

Ethical Invasion in Islamic Religious Education Scholarships: The Influence of Funding on Academic Autonomy

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Abstract

Scholarship programs in Islamic religious education are generally positioned as instruments for expanding access and strengthening human resource capacity; however, the micro-ethical dimension of how funding and its accountability mechanisms shape recipients' intellectual orientation and academic autonomy remains relatively understudied, particularly among Islamic religious education scholarship holders. This study aims to empirically test the "ethical invasion" hypothesis, namely the assumption that scholarship funding is related to the configuration of recipients' academic autonomy. Using an explanatory quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design, the study involves 30 purposively selected scholarship recipients ($N = 30$). Data were collected through a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire measuring Funding Influence (X) and Academic Autonomy (Y) as composite scores (thought orientation and academic independence), covering aspects of dependence, freedom of expression, privacy and data use, values and ideology, pressure to comply, and future expectations. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics, assumption testing (Kolmogorov–Smirnov residual normality and linearity), and simple linear regression using IBM SPSS 27. The results indicate a significant regression model ($F = 21.752$; $p < 0.001$) with a relationship strength of $R = 0.661$ and $R^2 = 0.437$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.417$), showing that scholarship funding predicts meaningful variation in academic autonomy among respondents. These findings support the relevance of the "ethical invasion" hypothesis and imply the need for scholarship governance that balances accountability with the protection of academic freedom, particularly through clear limits on monitoring indicators, transparency in data approval,

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and secure feedback channels for recipients to safeguard autonomy in Islamic religious education contexts.

Keywords: Ethical Invasion; Scholarship Funding; Academic Autonomy; Academic Freedom; Compliance Pressure

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of scholarship programs—whether funded by the state, donor agencies, or inter-ministerial collaborations—has become a global phenomenon in the landscape of higher education. On the one hand, scholarships are understood as instruments of social mobility and human resource investment: they open access, improve qualifications, and are expected to strengthen the research and leadership capacities of the younger generation (Campbell & Neff, 2020; Rachman, 2023). However, international literature also emphasizes that scholarships are never completely neutral. Scholarships often carry a set of “program rationalities” in the form of development targets, service contracts, achievement standards, and narratives of “repaying the favor” that can shape how recipients interpret their studies, careers, and social positions (Campbell, 2018; Campbell & Mawer, 2019). When education funding is managed through strict administrative mechanisms (reporting, evaluation, restriction of choices, or emphasis on specific outputs), scholarships have the potential to move from being mere assistance to becoming a steering device and, in certain situations, even an “ethical invasion” that infiltrates through funding to influence the recipients' orientation of thought and academic autonomy.

This issue is increasingly relevant in the context of academic freedom and autonomy, which are under pressure globally. Recent comparative measurements of academic freedom show that the dimensions of freedom to research, freedom of dissemination, institutional autonomy, and campus integrity are areas vulnerable to restrictions (Spannagel & Kinzelbach, 2023). In the digital age, this pressure can arise not only through direct prohibitions, but also through surveillance, standardization, and the “datafication” of academic activities—which encourages excessive caution, conformity, or even self-censorship (Tanczer et al., 2020). From the perspective of educational policy ethics, discussions about scholarships also raise dilemmas between an individual rights-based (empowerment) approach and collective/state interests (instrumentality), especially

when scholarships come with conditions that demand compliance with a particular agenda (Lehr, 2008). Thus, the main question is not simply “are scholarships effective,” but “how does funding shape the power relations and morality that guide academic subjects.”

In the Indonesian context, this logic is evident in the position of scholarships as a pillar of development. A study of the LPDP, for example, positions postgraduate scholarship programs as a policy instrument that ties education to the agenda of economic “catching up” and human capital strengthening (Rachman, 2023). At the same time, more recent analyses show a sharpening of justifications—from the dominance of human capital to an increasingly plural mix of justifications, including sentiments of nationalism and coordinated values of the “common good” (Saling, 2025). In the policy realm, national and religious scholarship schemes have also developed through cross-institutional collaboration. The Indonesian Education Scholarship (BPI), for example, is promoted as a collaborative program between the government and LPDP funding to support degree and non-degree studies (Jatnika, 2024). In the Islamic religious education sector, the Indonesia Bangkit Scholarship (BIB) is positioned as a collaborative scholarship scheme between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and LPDP that emphasizes career development, experience, and educational networks for the community (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025). This policy fact confirms that scholarship funding is not only a matter of material support, but also part of human resource management, policy legitimacy, and the construction of the “ideal profile” of scholarship recipients.

Researchers respond to these dynamics by viewing scholarships as an arena of ethics and power: funding can be a medium of “soft power” that works subtly through attraction, values, and future imagination, rather than direct coercion (Nye, 2004). In fact, even when the rhetoric used is one of opportunity and meritocracy, program practices can still instill certain orientations through evaluation mechanisms, standards of success, and implied expectations of contribution (Campbell & Mawer, 2019; Gauttam et al., 2024). Within the framework of capabilities, financial support should expand the substantive freedom of recipients to choose the academic life they value, rather than narrowing it down to conformity to a single model of success (Sen, 1999). In the realm of Islamic higher education, discussions about scientific paradigms also place the development of science as a process that demands responsible freedom, namely academic openness that is still guided by ethics and the horizon of revelatory values (Abdullah, 2017). Here, the problem of “ethical invasion” becomes important: not to reject values in Islamic education, but to

distinguish between ethical guidance that empowers and normative control that diminishes academic autonomy.

Previous studies have laid an important foundation: systematic studies of international scholarships emphasize program design variations, social impacts, and tensions between development goals, rights, and capabilities (Campbell & Mawer, 2019; Campbell & Neff, 2020). There is also explicit discussion of “conditionality” (post-scholarship requirements) and how recipients negotiate their agency under program guidelines (Campbell, 2018). Studies in the Indonesian context show scholarships as instruments of development policy and human capital rationality (Rachman, 2023), as well as shifts in value justification and social coordination in large-scale scholarship governance (Saling, 2025). However, there are still notable gaps: these studies generally assess scholarships at the policy and macro-outcome levels, while the micro-ethical dimension—namely, how financing (and the accompanying dependency relationships) influences the recipients' orientation of thought and academic autonomy—remains limited, especially among recipients of Islamic religious education scholarships who have a distinctive landscape of values, scientific traditions, and moral expectations. This gap is the basis for the novelty of this research: empirically testing “ethical invasion” as a working hypothesis, namely the assumption that financing schemes may correlate with changes in intellectual orientation and academic independence.

Based on this gap, this study focuses on analyzing the influence of scholarship funding on the academic autonomy of Islamic religious education scholarship recipients, with academic autonomy understood as a combination of intellectual orientation (ways of viewing knowledge, criticism, and academic position) and academic independence (the ability to make autonomous decisions about learning/research). Operationally, this study aims to explain whether and to what extent financing—as material support and a management mechanism—is related to the degree of academic autonomy of scholarship recipients, thereby enriching the ethical, policy, and philosophical discussions in Islamic education regarding the relationship between educational assistance, power, and freedom of thought.

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory orientation, as its main objective is to examine the effect (cause and effect) of scholarship funding variables on the academic autonomy of scholarship recipients. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for standardized measurement of constructs through numerical scores and testing of relationships between constructs using inferential statistics (Creswell, 2014; Sugiyono, 2019). The quantitative framework is also relevant for assessing “ethical invasion” operationally, namely through indicators of scholarship recipients' perceptions of moral obligations, freedom of expression, privacy, and pressure to comply, which can be measured using a questionnaire instrument.

The design used is a cross-sectional survey, in which data collection is conducted once in a single period to capture respondents' perceptions at the same time. A survey is considered appropriate because the study targets the subjective experiences of scholarship recipients in the form of perceptions that are more efficiently collected through structured questionnaires (Fowler, 2014). Unlike scholarship survey studies that generally stop at evaluating the benefits or satisfaction of the program, the design of this study is directed at testing the predictive relationship between funding and academic autonomy through a regression model, with instruments that specifically include the dimension of “ethical invasion” (value pressure, privacy, loyalty, and the formation of direction of thought).

The research population is defined as recipients of Islamic religious education scholarships who meet the following criteria: (1) are currently receiving or have received scholarship funding; (2) are involved in academic-religious activities; and (3) are willing to voluntarily complete the questionnaire. The most appropriate sampling technique for this context is purposive sampling, because the selection of respondents is based on certain characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019). The research sample consisted of 30 respondents ($N = 30$) as reflected in the descriptive analysis output of variables X and Y. In terms of analytical feasibility, this sample size is still adequate for simple linear regression (one predictor), especially when the assumption checking procedure is carried out strictly (Hair et al., 2019).

The data collection instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire with a Likert scale to measure two main constructs: the Influence of Funding (X) and Academic Autonomy (Y). The questionnaire items were arranged into six aspects representing the dimensions of

ethical invasion and academic autonomy, including: (a) funding and dependence (P1–P4), (b) freedom of expression (A1–A4), (c) privacy and personal data (B1–B4), (d) values/morals/ideology (C1–C4), (e) social pressure & compliance (D1–D4), and (f) role/expectations/future (E1–E4).

The development of the instrument followed the principles of construct measurement, including refining the operational definition, writing items that represent the concept domain, and checking readability (DeVellis, 2017). In line with psychometric instrument development practices in reputable journals, the instrument quality evaluation process was conducted through validity and reliability testing (Yusuf et al., 2024). Internal reliability in quantitative research is commonly examined using coefficients such as Cronbach's alpha, accompanied by proportional interpretation (Taber, 2018). At the processing stage, items with a negative tone can be treated as reverse-coded so that the score direction is consistent with the construct definition.

Data analysis was conducted in the following stages: (1) data checking (completeness and consistency of responses), (2) formation of composite scores for variables X and Y based on item mapping in the codebook, (3) descriptive statistics (minimum–maximum, mean, and standard deviation), and (4) testing of assumptions and inferential models. The output shows descriptive statistics for both variables with $N = 30$. Before testing the effect, regression assumptions were tested, specifically the normality of residuals using Kolmogorov–Smirnov and checking the linearity of the X–Y relationship.

The main inferential analysis used simple linear regression to test whether funding (X) predicts academic autonomy (Y), with the help of IBM SPSS software (recorded using SPSS version 27.0). In the reporting, the interpretation of regression coefficients, significance values (p), and effect sizes such as R and R^2 followed the guidelines for SPSS-based regression analysis, which emphasized the readability of results and caution in drawing conclusions (Field, 2023; Pallant, 2020).

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the survey data analysis that examines the effect of scholarship funding (X) on academic autonomy (Y). In this study, academic autonomy is operationalized as a composite score of the *orientation of thinking and academic independence* of scholarship recipients.

Descriptive statistics of research variables

Descriptive analysis was conducted to obtain an overview of the distribution of scores for each variable. The results show that the number of respondents (Valid N) was 30. The scholarship funding (X) score ranged from 32–60 with an average of 41.13 (SD = 5.171). Meanwhile, the academic autonomy (Y) score ranged from 36–59 with an average of 41.83 (SD = 4.807).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pengaruh Pembiayaan	30	32	60	41.13	5.171
Orientasi Pemikiran dan Kemandirian Akademik	30	36	59	41.83	4.807
Valid N (listwise)	30				

In general, the mean of both variables is in the upper-middle range of the total score, indicating that respondents tend to give relatively high ratings to both their experience of “funding influence” and their academic autonomy (as a composite score).

Regression assumption test

Before testing the regression model, the main assumptions were examined, namely residual normality and linearity of the relationship between variables. This examination is important so that simple linear regression estimates can be interpreted more validly (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020).

Residual normality

The normality test was performed using the One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test on the unstandardized residual. The test results showed Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.200 and Monte Carlo Sig. = 0.503 ($p > 0.05$). Thus, the model residuals did not show a significant deviation from the normal distribution.

Table 2. Residual normality test**One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test**

		Unstandardized Residual	
N		30	
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	.0000000	
	Std. Deviation	3.60635201	
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.107	
	Positive	.107	
	Negative	-.073	
Test Statistic		.107	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c		.200 ^d	
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) ^e	Sig.	.503	
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.490
		Upper Bound	.516

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.

Important note for reporting: what is tested at this stage is the normality of residuals, not the “normality of variables X and Y” directly. Normal residuals reinforce the suitability of using simple linear regression to model the predictive relationship of X to Y.

Linearity of the relationship between X and Y

A linearity test was conducted to ensure that the relationship between funding (X) and academic autonomy (Y) follows a linear pattern. The deviation from linearity value shows a significance of 0.437 ($p > 0.05$), so the relationship between X and Y can be declared linear.

Table 3. Linearity test of the relationship

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Orientasi Pemikiran dan Kemandirian Akademik* Pengaruh Pembiayaan	Between Groups	(Combined)	475.583	14	33.970	2.619	.037
		Linearity	292.999	1	292.999	22.587	<.001
		Deviation from Linearity	182.584	13	14.045	1.083	.437
	Within Groups		194.583	15	12.972		
	Total		670.167	29			

Simple linear regression results

After the assumptions were met, the analysis continued with simple linear regression to test whether financing (X) had a significant effect on academic autonomy (Y). The model significance test based on the ANOVA table shows a value of $F = 21.752$ with $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$ (in APA reporting, this can be written as $p < 0.001$). This means that the regression model that includes the financing variable as a predictor is able to explain the variation in academic autonomy in a meaningful way.

Table 4. Regression model significance test

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	292.999	1	292.999	21.752	.000 ^b
Residual	377.167	28	13.470		
Total	670.167	29			

a. Dependent Variable: Orientasi Pemikiran dan Kemandirian Akademik

b. Predictors: (Constant), Pengaruh Pembiayaan

Furthermore, the magnitude of the relationship strength and predictor contribution can be seen in the Model Summary. The model correlation value is $R = 0.661$, while $R^2 = 0.437$ and Adjusted $R^2 = 0.417$. This means that approximately 43.7% of the variation in academic autonomy scores (Y) can be explained by the influence of funding (X), while the remainder (approximately 56.3%) is influenced by other factors outside the research model.

Table 5. Model summary

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.661 ^a	.437	.417	3.670

a. Predictors: (Constant), Pengaruh Pembiayaan

b. Dependent Variable: Orientasi Pemikiran dan Kemandirian Akademik

Thus, empirically, this study finds that scholarship funding is a significant predictor of academic autonomy (measured as a composite score of thought orientation and academic independence). At this Results stage, the findings are presented as predictive-statistical relationships; the elaboration of the meaning of “ethical invasion” and its philosophical consequences will be explored in depth in the Discussion section, including an explanation of how the influence of funding can work through the mechanisms of moral relations, caution in expressing opinions, and the governance of scholarship programs as perceived by recipients.

DISCUSSION

Meaning of Key Findings

The quantitative findings of this study indicate that scholarship funding is not a “neutral” variable in the academic experience of recipients, but rather correlates with and contributes statistically to variations in thought orientation and academic autonomy. Descriptively, the average scholarship funding score ($M = 41.13$; $SD = 5.17$; $N = 30$) and the average thinking orientation–academic autonomy score ($M = 41.83$; $SD = 4.81$; $N = 30$) indicate that these two constructs are quite prominent among respondents. At the prerequisite level, the model residuals were indicated to be normal (Asymp. Sig. = 0.200) and the X–Y relationship met the linearity assumption (deviation from linearity Sig. = 0.437).

More importantly, the simple linear regression test shows that the model is significant ($F = 21.752$; Sig. = 0.000), so that financing can be used to predict variations in thinking orientation–academic independence in the research sample. The coefficient of determination shows $R = 0.661$ with $R^2 = 0.437$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.417$), which means that approximately 43.7% of the variation in academic independence-thinking orientation scores

is explained by funding in this simple model. Epistemically, this figure is not merely a matter of “the magnitude of influence,” but rather an indicator that scholarship funding is intertwined with the formation of academic dispositions: how to assess issues, the sense of security in expressing views, how to interpret loyalty, and how to read the academic future.

Within the framework of “ethical invasion,” these findings can be understood as a symptom of financial support transforming into a normative relationship: the emergence of experiences of moral attachment, caution in expressing views, and the perception that scholarship programs can carry a certain value mission. The research instrument was deliberately designed to capture the spectrum of experiences ranging from financing and dependence; freedom of expression; privacy and data; moral-ideological values; social pressure; to future expectations—so that “ethical invasion” is read not as a single accusation, but as a layered space of experience.

Financing as an Ethical Relationship

Conceptually, scholarships are instruments of opportunity redistribution. However, at the same time, scholarships can also function as instruments of subject formation: recipients are positioned as actors who are both “supported” and “directed.” This is where “ethical invasion” becomes an analytical term: it points to a subtle shift from assistance to demands, from facilitation to conditioning, from support to standardization. In the discourse of global higher education, the literature asserts that scholarship programs often carry diverse mandates: human resource development, diplomacy, alumni networking, and broader socio-political agendas (Campbell & Mawer, 2019; Campbell & Neff, 2020).

From the perspective of educational ethics, the problem is not the “presence or absence of objectives,” but rather how those objectives are realized: whether through open academic persuasion or through symbolic pressure that is difficult to trace. This research instrument captures these vulnerable areas, such as experiences of “moral obligation,” caution in expressing views, and the perception that funding can influence how social and religious issues are assessed. From an institutional ethics perspective, aid relationships tend to generate “debt of gratitude” as social currency. Under certain conditions, this debt of gratitude can shift into tacit compliance: not because scientific arguments are stronger, but because the social risk (the stigma of disloyalty) is considered too high.

The literature on international scholarships shows that their impact is often ambivalent. On the one hand, scholarships increase the academic capacity and expand the

social capital of recipients; on the other hand, scholarships can insert an institutional agenda that makes recipients “conform” to program expectations (Campbell & Neff, 2020). In other words, financial assistance can simultaneously expand learning space and narrow speaking space—depending on program design, organizational culture, and evaluation mechanisms. The regression findings in this study provide empirical evidence that funding is strongly related to the orientation–autonomy configuration, so that this ambivalence is not merely a theoretical assumption, but is evident in the experiences of recipients in the context of Islamic religious education.

Academic Autonomy and Freedom of Expression

Academic autonomy in the context of this study is defined as the capacity of scholarship recipients to think critically, make decisions, conduct evaluations, and express their views in an academic environment without non-scientific pressures that could limit their freedom of expression. At the micro level, this autonomy is evident in individuals' courage to criticize policies, their sense of security in expressing different opinions, and their freedom to express personal perspectives. Indicators relevant to freedom of expression, such as feeling safe in expressing views, concerns about being labeled as disloyal, and the urge to align views with institutional expectations, are revealed in this research instrument (Danell, 2025).

In educational studies, the relationship between funding and academic freedom is often analyzed through the lens of the concept of performativity. When educational institutions assess success based on indicators of compliance, reputation, and program targets, the subjects involved tend to internalize “safe ways” to maintain recognition. As explained by Ball (2003), the logic of performativity can transform the professional ethos from a search for truth to mere management of impressions and compliance with certain indicators (Danell, 2025). If this logic is applied to scholarship programs—for example, through evaluations that demand uniformity of attitude—then academic autonomy can be reduced to merely “performance” that is deemed to meet the expectations of educational institutions.

At the macro level, the issue of academic freedom is closely related to broader academic ecological conditions. Data from the Academic Freedom Index (AFI) shows that academic freedom can be measured through several dimensions, including freedom in research and teaching, academic exchange, freedom of expression, institutional autonomy,

and campus integrity (Nursyamsi et al., 2022). Although the AFI operates at the country level, its relevance to this study lies in its emphasis that academic freedom is always vulnerable to various mechanisms of control, whether political, administrative, or financial.

In the context of religious education scholarships, such control does not always take the form of formal prohibitions; it often appears as norms of propriety and standards of loyalty, which can force scholarship recipients to choose to remain silent. Therefore, the understanding of “ethical invasion” needs to be placed as a form of control that operates through morality, not only in the realm of regulation. This shows that the supervision carried out has an impact on academic freedom and makes open dialogue something that scholarship recipients may fear (Aulia et al., 2024). Thus, the issues of academic autonomy and freedom of expression are serious challenges in the context of Islamic religious education scholarship programs, which simultaneously encourage space for the exploration of ideas and constructive criticism while considering the risks of social and institutional pressure.

Privacy and Monitoring as an Ecology of Control

Privacy and personal data are fundamental aspects of conducting research, especially in the context of scholarship programs that require monitoring of scholarship recipients' academic progress. This study shows that individuals' perceptions of privacy, including discomfort in sharing daily information and feeling overly monitored, have the potential to create a line between the transparency necessary for accountability and unethical invasion of privacy (Price & Cohen, 2019; Shah, 2024).

In the practice of modern scholarship programs, monitoring is an important element for maintaining accountability. However, if monitoring is not based on the principles of data minimization and explicit consent, it risks transforming into an excessive surveillance mechanism. In this context, the use of data must be in line with clear objectives, where boundaries must be set to distinguish between information that is relevant to academic progress and that which is private (Mann et al., 2016; Price & Cohen, 2019) For example, awareness of the importance of written consent from research subjects is crucial to maintaining individual integrity and privacy (Kaplan, 2016; Mann et al., 2016).

In educational ethics, the relevant question is not simply whether reports need to be made, but to what extent these reports can ensure learning progress without entering into the realm of irrelevant privacy (Price & Cohen, 2019; Saeidnia et al., 2024). The

discomfort felt by scholarship recipients when asked to share overly detailed information and their experience of feeling overly monitored indicate significant ethical challenges. The use of technology, such as data-based monitoring tools and artificial intelligence, can add a new dimension to this problem; these tools are often equipped with the ability to collect more information than is necessary for legitimate research purposes (Downing et al., 2024; Moreno et al., 2013; Shah, 2024). When research enters the realm of personal data, it is necessary to consider how that information will be used and stored, as well as who has rights to the data. Openness, flexibility, and accountability are key in managing the use of health data (Kaplan, 2016). Researchers, educational institutions, and scholarship providers must ensure not only that their operations are transparent but also that they respect individual privacy boundaries as part of their social responsibility (Ahluwalia, 2021; Shah, 2024). Conducting ongoing evaluations of the impact of data use and applying ethical principles in decision-making are essential to prevent privacy violations (Ikwuanusi et al., 2023; Reddy et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to recognize that the experiences of scholarship recipients often fall into a gray area between necessary accountability and unwanted privacy invasions. Ensuring that monitoring is conducted in a manner that considers ethics, consent, and data relevance will help create a healthy balance between transparency and privacy protection in research.

Dialogue with Previous Studies

The findings of this study resonate with the global scholarship literature that emphasizes that scholarships often carry a “double message”: capacity building and agenda promotion (Campbell & Mawer, 2019; Campbell & Neff, 2020). However, the contribution of this study lies in its specific focus: the context of scholarships in Islamic religious education and their ethical consequences for academic autonomy, rather than merely economic outcomes or academic achievement. In other words, this study broadens the conversation from “what are the benefits of scholarships” to “what are the ethical consequences of scholarships for freedom of thought.”

Studies on soft power are also relevant as a comparative lens. A systematic review of education as a source of soft power confirms that education—including scholarships—is often positioned as a means of building influence and networks, with certain conditions for that influence to be effective (Gauttam et al., 2024). If scholarships are understood as a space for forming networks and influence, then ethical questions become increasingly

important: is influence formed through the equal exchange of knowledge, or through the standardization of views that narrow academic plurality? In the context of Islamic religious education, plurality is not an accessory; it is at the core of scientific tradition because differences in *ijtihad*, various approaches to interpretation, and differences in thought patterns are part of the dynamics of science.

In the context of Indonesian PTKIN, the study by Hasbiyallah et al. presents the face of Islam in religious universities as a non-singular reality involving a variety of orientations, discourses, and constantly changing dynamics of thought (Hasbiyallah et al., 2019). The implication is that when a scholarship program carries a certain mission (whether explicit or implicit), it has the potential to interact with this diversity in a tense manner: encouraging uniformity in a space that actually requires dialogue and scientific differentiation. At this point, “ethical invasion” can be understood as the failure of program design to recognize epistemic diversity: recipients are not only “beneficiaries” but also subjects of knowledge who have the right to differ in their academic assessments.

From a statistical perspective, the moderate-strong correlation ($R = 0.661$) and relatively substantial explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.437$) indicate that this phenomenon is not merely a sporadic individual case. Although the sample is limited, the empirical signal is quite clear: funding is related to the ecology of orientation–autonomy. This enriches the existing literature, which often focuses its analysis on “program success” and “alumni impact,” by offering attention to “ethical consequences” that are often unrecorded in program indicators.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study emphasizes that scholarship funding should be viewed as an ethical relationship, not merely an administrative one. This ethical relationship encompasses potential power imbalances between scholarship recipients and providers, the internationalization of certain norms, and homogenization through more subtle mechanisms such as monitoring and loyalty standards.

Considering this perspective, the concept of “ethical invasion” can be positioned as a significant conceptual contribution to the analysis of scholarship programs, particularly in the context of Islamic religious education. This is particularly relevant when examining how the value orientation of programs interacts with academic traditions that should demand freedom of argumentation and exploration (Nadirah, 2023). As explained by Junaidah, the

importance of an ethics-based approach in education encourages the formation of positive norms, promotes integrity, and balances social responsibility in an academic context (Junaidah, 2025). This study also shows that research on the dynamics of Islamic education must consider broader social and cultural changes and the enforcement of pluralistic values (Sofi et al., 2025; Tuginova et al., 2020).

From a practical perspective, the results of this study have several policy implications for scholarship programs. First, funding accountability should be limited to relevant academic indicators, such as study progress and academic integrity. Assessments should not include ideological aspects or preference for views that could cause bias (Safingah et al., 2025). This is in line with the view that the implementation of transparent accountability practices needs to consider the broader social and cultural context of Islamic education (Deesaeh, 2025).

Second, monitoring mechanisms should follow the principle of proportionality, whereby the data collected is minimal and has a clear purpose, and the approval procedures are transparent. This approach aims to avoid excessive surveillance that could turn individual privacy into a harmful disciplinary tool (Deesaeh, 2025). This study shows that discomfort with the collection of personal data and perceptions of excessive monitoring are very real among scholarship recipients (Junaidah, 2025; Sofi et al., 2025).

Third, it is important to institutionalize a safe space for dialogue for scholarship recipients to provide criticism and feedback without fear of threats to their status. Perceptions of freedom of expression and fear of being labeled disloyal, as expressed in the research instrument, underscore that psychological security is a prerequisite for academic autonomy (Nadirah, 2023). Finally, scholarship programs in Islamic religious education should consider diversity of thought as a valuable asset, as revealed in the broader dynamics of Islamic education in religious higher education institutions (Chasanah & Roqib, 2025). Thus, this study not only provides deep theoretical insights but also recommends practical policies that can be adopted to improve and maintain ethical accountability in scholarship programs.

Limitations and Research Agenda

In this study, there are several limitations that are important to recognize and consider. First, the relatively small sample size ($N = 30$) requires researchers to be cautious in generalizing to the entire population of Islamic religious education scholarship

recipients. A limited sample size can affect statistical power and the ability to obtain results that are fully representative of a broader population (Sarvet et al., 2018; Suliarta et al., 2021). In the context of previous research, Sarvet et al. stated that a larger sample size is often necessary to improve the validity and reliability of the results.

Second, the research design using a cross-sectional survey presents its own challenges. The relationships found in this study tend to be associative rather than causal. Although the regression model shows significance, this cannot necessarily be interpreted as a cause-and-effect relationship (Maythy Lasut et al., 2023; Murdiyanti et al., 2022). For example, in another study, Murdiyanti et al. showed that cross-sectional study designs limit the assessment of causal relationships between related variables. Therefore, it is recommended that further research use multivariate designs such as multiple regression or Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to explore the complexity of the data and the deeper relationships between variables (Mintawati et al., 2023; Tukinova et al., 2020). A mixed approach, combining surveys and in-depth interviews, is also proposed to investigate the mechanisms of ethical invasion in greater depth (Hung et al., 2022).

Recognizing these limitations, further research could focus more on developing more robust and representative methodologies, so that the results are more accurate in describing the influence of monitoring and privacy in the context of higher education.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the effect of scholarship funding on the academic autonomy of Islamic religious education scholarship recipients. The results of simple linear regression show that funding is a significant predictor of academic autonomy ($F = 21.752$; $p < 0.001$), with a fairly strong relationship ($R = 0.661$) and moderate explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.437$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.417$). Substantively, these findings confirm that scholarship funding not only serves as material support but also correlates with the configuration of recipients' thinking orientation and academic independence. Thus, the concept of "ethical invasion" can be understood as a normative relationship that has the potential to be formed through scholarship funding and management mechanisms, thereby requiring management that maintains a balance between accountability and academic autonomy.

The limitations of this study lie in the relatively small sample size ($N = 30$) and cross-sectional survey design, so that the interpretation of the findings is associative and

cannot be used as a basis for strong claims of causality. In addition, perception-based data and a simple regression model open up the possibility that other variables that influence academic autonomy have not been accommodated in the model.

Further research is recommended to expand the sample size and enrich the analysis design by separating the construct of academic autonomy into more specific sub-dimensions, as well as testing mediating variables such as moral obligation, pressure to comply, or perceptions of monitoring. Strengthening the mixed methods approach is also important so that the mechanism of “ethical invasion” can be explained in greater depth through the narratives of recipients' experiences, while also strengthening scholarship governance recommendations that protect the space for academic autonomy.

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