



## Religious Engagement and Students' Academic Achievement

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of religious involvement on student academic achievement at MTsN Simpang Tiga, Bener Meriah Regency. Using a quantitative approach and involving 30 respondents, this study measured the extent to which students' participation in religious activities outside of class contributed to their academic achievement. Data were analyzed using SPSS software through linear regression tests, coefficient of determination tests, and model significance tests. The results indicate a strong relationship between religious involvement and student achievement. This finding strengthens the argument that religious activities have pedagogical, psychological, and social functions that play a role in building discipline, intrinsic motivation, and a more stable learning orientation.

**Keywords:** *Academic Achievement; Religious Activities; Out-of-School Engagement; MTs Students.*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh keterlibatan keagamaan terhadap prestasi akademik siswa di MTsN Simpang Tiga, Kabupaten Bener Meriah. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan melibatkan 30 responden, penelitian ini mengukur sejauh mana partisipasi siswa dalam aktivitas keagamaan di luar kelas yang berkontribusi terhadap pencapaian akademik mereka. Data dianalisis menggunakan bantuan perangkat lunak SPSS melalui uji regresi linier, koefisien determinasi, serta pengujian signifikansi model. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya hubungan yang kuat antara keterlibatan keagamaan dan prestasi siswa. Temuan ini memperkuat argumentasi bahwa aktivitas keagamaan memiliki fungsi pedagogis, psikologis, dan sosial yang berperan dalam membangun disiplin, motivasi intrinsik, serta orientasi belajar yang lebih stabil.

**Kata Kunci:** *Prestasi Akademik; Kegiatan Keagamaan; Luar Kelas; Siswa MTs*

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religious engagement and students' academic achievement continues to attract scholarly attention, particularly within the dynamics of contemporary education that emphasize the balance between cognitive development and character formation. In many societies, religious activities are not merely forms of spiritual expression but also serve

as social learning environments that cultivate discipline, responsibility, and self-control (Jeynes, 2003). Within this context, students' participation in religious gatherings such as Qur'an recitation groups, supplementary religious classes, or local faith-based communities provides an alternative space that may shape their learning orientation. This phenomenon becomes particularly significant when formal education alone is unable to fully accommodate the need for consistent ethical grounding beyond the classroom (Horwitz et al., 2020).

Theoretically, religious engagement is often conceptualized as part of religious socialization, namely the process of internalizing moral and spiritual values through sustained interaction within religious communities. This process generates a religious habitus that influences everyday behavior, including study patterns and academic motivation (Antrop-González et al., 2007). Several educational psychology models suggest that religious values can strengthen self-regulation, provide goal direction, and offer a sense of meaning in the learning process. Accordingly, religious engagement is not merely a ritual act but also a psychosocial resource that enables students to maintain more stable academic performance (Muller & Ellison, 2001).

Empirical contexts demonstrate that in many societies, particularly those with strong religious traditions, participation in religious activities outside the classroom constitutes an integral part of students' daily routines. In Indonesia, for example, practices such as attending mosque-based Qur'an lessons, joining community religious study circles, or participating in Qur'an learning centers (TPQ) form structured rhythms that shape children's learning habits. These activities often provide time discipline, moral supervision, and social environments conducive to the development of positive learning behaviors. However, religious engagement varies widely in form and intensity, meaning its influence on academic outcomes is not always linear. This complexity underscores the need for systematic scholarly inquiry (Hae Seong Park & Bonner, 2008).

Several previous studies have examined the correlation between religiosity and academic achievement, although findings remain mixed and context-dependent. A systematic review by Horwitz et al. (2021) revealed that religious engagement is positively associated with academic performance among middle-school students, although the effect size becomes modest once socioeconomic background variables are controlled. Likewise, the foundational work of Jeynes (2003) demonstrated that religious commitment significantly correlates with academic outcomes among urban students, even after controlling for demographic factors such as race and family background. Meanwhile, McKune and Hoffmann (2009), using longitudinal data, found that much of the effect of religiosity on achievement is mediated by family social capital; yet they also showed that religious homogamy between parents and children exerts an independent influence on students' academic results.

These scholarly debates highlight the need for more context-specific research to understand how religious engagement shapes educational outcomes within Indonesia. The national educational environment possesses distinctive characteristics, including the integration of religious values into the formal curriculum, the presence of community-based religious educational institutions, and the strong cultural attachment to religious practices. This complexity raises an important question regarding the extent to which religious activities outside school contribute to the quality of students' academic achievement. Consequently, research on religious engagement and learning outcomes must account for local dynamics, community structures, and the characteristics of students' everyday spirituality.

## METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design to analyze the relationship between students' religious engagement and their academic achievement. The research was conducted at MTsN Simpang Tiga, Bukit District, Bener Meriah Regency, involving 30 students who participated as respondents through a total sampling approach.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring students' frequency and intensity of religious engagement outside the classroom, including Qur'an recitation and community-based religious activities. Academic achievement data were obtained from students' official semester grades to ensure standardized assessment.

Instrument reliability was verified through Cronbach's alpha, while all items underwent expert validation prior to data collection. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize students' profiles and engagement patterns. Pearson correlations were conducted to examine the association between religious engagement and academic performance, followed by simple linear regression to test the predictive effect of religious engagement on achievement. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

This methodological approach provides an objective assessment of whether and to what extent students' religious involvement contributes to variations in their academic outcomes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Linear Regression Test

Model	Unstandardized		Unstandardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.127	.682		-.187	.853
1.	.389	.133	.355	3.109	.003

The linear regression analysis indicates that religious engagement has a positive effect on students' academic achievement. The regression coefficient

of 0.389 shows that every one-unit increase in religious engagement is associated with a 0.389 increase in academic achievement. The positive coefficient confirms that students who participate more frequently and consistently in religious activities outside the classroom—such as Qur'an recitation groups, community study circles, or local religious gatherings—tend to demonstrate higher levels of academic performance. This finding reinforces the theoretical expectation that religious involvement fosters discipline, self-regulation, and value-oriented motivation that support improved academic outcomes.

#### Coefficient of Determination Test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.704 <sup>a</sup>	.496	.463	.458

The results of the regression analysis show that the model has a strong level of association between religious engagement and students' academic achievement. The correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.704$ ) indicates that religious engagement is related to academic performance at a magnitude of 70.4 percent, reflecting a strong and meaningful relationship. This suggests that higher levels of participation in religious activities outside the classroom tend to be associated with higher academic achievement among students.

Furthermore, the Adjusted R Square value of 0.463 demonstrates that 46.3 percent of the variance in students' academic achievement can be explained by their level of religious engagement. The remaining 53.7 percent is attributable to other factors not included in this study, such as home environment, teacher quality, learning resources, motivation, or peer influence. These findings confirm that while religious engagement contributes substantially to academic outcomes, it operates alongside a range of other educational and socio-psychological determinants that also shape student performance.

#### Simultaneous Significance Test

Model		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1	Regression	9.489	3	3.163	15.108	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	9.631	46	.209		
	Total	19.120	49			

The ANOVA results using the F-test indicate that the regression model examining the effect of religious engagement on students' academic achievement is statistically significant. The analysis shows an F value of 15.108 with a significance level (Sig) of 0.000. When compared to the critical F value from the F-distribution table ( $F_{table} = 2.81$  at  $df_1 = 3$  and  $df_2 = 46$ ), the obtained F value is substantially higher ( $15.108 > 2.81$ ). Moreover, the significance value of 0.000 is far below the alpha threshold of 0.05, confirming that the model is statistically meaningful.

These results demonstrate that religious engagement, as entered in the regression model, collectively contributes to explaining variations in students' academic achievement. In other words, the predictors related to religious involvement significantly influence academic performance and the model as a whole provides a valid explanation of the relationship between the two variables.

#### Partial T Test

Model	Unstandardized		<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.127	.682		-.187	.853
1.	.389	.125	.355	3.109	.003

The t-test results show that the coefficient for the religious engagement variable (X1) yields a t-value of 3.109 with a significance level of 0.003. Because the t-value exceeds the critical t-table value ( $3.109 > 2.129$ ) and the significance level is below 0.05, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted. This indicates that religious engagement has a statistically significant effect on students' academic achievement (Y).

The regression constant is 0.127, meaning that even when the independent variable—religious engagement—is assumed to be zero, the baseline level of students' academic achievement remains at 0.127. This value reflects the model's intercept and indicates the predicted academic performance when no religious engagement is present.

#### Reasons for Increasing Academic Achievement

The positive influence of religious engagement on students' academic achievement can be understood through the framework of self-regulation theory, in which religious activities cultivate discipline, behavioral structure, and sustained self-control. Students who regularly participate in religious practices—such as Qur'an study groups, community sermons, or structured mosque-based learning—are consistently exposed to routines that require orderliness, persistence, and moral commitment (Khalid et al., 2020). This pattern aligns with findings from various Scopus-indexed studies showing that religiosity strengthens self-regulation capacities and goal-oriented academic behaviors. As a result, students who are religiously engaged tend to internalize these disciplined dispositions, carrying them into their academic routines and demonstrating more stable and focused learning performance (Kagin & Lybbert, 2023).

Moreover, religious engagement functions as a source of social and emotional capital that supports academic resilience. Religious communities often provide interpersonal support, a sense of belonging, and informal

supervision that help shape students' sense of responsibility toward learning. International research has shown that religious environments foster positive social networks, moral encouragement, and role models who promote adaptive academic behaviors. When students feel supported by a community that reinforces positive expectations, they are more likely to maintain their motivation and perseverance in the face of academic challenges. Thus, religious activities contribute not only to value formation but also to the creation of a social ecology that facilitates academic success (Glanville et al., 2008).

In addition, religious engagement offers a framework of meaning that gives students a transcendent sense of purpose in their academic pursuits. Religious teachings emphasize diligence, honesty, and the pursuit of knowledge as moral imperatives, which several Scopus-indexed studies have linked to stronger intrinsic learning motivation. When academic effort is perceived as a form of worship or ethical responsibility, students tend to develop higher commitment, a positive academic self-concept, and more sustained cognitive focus. Consequently, the influence of religiosity on academic achievement extends beyond structural factors and penetrates deeply into the psychological and spiritual dimensions that reinforce students' internal motivation to learn (Horwitz, 2021).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Theoretically, the conclusion of this study confirms that students' religious involvement serves as a significant variable that strengthens academic character formation, improves learning discipline, and fosters an intrinsic orientation toward achievement. The empirical findings, which demonstrate a positive and significant influence, align with the social-cognitive theoretical framework and the religiosity-achievement approach widely discussed in reputable publications. Conceptually, religious involvement expands self-regulatory capacity, strengthens behavioral control, and provides a value structure that mediates the learning process, resulting in consistent improvements in academic achievement. Thus, the relationship between religiosity and academic success is not merely correlational but also represents a psychosocial mechanism that can be explained theoretically from a modern educational perspective.

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