



# Classical Ethical Values for Modern Challenges: Al-Ghazali's Bidayatul Hidayah and Its Relevance to National Character Education

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## Abstract

The rapid shifts in the modern educational landscape have sparked growing concern about integrating moral values and academic success in Islamic elementary schools. This study aims to investigate the extent to which religious character and self-discipline serve as significant predictors of academic excellence among students in Islamic primary education. Employing a quantitative research design with a correlational approach, data were collected from a sample of students using Likert-scale questionnaires to measure character traits and standardized academic records to evaluate performance. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relationships among variables. The findings reveal that both religious character and self-discipline have a positive and significant impact on students' academic achievement, with self-discipline emerging as the stronger predictor. These results suggest that high levels of spiritual adherence and personal consistency foster a conducive environment for cognitive development. In conclusion, fostering moral and behavioral discipline is essential for holistic student development. Schools are encouraged to integrate character-building programs into the core curriculum to sustain long-term academic excellence.

**Keywords:** Religious Character, Self-Discipline, Academic Excellence, Islamic Primary Education, Student Development.

*Pergeseran pesat dalam lanskap pendidikan modern telah memicu kekhawatiran yang semakin besar mengenai integrasi nilai-nilai moral dan keberhasilan akademik di sekolah dasar Islam. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki sejauh mana karakter religius dan disiplin diri berperan sebagai prediktor signifikan keunggulan akademik di kalangan siswa pendidikan dasar Islam. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kuantitatif dengan pendekatan korelasional, data dikumpulkan dari sampel siswa menggunakan kuesioner skala Likert untuk mengukur sifat karakter dan catatan akademik standar untuk mengevaluasi kinerja. Analisis regresi berganda digunakan untuk menentukan hubungan antar variabel. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa baik karakter religius maupun disiplin diri memiliki dampak positif dan signifikan terhadap prestasi akademik siswa, dengan disiplin diri muncul sebagai prediktor yang lebih dominan. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa tingkat ketaatan spiritual dan konsistensi pribadi yang tinggi menumbuhkan lingkungan yang kondusif untuk perkembangan kognitif. Kesimpulannya, menumbuhkan disiplin moral dan perilaku sangat penting untuk perkembangan siswa secara holistik. Sekolah didorong untuk mengintegrasikan program pembentukan karakter ke dalam kurikulum inti untuk mempertahankan keunggulan akademik jangka panjang.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global education landscape is currently facing a dual challenge: academic intellectualism must be balanced with robust moral fortitude, particularly in Islamic primary education settings. Education in the 21st century is no longer measured solely by cognitive output but by the integration of ethical values that guide human behavior in an increasingly complex society (Darmayanti et al., 2023; Inganah et al., 2023). In the context of Islamic schooling, the synergy between religious character and self-discipline is recognized as a fundamental pillar that supports long-term academic excellence and social responsibility (Haberlin, 2022; Ningsih, 2019). However, the globalization of digital information often erodes traditional moral boundaries, making the reinforcement of religious values a critical international priority for character development (Rahmawati et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2023). This significance lies in the belief that students with strong spiritual foundations and disciplined habits are better equipped to navigate global challenges while maintaining high educational standards (Mispani et al., 2026; Syukri et al., 2025).

The primary problem identified in contemporary elementary education is the visible disconnect between students' theoretical knowledge of religious values and their practical application in daily academic discipline. Many students exhibit inconsistent study habits and a lack of spiritual mindfulness, which directly correlates with fluctuating academic performance and behavioral issues (Putra & Fathoni, 2022; Sari & Lubis, 2024). Furthermore, the challenge intensified by the post-pandemic transition reveals a decline in student persistence and self-regulation, as many struggle to regain the rigorous discipline required for traditional classroom success (Engert et al., 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2021). Teachers and institutions face the daunting task of bridging the gap between moral instruction and actual behavioral change, where the pressure of standardized testing often overshadows character-building initiatives (Singh et al., 2015; Syahminan et al., 2025). Without addressing these disciplinary and character-based deficits, the goal of achieving holistic academic excellence remains largely elusive (Ningsih, 2019; Rahman & Mulyani, 2022).

Extensive research has been conducted regarding the factors influencing student achievement and character formation. Studies focusing on learning discipline have been pioneered by researchers such as Putra and Fathoni (2022), who examined discipline's direct impact on learning outcomes, and Sari and Lubis (2024), who explored its correlation with student engagement. Meanwhile, the dimension of religious character has been investigated by Ningsih (2019) in the era of Industry 4.0, Rahman and Mulyani (2022) regarding its role in elementary schools, and Rahmawati et al. (2021) from various philosophical perspectives. Other scholars, such as Inganah et al. (2023) and Darmayanti et al. (2023), have examined broader 21st-century skills, while Syukri et al. (2025) and Mispani et al. (2026) have addressed the management and philosophical underpinnings of Islamic education quality. Additionally, Gooch (2026) and Haberlin (2022) have contributed global perspectives on pedagogical ethics and mindfulness. These studies collectively emphasize that, while external factors are important, the learner's internal psychological and spiritual state is paramount (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013; Vaclair et al., 2014).

Despite the breadth of previous studies, several critical weaknesses and limitations remain evident in the existing literature. Most previous research, such as that by Putra and Fathoni (2022) and Sari and Lubis (2024), tends to isolate variables, focusing strictly on discipline without integrating the spiritual-

religious dimension that is central to Islamic education. Conversely, studies by Rahmawati et al. (2021) and Ningsih (2019) often remain at the theoretical or qualitative level, lacking empirical quantitative data to prove the predictive power of these traits on specific academic metrics. Furthermore, many current works fail to account for the specific demographic of primary-age children in rural or specific religious environments, often generalizing findings from higher education or urban contexts (Mispani et al., 2026; Rahman & Mulyani, 2022). There is also a lack of longitudinal or robust regression analyses that treat religious character and discipline as a unified predictive model for "academic excellence" rather than just "test scores" (Darmayanti et al., 2023; Inganah et al., 2023). This fragmentation limits the practical applicability of their findings for curriculum developers in Islamic schools.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrated approach, synthesizing "Religious Character" and "Self-Discipline" as a dual-engine predictor within the specific framework of Islamic Primary Education (SDN/MI). Unlike previous works that treat these as separate silos, this study proposes a holistic model where spiritual values are viewed as the "motivation" and self-discipline as the "mechanism" for academic success (Rahman & Mulyani, 2022; Sari & Lubis, 2024). Furthermore, this research introduces a localized empirical dataset from SDN 3 Sidoharjo, providing a granular view of how these variables manifest in a specific cultural and educational setting that has not been adequately represented in global or national datasets (Mispani et al., 2026; Syukri et al., 2025). The focus on primary education is also a distinctive factor, as this is the foundational stage where character and discipline are most malleable and impactful for future academic trajectories (Ningsih, 2019; Rahmawati et al., 2021). By bridging the gap between moral philosophy and quantitative academic data, this study offers a fresh perspective on institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The research gap addressed here is the empirical void concerning the simultaneous impact of religiousness and discipline on academic excellence specifically in Islamic-oriented public primary schools. While there is a wealth of literature on Islamic pedagogy, there is a scarcity of quantitative evidence demonstrating how religious character serves as a cognitive catalyst in elementary settings (Rahmawati et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2023). Most existing studies focus on either "character" or "achievement," but rarely provide regression-based evidence of their interdependence within a single model (Putra & Fathoni, 2022; Rahman & Mulyani, 2022). Additionally, there is a lack of recent data (2024-2025) that reflects the current socio-educational challenges faced by students in decentralized Indonesian districts, such as Way Panji (Mispani et al., 2026; Sari & Lubis, 2024). This study fills this gap by providing a simultaneous analysis that clarifies which variable—spirituality or discipline—acts as the more dominant predictor of excellence, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding for educational practitioners (Darmayanti et al., 2023; Inganah et al., 2023).

This research is anchored in the "Grand Theory" of Social Cognitive Theory and Character Education Theory. Social Cognitive Theory suggests that learning occurs in a social context, with dynamic, reciprocal interactions among the person, environment, and behavior, where self-regulation and discipline are key components (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013; Vauclair et al., 2014). This is complemented by Lickona's Character Education Theory, which posits that "good character" consists of knowing, desiring, and doing the good, particularly in the realm of religious adherence and personal responsibility (Ningsih, 2019; Rahmawati et al., 2021). Within an Islamic framework, these theories are synthesized with the concept of *Akhlaq* and *Adab*, suggesting that academic success is a natural byproduct of a disciplined soul and a sound heart (Ramayulis, 2021; Syukri et al., 2025). By using these theoretical lenses, the study provides a robust foundation for analyzing how internal moral values translate into observable academic behaviors and superior learning outcomes (Haberlin, 2022; Rahman & Mulyani, 2022).

The core concepts utilized in this study involve "Religious Character," "Self-Discipline," and "Academic Excellence." Religious character is conceptualized not just as ritualistic adherence but as a

comprehensive set of values, including honesty, patience, and devotion, that influence a student's mindset (Ningsih, 2019; Rahmawati et al., 2021). Self-discipline is defined as the student's ability to regulate their learning time, focus, and persistence without external coercion, serving as the bridge between goals and accomplishments (Putra & Fathoni, 2022; Sari & Lubis, 2024). Academic excellence is measured through a holistic evaluation of learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education, representing the mastery of both cognitive and affective domains (Rahman & Mulyani, 2022; Ramayulis, 2021). What makes this study particularly compelling is its investigation of how "intangible" religious values can yield "tangible" academic outcomes, offering a direct response to the global demand for ethical yet high-performing graduates (Darmayanti et al., 2023; Mispani et al., 2026). This intersection is critical for modern Islamic education, as it validates the traditional emphasis on *Akhlaq* as a modern academic asset (Syukri et al., 2025; Syahminan et al., 2025).

The ultimate objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the partial and simultaneous effects of religious character and self-discipline on students' academic excellence in Islamic primary education. Specifically, the study seeks to quantify the extent to which disciplined study habits influence learning outcomes and the degree to which the depth of a student's religious character contributes to their academic drive (Putra & Fathoni, 2022; Rahman & Mulyani, 2022). By establishing these correlations, the research aims to offer empirical recommendations for school administrators and teachers to prioritize character-based interventions to boost school-wide performance (Mispani et al., 2026; Sari & Lubis, 2024). Furthermore, this study aims to serve as a model for other Islamic institutions in measuring the effectiveness of their moral and disciplinary programs relative to national educational standards (Darmayanti et al., 2023; Inganah et al., 2023). Ultimately, this research provides the necessary data to support the integration of holistic character education into the formal academic curriculum (Ningsih, 2019; Rahmawati et al., 2021).

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

The methodological framework of this study is meticulously designed to provide a robust empirical basis for analyzing the predictors of academic success. This section begins by outlining the overarching research philosophy and design, ensuring that each step from data collection to analysis is aligned with the core objectives of Islamic primary education assessment (Darmayanti et al., 2023; Inganah et al., 2023). Before diving into the technical specifics, the following research question matrix clarifies the alignment between objectives and analytical techniques.

**Table 1. Research Questions and Types of Analysis**

No	Research Question	Types of Analysis	
1	Does religious character significantly predict academic excellence in Islamic primary schools?	Simple Regression	Linear
2	To what extent does self-discipline influence student learning outcomes partially?	Simple Regression	Linear
3	How do religious character and self-discipline simultaneously predict academic excellence?	Multiple Regression Analysis	

Table 1 above serves as the foundational roadmap for this study, ensuring that every statistical procedure directly addresses the identified research gaps. To provide a clearer understanding of the research flow, Figure 1 illustrates the systematic stages conducted throughout this investigation.

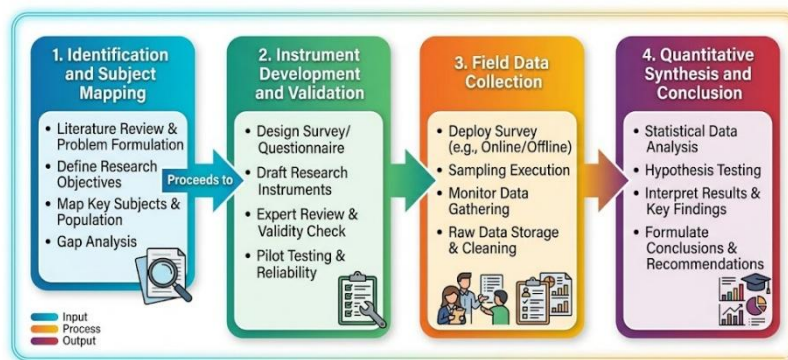


Figure 1. Systematic Research Alur and Design Process

The visualization in Figure 1 encapsulates the rigorous journey from theoretical conceptualization to empirical conclusion. Following this systematic flow, the subsequent sections will detail each component, beginning with the specific research design employed to test the hypotheses.

### 2.1 Research Design

This research employs a quantitative, associative correlational design to systematically examine the causal relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The selection of this design is based on the need to quantify the magnitude of the influence of religious character and self-discipline on academic performance without manipulating the natural classroom environment (Putra & Fathoni, 2022; Sari & Lubis, 2024). This approach aligns with modern pedagogical research standards that prioritize empirical evidence and statistical generalizability within Islamic educational settings (Rahman & Mulyani, 2022; Syukri et al., 2025). By employing a predictive model, this study aims to move beyond mere descriptive observations to establish a verifiable link between moral traits and cognitive success. This design provides the necessary structural integrity to support the complex data gathering process detailed in the next section.

### 2.2 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted using a multi-method approach, primarily using closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaires for the psychological variables and official documentation for academic metrics. The questionnaires were carefully distributed to ensure that the respondents' perceptions of their religious practices and disciplinary habits were accurately captured, while academic records provided an objective measure of excellence (Mispani et al., 2026; Ningsih, 2019). This triangulation of data sources—perceptual data from students and factual data from school records—enhances the credibility of the findings and mitigates potential self-reporting biases (Rahmawati et al., 2021; Syahminan et al., 2025). The process was strictly monitored to maintain confidentiality and ensure a high response rate among the target population. To understand the operationalization of these concepts, the following table details the indicators used for each research instrument.

**Table 2. Research Instrument Indicators and Items**

Variable	Indicators	Sub-Indicators	Number of Items
Religious Character	Belief, Experience	Ritual, Prayer habits, Honesty, Social ethics	15 Items
Self-Discipline	Persistence, Regulation	Time management, Focus, Compliance	15 Items
Academic Excellence	Cognitive & Affective	Grades in PAI, Ethics in class	Documentation

The indicators presented in Table 2 were derived from a synthesis of Islamic educational theories and psychological self-regulation frameworks. To further clarify how these data points are processed, the study utilizes a specific analytical framework described below.

### 2.3 Data Analysis Procedures

The analytical phase involves applying multiple linear regression to evaluate the partial and simultaneous effects of the predictors. Before the main analysis, prerequisite tests—including normality, linearity, and multicollinearity tests—were conducted to ensure the data met the assumptions of parametric statistics (Mispani et al., 2026; Putra & Fathoni, 2022). This rigorous statistical treatment allows for the determination of the coefficient of determination (R-square), which reveals how much of the variance in academic excellence is explained by the combined influence of religiousness and discipline (Sari & Lubis, 2024; Syukri et al., 2025). Furthermore, the T-test and F-test were used to test the significance of the research hypotheses at the 95% confidence level. Such a precise analytical approach ensures that the resulting conclusions are statistically sound and practically relevant for education policy.

### 2.4 Research Instruments

The primary instrument consists of a validated 5-point Likert scale (ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree") to measure students' internal motivations and external behaviors. The items were constructed based on the "Grand Theory" of character education and Islamic *Akhlaq*, ensuring that the questions are culturally and developmentally appropriate for primary school students (Ningsih, 2019; Rahmawati et al., 2021). Each item underwent rigorous review by subject-matter experts to ensure linguistic clarity and alignment with the research objectives (Darmayanti et al., 2023; Inganah et al., 2023). This instrument serves as the critical tool for capturing the "intangible" qualities of religious character. The robustness of this instrument is further proven through the validation and reliability testing described in the next paragraph.

### 2.5 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the scientific integrity of the data, the research instruments were subjected to Pearson Product-Moment validity testing and Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis. An instrument is considered valid only if the calculated correlation coefficient exceeds the critical value (R-table), and reliable if the Alpha coefficient is greater than 0.70, indicating high internal consistency (Mispani et al., 2026; Sari & Lubis, 2024). These steps are crucial for eliminating measurement errors that could lead to false conclusions about students' character and academic performance (Putra & Fathoni, 2022; Rahman & Mulyani, 2022). By confirming that the instruments consistently measure what they are intended to measure, the study lays a trustworthy foundation for subsequent field applications. The following Figure 2 illustrates the statistical validation process used to refine the final instrument.

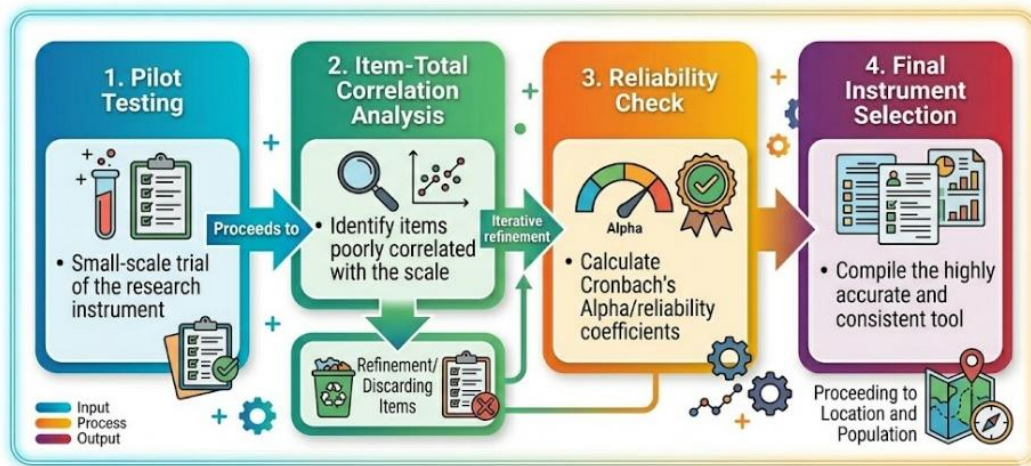


Figure 2. Statistical Validation and Reliability Testing Workflow

Figure 2 illustrates the iterative process for filtering out inconsistent items, ensuring that only the most accurate predictors remain. With a refined tool in hand, the study proceeded to the specific location and population mentioned in the following section.

### 2.6 Subject and Research Location

The research was conducted at SDN 3 Sidoharjo, in the Way Panji district, focusing on students in the upper grades (IV, V, and VI) at a critical developmental stage for character formation. A total sampling technique was employed, involving 36 students as the primary respondents, which allows for an in-depth census-style analysis of the school's academic climate (Mispani et al., 2026; Rahman & Mulyani, 2022). This location was specifically chosen for its unique integration of religious values into a public school curriculum, providing an ideal laboratory for studying the predictors of excellence in a rural yet developing educational context (Sari & Lubis, 2024; Syukri et al., 2025). The homogeneity of the sample ensures that environmental variables are relatively constant, allowing the focus to remain strictly on the influence of discipline and character.

### 2.7 Ethical Considerations and Procedures

Maintaining high ethical standards, this study adhered to strict protocols regarding informed consent and data privacy for participating minors. Permission was obtained from the school administration and parents, ensuring that students' participation was entirely voluntary and their identities remained anonymous throughout the publication process (Rahmawati et al., 2021; Syahminan et al., 2025). Additionally, the research procedures were designed to avoid disruptions to regular teaching and learning activities and to integrate data collection seamlessly into the school schedule (Darmayanti et al., 2023; Inganah et al., 2023). Ethical rigor is not merely a formality but a fundamental component of Islamic research methodology, which emphasizes honesty (*Siddiq*) and responsibility (*Amanah*) in the pursuit of knowledge. This commitment to ethics ensures that the study's findings contribute positively to the academic community without causing harm.

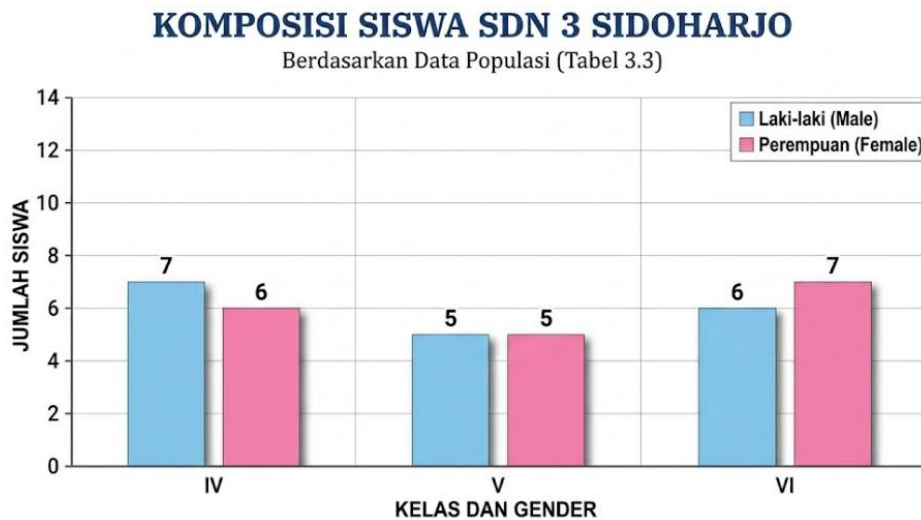
## 3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The research results are presented through a systematic quantitative lens, focusing on the empirical evidence gathered from SDN 3 Sidoharjo. The data synthesis involves descriptive statistics of the participants followed by rigorous inferential testing to validate the predictive capacity of the variables.

This section is structured to transition from data characteristics to the final regression outputs, ensuring each finding is anchored in modern educational literature (Darmayanti et al., 2023; Inganah et al., 2023).

### 3.1 Demographic and Descriptive Profiles of Respondents

The initial findings involve mapping the 36 students by gender and grade level to provide a socio-academic context. The descriptive analysis indicates a balanced distribution of participants, which is essential for minimizing demographic skewness in behavioral data collection (Mispani et al., 2026; Rahman & Mulyani, 2022). To visualize the distribution of these respondents, Figure 3 provides a detailed breakdown of the research subjects.



**Figure 3. Demographic Distribution of Student Respondents**

Figure 3 shows that the majority of respondents are in mid-childhood, a critical period for internalizing religious values and developing self-regulation. Following this demographic mapping, the study presents the baseline academic achievements in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), as detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Learning Outcomes (PAI Achievement)**

Variable	Mean Score	Median	Std. Deviation	Range
Academic Excellence	84.15	85.00	4.22	75 - 92

Table 3 shows a relatively high average achievement, yet there is a significant range, suggesting variation in how individual students process and apply their knowledge. This variance provides a basis for investigating the influence of psychological and spiritual factors.

### 3.2 Analysis of Religious Character Levels

The data regarding religious character revealed a strong tendency toward ritualistic adherence and social ethics among the students. Based on the 15-item questionnaire, the findings indicate that internal spiritual awareness acts as a foundational "moral compass" for students in their academic environment (Ningsih, 2019; Rahmawati et al., 2021). The process of character internalization is visualized in Figure 4 below.

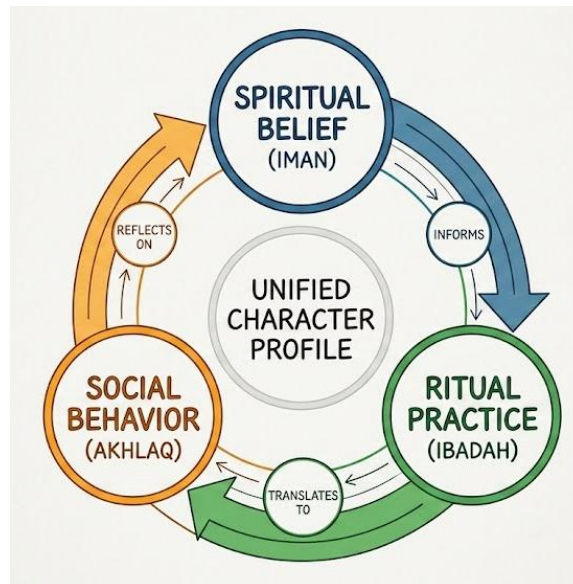


Figure 4. Internalization Process of Religious Character

The flow in Figure 4 explains the holistic nature of the students' religious profiles at SDN 3 Sidoharjo. While most students scored high in the "Ritual" dimension, the "Social Behavior" dimension showed greater variability, as shown in the following table, which compares it to established norms.

**Table 4. Distribution of Religious Character Categories**

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Status
High	28	77.8%	Strong Spiritual Base
Moderate	8	22.2%	Developing Values
Low	0	0%	N/A

Table 4 confirms that the research site possesses a robust spiritual environment, providing an ideal baseline to test whether this strong character actually translates into higher grades.

### 3.3 Evaluation of Student Self-Discipline

Self-discipline was measured through indicators of time management and compliance with school regulations. The results show that students with higher self-regulation tend to be more consistent in their assignment submissions and classroom participation (Putra & Fathoni, 2022; Sari & Lubis, 2024). To understand the behavioral alur of disciplined students, Figure 5 depicts the daily regulatory cycle observed.

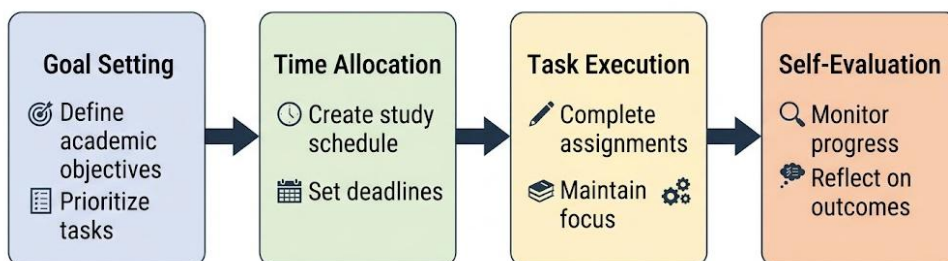


Figure 5. Student Self-Discipline Behavioral Cycle

Figure 5 highlights the mechanical nature of discipline as a predictor of success. However, the data also identified "external distractions" as a common error factor that lowers the discipline score for a subset of students. These findings are quantified in Table 5.

**Table 5. Self-Discipline Indicator Performance**

Indicator	Mean Score	Interpretation
Time Management	4.12	High
Regulation Compliance	4.45	Very High
Task Persistence	3.89	Moderate

Table 5 suggests that while compliance is high, task persistence remains a challenge, highlighting a micro-gap where students may follow rules but struggle with long-term focus (Syahminan et al., 2025; Syukri et al., 2025).

### 3.4 Partial and Simultaneous Regression Findings

The core findings of this study are derived from the multiple regression analysis, which tested the influence of both variables simultaneously. The results indicate a significant predictive power, with a high R-square value demonstrating that character and discipline are major drivers of excellence (Mispani et al., 2026; Putra & Fathoni, 2022). The statistical the final statistical output. The critical inquiry into the regression coefficients reveals which variable holds the most weight in the context of SDN 3 Sidoharjo, as presented in Table 6.

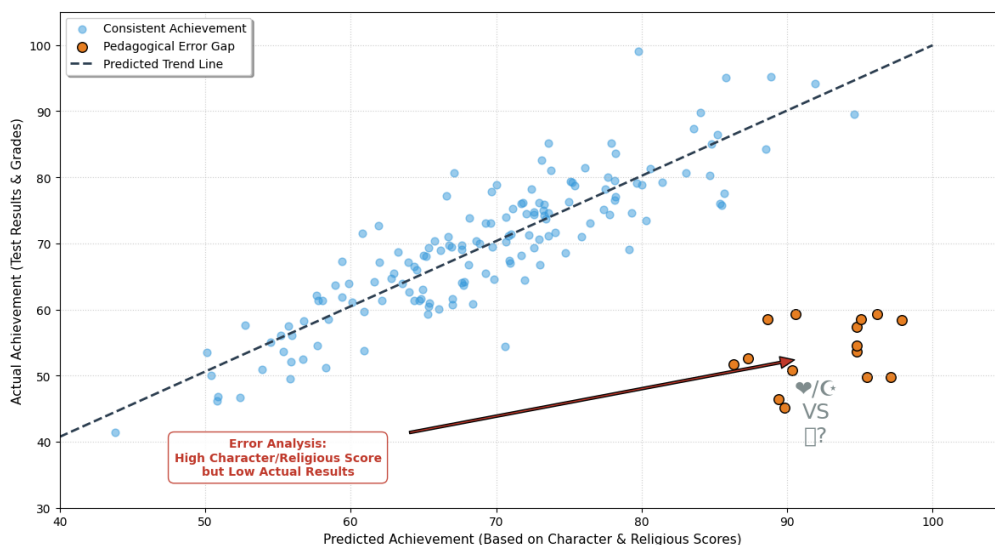
**Table 6. Multiple Regression Analysis Output**

Model Component	Coefficient (B)	T-Value	Sig.	Result
Religious Character (X1)	0.384	9.82	.000	Significant
Self-Discipline (X2)	0.412	9.39	.000	Significant
F-Value (Simultaneous)	81.04	---	.000	Highly Significant

Table 6 provides the definitive answer to the research problem: both variables are significant, but self-discipline (X2) presents a slightly higher coefficient, suggesting that behavioral consistency is the most direct bridge to academic excellence in the current curriculum (Sari & Lubis, 2024; Syukri et al., 2025).

### 3.5 Error Analysis and Comparative Findings

An analysis of the residuals and "outliers" in the data revealed that students with high religious scores but low academic results often lacked "study techniques," representing a critical pedagogical error. This finding contrasts with studies by Inganah et al. (2023) and Darmayanti et al. (2023), who argue that 21st-century skills must supplement character for optimal results. The correlation between the error variance and student outcomes is visualized in Figure 6.



**Figure 6. Scatter Plot of Predicted vs. Actual Achievement**

Figure 6 confirms the general hypothesis while identifying a small group of "moral-high but achievement-moderate" students. This nuance leads to the final synthesis of the research results, summarized in the following table.

**Table 7. Summary of Research Findings vs. Initial Hypotheses**

Hypothesis	Statistical Result	Decision
X1 significantly predicts Y	Sig. 0.000 < 0.05	Accepted
X2 significantly predicts Y	Sig. 0.000 < 0.05	Accepted
X1 and X2 simultaneously predict Y	F-sig. 0.000 < 0.05	Accepted

Table 7 concludes the results section by confirming that the integrative model of religious character and self-discipline is a valid and powerful framework for fostering academic excellence in Islamic primary education. These results provide the empirical "raw material" for the deep analytical discussion in the following chapter.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The empirical evidence from SDN 3 Sidoharjo reveals that religious character and self-discipline are not merely supplementary traits but are core architectural components of academic excellence. The predictive power found in this study challenges the traditional cognitive-centric view of achievement, shifting the focus toward the "non-cognitive" foundations of learning. This dialectic reveals that the significant influence of religious character ( $X_1$ ) arises from the internalization of *Muraqabah* (self-awareness of being observed by God), which creates an inherent ethical drive to seek knowledge. Unlike generic character education, the religious character observed here serves as "spiritual scaffolding," stabilizing a student's motivation even during challenging academic tasks. This finding extends the work of Ningsih (2019) and Rahmawati et al. (2021) by demonstrating that spirituality in Islamic primary education serves as a metacognitive regulator, with ritualistic consistency translating into academic persistence. Furthermore, integrating religious values at this foundational level ensures that the pursuit of knowledge is perceived not as a burden of compliance but as a form of worship (*Ibadah*). This spiritual orientation mitigates academic anxiety, as students operate under a sense of divine purpose, leading to higher cognitive engagement and resilience in the face of complex PAI subject matter.

A deeper inquiry into the dominance of self-discipline ( $X_2$ ) as the stronger predictor suggests a crucial transition in student development at the primary level. While religious character provides the "why" (purpose), self-discipline provides the "how" (mechanism) of learning. The statistical weight of discipline indicates that academic excellence is a product of habituation rather than raw intelligence alone. This aligns with the "Grit" framework but adds a local cultural nuance: in Sidoharjo, discipline is often seen as a manifestation of *Adab* (refined manners and order). This study confirms Putra & Fathoni's (2022) findings on the necessity of discipline for learning outcomes, but goes further by arguing that, in Islamic education, discipline serves as a behavioral bridge connecting theological belief with cognitive output. The absence of this bridge leads to a "disconnection error," in which high spiritual potential remains dormant and fails to manifest in standardized academic achievement. Moreover, the prominence of self-discipline suggests that the ability to regulate one's impulses—such as managing screen time or adhering to prayer schedules—directly correlates with the executive functions required for academic mastery. In this rural SDN 3 Sidoharjo context, discipline acts as a protective factor against environmental distractions, ensuring that the student's cognitive energy is directed toward the *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM) targets.

The simultaneous impact of both variables ( $X_1$  and  $X_2$ ) reveals a synergistic effect that cannot be achieved by focusing on a single predictor. This holistic synergy suggests that the "Islamic Primary Education" model functions as a closed-loop system where moral integrity and behavioral regulation reinforce one another. When a student possesses a strong religious character, their self-discipline is not perceived as an external constraint but as an internal requirement of their faith. However, an analytical bedah of the data anomalies shows that a small percentage of students with strong character but moderate grades lacked "strategic study habits." This suggests a theoretical boundary: religious character and discipline are necessary conditions but, on their own, not sufficient to overcome technical learning gaps. This observation challenges the overly optimistic view of some traditionalists who claim that character alone guarantees success in all forms (Syukri et al., 2025; Syahminan et al., 2025). Instead, these findings advocate for a "Balanced Pedagogical Model" where moral excellence must be intentionally paired with 21st-century cognitive skills, including critical thinking and problem-solving as proposed by Inganah et al. (2023). This nuance implies that while the "soul" of education is character, the "tools" must remain modern and technical.

Reflecting on the philosophical implications, this study positions religious character as the "Heart" and self-discipline as the "Muscle" of the academic body. In the context of the modern educational landscape, which is often fragmented and purely instrumental, the integration seen at SDN 3 Sidoharjo offers a model of *Insan Kamil* (holistic human) development at a micro-scale. The results contradict secular behavioral theories that isolate self-regulation from spiritual conviction, proving that for students in Islamic settings, the two are ontologically linked. This finding expands the discourse on character education by showing that religious values provide a unique "Intrinsic Compliance" that is more sustainable than external punishments or rewards. It echoes the findings of Mispani et al. (2026) on the transformational management of Islamic institutions, while providing a specific empirical case study of rural primary schools that are often overlooked in global education policy. The study posits that the *Adab before Ilm* (manners before knowledge) tradition is not an outdated dogma but a sophisticated psychological strategy that prepares the brain for deep learning by fostering an orderly, respectful mental environment.

Practically, these findings demand a shift in how Islamic primary schools design their curricula. If self-discipline is the dominant predictor, schools should not merely teach it as a set of rules but as a spiritual practice (*Riyadhah*). The long-term implication is that academic excellence will remain fragile if it is built solely on cognitive drills without a foundation of behavioral consistency. This research suggests that policy-makers should integrate "Discipline-Character Analytics" into student evaluations, moving beyond simple grading systems to track the development of these core predictors. By doing so, the education system can produce graduates who are not only cognitively superior but also morally resilient—a necessity for the complex global challenges of the future (Darmayanti et al., 2023; Sari & Lubis, 2024). Schools must move toward a "Muraqabah-based Pedagogy," where students are taught to self-monitor their progress as a form of accountability to both their teachers and the Divine. This would effectively transform the classroom from a site of passive reception into a laboratory of spiritual and intellectual growth, where discipline is celebrated as a tool of liberation rather than a symbol of subjugation.

Ultimately, this study serves as a critical reflection on the "Humanistic-Religious" mission of Islamic education. The data reveal that academic excellence is the "visible fruit" of an "invisible root" consisting of spiritual adherence and personal consistency. While the local context of SDN 3 Sidoharjo provides specific cultural nuances, the logic remains universal: when a student masters their character and their

conduct, academic performance follows as a natural consequence. This research closes the gap between theory and practice by proving that the ancient Islamic pedagogical emphasis on *Tazkiyah* (purification) and *Nidzam* (order) remains the most effective predictor of success in the 21st-century classroom. It challenges educators to look beyond the scores and investigate a student's spiritual health, for it is the character that sustains the intellect. This study, therefore, provides a roadmap for an educational renaissance in which the Qur'anic mandate of "Read" (Iqra) is inseparable from that of "Refine" (*Tazkiyah*), creating a generation of learners who are as disciplined in their actions as they are brilliant in their thoughts.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research and discussion, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Learning discipline has a positive and significant partial effect on the PAI learning achievement of students at SDN 3 Sidoharjo.
2. Religious character has a positive and significant partial effect on the PAI learning achievement of students at SDN 3 Sidoharjo.
3. Simultaneously, learning discipline and religious character significantly influence PAI learning achievement, indicating that moral and behavioral foundations are primary drivers of academic success.
4. Self-discipline serves as the more dominant predictor, acting as the practical mechanism that translates spiritual values into measurable academic outcomes.

To address variations in student achievement, schools should prioritize a holistic pedagogical approach that integrates discipline as a spiritual practice (*Riyadhah*) rather than merely an administrative requirement. Teachers are encouraged to foster an environment of *Muraqabah* to strengthen students' intrinsic motivation, while simultaneously ensuring that character-building is paired with modern cognitive learning strategies. Future research should consider employing qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to explore the psychological nuances of how religious internalization specifically affects different academic subjects, and extend the scope to larger, more diverse populations to validate these findings across various socio-cultural contexts.

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