

Peer Interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* Instruction as Predictors of Religious Character

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* education on the religious character of students. With the increasing moral challenges adolescents face in the modern era, understanding the factors contributing to religious identity formation is crucial. Previous research has explored the role of social influences and religious education in shaping students' values. However, few studies have examined the combined impact of peer relationships and *Akidah Akhlak* subjects. This research uses a quantitative approach, employing a survey method with 60 randomly selected students to assess the effects of peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* education on religiosity. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression to test the relationship between these variables. The findings reveal that peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* education have a significant positive effect on students' religiosity, with peer interaction showing a more substantial influence. These results highlight the importance of fostering a supportive social environment and integrating effective religious education to strengthen students' religious character. The study's implications suggest that combining social and educational factors can enhance religious development, offering valuable insights for educators and policymakers aiming to promote religious and moral values in schools.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of religious education in shaping students' moral and ethical values has long been a focal point in Islamic educational systems, especially in Indonesia, where religion plays a central role in daily life. However, recent studies show that the religiosity of students is facing significant challenges due to changing social dynamics, including the rise of digital media and shifting peer influences (Bingaman, 2023; Ju'subaidi et al., 2024; Wittberg, 2021). According to Garagiola et al. (2022), 65% of adolescents report that their peers

have more influence on their behavior than religious teachings or parental guidance.

This shift calls for a deeper understanding of how peer relationships and religious education influence students' religious identities (Abu Khalaf et al., 2022; Skrefsrud, 2022; Zellma et al., 2022). *Akidah Akhlak*, which focuses on *Islamic creed* and ethics, remains a core component of Islamic education. Understanding its impact on student religiosity is essential for developing more effective strategies to combat moral degradation and foster a deeper connection with faith among young people.

Several studies have explored the relationship between peer interaction and religiosity. Hidayah et al. (2021) surveyed 300 students in Jakarta, finding that peer groups with high religious engagement significantly boosted students' participation in religious activities ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, recent studies highlighted that social support from peers in religious contexts improved religiosity, with a 45% increase in religious activities among students in supportive peer groups (Al-Shaer et al., 2024; Gan et al., 2023; Horwitz, 2021). Other research has examined the role of religious education in influencing adolescent religiosity, revealing that *Akidah Akhlak* subjects have a significant positive effect on students' religious commitment (Horwitz, 2021; Sutarja et al., 2024; Yalvaç Arıcı, 2025). These studies underscore the importance of peer influence and religious education in fostering student religiosity. However, they do not fully address the combined effect of these variables, which remains underexplored in existing literature.

Despite the growing body of research on student religiosity, there remains a significant gap in understanding how peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* subjects influence students' religiosity. While some studies have examined these factors individually, few have explored their combined effect in a comprehensive quantitative framework. For example, the research found that peer influence was a critical factor in shaping students' religious behavior, but the study did not consider the role of religious education in the process (Sârbu et al., 2021; Sutarja et al., 2024; Tabrizi et al., 2024). Aderibigbe et al. (2023) also found that only 40% of students believe that religious subjects are effective in shaping their moral values. This suggests a need for research investigating how peer influences and *Akidah Akhlak* education interact to impact religiosity, particularly in an Indonesian school context, where the social environment and educational practices can significantly differ from those in other countries.

This study uniquely contributes to the field by examining the combined effect of peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* subjects on students' religiosity. Previous research has largely focused on these factors in isolation, with little attention paid to how they interact to shape religiosity. Using a survey-based approach and quantitative analysis, this research fills this gap by exploring how these variables influence students' religious character. Furthermore, the study is

one of the first to focus on a specific Indonesian school setting, providing contextual insights relevant to the local education system.

The findings will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the social and educational factors influencing religiosity, offering actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers looking to strengthen students' moral and religious values in the face of modern challenges. This study aims to assess the influence of peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* subjects on the religiosity of students at *MTs Wahid Hasyim 01 Dau Malang*. Using a survey design, the research gathers data from 60 randomly selected students to examine how peer groups and religious education shape students' religious identities. The study tests two hypotheses: (1) Peer interaction positively influences students' religiosity, and (2) *Akidah Akhlak* subjects significantly contribute to students' religious character. The data collected will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis to identify the extent of these influences and their interplay. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide valuable insights into how social and educational factors can be leveraged to enhance students' religiosity in the modern era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted at *MTs Wahid Hasyim 01 Dau Malang*, an Islamic junior high school in Indonesia, chosen for its relevant demographic and academic context in examining student religiosity. The institution provides a fitting environment for exploring the interplay between peer interactions and *Akidah Akhlak* subjects in shaping students' religious characters. The student population represents a blend of educational and social backgrounds, making it ideal for studying the factors influencing religious behavior. A quantitative survey research design was selected for this study as it allows the systematic measurement of variables and the establishment of relationships between them (Harari & Lee, 2021; Kucharczuk et al., 2022; Mio et al., 2022). This approach is appropriate for analyzing the impact of peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* subjects on religiosity, providing objective, generalizable findings through statistical analysis. The study utilizes a deductive approach, which aligns with the hypothesis-testing nature of the research (Bazen et al., 2021; Casula et al., 2021; Li et al., 2025), focusing on confirming or refuting theoretical propositions based on empirical data.

To gather data, this research employed a questionnaire distributed to 60 students from *MTs Wahid Hasyim 01 Dau Malang*, selected through simple random sampling. The use of a questionnaire is justified by its efficiency in reaching many respondents in a structured format. This method enables the collection of both categorical and numerical data, making it suitable for the study's objectives of examining the relationship between peer interaction, *Akidah Akhlak* subjects, and student religiosity. The questionnaire comprised items designed to assess the three core variables: peer interaction, *Akidah Akhlak* education, and religiosity, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the research questions.

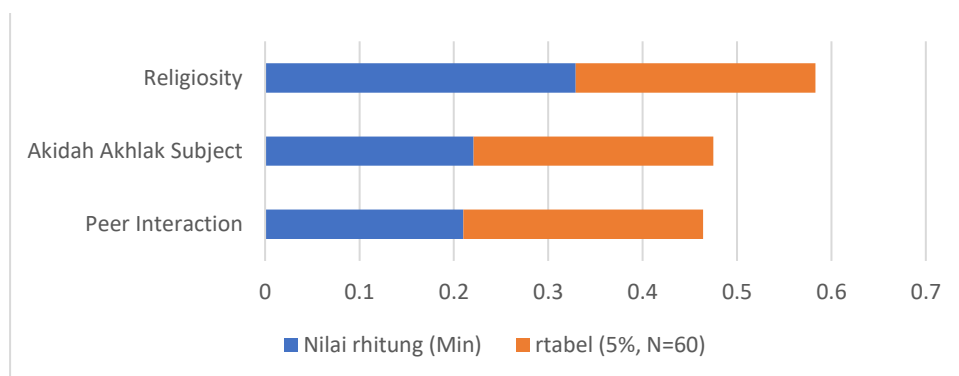
The survey method is particularly effective in capturing a wide range of responses, offering insight into behavior patterns, attitudes, and beliefs across a diverse student body. Additionally, the survey format allows for the standardization of responses (Centenaro et al., 2021; Husereau et al., 2022; Liguori et al., 2022), facilitating comparison and statistical analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, providing a robust framework for understanding the relationship between the variables. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the sample's characteristics and provide an overview of key data trends (Birgili et al., 2021; Bragazzi et al., 2023; Coops et al., 2021). Inferential statistics, including t-tests and multiple linear regression analysis, were used to test the research hypotheses regarding the effects of peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* subjects on religiosity. The t-tests assessed the individual impact of each independent variable, while regression analysis examined the combined influence of both factors on religiosity. The validity and reliability of the instruments were confirmed through preliminary tests, ensuring the robustness of the findings. Statistical software such as SPSS was used to carry out these analyzes, allowing for precise measurement and interpretation of data. These techniques facilitated the identification of significant predictors of religious character, offering valuable insights for future educational interventions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Validity Test

The validity test was conducted to ensure that the research instrument, , the questionnaire used to measure the Peer Interaction, *Akidah Akhlak*, and *Religiosity variables*, accurately measures the intended constructs. The validity test results using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25 application show that all items from the three questionnaires have a values greater than the r-table (0.254) at a significance level of 5% with a total of 60 respondents. This indicates that all statements in the questionnaire are valid, so they can be used to measure the research variables accurately. Thus, the instruments used in this study can be relied upon to obtain valid and relevant data. as shown in Graph 1.



Graph 1. Questionnaire Validity Test Results

The graph above presents the results of the questionnaire validity test for three research variables, : Peer Interaction, *Akidah Akhlak*, and Religiosity, each consisting of 20 items. The calculated values for each variable shows a minimum of 0.210 for Peer Interaction, 0.221 for Akidah Akhlak Subject, and 0.329 for religiosity, all of which are greater than the table value of 0.254 at the 5% significance level. This indicates that all statement items in the three variables are valid and can be used to measure the research variables accurately. Thus, the instruments used in this study can be relied upon to obtain relevant and valid data.

Reliability Test

The reliability test was conducted to ensure that the research instruments employed in the study produced consistent results. Specifically, Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the survey items. A higher Cronbach's Alpha value indicates that the items within a given variable are strongly correlated, thus confirming that the instrument reliably measures the intended construct. In this study, the reliability analysis revealed that all variables, Peer Interaction, *Akidah Akhlak*, and student religiosity met the established reliability criteria, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the threshold of 0.7, which is considered acceptable for social science research. These results, presented in Table 1, demonstrate that the instruments used are robust and can yield reliable data. Ensuring reliability is crucial, as it directly impacts the validity of the findings, guaranteeing that the observed relationships between variables are not due to measurement errors but reflect actual patterns within the data.

Table 1. Questionnaire Reliability Test Results

Variables	N Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Peer Interaction	20	0.789
<i>Akidah Akhlak</i> Subject	20	0.794
Religiosity	20	0.855

The reliability test results, as shown in Table 1, reveal the internal consistency of the variables used in this study. The Cronbach's Alpha values for all three variables, Peer Interaction, *Akidah Akhlak*, and Religiosity, are above the acceptable threshold of 0.7, indicating that the research instruments used to measure these constructs are reliable. Specifically, the Peer Interaction variable has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.789, and the Akidah Akhlak Subject follows closely with a value of 0.794, both suggesting strong internal consistency. However, the *Religiosity variable* demonstrates the highest reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.855, indicating a high degree of consistency among the items measuring religiosity.

These results suggest that the instruments will likely produce stable and

consistent results across different samples. Given the high reliability, the study can reasonably rely on these variables to conclude the influence of peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* on student religiosity.

Data Normality Test

The data normality test is a critical step in validating the assumptions necessary for reliable statistical analyzes, particularly when applying methods such as regression analysis. In this study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to assess whether the data residuals follow a normal distribution, a key assumption underpinning many statistical techniques. The sample size for this analysis was 60, providing sufficient data points to ensure the robustness of the normality test. By confirming that the residuals are normally distributed, the test helps ensure that subsequent analyses, such as hypothesis testing or model fitting, yield valid and generalizable results. A failure to meet normality assumptions can lead to biased estimates and misleading conclusions. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Data Normality Test		
One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		60
Normal Parameters ^b	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	9.90082781
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.099
	Positive	.056
	Negative	-.099
Test Statistic		.099
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200 ^{c,d}

Table 2 presents the results of the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, assessing the normality of the unstandardized residuals in the dataset. With a sample size (N) of 60, the test examines whether the residuals deviate from a normal distribution. The test statistic was 0.099, along with an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.200 suggests that the residuals are normally distributed, as the significance value exceeds the 0.05 threshold commonly used for normality testing. This indicates that the residuals do not significantly differ from a normal distribution, satisfying a key assumption for further statistical analysis. These results support the validity of subsequent analyses, such as regression, which rely on normality. While the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is sensitive to sample size, the results suggest that the data distribution does not introduce biases, thus ensuring the reliability of the study's findings.

Partial Test (T-Test)

The t-test or partial test was conducted in this study to measure the effect of each independent variable, , Peers (X1) and *Akidah Akhlak* (X2), on the dependent variable, Religiosity (Y). This test aims to determine whether the effect of each independent variable is statistically significant. The requirement to fulfill the t-test is that the significance value must be below 0.05. Using 60 respondents and a degrees of freedom (df) of 58, the t-test results show that both independent variables significantly influence the dependent variable. , as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. T-Test Results						
Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	86.604	15.565		3.959	.004
	Peers (X1)	.226	.144	.203	4.932	.000
	<i>Akidah Akhlak</i> (X2)	.082	.151	.070	6.101	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Religiosity (Y)

Table 3 presents the results of the t-test, showing the coefficients for the regression model examining the impact of Peer Interaction (X1) and *Akidah Akhlak* (X2) on the religiosity of students (Y). The model includes unstandardized and standardized coefficients, t-values, and significance levels. Both independent variables, Peer Interaction, and *Akidah Akhlak*, exhibit statistically significant positive effects on religiosity, with t-values of 4.932 ($p = 0.000$) and 6.101 ($p = 0.000$), respectively. These results suggest that students' religiosity is likely to improve as peer interaction and engagement in *Akidah Akhlak* education increase. The unstandardized coefficients (0.226 for peers and 0.082 for *Akidah Akhlak*) indicate the relative magnitude of their influence on religiosity, with peer interaction showing a stronger effect. The significance values below 0.05 for both variables confirm the robustness of these findings, supporting the hypothesis that these factors contribute significantly to shaping students' religious character.

Simultaneous test (F test)

The simultaneous test or F test was conducted to test the simultaneous influence of all independent variables, namely Peers (X1) and *Akidah Akhlak* (X2), on the dependent variable, namely Religious Character (Y). This test aims to determine whether combining the two independent variables can significantly explain variations in the dependent variable. The requirement to fulfill the F test is that the significance value must be below 0.05. Thus, this test provides an overview of how well the regression model can explain the relationship between the variables studied.

Table 4. Simultaneous Test Results

		Sum of				
Model		Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	274.843	2	137.421	13.354	.000 ^b
	Residuals	5783.557	57	101.466		
	Total	6058.400	59			
a. Dependent Variable: Religiosity (Y)						
b. Predictors: (Constant), <i>Akidah Akhlak</i> (X2), Peers (X1)						

Table 4 presents the results of the simultaneous F-test, which evaluates the combined effect of the independent variables, Peer Interaction (X1) and *Akidah Akhlak* (X2), on the dependent variable, Religiosity (Y). The F-statistic is 13.354, with a significance value of 0.000, well below the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the model significantly explains the variation in religiosity. The Sum of Squares for the regression model is 274.843, and the Mean Square for the regression is 137.421, suggesting that the independent variables together account for a substantial portion of the variability in religiosity. These results confirm that peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* education contribute meaningfully to developing students' religious character. The significant F-value supports the rejection of the null hypothesis, affirming the predictive power of the combined factors. Thus, the study demonstrates the importance of social and educational influences on religiosity.

Discussion

This study aims to examine the influence of peer interaction and learning of *Akidah Akhlak* subjects on the character of students' religiosity. Based on the results of statistical analysis, both the t-test and the F-test showed that the two independent variables, namely peer interaction (X1) and *Akidah Akhlak* (X2), had a positive and significant influence on the dependent variable, namely religiosity (Y). With a p-value much smaller than 0.05, these results support the proposed hypothesis that both factors significantly affect the religious character of students. Regression analysis showed a significant positive coefficient for both variables, with a t-value for peer interaction 4.932 ($p = 0.000$) and for Moral Faith of 6.101 ($p = 0.000$). This aligns with Tabrizi et al. (2024), which posits that individuals tend to imitate the behaviors and values of their closest social groups, including peers. Research by Hidayah et al. (2021) also supports these findings, suggesting that religious peers can increase student engagement in religious activities.

In addition, the results of the F test (13.354, $p = 0.000$) showed that the combination of the two independent variables significantly explained the variation in students' religiosity. These findings contribute to the existing literature, showing that peer influence and *Akidah Akhlak* learning should be viewed together, rather than separately, to understand their influence on students' religiosity. This strengthens the view that social factors and religious education must complement each other to form a strong religious character (Dasopang et al., 2023; Metcalfe & Moulin-Stožek, 2021; Saada, 2023).

The implications of these findings for future research include the need for

further testing of interactions between other variables that may also affect students' religiosity, such as family roles or cultural contexts. Follow-up research can also explore the influence of gender or age on the intensity of peer influence and the learning of *Akidah Akhlak*. Theoretically, these findings update our understanding of social interaction and religious education in shaping students' religiosity character. These results confirm that effective religious teaching and a supportive social environment can synergistically strengthen an individual's religious commitment through existing moral education theories (Cripps, 2024; Gamage et al., 2021; Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023).

The study, however, had limitations, such as a sample limited to one location and a study subject that did not cover a broader range of variations (e.g., different ages or social backgrounds). This may limit the generalizability of the findings to a larger population. In addition, cross-sectional research designs cannot identify causal relationships directly, so longitudinal research is needed to explore long-term changes in students' religiosity. The findings of this study make a significant contribution to the understanding of the social influence and religious education on students' religiosity. This study strengthens the existing literature by showing that the combination of peer interaction and learning of *Akidah Akhlak* has a positive and significant impact on students' religiosity character. Thus, these results can serve as a basis for developing more effective curricula and educational practices in the future.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of peer interaction and *Akidah Akhlak* subjects on the religiosity character of students at *MTs Wahid Hasyim 01 Dau Malang* in response to the growing concern over moral challenges in the modern era. The findings reveal that both peer interactions and *Akidah Akhlak* education significantly contribute to the development of students' religiosity. Peer groups with religious habits positively influence students' religious behaviors, while the *Akidah Akhlak* subject provides a foundational framework for moral and ethical growth. These results highlight the importance of fostering supportive social environments and effective religious education to strengthen students' religious character. Educators and policymakers can use these insights to design more effective programs combining social and educational factors to nurture religiosity. Future research could further explore additional variables, such as family influence, or examine the long-term effects of these educational strategies on religiosity.

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