A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SHAH ALAM

Kajian Awal Mengenai Hubungan antara Religiositi dan Pencapaian Akademik dalam Kalangan Pelajar Sekolah Menengah di Shah Alam

[1]*Khalidah Adibah Abu Zarim,* [2]*Nabihah Husna Razali, &* [3]*Arifin Mamat*
[1,2,3,]*Kulliyyah of Education (KOED), International Islamic University Malaysia*

Corresponding author: drarifin@iium.edu.my

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ABSTRACT

Academic performance among secondary school students is increasingly shaped not only by cognitive and psychological factors but also by spiritual and moral dimensions that remain underexplored in contemporary educational research, particularly in urban Malaysian school contexts, where adolescents face growing challenges related to moral deterioration, digital distractions, and declining motivation to learn. This preliminary study examines the relationship between religiosity and academic performance among secondary school students in Shah Alam, Malaysia. Employing a quantitative survey design, data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising two constructs: religiosity, operationalized across three dimensions; Islamic worldview, religious practices, and moral conduct; and academic achievement, encompassing study behaviour, motivation, classroom engagement, and perceived performance. A total of 44 secondary school students from a selected urban school in Shah Alam participated in this pilot study. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis via SPSS version 27. The findings revealed that students demonstrated high levels of both religiosity and academic achievement across all measured dimensions. Pearson correlation analysis indicated a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between religiosity and academic achievement ($r = .746$, $p < .001$), suggesting that higher levels of religious commitment are associated with better academic performance. These findings carry significant implications for educators and policymakers, highlighting the importance of integrating spiritual and moral development into holistic educational practices and informing the design of school programs that nurture both academic excellence and religious character formation among Malaysian secondary school students.

Keywords: *Religiosity, academic achievement, religious practices, study behaviour, secondary school students.*

ABSTRAK

Pencapaian akademik dalam kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah semakin dipengaruhi bukan sahaja oleh faktor kognitif dan psikologi, tetapi juga oleh dimensi kerohanian dan moral yang masih kurang diterokai dalam penyelidikan pendidikan kontemporari, khususnya dalam konteks sekolah bandar di Malaysia, di mana remaja berhadapan dengan cabaran yang semakin meningkat seperti kemerosotan akhlak, gangguan digital, dan penurunan motivasi untuk belajar. Kajian awal ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara religiositi dan prestasi akademik dalam kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah di Shah Alam, Malaysia. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk tinjauan kuantitatif, dengan data dikumpulkan melalui soal selidik berstruktur yang merangkumi dua konstruk utama, iaitu religiositi dan pencapaian akademik. Konstruk religiositi dioperasionalisasikan melalui tiga dimensi, iaitu Tasawwur Islam, amalan keagamaan, dan tingkah laku moral, manakala konstruk pencapaian akademik meliputi tingkah laku pembelajaran, motivasi, penglibatan dalam bilik darjah, dan

pencapaian akademik yang dirasakan. Seramai 44 orang pelajar sekolah menengah daripada sebuah sekolah bandar terpilih di Shah Alam telah mengambil bahagian dalam kajian rintis ini. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan analisis korelasi Pearson melalui perisian SPSS versi 27. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa para pelajar memperlihatkan tahap religiositi dan pencapaian akademik yang tinggi bagi semua dimensi yang diukur. Analisis korelasi Pearson menunjukkan terdapat hubungan positif yang kuat dan signifikan secara statistik antara religiositi dengan pencapaian akademik ($r = .746$, $p < .001$), yang menunjukkan bahawa tahap komitmen beragama yang lebih tinggi adalah berkait dengan prestasi akademik yang lebih baik. Dapatan ini membawa implikasi penting kepada para pendidik dan pembuat dasar dengan menekankan kepentingan mengintegrasikan pembangunan kerohanian dan moral dalam amalan pendidikan secara holistik. Selain itu, hasil kajian ini dapat menjadi panduan dalam mereka bentuk program sekolah yang mampu memupuk kecemerlangan akademik serta pembentukan sahsiah dan karakter keagamaan dalam kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah di Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: *Religiositi, pencapaian akademik, amalan keagamaan, tingkah laku belajar, pelajar sekolah menengah.*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping students' intellectual, emotional, and moral development. In the Malaysian context, academic performance is often regarded as a key indicator of students' success and future opportunities. However, academic achievement is not solely influenced by cognitive abilities; it is also shaped by various internal and external factors, including students' attitudes, motivation, and spiritual orientation. Secondary school students, who fall within the adolescent developmental stage spanning ages 13 to 17, consistent with the World Health Organization's (World Health Organization, 2019), classification of adolescence as the period between ages 10 and 19, are particularly vulnerable to a range of educational and social challenges during this formative phase. In recent years, various educational and social issues among adolescents, such as declining learning motivation, disciplinary misconduct, academic stress, cyberbullying, excessive social media use, and moral deterioration, have raised concerns among educators and parents regarding students' holistic development (Md Noon et al., 2003; Muntazza et al., 2025; Masri-zada et al., 2025; Zahara Lutfya et al., 2024). These challenges suggest that academic excellence alone is insufficient without the support of strong moral and spiritual values.

In Malaysia, concerns regarding moral decline and behavioral problems among secondary school students in urban schools have been highlighted in national educational policies, particularly in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025, which stresses the importance of developing students' spiritual, moral, and ethical values alongside academic excellence (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2013). However, despite this strong policy emphasis, ongoing reports of disciplinary issues, student disengagement, and moral deterioration among secondary school students, especially within highly urbanized school environments, indicate a continuing gap between the aspirations of educational policies and the actual experiences of students in schools (Md Noon et al., 2003; Muntazza et al., 2025). Previous studies have shown that weak spiritual and moral development among students is associated with increased behavioral problems, poor emotional self-regulation, and lower academic concentration (McLoughlin & Kristjánsson, 2024; Shek & Zhu, 2018). These issues are becoming more critical in urban school settings, where excessive digital exposure and strong peer influences increasingly affect students' character development and ethical behaviour (Nur Hidayat et al., 2024; Hollenstein & Faulkner, 2024). Although many studies have focused on psychological and socioeconomic factors influencing academic achievement, the role of religiosity as a possible protective and formative factor among Muslim secondary school students remains underexplored, particularly in contemporary urban school contexts (Horwitz, 2021; Ab Aziz et al., 2025). This is concerning because religiosity not only functions as a personal belief system but also serves as a moral and behavioral guide that may influence students' self-discipline, emotional control, and academic motivation (Shek & Zhu, 2018; McLoughlin & Kristjánsson, 2024). Therefore, there is a clear need for further empirical research to examine the

relationship between religiosity and academic performance among secondary school students in urban areas in Malaysia.

Among these factors, religiosity has gained increasing attention as a potential contributor to students' holistic development. Religious beliefs generally refer to the extent to which individuals adhere to religious beliefs, practices, and values in their daily lives. For Muslim students in particular, religiosity encompasses not only ritual practices such as prayer and fasting but also moral conduct, discipline, and a sense of responsibility. These elements are believed to foster positive behaviors such as self-regulation, perseverance, and ethical decision-making, which may indirectly support academic success. Previous studies have suggested that students with higher levels of religiosity tend to exhibit better self-discipline, stronger intrinsic motivation, and more positive attitudes toward learning (Ahmad Putra et al., 2024; Marzuki et al., 2024; Solichin & Muhlis, 2020). These characteristics are essential for academic achievement, as they influence students' engagement, time management, and resilience in facing academic challenges. Nevertheless, empirical findings on the relationship between religiosity and academic performance remain inconsistent, with some studies reporting significant positive relationships while others indicate weak or negligible associations (Amin, 2020; Ismail et al., 2025). This inconsistency across contexts and populations further underscores the need for context-specific investigation, particularly within the Malaysian urban school setting, where the interplay between religiosity, social environment, and academic outcomes has yet to be sufficiently explored.

In the Malaysian educational setting, particularly among secondary school students, research examining this relationship is still limited. Despite the wide range of studies focusing on academic achievement from psychological and socioeconomic perspectives, the influence of religiosity on students' academic performance continues to receive limited attention in educational research (Horwitz, 2021; Horanicova et al., 2024). Existing studies rarely explore this relationship within modern urban school environments, especially in Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia, where religiosity plays an important role in students' everyday lives but remains insufficiently examined in relation to educational achievement (Ab Aziz et al., 2025; Hardy & Taylor, 2024). Shah Alam, as a rapidly developing urban area with diverse socio-educational backgrounds, provides a relevant context to explore how religiosity may influence students' academic outcomes. Understanding this relationship is important not only for educators but also for policymakers and parents in promoting balanced development that integrates both academic excellence and spiritual well-being.

Therefore, this preliminary study aims to explore the relationship between religiosity and academic performance among secondary school students in Shah Alam. Specifically, it seeks to determine the level of religiosity and academic performance among students and to examine whether a significant relationship exists between these two variables. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing literature and provide insights for future research in the field of education, particularly within the context of Islamic education and character development.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study aims to explore the relationship between religiosity and academic performance among secondary school students in Shah Alam. Accordingly, the research question is: What is the relationship between religiosity and academic performance among secondary school students in Shah Alam?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The nexus between religiosity and academic performance has attracted increasing scholarly attention across disciplines such as educational psychology, sociology of religion, and Islamic studies. In the context of Malaysia, where Islam is the official religion and religious identity is deeply embedded within both the educational system and broader social fabric, this relationship is particularly significant. Academic performance among secondary school students is influenced by a complex interplay of cognitive, psychological, social, and environmental factors (Horwitz, 2021).

However, recent scholarship has begun to acknowledge that spiritual and religious dimensions may also play a meaningful role in shaping students' educational outcomes. Empirical studies suggest that students with higher levels of religiosity tend to exhibit prosocial behaviour, stronger self-discipline, reduced delinquency, and more positive attitudes toward learning, attributes that are closely associated with academic success (Ramzy et al., 2021; Coman et al., 2024). Despite this growing body of literature, the relationship between religiosity and academic performance remains theoretically and empirically complex.

Conceptualizing Religiosity in Islamic Contexts

Religiosity is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing beliefs, practices, experiences, and the social implications of religious commitment (Nabi et al., 2023). It includes both private dimensions, such as personal faith, spirituality, and prayer, and public dimensions, such as participation in religious activities and adherence to communal norms (Horwitz, 2021). While many studies operate religiosity as a composite index, others treat its dimensions separately, leading to variation in how religiosity is measured and interpreted across studies. Within Muslim populations, the Muslim Religiosity-Personality Inventory (MRPI) offers a culturally grounded framework. Developed by Krauss et al. (2005), the MRPI captures two key dimensions: Islamic worldview (based on Tawhid and the pillars of faith) and religious personality (covering akhlaq, ibadat, and mu'amalat) (Ramzy et al., 2021). Its widespread use in Malaysian research reflects its contextual relevance and cultural sensitivity.

Nevertheless, recent scholarship highlights that religiosity should not be treated as a static or uniform construct. Nabi et al. (2023) emphasize the need for context-sensitive and culturally valid instruments, noting that different scales, such as the Centrality of Religiosity Scale and the IIUM Religiosity Scale, capture distinct cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of religiosity. Despite these advancements, many empirical studies still rely on simplified or aggregated measures of religiosity, which may obscure the differential effects of its dimensions. For example, Islamic worldview, ritual practice, and moral conduct may influence academic outcomes in different ways, yet few studies examine these components independently. This limitation is particularly relevant in the Malaysian secondary school context, where students' lived religious experiences may vary significantly.

Dimensions of Religiosity

This study conceptualizes religiosity as a multidimensional construct consisting of Islamic worldview, religious practices, and moral conduct, in line with the Muslim Religiosity-Personality Inventory (Krauss et al., 2005). The Islamic worldview dimension reflects students' beliefs in core theological principles such as the oneness of Allah, accountability, and the Day of Judgement. The religious practices dimension captures observable acts of worship, including prayer, Quran recitation, and fasting, which are associated with behavioral regulation and discipline. Meanwhile, the moral conduct dimension encompasses ethical behaviour and adherence to Islamic values in daily life, such as honesty, modesty, and responsibility. These dimensions are expected to influence students' academic achievement through mechanisms such as self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and prosocial behaviour, as highlighted in previous studies (Abang et al., 2024; Ramzy et al., 2021; Farhan & Abdul Rofi'ulmuiz, 2021).

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement in this study is operationalized through students' self-reported study behaviour, motivation, classroom engagement, and perceived academic performance. These components reflect both behavioral and psychological aspects of learning, which are widely recognized as key predictors of academic success. Prior research suggests that students with higher levels of self-discipline, intrinsic motivation, and active engagement in learning tend to achieve better academic outcomes (Coman et al., 2024; Horwitz, 2021).

Academic achievement is not only shaped by cognitive engagement but also by the ability of students to regulate their own learning processes. Self-regulated learning, defined as students' active control over their cognitive, motivational, and behavioral learning strategies, has been consistently linked with better academic outcomes. Research has demonstrated that self-regulated learning and academic motivation together significantly contribute to academic achievement, where students with higher motivation and effective self-regulation show superior performance compared to their peers (Alafgani & Purwandari, 2019). This highlights the importance of promoting self-regulatory skills and motivational beliefs as part of strategies to enhance academic success among students.

In addition to self-regulation and motivation, student engagement, comprised of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, also plays a fundamental role in academic achievement. Engagement reflects students' investment in learning activities, persistence in overcoming difficulties, and active participation in classroom tasks. Studies indicate that higher levels of engagement are associated with better academic performance because engaged students are more likely to attend classes regularly, participate in discussions, and complete assignments conscientiously (Suipoilie & Kithan, 2025; D. Rajasekar et al., 2025). Empirical evidence also suggests that engagement mediates the effects of other factors such as motivation and learning strategies, amplifying their positive influence on academic outcomes (Feraco et al., 2022). Thus, academic achievement should be understood as the product of an interplay between motivation, engagement, and self-regulated learning within the educational environment.

Theoretical Perspectives on Religiosity and Academic Achievement

Several theoretical frameworks have been used to explain the relationship between religiosity and academic performance. First, social capital theory (Coleman, 1988) posits that religious involvement fosters networks of trust, shared norms, and social support that enhance educational attainment. Religious communities often create intergenerational ties that promote monitoring, discipline, and aspirational norms (Horwitz, 2021). While this theory provides a strong sociological explanation, it tends to emphasize external structures and may overlook individual psychological processes.

Moreover, self-regulation theory suggests that religiosity enhances students' ability to regulate behaviour through structured practices (e.g., daily prayers), moral guidelines, and a sense of accountability to a higher authority. Empirical findings indicate that religious students often demonstrate better time management, discipline, and persistence (Abang et al., 2024). Similarly, the concept of the Islamic work ethic is described as the degree to which an entrepreneur adheres to Islamic principles, believes in Allah, and engages in actions that are expected of Muslims and encouraged by Islam (Musallam & Kamarudin, 2021).

Lastly, cognitive-motivational theory explains religiosity as a source of intrinsic motivation. Technically, for the Muslim that learn Islamic education, Nur Rois et al. (2025) showed that by encouraging virtues like sincerity, discipline, and responsibility, Islamic education greatly improves students' spiritual well-being. Additionally, this enhanced spiritual dimension acts as a mediating factor that positively correlates with enhanced academic achievement, especially in domains like motivation, self-control, and learning persistence. Empirical studies support this mechanism; for instance, Farhan and Abdul Rofi'ulmuiz (2021) found that religiosity significantly predicted academic achievement indirectly through learning motivation, highlighting the role of mediating variables.

Empirical Evidence on Religiosity and Academic Outcomes

A growing number of studies report a positive relationship between religiosity and academic-related outcomes. In the Malaysian higher education context, Che Rahimi et al. (2021) found that religiosity was positively associated with psychological well-being and academic engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Azizi et al. (2022) reported positive correlations between religiosity, emotional intelligence, and academic achievement, although the direct effect on GPA was relatively weak. These

findings suggest that religiosity may operate indirectly through psychological constructs such as resilience, coping strategies, and emotional intelligence.

Research at the secondary school level also provides supportive evidence. Ramzy et al. (2021), in a study conducted in Shah Alam, found that higher religiosity was associated with lower delinquent behaviour among adolescents. Since behavioral discipline is closely linked to academic success, religiosity may function as a protective factor that indirectly enhances academic performance (Abang et al., 2024). International studies further reinforce this relationship. Coman et al. (2024) found that students in religious (confessional) schools demonstrated stronger prosocial behaviour and more positive school climates compared to their peers. Likewise, Celeste et al. (2024) reported that religiosity was associated with higher student engagement and well-being in Hong Kong secondary schools.

Limitations of Previous Studies and Research Gap

Even though it had a lot of positive findings, the literature reveals several important limitations that warrant critical consideration. First, there is a notable inconsistency in the direct effects reported across studies. While many researchers identify positive correlations, the relationship is often weak or statistically insignificant, suggesting that religiosity may not function as a direct predictor of academic performance but rather operates through mediating or moderating variables such as motivation, self-discipline, or emotional intelligence. This indicates a need for more complex analytical models to better capture the underlying mechanisms of influence.

Furthermore, much of the existing research demonstrates an overreliance on samples drawn from higher education settings. Studies focusing predominantly on university students limit the generalizability of findings to secondary school populations, particularly adolescents who are still in critical stages of identity formation and religious development. As such, the applicability of these findings to younger students remains questionable. In addition, there is a lack of contextual depth within Malaysian-based studies. Although Malaysia offers a unique socio-religious environment where Islam plays a central role in education and daily life, empirical research specifically targeting secondary school students remains limited. This gap is further compounded by the underutilization of localized measurement instruments, such as the Malaysian Religious Personality Inventory (MRPI), which are better suited to capturing culturally relevant dimensions of religiosity.
Methodologically, many studies rely on cross-sectional research designs, which restrict the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationship between religiosity and academic performance. The widespread use of self-reported measures also raises concerns about social desirability bias, particularly when assessing sensitive constructs like religiosity, where respondents may be inclined to provide socially acceptable answers. Lastly, literature tends to neglect a multidimensional analysis of religiosity. Few studies explore how different dimensions, such as belief, religious practices, and moral conduct, independently or interactively contribute to academic outcomes. This represents a significant conceptual and empirical gap, highlighting the need for more nuanced and dimension-specific investigations in future research.

Summary of Literature and Research Gap

In conclusion, the literature suggests that religiosity plays a meaningful role in shaping students' academic outcomes, primarily through its influence on self-discipline, motivation, and positive behaviour rather than as a direct predictor of performance. While most studies report a positive association, the relationship remains complex and often mediated by psychological and behavioral factors. Moreover, existing research is limited by inconsistent findings, a strong focus on higher education samples, and insufficient attention to the Malaysian secondary school context. The tendency to treat religiosity as a single construct further restricts a deeper understanding of its impact. Therefore, more context-specific and multidimensional research is needed to better explain how religiosity influences academic performance among secondary school students.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach using a survey method with a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The questionnaire covers two main dimensions, namely level of religiosity and academic achievement.

Population

The study was conducted at SMK Jalan Kebun, involving students from Form 1 to Form 5. These students represent the target population of the study because secondary school students are at a crucial stage of adolescent development, where school, family, and social environments actively shape academic achievement, personality formation, emotional regulation, and moral values.

Furthermore, secondary school students today are increasingly exposed to various contemporary challenges such as academic stress, peer influence, emotional instability, social problems, and digital distractions, which may affect both their academic performance and spiritual practices.

The inclusion of students from Form 1 to Form 5 allows the study to obtain perspectives from different levels of adolescence and educational experience, thereby providing a broader understanding of the relationship between religiosity and academic performance among secondary school students.

In addition, SMK Jalan Kebun was selected because it represents an urban school environment with diverse socio-educational backgrounds, which is suitable for examining current issues related to students' academic and spiritual development in Malaysian secondary schools.

Sample

For the pilot study, a total of 44 students from various forms were selected. The participants involved in this preliminary study were different from those in the actual study in order to avoid bias and redundancy in the data collection process.

Data Analysis

The data for this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis to examine the significant relationship between the level of religiosity and academic achievement. Descriptive analysis included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 27.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was validated by two experts in Islamic Education as well as the Head of the Islamic Education Panitia at SMK Jalan Kebun to ensure its content validity. Expert feedback was incorporated into the final version of the instrument prior to pilot administration. A reliability test was subsequently conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of both constructs, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Table of Cronbach's Alpha for Each Construct

Constructs	No Of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Level Religiosity	18	0.895
Academic Performance	14	0.929

The results showed that the religiosity dimension achieved a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.895 for 18 items, while the academic achievement dimension recorded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.929 for 14 items. According to Taber (2018), Cronbach's alpha values can be interpreted at different levels, including excellent, strong, dependable, and adequate, among others. Based on this classification, the value of 0.895 for the religiosity dimension falls within the dependable category, while the value of 0.929 for the academic achievement dimension is considered strong. Therefore, the questionnaire items demonstrate a high level of reliability and are considered appropriate for use in this study.

FINDINGS

The level of religiosity and academic achievement of the respondents was assessed through 32 items (1–32), each measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). 18 items measuring religiosity and 14 items measuring academic achievement. A total of 44 students from SMK Jalan Kebun responded to the questionnaire. The analysis of data collected revealed a high level of religiosity and academic achievement. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean scores, and standard deviations, were calculated for each survey item. Mean scores were interpreted according to the following classification adapted from Nunnally and Bernstein (1994): 1.00–1.80 (very low), 1.81–2.60 (low), 2.61–3.40 (moderate), 3.41–4.20 (high), and 4.21–5.00 (very high), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Table of Level of Religiosity

Items	Statements	SD % (N)	D% (N)	N% (N)	A% (N)	SA% (N)	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	I remember Allah SWT everyday	-	-	-	9.1 (4)	90.9 (40)	4.91	.291
2.	I remember that anything happen is a test from God	-	-	4.5 (2)	20.5 (9)	75.0 (33)	4.70	.553
3.	I hold Quran and Sunnah as a guidance in my life	2.3 (1)	4.5 (2)	-	29.5 (13)	63.6 (28)	4.52	.792
4.	I remember the Day of Judgment	-	-	-	9.1 (4)	90.0 (40)	4.91	.291
5.	Allah SWT always see what I do everyday	-	-	-	18.2 (8)	81.8 (36)	4.82	.390
6.	I always remember that all my action is recorded by the angels.	-	-	4.5 (2)	20.5 (9)	75.0 (33)	4.70	.553
7.	I always keep on praying 5 times daily.	-	-	11.4 (5)	27.3 (12)	61.4 (27)	4.50	.699
8.	Even though I am busy, I will recite Quran every day.	-	4.5 (2)	34.1 (15)	36.4 (16)	25.0 (11)	3.82	.870
9.	I often perform sunat prayer before and after prayer.	-	11.4 (5)	50.0 (22)	25.0 (11)	13.6 (6)	3.41	.871
10.	I recite doa after prayer	-	-	11.4 (5)	25.0 (11)	63.6 (28)	4.52	.698
11.	I love to perform congregational prayer with my family members.	-	4.5 (2)	27.3 (12)	25.0 (11)	43.2 (19)	4.07	.950
12.	Once I miss the fasting during Ramadan, I will replace the day.	-	-	-	25.0 (11)	75.0 (33)	4.75	.438
13.	I practice the sunnah of Prophet SAW in my daily life	-	-	20.5 (9)	38.6 (17)	40.9 (18)	4.20	.765
14.	I know learning is a part of worship	-	-	6.8	20.5	72.7	4.66	.608

			(3)	(9)	(32)		
15. I maintain the boundaries between male and female promiscuity.	-	-	11.4 (5)	22.7 (10)	65.9 (29)	4.55	.697
16. I refrain myself from doing prohibited deeds	-	-	11.4 (5)	34.1 (15)	54.5 (24)	4.43	.695
17. I never take someone else without prior approval.	-	-	22.7 (10)	38.6 (17)	38.6 (17)	4.16	.776
18. I apologize if I made a mistake	-	-	6.8 (3)	27.3 (12)	65.9 (29)	4.59	.622

Note. N = 44. SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree.

The findings indicate that respondents generally demonstrate a very high level of religious belief and awareness, particularly in aspects related to faith (aqidah) such as remembering Allah SWT, belief in the Hereafter, and awareness of divine observation.

The result showed that the highest level of agreement was recorded for Item 1 (I remember Allah SWT every day) and Item 4 (I believe in the Day of Judgment) with a mean of 4.91 (SD = 0.291), followed by Item 5 (Allah SWT sees everything I do every day) (Mean = 4.82, SD = 0.390), Item 12 (I make up missed fasting during Ramadan) (Mean = 4.75, SD = 0.438), as well as Item 2 (I believe that everything that happens is a test from Allah SWT) and Item 6 (I remember that all my actions are recorded by the angels) with a mean of 4.70 (SD = 0.553).

At the high level, Item 14 (I understand that learning is a form of worship) recorded a mean of 4.66 (SD = 0.608), followed by Item 18 (I apologize when I make a mistake) (Mean = 4.59, SD = 0.622), Item 15 (I maintain appropriate boundaries between males and females) (Mean = 4.55, SD = 0.697), Item 3 (I adhere to the Quran and Sunnah as guidance in my life) and Item 10 (I recite supplications after prayers) both with a mean of 4.52 (SD = 0.792; SD = 0.698), Item 7 (I consistently perform the five daily prayers) (Mean = 4.50, SD = 0.699), and Item 16 (I refrain from engaging in prohibited actions) (Mean = 4.43, SD = 0.695).

For the moderately high level, Item 13 (I practice the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in my daily life) recorded a mean of 4.20 (SD = 0.765), followed by Item 17 (I do not take others' belongings without permission) (Mean = 4.16, SD = 0.776) and Item 11 (I enjoy performing congregational prayers with my family members) (Mean = 4.07, SD = 0.950). Meanwhile, the lowest level, although still positive, was observed for Item 8 (I recite the Quran every day) (Mean = 3.82, SD = 0.870) and Item 9 (I regularly perform sunnah prayers) (Mean = 3.41, SD = 0.871).

Table 3
Table of Academic Achievement

Items	Statements	SD % (N)	D% (N)	N% (N)	A% (N)	SA% (N)	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	I study regularly to prepare for my exams.	-	2.3 (1)	2.3 (1)	34.1 (15)	61.4 (27)	4.55	.663
2.	I set academic goals for each term and work hard to achieve them.	-	2.3 (1)	13.6 (6)	29.5 (13)	54.5 (24)	4.36	.810
3.	I revise my schoolwork even when there are no tests.	-	2.3 (1)	29.5 (13)	31.8 (14)	36.4 (16)	4.02	.876
4.	I manage my time well between school, home, and religious activities.	-	2.3 (1)	15.9 (7)	29.5 (13)	52.3 (23)	4.32	.829
5.	I participate actively during classroom discussions.	-	2.3 (1)	31.8 (14)	34.1 (15)	31.8 (14)	3.95	.861
6.	I ask my teachers questions when I do not understand a topic.	-	6.8 (3)	25.0 (11)	40.9 (18)	27.3 (12)	3.89	.895

7.	I help my classmates in their studies when they ask for help.	-	-	4.5 (2)	50.0 (22)	45.5 (20)	4.41	.583
8.	I usually get good marks in my tests and exams.	2.3 (1)	9.1 (4)	43.2 (19)	25.0 (11)	20.5 (9)	3.52	1.00
9.	I feel confident when I sit for exams.	4.5 (2)	6.8 (3)	31.8 (14)	36.4 (16)	20.5 (9)	3.61	1.04
10.	I try my best to improve my academic performance each term.	-	2.3 (1)	4.5 (2)	27.3 (12)	65.9 (29)	4.57	.695
11.	I complete all my homework and assignments on time.	-	6.8 (3)	36.4 (16)	31.8 (14)	25.0 (11)	3.75	.918
12.	I stay focused and avoid distractions during study time.	-	4.5 (2)	34.1 (15)	43.2 (19)	18.2 (8)	3.75	.811
13.	I try to please Allah and my parents by doing well in school.	-	-	11.4 (5)	20.5 (9)	68.2 (30)	4.57	.695
14.	I set up time for other social activities so that they won't interfere with my studies.	-	-	20.5 (9)	38.6 (17)	40.9 (18)	4.20	.765

Note. $N = 44$. SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree.

The findings indicate that respondents generally demonstrate a high level of academic achievement behaviors, particularly in terms of effort, motivation, and goal setting. Items related to continuous improvement, responsibility towards learning, and exam preparation recorded the highest mean scores. It is noted that one item from the original 15-item scale was identified as a duplicate (Item 5 and Item 12 both contained identical wording) and was removed, resulting in a revised 14-item scale. Descriptive statistics for individual items are presented in Table 3.

The highest level of agreement was recorded for Item 10 (I try my best to improve my academic performance each term) and Item 13 (I try to please Allah and my parents by doing well in school) with a mean of 4.57 (SD = 0.695), followed by Item 1 (I study regularly to prepare for my exams) (Mean = 4.55, SD = 0.663), Item 7 (I help my classmates in their studies when they ask for help) (Mean = 4.41, SD = 0.583), Item 2 (I set academic goals for each term and work hard to achieve them) (Mean = 4.36, SD = 0.810), and Item 4 (I manage my time well between school, home, and religious activities) (Mean = 4.32, SD = 0.829).

At the high level, Item 14 (I set up time for other social activities so that they do not interfere with my studies) recorded a mean of 4.20 (SD = 0.765), followed by Item 3 (I revise my schoolwork even when there are no tests) (Mean = 4.02, SD = 0.876). For the moderately high level, Item 5 (I participate actively during classroom discussions) recorded a mean of 3.95 (SD = 0.861), followed by Item 6 (I ask my teachers questions when I do not understand a topic) (Mean = 3.89, SD = 0.895), Item 11 (I complete all my homework and assignments on time) (Mean = 3.75, SD = 0.918), and Item 12 (I stay focused and avoid distractions during study time) (Mean = 3.75, SD = 0.811).

Meanwhile, the lowest level, although still positive, was observed for Item 9 (I feel confident when I sit for exams) (Mean = 3.61, SD = 1.039), and Item 8 (I usually get good marks in my tests and exams) (Mean = 3.52, SD = 1.000).

INFERENTIAL ANALYSIS

Table 4

Table of Correlation between Level of Religiosity and Academic Achievement

Variables	*r*	*p*	*N*
Level of Religiosity Academic Achievement	.741	< .001	44

Note. r = Pearson correlation coefficient. N = Sample size.

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong and positive relationship between Level of Religiosity and Academic Achievement ($r = .741$, $p < .001$, $N = 44$). This indicates that higher levels of religiosity are associated with higher levels of academic achievement. The correlation was statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), suggesting a meaningful association between the two variables, as shown in Table 4.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between religiosity and academic achievement among secondary school students in Malaysia. The findings indicate that students generally exhibit high levels of religiosity across multiple dimensions, including belief, religious practice, and moral conduct. The highest levels of agreement were observed for items reflecting daily remembrance of Allah SWT (Mean = 4.91), belief in the Day of Judgment (Mean = 4.91), and awareness that Allah observes all actions (Mean = 4.82). Students also demonstrated strong commitment to practices such as performing five daily prayers (Mean = 4.50), replacing missed fasts during Ramadan (Mean = 4.75), and integrating learning as an act of worship (Mean = 4.66). These findings support prior studies emphasizing that religious commitment among Malaysian adolescents is both robust and multidimensional, encompassing cognitive, behavioural, and moral components (Krauss et al., 2005; Ramzy et al., 2021). Regarding academic achievement, students reported high engagement in behaviours indicative of self-regulated learning, including regular study for examinations (Mean = 4.55), goal setting for each term (Mean = 4.36), time management (Mean = 4.32), and completing assignments on time (Mean = 4.57). They also demonstrated active classroom participation (Mean = 3.95) and supportive peer interactions (Mean = 4.41). These findings align with existing literature suggesting that behavioral engagement, intrinsic motivation, and self-regulation are critical predictors of academic success (Alafgani & Purwandari, 2019; Coman et al., 2024; Suipoilie & Kithan, 2025). The data further underscores the role of religiously inspired motivation in reinforcing disciplined study habits, as students who perceive learning as a form of worship tend to internalize educational responsibilities more effectively (Nur Rois et al., 2025).

Crucially, the correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between overall religiosity and academic achievement ($r = .741$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of religious commitment are associated with better academic outcomes. This finding resonates with prior empirical evidence demonstrating that religiosity can indirectly enhance academic performance through mechanisms such as self-discipline, motivation, and prosocial behaviour (Ramzy et al., 2021; Abang et al., 2024; Farhan & Abdul Rofi'ulmuiz, 2021). The results also support theoretical frameworks such as self-regulation theory, which posits that structured religious practices and moral accountability can foster students' ability to regulate behaviour, manage time, and sustain focus on educational tasks (Abang et al., 2024). Similarly, cognitive-motivational theory suggests that religiosity functions as an intrinsic motivator, promoting persistence, responsibility, and ethical conduct, which are essential for academic achievement (Nur Rois et al., 2025; Farhan & Abdul Rofi'ulmuiz, 2021).

While the observed correlation is strong, it is important to interpret the results critically. First, the high religiosity scores may reflect social desirability bias, as students might overreport religious behaviour in a school context that values Islamic practice. Second, although religiosity appears strongly associated with academic achievement, the study does not establish causality. The relationship may be mediated by factors such as intrinsic motivation, self-regulated learning, or engagement in school, which aligns with the literature highlighting indirect pathways between religiosity and performance (Farhan & Abdul Rofi'ulmuiz, 2021; Coman et al., 2024). Third, the multidimensional nature of religiosity suggests that some components, such as moral conduct or Islamic worldview, may exert differential effects on academic behaviors. For instance, students' belief in accountability to Allah (Items 1, 4, 5) may enhance conscientiousness and homework completion, while daily practices (Items 7, 12) may strengthen time management and persistence. Future research should investigate these

dimension-specific effects using structural equation modeling or mediation analysis to clarify the mechanisms linking religiosity and academic outcomes.

In sum, these findings corroborate the growing evidence that religiosity is not merely a spiritual construct but also a practical contributor to academic development. In the Malaysian context, where Islamic values are integrated into daily life and education, religious commitment appears to reinforce self-discipline, motivation, and engagement, which collectively enhance students' academic performance. This highlights the importance of considering cultural and religious contexts when examining predictors of educational outcomes and suggests that school programs that integrate spiritual, ethical, and academic development may be particularly effective in promoting holistic student success.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates a strong positive relationship between religiosity and academic achievement among Malaysian secondary school students ($r = .741$, $p < .001$). Students with higher levels of religiosity, reflected in daily remembrance of Allah, adherence to religious practices, and moral conduct, tend to exhibit better academic behaviors, including regular study, goal setting, time management, and classroom engagement. These findings suggest that religiosity supports self-discipline, intrinsic motivation, and prosocial behaviors, which collectively enhance academic performance. However, the relationship is likely indirect, mediated by factors such as self-regulated learning and engagement, and may be influenced by social desirability bias. Overall, the study highlights the importance of integrating religious values into educational practices to foster holistic development in Malaysian adolescents.

RECOMMENDATION

For educators and schools, it is recommended to integrate religiosity-based learning strategies, such as framing academic achievement as a form of worship, to enhance students' motivation and self-regulation. Activities that reinforce both moral conduct and academic discipline, such as group study sessions coupled with ethical discussions or reflection exercises, should also be promoted. For policymakers, educational policies should recognize the interplay between spiritual development and academic success, particularly in religiously oriented school contexts, and support programs that strengthen moral and religious practices alongside academic learning. For future research, it is suggested to investigate the mediating roles of self-regulated learning, engagement, and intrinsic motivation in the relationship between religiosity and academic achievement, as well as to examine the individual contributions of different religiosity dimensions: belief, practice, and moral conduct, using more sophisticated analytical models such as structural equation modeling. Expanding research into diverse school contexts and age groups is also recommended to improve generalizability, especially among younger adolescents in secondary education.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which prevents causal inferences regarding the relationship between religiosity and academic achievement. Second, the sample was limited to a single secondary school in Shah Alam, restricting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts and populations. Third, data relied on self-reported measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias, especially when assessing religiosity and moral behaviour. Fourth, the study did not explore the mediating effects of factors such as self-regulated learning, motivation, or engagement, which may influence the observed relationship. Finally, as a preliminary study, the sample size was relatively small, indicating the need for larger-scale studies to validate these findings and provide more robust evidence.

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