

## The Effect of Religious Maturity on Substantive Religiosity of Prospective PAI Teacher Students

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### Abstract

Religious maturity and substantive religiosity are critical components in shaping the character and pedagogical orientation of prospective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. Teachers who exhibit mature religiosity and internalized religious values are more likely to foster religious character development among their students through reflective thought, ethical conduct, and value-oriented teaching practices. This study examines the level of religious maturity and its influence on the substantive religiosity of PAI teacher candidates in West Java, Indonesia. Employing a quantitative correlational design, data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 192 PAI teacher candidates from three universities using a convenience sampling method. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software to perform correlation analysis. Descriptive results indicated that 60% of participants demonstrated a moderate level of religious maturity, while 96% exhibited high levels of substantive religiosity. Correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between religious maturity and substantive religiosity, with a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.631$  and a significance level of  $p < 0.001$ , confirming the hypothesis at the 99% confidence level. These findings underscore the importance of fostering both cognitive and affective dimensions of religiosity in teacher education. The study recommends the development of a more integrative PAI curriculum that emphasizes value-based learning, spiritual reflection, and personal religious development to support the formation of ethically grounded and pedagogically competent future educators.

**Keywords:** Substantive Religiosity; Religious Maturity; Islamic Religious Education; Teacher Development; Value-based Pedagogy

## INTRODUCTION

Religious maturity and substantive religiosity are two key concepts in understanding the quality of one's religiousness in depth (Schwadel, 2015). Religious maturity reflects the level of individual religious development that not only appears in the ritualistic aspect, but also in the dimensions of understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of religious values in a mature and contextual manner (Shim, 2021). Substantive religiosity refers to a comprehensive form of religiosity, which includes belief (faith), worship (worship), religious knowledge, spiritual experience, and the implementation of religious values in social and moral behavior. These two concepts become very relevant in the context of character education, especially in the formation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers who not only teach religion as teaching material, but also as a life practice that reflects a moral example (Guo et al., 2020).

In the context of character education in Indonesia, the role of PAI teachers has strategic urgency as moral shapers of the younger generation. However, the challenges faced are increasingly complex when the phenomenon of character degradation in students is found, such as low discipline, decreased social care, and lack of personal integrity (Muhammad Anas Ma'arif et al., 2023; Rachman et al., 2023). In fact, research at a junior high school in Bandung City shows that the lowest aspect in the Developmental Task Inventory is the foundation of religious life (Oktonika, 2020). This emphasizes the importance of the quality of religiosity of PAI teachers as a model for shaping student character (Wahyuni et al., 2023).

National data from the Ministry of Education's National Assessment shows a consistent decline in students' moral and religious character over the past few years (Murtadlo et al., 2021). This decline is exacerbated by globalization and uncontrolled digital consumption, which often introduce foreign values that conflict with local ethics (Susilowati et al., 2022). In this context, the role of PAI teachers not only as teachers, but also as representatives of substantial and applicable religious values becomes increasingly important (Gui et al., 2020).

Empirically, there is a paradox that emerges between formal worship practices and moral quality. Rahmat's research found that although 100% of students in religious studies programs performed prayers and fasting, many showed less than ideal morals, such as difficulty forgiving and a tendency to lie (41% each) (Rahmat, 2022). In fact, Rahmat & Wildan Yahya reported that 63% of students showed low levels of honesty (Rahmat & Wildan Yahya, 2021). This finding shows that formal religiosity does not always have a significant impact on the formation of a strong moral character.

International research confirms this urgency. Zijlstra et al. highlighted that acceptance of religious diversity strengthens morality and builds inclusive student character (Zijlstra et al., 2021). However, other studies show that the success of character education is highly dependent on the quality of internalization of religious values through authentic and relevant practices (Hariyadi et al., 2023; Ulya & Nursikin, 2023). However, the fundamental problem that remains a research gap is that most prospective PAI teachers show ritualistic and normative religiosity, without deep reflection on spiritual values. This leads to their unpreparedness to be a role model in student character building. In fact, high religious maturity is very important to form a mindset and educational actions based on substantive religiosity.

Various previous studies have examined aspects of religious maturity and substantive religiosity in the context of education. Salamuddin examined the effectiveness of religious maturity-based PAI learning at the junior high school level and found that this approach could improve students' religiosity although in the moderate category (Ahmad Salamuddin, 2024). Meanwhile, Andrianawati evaluated PAI teachers' efforts in instilling substantive religiosity at SMP Negeri 14 Bandung City and concluded that the method of developing religious awareness through the *targhib wa tarhib* approach and stories proved to be quite effective (Meli Andrianawati, 2024). In addition, Sukmawati found that emotional maturity and religiosity have a positive relationship with religious tolerance among the millennial generation (Sukmawati et al., 2024). However, there have not been many studies that specifically examine the relationship between religious maturity and substantive religiosity in prospective PAI teacher students. Therefore, this study aims to fill the void by deeply analyzing the relationship between the two variables, so that it can contribute to the development of more effective character education in higher education.

## METHODS

This study uses a descriptive correlational design with a quantitative approach. The main objective of this study is to describe the level of religious maturity and test its influence on substantive religiosity in prospective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in three universities in Bandung, namely Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Bandung Islamic University (UNISBA), and Universitas Islam Nusantara (UNINUS). This research was conducted for 3 months, from November 2024 to January 2025. The descriptive design was chosen to provide a comprehensive picture of the students' religious conditions, while the correlational approach was used to examine the relationship and influence between the two main variables, namely religious maturity as the independent variable and substantive religiosity as the dependent variable.

The population in this study were all first semester students of PAI study program in the three universities, with a total number of 325 students. Due to limited access and time, researchers used convenience sampling technique to obtain respondents, and data were collected from 192 active students who were willing to fill out the research questionnaire. Data collection was conducted both online and offline, adjusting to the situation of each campus. The instruments used in this study consisted of two types of questionnaires. First, a substantive religiosity questionnaire that uses a Guttman scale with yes and no answer options, designed to assess the clarity of students' religious attitudes explicitly. Second, a religious maturity questionnaire arranged in the form of a four-point Likert scale, used to measure students' attitudes and perceptions of aspects of religious maturity. Both instruments are adapted from instruments that have been developed by Prof. Dr. Munawar Rahmat, M.Pd., and have gone through a validation and reliability process through the Delphi approach and statistical analysis using SmartPLS.

The stages of research implementation include the preparation and testing of instruments, validation and reliability, data collection in the field, and data analysis using SPSS software version 26. Data analysis was carried out in two stages, namely descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the level of religious maturity and substantive religiosity of students in the high, medium, and low categories based on the scores obtained. Meanwhile, inferential statistics are used to test the hypothesis, by first ensuring the fulfillment of classical assumptions through normality and linearity tests. Simple linear regression test was conducted to determine the significance of the influence of

religious maturity on substantive religiosity. Through this approach, the research is expected to be able to provide an empirical picture of the religious condition of prospective PAI teachers while explaining the relationship between religious maturity and the depth and authenticity of their religiosity in the context of religious higher education in Indonesia.

## RESULTS

### Religious Maturity of Islamic Education Teacher Candidates

Research on religious maturity can be said to be quite difficult and complex because it is full of presumptions and various perspectives. Until now, research on religious maturation is still very minimal. Religion and an individual's relationship with God cannot be measured scientifically. However, we can only assess a person's religious life through real activities that reflect their existence and beliefs (Rumapea, 2016).

Regarding this, Allport, defines religious maturity as a religious character formed through the experience of one's inner encounter with God whose influence is evidenced in the real behavior of one's life. These experiences will bring individuals to the object or stimulus they receive, resulting in concepts and principles that become an important and permanent part of the individual's personal life as religion. A person who is mature in religion will have the ability to understand, appreciate, and uphold the noble ideals of his religion in everyday life (Mukhlis et al., 2023). People who are mature in religion will apply noble religious values and teachings, they will stay away from violent, violent, and radical attitudes, disturbing the rights of others, and others. Because he has believed that religion teaches gentleness; and totality in living life, the impact of the characteristics of religious maturity is positive thinking towards God, even in difficult situations (Haryati & Rahmat, 2022).

To answer the first problem formulation, namely regarding the level of religious maturity of prospective PAI teachers, the first analysis carried out is descriptive analysis. Based on the categorization results, in general, the level of religious maturity of prospective PAI teachers is in the moderate category, where the average religious maturity of students is 126.3. For more details, the percentage of religious maturity level of PAI teacher candidates is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Table of Religious Maturity of Prospective Teacher Students

Category	Interval	f	percentage
Low	43 - 85	0	0%
Medium	86 - 128	115	60%
High	129 - 172	77	40%
		192	100%

From the table 1, table of religious maturity of prospective teacher students, it is known that 60% of PAI teacher candidates have moderate religious maturity, while the rest have low religious maturity. The religious maturity variable has 4 dimensions, namely faith (76%), worship (81%), morals (68%) and tolerance (67%). The largest average score is in the worship dimension, while the smallest is in the tolerance dimension. The following is a detailed explanation of the results of the analysis of each dimension.

1. Dimension of Faith

In this study, the faith parameter consists of 10 items. The following graph presents the calculation results on each item in this dimension.

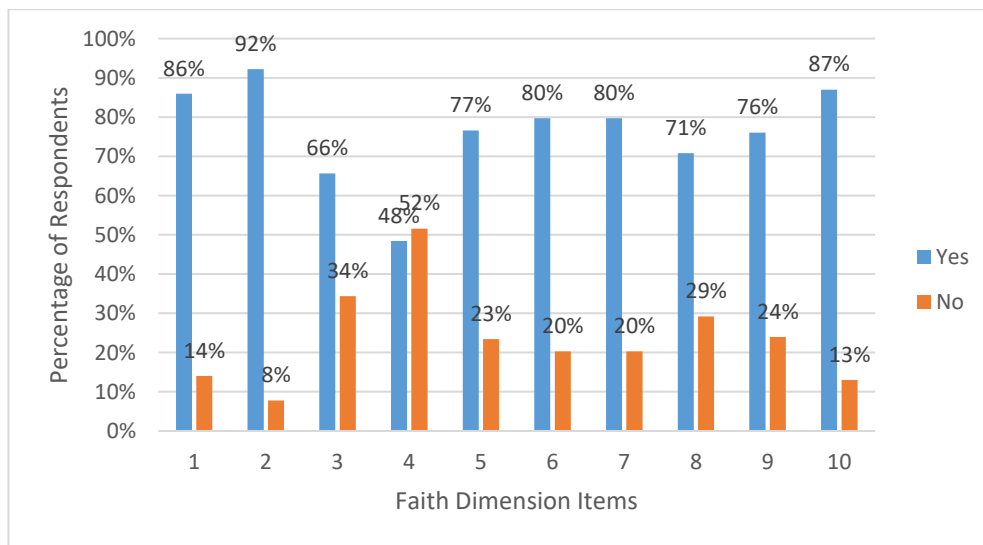


Figure 1: Dimensions of Faith

From the figure 1, dimension of faith, it is known that the highest percentage of this dimension is item number 2, where 92% of prospective PAI teacher students still feel happy and happy with God's destiny (good or bad). While the lowest score is item number 4 where PAI students are not ready to imitate angels who always obey Allah. This means that there needs to be support from related parties to improve the readiness of prospective PAI

teachers in imitating angels. However, in general, the faith of prospective PAI teachers is very good. This can be seen from the scores of almost all items in this dimension of more than 70%. There are only two items that are less than 70%, namely readiness to imitate angels (48%) and worship purely for Allah (66%).

## 2. Dimensions of Worship

Based on the results of the calculation, the worship dimension is the greatest strength that affects the religious maturity of prospective PAI teacher students. In this study, the worship parameter consists of 10 items. The following graph presents the results of the calculation on each item in this dimension.

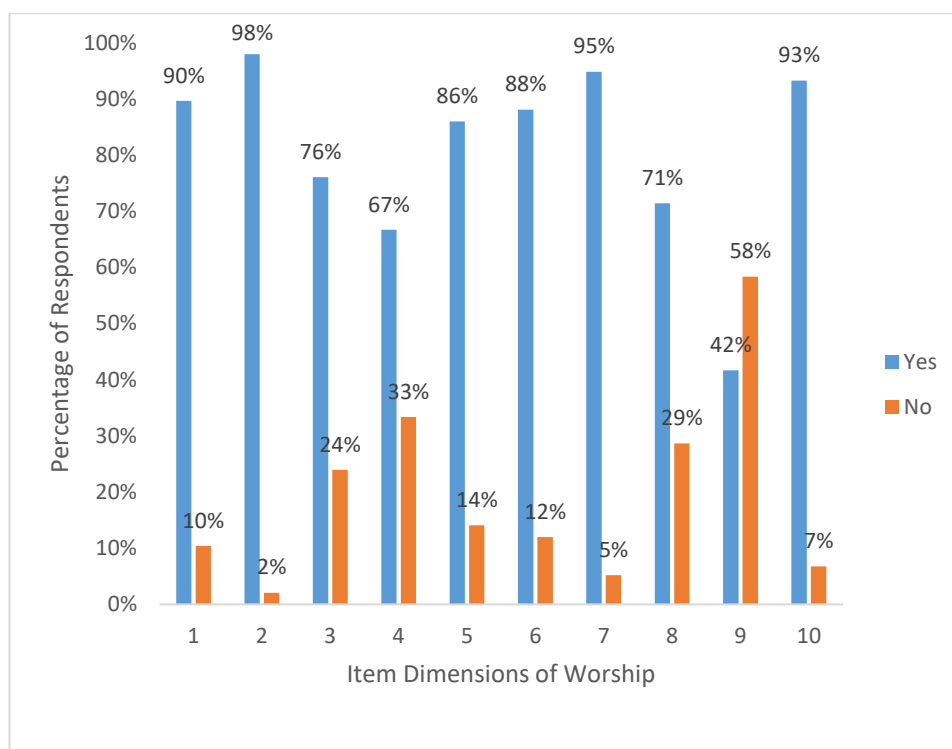


Figure 2: Dimensions of Worship

From the figure 2, dimensions of worship, it is known that the item that has the highest score of this dimension is item number 2, namely almost 98% of prospective PAI teacher students regularly perform tahajud prayers. This strengthens the findings of previous research which states that some religious study program students perform rawatib and tahajud prayers (Rahmat & Wildan Yahya, 2021). While the lowest score of this worship dimension is item number 9, which is only 42% of PAI students who dare to take responsibility that the assets they use are 100% halal.

### 3. Moral Dimension

In this study, the moral parameter consists of 19 items. The following graph presents the calculation results on each item in this dimension.

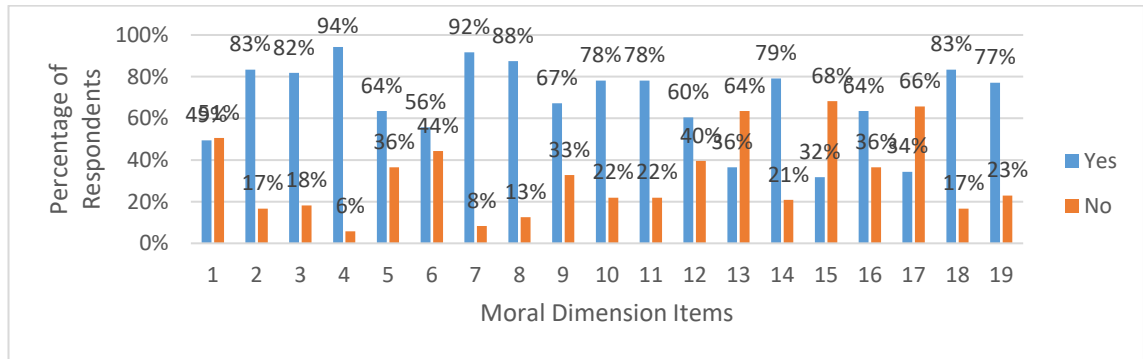


Figure 3. Moral dimension

From the figure 3, moral dimension, it is known that there are 2 items that have scores above 90%, namely items 4 and 7, which means that 94% of PAI teacher candidates have the belief that all of God's gifts (good/bad) are blessings, and 92% of students feel that they always forget God, so they routinely repent. However, there are 4 items in this dimension whose percentage is less than 50%, namely item 1 which shows that only 49% of students continue to speak kindly to people who do bad things, item number 13 which shows that only 36% of students routinely provide assistance to family/friends/neighbors, item number 15 which shows that only 32% of students care for orphans and the poor, and item number 17 shows that only 35% of prospective PAI teachers care more about others than themselves.

### 4. Tolerance

In this study, the tolerance parameter consists of 4 items. The following graph presents the calculation results on each item in this dimension.

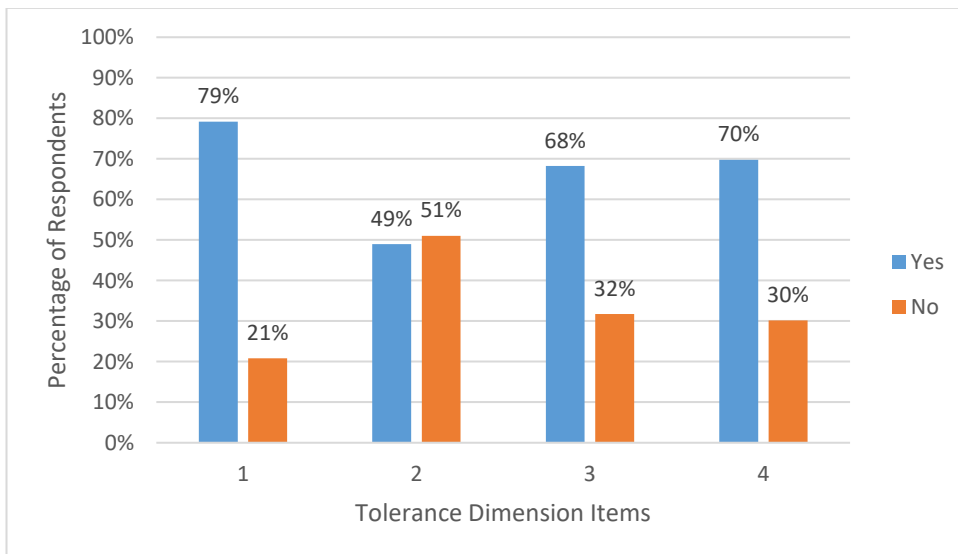


Figure 4. Tolerance dimension

In the figure 4, tolerance dimension, it is known that the highest score in the tolerance dimension is item number 1, which is 79% of prospective PAI teacher students assessing the goodness of a person from his morals, not his religion. While the item with the lowest score is item number 2, which is only 49% of students who choose leaders based on their personal qualities, not because of their religion.

### Substantive Religiosity of Islamic Education Teacher Canddates

Religious comes from the word religion, which means religion. Religion is recognized as having a significant influence on a person's personal life. Religion is a phenomenon that is combined with many parts of individual and social life. It can influence and be influenced by other parts of life (Parashchevin, 2021). Research on religious behavior began to emerge in the early 20th century with several studies, including William James' research in 1902 which paid attention to individual religious experiences. This aspect of religious experience is defined as emotions that lead to increased self-confidence in or towards certain actions or activities.

If we look at the definition of religiosity, the different approaches (epistemology) used make each expert have a certain emphasis in defining it. For example, the empiricist William James emphasized the effects of religion or personal religious experiences rather than religious beliefs and institutions. James defined religiosity as “the feelings, actions, and experiences of individuals in their solitude, insofar as they feel they are in relationship with whatever they regard as divine”.

Based on the categorization results, in general, the level of substantive religiosity of prospective PAI teachers is in the high category, where the average substantive religiosity of students is 28.2. For more details, the percentage level of substantive religiosity of prospective PAI teachers is presented in the following table:

Table 2 Level of Substantive Religiosity of Prospective PAI Teacher Students

Category	Interval	f	Percentage
High	> 21,5	185	96%
Low	< 21,5	7	4%
		192	100%

From the table 2, table level of substantive religiosity of prospective PAI teacher students, it is known that almost all PAI teacher candidates (96%) have high substantive religiosity, while the rest have low religiosity.

The substantive religiosity variable has 3 dimensions, namely faith (75%), worship (62%), and morals (61%). The largest average score is in the dimension of faith, while the smallest is in the dimension of morals. The following is a detailed explanation of the results of the analysis of each dimension.

### 1. Dimension of Faith

Based on the results of the calculation, the dimension of faith is the biggest force that affects the substantive religiosity of prospective PAI teachers. In this study, the faith parameter consists of 14 items. The following graph presents the calculation results on each item in this dimension.

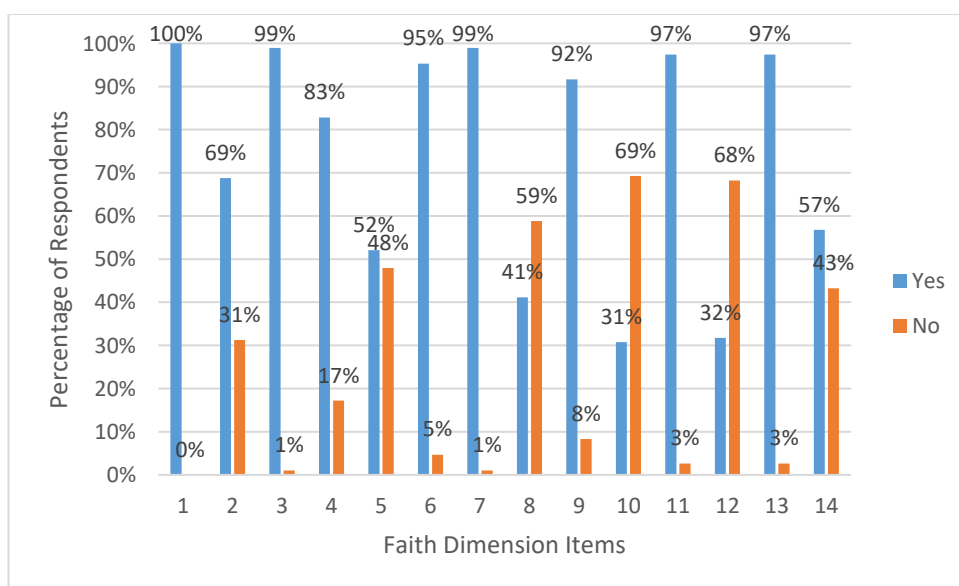


Figure 5: Dimensions of Faith

Based on the figure 5, dimensions of faith, it is known that the highest score in the dimension of faith is item number 1, where all prospective PAI teacher students (100%) humble themselves to God. While the items that have a score of less than 50% are item number 8 which shows that only 41% of students are ready to stay away from Allah's prohibition in the Qur'an to restrain anger, item number 10 which shows that only 31% of students are ready to emulate the Apostle's morals without any moral defects, and item number 12 which shows that only 32% of prospective PAI teacher students realize that the main capital to enter heaven is not only faith and worship, but also morals.

## 2. Dimensions of Worship

In this study, the worship parameter consists of 12 items. The following graph presents the calculation results on each item in this dimension.

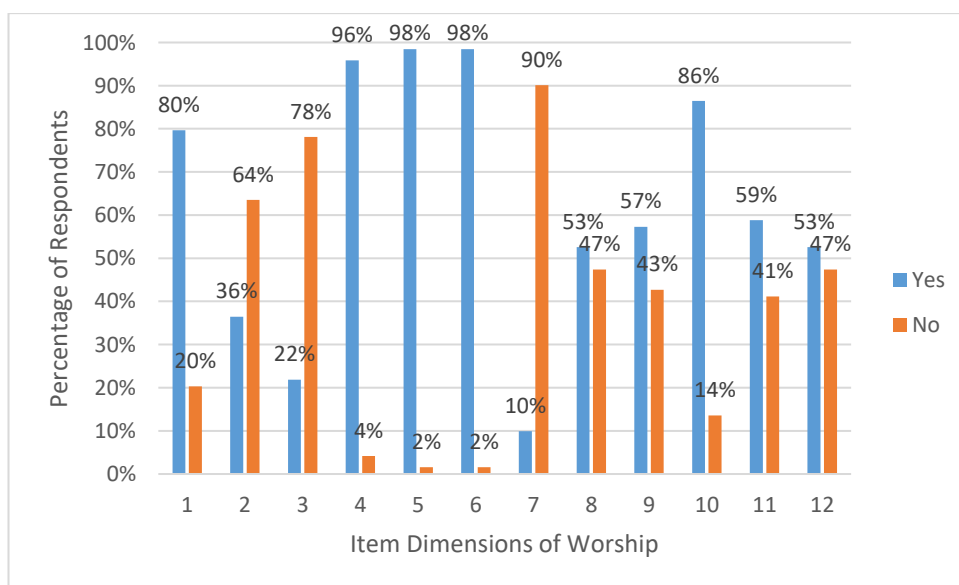


Figure 6: Dimensions of Worship

Based on the figure 6, dimensions of worship, it is known that there are 2 items that have the highest score, namely item number 5 which shows that 98% of PAI teacher candidates are ready to carry out Ramadan fasting for a full month and feel closer to Allah when fasting. Meanwhile, some items that have a score below 50% are item number 16 which shows that only 36% of students make prayer as a fortress from vile and evil deeds, item number 17 which shows that only 22% of students who establish prayers with khusyu', item number 21 which shows that only 10% of students are able to fast for a full month in Ramadan by leaving bad morals, and item number 26 which shows that only 47% of students think that the essence of Hajj is if we have high concern in alleviating poverty.

### 3. Moral Dimension

In this study, the worship parameter consists of 17 items. The following graph presents the calculation results on each item in this dimension.

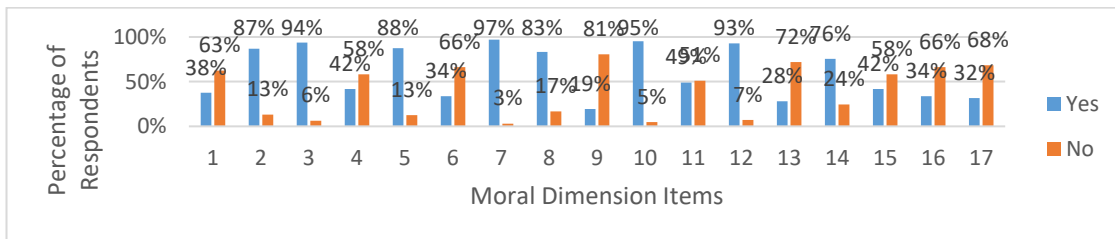


Figure 7: Moral dimension

Based on the figure 7, moal dimension, it can be seen that the highest score in this dimension is item number 7 which shows that 97% of PAI teacher candidates choose good content to share on social media. While some items that score below 50% are item number 27 which shows that only 38% of students are khusyu' when praying, item number 30 which shows that only 42% of PAI teacher candidates think that repentance is required for people who commit sins, even though it is a small sin, item number 32 which shows that only 34% of students are polite even to rude people, item number 35 which shows that only 19% of students do not hurt others with words, item number 37 which shows that only 49% of students easily forgive the mistakes of people who do bad things, item number 39 which shows that only 28% of students are not offended if someone insults / humiliates, item number 41 which shows that only 42% of students think that patience has no limit, item number 42 which shows that only 34% of students always tell the truth, and never lie, and item number 43 which shows that only 32% of students do not easily promise things that are difficult to keep.

### The Effect of Religious Maturity on Substantive Religiosity of Prospective PAI Teacher Students

Based on these data, the researcher intends to analyze the effect of religious maturity on substantive religiosity of prospective PAI teacher students. This data is then tested through a statistical approach, namely the prerequisite test which consists of normality test and linearity test. The test results are as follows:

Table 3 Data Normality Test Results

**One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test**

		Unstandardized Residual	
N		192	
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	,0000000	
	Std. Deviation	3,03987649	
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,024	
	Positive	,020	
	Negative	-,024	
Test Statistic		,024	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) <sup>c</sup>		,200 <sup>d</sup>	
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) <sup>e</sup>	Sig.	,998	
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	,996
		Upper Bound	,999

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

e. Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000.

Based on the test results displayed in Table 3, data normality test result, it is known that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.200. This value is greater than the specified significance level, namely  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Thus, it can be concluded that the residual data in this study are normally distributed. In addition, the test results are also supported by the significance value of the Monte Carlo simulation of 0.998 with a 99% confidence interval between 0.996 to 0.999. This further reinforces that the residual distribution does not deviate significantly from the normal distribution. Based on these findings, the assumption of normality is met, and the data is suitable for further analysis using parametric statistical methods. Therefore, correlational analysis between religious maturity and substantive religiosity can be conducted using the Pearson correlation test.

Table 4 Test Results of linear regression

ANOVA Table			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Religiusitas Substantif* Kematangan Beragama	Between Groups	(Combined)	1670,924	46	36,324	4,171	<,001
		Linearity	1168,664	1	1168,664	134,197	<,001
		Deviation from Linearity	502,260	45	11,161	1,282	,138
	Within Groups		1262,742	145	8,709		
	Total		2933,667	191			

Based on the ANOVA output displayed in Table 4, it is known that the significance value for Linearity is <0.001 with an F value of 134.197. The significance value is much smaller than the specified significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), so it can be concluded that there is a significant linear relationship between religious maturity and substantive religiosity of PAI teacher candidates. Meanwhile, the significance value in the Deviation from Linearity section is 0.138, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that there is no significant deviation of linearity. That is, the relationship between the two variables does not deviate significantly from a straight line. Thus, it can be concluded that the relationship between religious maturity and substantive religiosity is linear, and the assumption of linearity in correlation analysis has been met.

After fulfilling the assumptions of normality and linearity, a Pearson correlation analysis was then conducted to determine the relationship between religious maturity and substantive religiosity in prospective Islamic Religious Education teacher students. The Pearson correlation test was chosen because both variables are normally distributed and have a linear relationship, as explained in the previous section.

Table 5 Correlation Test Results

Correlations		Kematangan Beragama	Religiusitas Substantif
Kematangan Beragama	Pearson Correlation	1	,631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	192	192
Religiusitas Substantif	Pearson Correlation	,631**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	192	192

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the test results displayed in Table 5, correlation test result, The results of Pearson correlation analysis show that there is a significant relationship between Religious

Maturity and Substantive Religiosity in PAI teacher candidates. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) = 0.631 indicates that the relationship between these two variables is positive and strong. In addition, the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) < 0.001 indicates that this relationship is highly significant at the 99% confidence level ( $p < 0.01$ ). In other words, the possibility that this relationship occurs by chance is very small, so it can be concluded that the higher one's religious maturity, the higher the level of substantive religiosity.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, it is known that the level of religious maturity of prospective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers is mostly in the medium category (60%), while the other 40% are in the high category. No students were found in the low category. This finding shows that in general, prospective Islamic Education teacher students have a fairly good level of religious maturity, although most are still in a dynamic stage of development. This finding is in line with Kharimah and Pranajaya's research which shows that students in the Islamic education environment tend to have good religiosity, but not all of them have achieved stable spiritual maturity because they are still in the stage of searching for religious identity (Kharimah & Adymas Pranajaya, 2020).

Similarly, Salamuddin highlighted that PAI learning that is designed integratively and value-based can play an important role in developing students' religious depth (Salamuddin et al., 2024). The absence of students in the low category reflects the effectiveness of the religious education system in higher education in forming a strong religious foundation. However, the dominance of the medium category shows that most students are still in the process of building personal meaning of their religious teachings. Emawati and Syukri's research supports this with the finding that students in general and religious universities tend to be in a transitional phase, from normative compliance to reflective internalization of religious values (Emawati & Syukri, 2022). Research by Jauhari, Nuraini, and Alnashr also revealed that the religious maturity of PAI students has a positive relationship with moral character building, but some students still show ambivalence between religious knowledge and actual practice (Jauhari et al., 2019). In this context, Yasin emphasized the importance of PAI learning directed at forming moderate and transformative attitudes to support students' spiritual maturity as prospective educators (Yasin et al., 2023).

Some factors that can cause the dominance of the moderate category include social pressure, academics, and the influence of digital technology on the way students understand religion. This is in line with the findings of Khadavi, Nizar, and Syahri who mentioned that the effectiveness of PAI learning that integrates affective, cognitive, and spiritual aspects is a major factor in building students' spiritual intelligence amid the complexity of the times (Khadavi et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to develop an integrative, reflective experience-based spirituality strengthening program, an active religious community, and a transformative values-based curriculum. These efforts are expected to increase the religious depth of students, so that they are ready to become PAI educators who not only master knowledge, but also mature spiritually and morally.

The results showed that the level of substantive religiosity of prospective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers was classified as very high, with 96% of students in the high category and only 4% in the low category. This reflects that the majority of students do not only practice religion formally, but also internalize the values of religious teachings in their daily attitudes and behaviors. Substantive religiosity emphasizes understanding and implementing religious values deeply, beyond mere symbolism (Beyers, 2017). In the context of Islamic education, this high level of substantive religiosity is an important asset to form educators who are able to become role models in social life. Research by Bishop confirms that substantive religious understanding correlates with high reflective ability, tolerance, and social justice (Bishop, 2021).

The high level of substantive religiosity of prospective PAI teachers is also related to the concept of positive religious coping, which is the use of religious principles to overcome stress and life challenges in a healthy and productive way. This is important to equip students to face the complexity of social problems in the world of education. However, it should be noted that this substantive religiosity cannot be considered static. Strengthening through experiential learning programs based on religious values needs to be carried out continuously, as suggested by the results of Jenuri's research which emphasizes the importance of direct practice of religious values in various real situations as well as an applicative model of PAI learning that can be a solution to the problem of spiritual emptiness among students, by making the legacy of Al-Ghazali's thought as the main inspiration (Jenuri et al., 2025).

Thus, this high level of substantive religiosity must continue to be directed and developed through strengthening the value-based curriculum, practicing critical reflection,

and strengthening inclusive social practices, in order to produce PAI teachers who are not only academically intelligent, but also excel in moral and social integrity.

The Pearson correlation test between religious maturity and substantive religiosity showed a coefficient value of 0.631 with a significance of  $p < 0.001$ . This means that there is a strong positive relationship between the two variables, and this relationship is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. In other words, the higher a person's religious maturity, the higher his or her level of substantive religiosity. This finding reinforces the theory that substantive religiosity is not only measured by ritual activities alone, but is deeper, which is reflected in the maturity in living religious values in daily life. Religious maturity, which is characterized by reflective awareness, tolerance, and emotional balance, is a strong foundation in shaping substantive religious understanding.

This research is in line with the results of Bolat & Korkmaz's study which found that students with a high level of religious maturity are more able to internalize religious values deeply in social life, not just in the form of formal rituals. Yilmaz emphasized that religious maturity produces a dynamic, flexible, and compassionate religious personality which is the main characteristic of substantive religiosity (Bolat & Korkmaz, 2021).

However, not all research is in line. Lan's research shows that in some cultural contexts, there are individuals who show high rituality but are not followed by value maturity, so their religiosity tends to be formalistic and superficial. This research shows that although the hijrah community actively shares Islamic content on social media, their religious expressions tend to be superficial. That is, many of them emphasize symbolic appearances (such as shar'i clothing, hijra jargon, or quoting verses) rather than a deep understanding of religious teachings. This phenomenon is known as "religious superficiality", where religious expression is more symbolic than substantive (Hidayat et al., 2020).

The findings in this study, with a strong correlation value ( $r = 0.631$ ), indicate that among prospective PAI teacher students, the tendency towards substantive religiosity begins to form as religious maturity increases. This is a positive signal for efforts to produce religious educators who are not only able to teach dogma, but also become living examples in practicing Islamic values in various aspects of life.

In the context of Islamic higher education, these results also emphasize the importance of curriculum integration that not only focuses on cognitive-theoretical aspects, but also on fostering practical spiritual and moral maturity. As suggested by Zakiyah that character-based

religious education and real experiences have proven to be more effective in fostering substantive religiosity than the lecture approach alone. Thus, the results of this correlation not only have statistical significance, but also carry great practical implications for the development of PAI teacher candidate education models that are more oriented towards the formation of authentic religious characters, not just mastery of religious material (Zakiyah BZ et al., 2024).

Although this study produced valuable findings, there are some limitations that need to be recognized. First, this study is limited to a specific population of prospective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in three specific institutions so that the results may not be generalizable to other educational contexts or environments. Future research involving a more diverse sample from different universities or regions will provide a broader picture of religious maturity and substantive religiosity among university students. Second, this study relied heavily on self-report questionnaires, which are prone to social desirability bias. Respondents may answer in a way that is deemed most socially acceptable, rather than being completely honest, especially given the sensitive nature of religious topics. Third, this study is cross-sectional, so it cannot capture developments or changes in religious maturity and religiosity over time. A longitudinal approach would be better able to provide insights into how religious understanding develops throughout students' academic journey. Lastly, while this study explores the relationship between religious maturity and substantive religiosity, it does not delve deeply into the causal mechanisms behind the relationship. Qualitative approaches such as interviews or focus groups could enrich the findings by uncovering personal experiences, motivations and contextual factors that influence both constructs.

## CONCLUSION

This study offers significant empirical insight into the interplay between religious maturity and substantive religiosity among prospective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. The findings reveal that while the majority of participants exhibit a moderate level of religious maturity (60%), a notable proportion (40%) demonstrate a high level, with none categorized as low. This distribution suggests a generally solid religious foundation among students, shaped in part by the Islamic educational environment. However, the results also underscore the developmental nature of their spiritual maturity, indicating the need for

educational interventions that move beyond normative compliance toward reflective and transformative religious development.

The high level of substantive religiosity observed, where 96% of students show deep internalization of religious values in both attitudes and daily behavior, further affirms the strength of students' personal engagement with their faith. This level of internalization points to a form of religiosity that is not merely ritualistic or symbolic, but one that is ethically grounded and contextually responsive. Such a disposition is essential for future PAI educators who are expected to serve as moral exemplars and contribute constructively within increasingly diverse and pluralistic societies.

The statistically significant and strong positive correlation between religious maturity and substantive religiosity ( $r = 0.631$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) reinforces the conceptual linkage between cognitive-spiritual development and meaningful religious practice. These findings support the theoretical view that mature religious understanding enhances one's capacity to live out faith in a reflective, ethical, and socially responsive manner. In this context, religious maturity acts as a catalyst for non-formalistic, values-driven religiosity—an attribute of particular relevance for educators entrusted with cultivating moral and spiritual awareness among students.

In light of these findings, the study underscores the need for Islamic Religious Education curricula that extend beyond cognitive instruction to actively foster spiritual maturity. Integrative approaches that involve reflective practice, value habituation, experiential learning, and participation in supportive religious communities are essential to cultivate well-rounded educators. To deepen and broaden understanding, future research should adopt more diverse sampling strategies across academic disciplines, institutions, and regions, and incorporate mixed methods to capture the lived experiences and spiritual dynamics of students. Longitudinal designs and culturally attuned instruments would further enhance the validity and depth of such investigations, while also illuminating the roles of institutional, interpersonal, and digital influences in shaping students' religiosity.

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