciplinary education) We look at life from different perspectives. We don’t just stay only in our own field. We also see that other life exists out there.” M4</p> <p>“We do not live in a purely religious place. For example, we are not governed by a Sharia law where Islam prevails. That's also true of the whole world. ...That's why we need perspectives other than religion. For example, we learned about the stock market today. We had only looked at it from a religious perspective.” F1</p>
<p>One of the primary aims of interdisciplinary education is to enable students to acquire different perspectives. The participants’ statements support this conclusion. Integrating non-religious perspectives alongside a religion-centered understanding enhances the resolution of issues addressed in religious education.</p>	
Integration of various disciplinary knowledge (f=6)	<p>“A finance lecturer told us about the secular side of the issue.... We also listened to halal and haram aspects from the lecturer of Islamic law. It resembles how the upper and lower teeth complement each other. This had a great effect on me. If I had listened only to the finance lecturer, I would have been confused about if the stock market is permissible or how much of it is permissible?” If I had listened only to the Islamic jurist, I would have said, "Okay, the stock market is not halal, but what is the basis?" M5</p> <p>“I think that knowing only one aspect can be a great asset, both in terms of the satisfaction of the individual and in terms of filling in what’s missing in terms of the competence of learners. In (these) classes in which we have participated, we have clearly observed the ability to analyze and comprehend of the topics through different dimensions.” F3</p>
<p>Participants believed that interdisciplinary education could enhance their own cognitive development and their interlocutors to deliver religious education more effectively. The positive impact of this approach on students underscores the feasibility and necessity of incorporating interdisciplinary methods in theological education.</p>	
Improving theologians’ image (f=4)	<p>“Acquiring knowledge from various disciplines benefits us, but it benefits the people out there even more. The way our people look at a theologian, a hajji or hodja, has changed. It's not like how it used to be. Instead of attending a lecture by a theologian, they attend Dr. Salih Selman's lecture, and the hall is packed. But compared to a theologian, he has many shortcomings.” M4</p> <p>“Since we have an image of hodja in society, when you approach the subject of medicine after graduation, others are surprised... They appreciate you more, and they listen to you more. That's why we need to appeal to people from different backgrounds.” F8</p>

The findings of the study demonstrate that interdisciplinary education enhances the identity of a theologian. Participants noted that theologians who possess knowledge from

different disciplines are better equipped to engage with their interlocutors and believe that this broader expertise can help improve the often negative image of theologians.

Personal development (f=4)

“We do not just acquire knowledge in interdisciplinary education. For example, if I learn about finance, I can run my own finance-related business. I can develop myself in this field or if we learn psychology, we can deal with people better. Human psychology has more advanced stages.” F1
 “I think the ability to look at issues from different perspectives is one of the factors that contribute to human development. From this point of view, I think having lecture by two experts from different disciplines has contributed to our self-development by providing us with different perspectives.” M7

Interdisciplinary education not only aids in the acquisition of knowledge but also fosters personal development. In social life and in the contemporary world in particular, most skills require insights from multiple disciplines. Recognizing this, participants believe that interdisciplinary education can enhance their ability to engage effectively with others.

Creating motivation and excitement (f=4)

“The Quran lecturer told us about the maqams and the effect of the morning and evening adhan recited with these maqams. We have been told these things for years, so okay, we know them. However, having the music teacher explain the same topic to us was completely different. I have never experienced such an impressive lecture...” F5
 “Th theology faculty has an intense curriculum. We learned a lot quickly, but unfortunately, many of our questions that came up while learning were sometimes limited to note taking. When considering that some of these (theology courses) are related to other disciplines, I have seen that such education can answer the questions that come to minds... I believe that this situation eases the fatigue in the learning process.” F2

4.4. Suggestions for Interdisciplinary Education

Participants were asked what they would suggest for an interdisciplinary theological education, and the corresponding data were coded as academicians, teaching method, learning environment, and content.

Table 6: Suggestions for Interdisciplinary Education

Academics	Attitude (f=2) Privacy of religious view (f=1)	“The professor’s attitude is also important in an interdisciplinary course. A theologian should also know how to joke and draw from real life examples. They should not be like the clergy. I think we should abandon the idea of an ordinary theologian having a stoic face. Such lectures are already very fast-paced.” M1 “I think it would be more effective if the lecturers of other disciplines taught the lesson regardless of their religious views... Having a neutral teacher is
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better for drawing attention. They may not always have the same attitude. However, I think this is an effective way to draw attention from the other side.” M4

Interaction between learners and teachers is crucial in interdisciplinary education. However, participants criticized the persistence of traditional authoritarian attitudes in theological education, even within interdisciplinary settings. Additionally, a non-theological expert’s expression of personal religious views was not well received by participants. This reaction may stem from the expectation that interdisciplinary education should provide diverse perspectives that are not centered solely on religion.

Teaching method	<p>Active learning/teaching (f=3)</p> <p>“Students should be allowed to speak in interdisciplinary education. The instructor can explain, but I should be able to say what I think, and maybe the instructor’s answer will change my mind. Both students and instructor should be active. If the instructor is active and the students are passive, nothing happens except the instructor imparting knowledge.” M3</p> <p>Simultaneous teaching (f=3)</p> <p>“I think it is more correct for two lecturers to teach at the same time in interdisciplinary education instead of teaching separately (one after the other).” M1</p>
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The participants noted that traditional teaching methods are unsuitable for interdisciplinary education. The lecture method, typically used in faculties of theology, often involves a one-way transmission of knowledge that limits active learning, critical engagement, and interaction -key components of effective interdisciplinary education.

To illustrate how interdisciplinary education can be experienced, the study included a single lecture course where two professionals taught simultaneously. However, this approach may be challenging within the traditional theological framework. Consequently, the remaining lectures were organized as consecutive sessions. Participants found the simultaneous lectures to be more effective, as they facilitated better integration of perspectives. Conversely, when lectures were separated, even with a common theme, the study observed that boundaries between disciplines remained blurred. This highlights an important consideration for interdisciplinary education.

Content (f=5)	<p>“If you don’t include a solid theological component in interdisciplinary education, the information will be meaningless and not fit from this perspective. The mind may focus on that side and shift. For example, let’s say that education is given in the field of psychology. If the theological aspect is not provided well, the non-theological aspect might make more sense.” F1</p>
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“Religion and science are said to not be in conflict, but when we say these things, it seems like we are putting science first. We should not miss this point. Let us make a connection between religion and science but not emphasize science over religion.” M4

Participants believe that theological disciplines should be given more emphasis in interdisciplinary theological education. However, interdisciplinary education aims to balance and integrate multiple disciplines without favoring one over another. This expectation may stem from the participants’ four years of experience in disciplinary theological education and their strong religious sensitivity.

Learning environment (f=4)

“Learners and teachers are afraid that co-education in theological teaching will eliminate the privacy. However, I think the privacy will be eliminated regardless. Gay students at Imam Hatip Schools and the LGBT we learned about yesterday are examples of this. The lessons should be taught in a mixed environment. Male and female students can continue their education in the same environment with respect.” F6
“We are discussing these topics very well now, boys and girls together. Everyone knows their boundaries. I can understand it very well: Sometimes men's perspectives are quite different from women's, so different data can come up regarding the same topic... Both men's and women's issues can be easily discussed in mixed environments.” F5

The suggestion for co-education in interdisciplinary education, proposed by female students, is a noteworthy finding in the study. This indicates that female students do not have concerns about privacy in a co-educational setting. Moreover, the participation of both male and female students in the same class has proven beneficial for observing and integrating diverse perspectives.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study conducted an exemplary interdisciplinary education involving five distinct theological disciplines to show the outcomes of interdisciplinary learning in higher religious education. Participants’ opinions on the outcomes of interdisciplinary education were surveyed. The findings indicate that all participants considered interdisciplinary education both necessary and beneficial. This aligns with existing literature, which also emphasizes the necessity of interdisciplinarity in religious education³⁹ and advocates for the adoption of interdisciplinary approach.⁴⁰

Participants highlighted several reasons for the need for interdisciplinary education in theology faculties. One key reason is the inherent interdisciplinarity within religion itself,

³⁹ Altaş, *Din Eğitimi*, 2022, 261.

⁴⁰ Kate Adams, “The concept of the child through a spiritual lens: implications for interdisciplinary approaches and Religious Education”, *Journal of Religious Education* 65/5 (2017), 81-93; Nigel Fancourt - Liam Guilfoyle, “Interdisciplinary Perspective-taking within Argumentation: Students’ Strategies Across Science and Religious Education”, *Journal of Religious Education* 70 (2022), 1-23; Stephen McKinney et al., “Searching for Meaning – Science and Religious Education Teachers collaborating in interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning”, *Scottish Educational Review* 46/1 (2014), 32-47; Razaq et al., “Development of Islamic Education: The Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Approaches”.

which supports the need for integrating multiple disciplines in religious education. This aligns with findings from other studies that also emphasize the role of interdisciplinarity in religion.⁴¹ Another significant reason is the complexity of daily life. Various studies suggest addressing the complexities of modern life necessitates the collaboration of different disciplines.⁴² This approach help students develop critical thinking skills to identify and solve real-world problems.⁴³ Additionally, participants justified the need for interdisciplinary religious education by arguing how it provides answers for those with secular views, contributes to professional development, and increases self-confidence. This view is supported by other research, which has shown that interdisciplinary education in higher education settings contributes positively to the interlocutors' professional development.⁴⁴

Participants noted that theological education is interconnected with a range of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, logic, sociology, medicine, law, economics, and astronomy. Literature suggests that integrating social science disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, and social anthropology can enhance the study of siyar (the life of Prophet Mohammed).⁴⁵ Similarly, history, psychology, and sociology are seen as valuable for enriching the science of tafsir (interpretation of the Quran) both in terms of content and methodology.⁴⁶ Other studies have revealed the relationship which theology has with the natural sciences,⁴⁷ psychology,⁴⁸ and ecology⁴⁹. Additionally, the course of religious education within the theological programs is recognized as inherently interdisciplinary.⁵⁰

Data on the results of interdisciplinary education show that it provides students with new perspectives and facilitates the integration of knowledge from various disciplines. Research shows that acquiring an interdisciplinary perspective and achieving cognitive development are key outcomes of such education. Interdisciplinary education aids in analyzing, synthesizing, and integrating the connection among disciplines.⁵¹ Studies have found that students taught using an interdisciplinary approach tend to perform better on exams that test both knowledge and critical

⁴¹ William K. Kay - Leslie E. Francis, "The Seamless Robe: Interdisciplinary Enquiry in Religious Education", *British Journal of Religious Education* 7/2 (1985), 65-66.

⁴² Brinia Vasiliki et al., "A New Teaching Method for Teaching Economics in Secondary Education", *International Organization of Scientific Research Journal of Research & Method in Education* 6/2 (2016), 86.

⁴³ Hilary Staples, "The Integration of Biomimicry as a Solution-Oriented Approach to the Environmental Science Curriculum for High School Students", *Online Submission* (01 Ocak 2005), 16.

⁴⁴ Ronica N. Rooks et al., "Co-teaching Two Interdisciplinary Courses in Higher Education", *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 16/2 (2022), 2.

⁴⁵ Bodur, "İnterdisipliner Etkileşim Çerçevesinde Siyer Yazıcılığı", 472.

⁴⁶ Ülgen, "Akademik Tefsir Araştırmalarında İnterdisipliner Yöntem ve Önemi", 13.

⁴⁷ Raymond R. Hausoul, "Theology and Cosmology: A Call for Interdisciplinary Enrichment", *Zygon* 54/2 (2019), 324-336.

⁴⁸ Paul M. Kaplick et al., "An Interdisciplinary Framework for Islamic Cognitive Theories", *Zygon* 54/1 (2019), 66-85.

⁴⁹ Gregory E. Hitzhusen - Mary Evelyn Tucker, "The potential of religion for Earth Stewardship", *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 11/7 (2013), 368-376.

⁵⁰ Aslıhan Kuşçuoğlu - Cemal Tosun, "İlahiyat Eğitiminde Disiplinlerin Amaç ve Muhtevaları: Akademisyen Görüşlerinin Nitel Bir Analizi", *EskiYeni* 52 (2024), 397.

⁵¹ Boix Mansilla, "Assessing student work at disciplinary crossroads", 15-16.

thinking skills.⁵² Related studies reveal that theology learners often have low levels of critical thinking dispositions⁵³ and medium levels of information literacy.⁵⁴ These findings support the need for interdisciplinary learning.

Another finding of this study is that interdisciplinary education contributes to personal development. A similar study with students who underwent interdisciplinary education concluded that it positively impacts not only learning but also personal growth. This includes enhancing tolerance, cooperation, and leadership skills,⁵⁵ as well as improving communication abilities.⁵⁶ Additionally, interdisciplinary education was found to stimulate motivation and enthusiasm among students. Another study showed that interdisciplinary education can better motivate students.⁵⁷ Furthermore, interdisciplinary religious education also helps improve the public perception of theologians.

Within the scope of the research, the participants made suggestions based on their experience with interdisciplinary education. One key suggestion is that interdisciplinary theological education should be interactive and critical. Other studies have supported this finding by indicating that religious education should be critical, questioning, and interactive.⁵⁸ Another suggestion from the participants was to implement interdisciplinary education through simultaneous teaching of different disciplines within the same course, rather than through sequential courses. Holley supports this approach, suggesting that collaborative participation by researchers from different disciplines is a specific practice of interdisciplinary education, though not always implemented.⁵⁹ Participants also offered suggestions regarding academicians, teaching methods, content, and learning environment. Another study supported this finding by revealing how students who drop out of school in higher religious education have difficulty adapting to the course content and teaching styles of academicians.⁶⁰ The participants' suggestions that other disciplines should support theology in interdisciplinary theological education and that religious knowledge should always take precedence contradict the nature of interdisciplinary education but are seen as a result of the discipline-centered religious education the participants have been receiving and their religious sensitivity they possess. Additionally, the reference to co-

⁵² Casey Jones, "Interdisciplinary Approach - Advantages, Disadvantages, and the Future Benefits of Interdisciplinary Studies", *ESSAI* 7 (2009), 78.

⁵³ İrfan Erdoğan, "Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi Öğretmen Adaylarının Eleştirel Düşünme Eğilim Düzeylerinin İncelenmesi", *Marife Dini Araştırmalar Dergisi* 15/2 (2015) 339.

⁵⁴ İpek, Fatih - Mustafa Tavukçuoğlu, "Yüksek Din Öğrenimi Gören Öğrencilerin Bilgi Okuryazarlığı ve Epistemolojik İnanç Düzeyleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma", *Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 49 (2020) 292.

⁵⁵ Susan J. Boyer - Penny A. Bishop, "Young Adolescent Voices: Students' Perceptions of Interdisciplinary Teaming", *Research in Middle Level Education Online* 28/1 (2004), 1-6.

⁵⁶ Andersone - Helmane, "Interdisciplinary Education in Multicultural Environment", 26; Jones, "Interdisciplinary Approach - Advantages, Disadvantages, and the Future Benefits of Interdisciplinary Studies", 80.

⁵⁷ Katrine Lindvig - Lars Ulriksen, "Different, Difficult, and Local: A Review of Interdisciplinary Teaching Activities", *The Review of Higher Education* 43/2 (2019), 711.

⁵⁸ Rob Freathy et al., "Pedagogical Bricoleurs and Bricolage Researchers: The case of Religious Education", *British Journal of Educational Studies* (2017), 1; Oduntan Jawoniyi, "Religious Education, Critical Thinking, Rational Autonomy, and the Child's Right to an Open Future", *Religion & Education* 42/1 (2015), 35.

⁵⁹ Holley, *Understanding Interdisciplinary Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education*, 4-5.

⁶⁰ Ali Baltacı, "Yüksek Din Öğretiminde Okul Terki", *Marife Dini Araştırmalar Dergisi* 19/2 (2019), 611.

education was notable, although it is not directly related to interdisciplinary education. The majority of theology learners who had participated in another study were also found to favor co-education.⁶¹

In conclusion, the study highlights the evident need for alternative approaches in higher religious education. By incorporating the perspectives of those directly involved in theological education, this research underscores the feasibility, necessity, and benefits of interdisciplinary learning. The findings demonstrate that interdisciplinary learning is both necessary and advantageous in the context of higher religious education. The results are expected to contribute significantly to the field of religious education by emphasizing the need for restructuring traditional methods and exploring alternative approaches.

The study advocates for practical and comprehensive research in religious education that employs interdisciplinary methods and various research approaches. This will help illustrate the outcomes of interdisciplinary education more effectively and support the development of innovative educational practices.

⁶¹ Muhammed Esad Altıntaş, "Yüksek Din Öğretiminde Karma ya da Tek Cinsiyete Dayalı Eğitim Üzerine Nitel Bir Araştırma", *Hitit Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 17/34 (2018), 373-406.

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