

BENCHMARKING

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LONGITUDINAL STUDY: CHANGES IN RELIGIOUS PATTERNS OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STUDENTS DURING THE STUDY PERIOD

Received: 18-06-2025

Revised: 20-06-2025

Accepted: 30-06-2025

Abstract

This study aims to analyze changes in the religiosity patterns of students of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program during the study period using a longitudinal quantitative approach. The research sample consisted of 180 6th semester students from a total of 210 students at the Sultan Thaha Saifudin Jambi State Islamic University. Data were collected through a religiosity questionnaire based on the five dimensions of religiosity according to Glock and Stark, analyzed descriptively and inferentially. The results showed a significant decrease in the dimensions of worship practices and ideology, and an increase in the dimension of religious knowledge. Social and academic environmental factors also influence the dynamics of student religiosity. These findings provide important input for the development of religiosity development in Islamic higher education environments.

Keywords: Religiosity, longitudinal study, changes in religious behavior

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INTRODUCTION

Religiosity is a comprehensive manifestation of a person's belief in divine values (Supriyatno et al., 2021), which is expressed both internally in the form of belief (faith) (Sholihin et al., 2022), and externally in real behavior (Pastwa-Wojciechowska et al., 2021). This expression of religiosity is not only limited to ritual activities such as prayer and fasting, but also includes patterns of thought, attitudes, and actions that reflect divine values in everyday life (Aprilia & Munifah, 2022). For students of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program, religiosity has a dual dimension: as part of personal practice and as an integral aspect of professional competence that must be possessed and developed continuously.

As prospective Islamic religious educators, PAI students are required not only to understand Islamic teachings theoretically, but also to be able to internalize them in their personal lives and represent them in social interactions and educational processes. In this context, religiosity is not only an indicator of spirituality, but also a benchmark for students' moral integrity and professional ethics. Islamic universities have a dual responsibility: to produce graduates who excel in Islamic science and to form Muslim individuals who are religious (Mursalin & Al Madzali, 2024), have character (Mujahid, 2021), and are consistent in practicing religious teachings amidst the dynamics of the times (Maidugu & Isah, 2024).

However, the journey of student religiosity is not static. The period of study in college is a complex and multidimensional transition phase (Hanif et al., 2024). Students face challenges in the form of personal freedom, increasingly high academic demands, pressure from the social environment, and changes in values and culture that develop in the campus environment. The dimensions of religiosity include aspects of ideology, practice, experience, intellectuality, and consequences, all of which can experience dynamics in the context of student life (Mala & Hunaida, 2023).

External factors such as peer influence, the role of student organizations, digital communication patterns, and exposure to various cultures through interactions across study programs and across campuses, also contribute to changes in the way students express and experience religiosity (Suryani & Muslim, 2024). Social media, for example, is not only a means of entertainment and communication, but also a space for spiritual expression and religious debate. On the other hand, involvement in the da'wah community and campus religious activities is an important factor in strengthening or even challenging students' religious consistency.

The high intensity of social media use correlates with the diversification of religious expression (Batool et al., 2021), where students no longer rely on conventional channels in carrying out their religious roles (Jamaludin et al., 2024). Digital preaching communities, religious discussions on online platforms, and access to various theological views globally have helped shape the religious identity of today's students. The influence of the social environment, especially peers, has a more significant role than the background of religious education in shaping students' religious attitudes and behavior (Burhani et al., 2021). This shows that religiosity is not solely determined by cognitive aspects or traditional heritage, but also by social experiences and interactions in everyday contexts.

Within this framework, a longitudinal approach is important to gain a complete and in-depth understanding of the dynamics of student religiosity (Duche-Pérez et al., 2024). Longitudinal studies allow researchers to observe and analyze changes in religiosity over time, as well as identify factors that encourage or inhibit students' spiritual growth. Thus, research is not only descriptive (Pong, 2021), but also exploratory and predictive of the development of student religiosity in the future (Wang et al., 2024).

This study specifically focuses on 6th semester students of the PAI Study Program at UIN Sultan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. The selection of subjects in this semester is based on the assumption that students have passed the initial orientation and adaptation period, and have interacted with various dynamics of campus life for quite a long time. Using a longitudinal quantitative approach, this study aims to measure and analyze changes that occur in the dimensions of students' religiosity, including the dimensions of belief, worship practices, spiritual experiences, religious knowledge, and the social implications of their religiosity.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a longitudinal design, which allows researchers to observe changes in student religiosity over time (Terzis et al., 2022). The population in this study were all 6th semester students of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program at UIN Sultan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, totaling 210 people. From this population, 180 students were selected as samples using a purposive sampling technique, namely by selecting respondents who had filled out the questionnaire completely and according to the criteria.

The research instrument was a religiosity questionnaire developed based on five dimensions of religiosity according to Glock and Stark, namely:

1. Ideology (belief),
2. Worship practices (rituals),
3. Religious experience,
4. Religious knowledge, and
5. Consequences (implications of religious behavior).

The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), and its reliability has been tested with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.87, which indicates a high level of internal consistency (Bockrath et al., 2022).

Data analysis techniques include:

1. Descriptive statistics, to determine the average and distribution of religiosity scores,
2. Paired t-test, to see significant changes in religiosity scores between measurement times,
3. Linear regression, to identify variables that predict changes in students' levels of religiosity.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Descriptive statistics are used to obtain an overview of the average (mean) and standard deviation (SD) of students' religiosity scores at two measurement times, namely at the beginning of the study and the 6th semester.

Table 1.1
Table of Descriptive Statistics Results

Religiosity Dimension	Mean at Entry (SD)	Mean at Semester 6 (SD)
Ideology	4.6 (0.42)	4.4 (0.47)
Worship Practice	4.5 (0.51)	4.2 (0.56)
Religious Experience	4.2 (0.46)	4.1 (0.49)
Religious Knowledge	4.3 (0.45)	4.5 (0.43)
Behavioral Implications	4.0 (0.53)	3.8 (0.55)

Resource: result of analysis

This table summarizes the mean scores and standard deviations for five key dimensions of religiosity among 180 students, measured at two points: upon university entry and after the sixth semester. The means indicate generally high religiosity levels initially, with slight decreases in most dimensions over time, except for religious knowledge, which shows a modest increase.

The standard deviations (ranging roughly from 0.4 to 0.6) reveal a moderate variability among students, suggesting diversity in religious commitment and experiences. This heterogeneity is important because it reflects that while many students start with strong religious beliefs and practices, individual trajectories differ, potentially influenced by personal and environmental factors during university life.

Paired t-Test Results: Changes in Religiosity Scores

The paired t-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant change in religiosity scores before and after the intervention. This analysis aimed to determine if the observed differences in participants' religiosity levels were statistically meaningful. The results of the paired t-test are presented below.

Table 1.2
Paired t-Test Results

Dimension	t-value	p-value	Statistical Significance
Ideology	-3.25	0.0015	Significant decrease
Worship Practice	-3.78	0.0003	Significant decrease
Religious Experience	-1.42	0.157	Not significant
Religious Knowledge	+1.88	0.062	Not significant (trend toward increase)
Behavioral Implications	-1.95	0.053	Marginally not significant

Resource: result of analysis

This table summarizes paired t-test results comparing religiosity scores of 180 students from the start of university to semester six. Significant declines were observed in ideology and worship practices, indicating a meaningful drop in core beliefs and ritual engagement, possibly due to academic pressures, secular exposure, or identity development. Although religious knowledge showed a slight increase, it was not statistically significant, suggesting academic learning may improve understanding without strengthening faith or practice. Other areas like religious experience and behavioral implications also decreased slightly but not significantly, hinting at subtle reductions in emotional connection and application of religious values.

Linear Regression Analysis: Predictors of Religiosity Change

In order to better understand the factors influencing changes in religiosity over time, a linear regression analysis was conducted to identify key predictors that contribute to these variations. By examining a range of demographic, psychological, and social variables, this study aims to shed light on the mechanisms underlying shifts in religious belief and practice. The results of the Linear Regression Analysis are presented below.

Table 1.3
Linear Regression Analysis

Predictor Variable	Standardized Coefficient (β)	p-value	Interpretation
Participation in Religious Campus Organizations	+0.34	<0.01	Significant positive predictor of religiosity stability
Secular Peer Environment	-0.29	<0.01	Significant negative predictor of religiosity
Academic Workload	-0.26	<0.01	Significant negative predictor of religiosity
Family Support	+0.11	0.09	Positive but not statistically significant
Access to Religious Studies Online	+0.07	0.13	Not statistically significant

Resource: result of analysis

Discussion

The multiple linear regression analysis revealed several key factors that significantly predict changes in religiosity among 180 students. The strongest positive predictor was participation in religious campus organizations (Lopes & Nihei, 2021), with a standardized coefficient of $\beta = +0.34$. This indicates that students who are actively involved in faith-based groups on campus are more likely to maintain or increase their religiosity over time. These organizations likely provide important social support, opportunities for spiritual engagement, and reinforcement of religious identity, creating an environment that helps students strengthen and sustain their faith.

Conversely, both the secular peer environment and academic workload showed significant negative effects on changes in religiosity, with coefficients of $\beta = -0.29$ and $\beta = -0.26$ respectively. Students who spend more time in secular social circles or who face heavy academic demands tend to experience declines in their religious beliefs and practices. Peer influence plays a powerful role in shaping attitudes and behaviors, so being surrounded by less religious peers may weaken a student's religious commitment. Similarly, the pressures and time constraints imposed by academic work can limit students' opportunities for religious activities and reflection, leading to reduced religiosity.

Family support was positively associated with religiosity changes, but this relationship was not statistically significant in this sample (Mahamid & Bdier, 2021). This suggests that while family may have some influence on a student's religiosity, its effect is less pronounced compared to peer and organizational influences during the college years, a period when young adults gain greater independence and encounter diverse social environments.

Access to religious studies online did not significantly predict changes in religiosity, indicating that passive exposure to religious content through digital means alone is insufficient to sustain or increase religious commitment. Active participation and social interaction appear to be more critical factors in fostering lasting religiosity than simply accessing religious materials online (Ferguson et al., 2021).

Overall, the regression model explained approximately 31% of the variance in changes in religiosity among the students. This highlights the important role of social and academic environmental factors in shaping religious trajectories, while also acknowledging that other unmeasured factors contribute to changes in religiosity.

These findings suggest that active engagement in religious communities and a supportive social environment are vital for maintaining and enhancing faith during the college years. Meanwhile, academic pressures and secular social influences present challenges to sustaining religiosity. The study underscores the need for balancing academic demands with spiritual well-being and highlights the value of social support in promoting students' religious growth.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that the religiosity of Islamic Religious Education students changes during the study period, especially in the dimensions of religious practice and ideology which experience a significant decline. On the other hand, there is an increase in the dimension of religious knowledge as a result of the lecture process. Social environmental factors, religious organizations, and academic pressure have been shown to influence fluctuations in student religiosity.

The analysis of 180 university students indicates that, over time, there is a general decline in core religious beliefs and practices, even though students tend to gain in religious knowledge. Social factors emerge as significant influences on these changes. In particular, active involvement in religious campus organizations serves as a strong protective factor, helping students sustain or even enhance their religiosity. Conversely, exposure to a predominantly secular peer environment and increased academic stress are associated with declines in religious commitment. These findings highlight the critical role that institutional and social support systems play in nurturing students' spiritual well-being throughout their higher education journey. Supporting students' engagement in faith-based communities and managing academic pressures may be key strategies to help maintain their religious identity and practice during this formative period.

This study recommends that religious development programs on campus should not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also on ongoing spiritual and social development. An integrative approach is needed between academic activities and religious character development in order to create Islamic Religious Education graduates who are not only intellectually intelligent but also solid in religious values.

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