

ÜNİVERSİTEPARK Bülten | Bulletin

ISSN: 2147-351X | e-ISSN: 2564-8039 | www.unibulletin.com

ÜNİVERSİTEPARK Bülten | Bulletin • Volume 9 • Issue 2 • 2020

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To cite this article: Karani, H., & Taufik, A. (2020). Active Students in Religious Activities Have High Learning Achievements. *Üniversitepark Bülten*, 9(2), 92-100.

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22521/unibulletin.2020.92.2>

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Active Students in Religious Activities Have High Learning Achievements

HAIDAH KARANI and ALI TAUFİK

Abstract

The background of this research is the observation of students' academic development and above average achievement scores. The author based the research on academic activities undertaken in the spiritual field as a researcher of Islam, and hopes that similar research could be conducted according to other religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, etc. The purpose of this study was to scientifically review the activities of students who are actively involved in Islamic religious activities, and how on average they attain above average grades in their academic performance. The method applied in this research was that of a descriptive qualitative case study model, as the author considers this to be a particularly interesting topic of research. The study included 10 students as participants and informants, and the study period lasted for a total of 14 weeks. The results of the study are considered by the author to be significant, as the participant students' religious activities were found to have influenced their academic learning achievement. From this analysis, the author identified five important indicators to explain these findings.

Keywords: Student, education, achievements, religious activities.



DOI: 10.22521/unibulletin.2020.92.2

UNIBULLETIN • ISSN 2147-351X • e-ISSN 2564-8039

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Introduction

The background of this research concerns student activities, especially in the field of their spirituality (i.e., their religious activities), and how they connect to the students' learning achievements. This research study aimed to find out if the subject of religion was connected to improvements in students' learning achievement. According to Zuiker et al. (2019), this type of study matches with the goals of higher education in advancing research in two important ways, goals and excellence, and also relevance. According to Taufik, Saidi, and Apendi (2019), learning is the process of changing one's mindset, therefore it can be said that active students will have greater opportunities to improve their intellect.

Two research questions guide the current study: (1) "What are the reasons behind religious activities participated in by students positively affecting their academic learning achievement?," and (2) "Who is able to be positively affected by improving learning achievement?"

Through interactions and activities there exists learning interactions; therefore, students who are active in their religion have the opportunity to learn more broadly, according to Schaffer (1996), hence, social action with peers is considered to be very important for children (Mjaavatn, Frostad, and Jan Pijl, 2016). According to Kapur (2014), producing solutions to complex problems targets the concept of measuring success in learning, and comparing to what was learned prior to receiving instruction about the target concept; meaning that in learning, students must strive to achieve certain targets. According to Willison (2018), educators facilitate student learning through active exploration in ways that allow their students' skills to grow in sophistication and rigidity. Quality learning starts from understanding and intelligence, and then enabling students to apply this in actual practice. In order for students to become more focused in their learning, it is also necessary to discover the appropriate types of teacher assistance so that they can actively support their students' performance increases (Wong et al., 2018). According to Astin (2014), student development based on student participation in activities positively impacts on their achievement and talent. Interestingly, good learning motivation makes students become active learners on campus, which can also lead to their self-development in the wider community (Tymon, 2013).

Students in Activities Have High Learning

Various means have been attempted to improve students' learning achievements, from seeking to improve the quality of education through continuation into higher studies, to supporting learning approaches through the process of extracurricular activities in the field of spiritualism. It is therefore important to ascertain which methods are the most appropriate and efficient so that the desired results are obtained through students learning according to their ability. Improvements in student achievement requires action by various stakeholders through a continuous and programmed approach, applied both independently and institutionally. According to Sumadi, Degeng, Sulthon, and Waras (2017), collaborative learning strategies have become well-developed in schools as suitable methods to provide motivation to learners. Especially for those facing the problem of low-level student achievement, numerous efforts have been made by various parties to increase learning achievement through improving the school learning environment, the applied curricula, teacher training and through improvements to teacher education, the provision of improved

facilities, the supplying of supporting books, and improvements made to teaching methods and approaches.

In the current study, the author noted seeing increases in learning achievement from within the students themselves, due to their religious activities, at home, within the community environment, and also on campus. The author saw this as quite extraordinary, hence the idea for the current study was formed to examine the phenomena more thoroughly. According to List (2018), various strategic processes help students to learn, understand, and integrate information in order that the learning value can be maximized. However, according to Yeoh (2017), students also need guidance, certainty, and confidence in writing something that requires personal opinion and their own thinking in order to produce sensitive and personal narration. Learning and sharing is important for students in higher education (Kuwabara, 2019).

Various reforms are carried out in the learning or education process in the form of teaching innovation, contextual approaches, and revised teaching methods.

Students who are active in the spiritual or religious field are also encouraged to help motivate other students; acting as facilitators in encouraging learning motivation in their peers.

Learning motivation for students who are active in a spiritual or religious context can be seen from their attitude, behavior, and orderly use of their time, so that in their learning process, they actively prioritize concentration for the purposes of learning, which is related to habits formed from their spiritual or religious extracurricular activities. According to Magnifico, Olmanson, and Cope (2013), teachers and schools aim for students to be meaningfully engaged, or at least to participate more thoroughly in their learning within shared spaces, and to thereby achieve the benefits of understanding.

Positive Activities Can Improve Learning Achievement

The learning process is based on activities, with the final result being acquired knowledge, achieved not only through memorization but also through the achievement of predetermined learning outcomes.

It can therefore be concluded, that learning is a form of activity or human action that must be applied in order to be able to change or improve knowledge, skills, and habits that together form an effort to develop students' lives. In order to be successful, therefore, optimism is seen as an important key to successful learning and to be able to improve the ability for interpretation (Marks & Baines, 2017). Optimism provides a mechanistic explanation of how people maintain positive illusions about their future life in order to succeed.

Teachers and lecturers contribute energy and thought into the learning process through tutoring. They are required to have the ability to plan (design) teaching and learning activities that are both effective and efficient. Teachers also need to have the ability to manage the entire end-to-end process of teaching and learning, by creating familiar learning conditions so that each student can learn effectively and efficiently through planned activities. According to Forbes (2015), common questions raised by student teachers include: "Will I be a good teacher?," "Will I be able to control my class?," and "How will I be able to do all that is planned for next week at the same time?"

Gilroy (2017) stated that if the teacher becomes the guide for their students, then the most important aspect is their ability to foster philosophy in students, which is an important means to motivating students to learn.

Learning follows a continuous process of instruction or self-learning and results achieved by students over time. This requires not only an instructional approach, but also a personal approach to learning.

According to Hughes, Morrison, and Dobos (2018), the experiences gained by students in the community also provide invaluable experiences, with some of the best development offered through learning-based activities, as well as facilitating support for students' mental development and intelligence.

Based on the premise that the intelligence level of students who take part in religious activities leads to a tendency for better academic achievement, the following research questions guided the current study:

- What makes students smarter and more skilled?
- Why do students become smarter?
- How does the process of increasing intelligence occur?

Methodology

Religious activities are often carried out by students both in the neighborhood and also on campus. The author noted that such activities appear to manifest a positive impact on improved learning achievements in the participating students. As such, the current study aims to evaluate how important these activities are. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study model. According to Corbin and Strauss (2012), qualitative research is a type of research whose results are not obtained through statistical procedures, or other forms of calculation. According to Creswell (2013, p. xx), "qualitative research is the process of understanding inquiry based on the traditions of various investigative methods that explore social or human problems." Merriam and Tisdell (2009) stated that, in case study research one can use quantitative and qualitative methods; however, when conducting qualitative case studies, methods aimed at generating inductive reasoning and interpretation rather than testing hypotheses are priorities. Then the cases are chosen based on the objectives and research questions, and for what they can reveal about the phenomenon or topic of interest. The aim is to provide a rich holistic description that provides an understanding of a phenomenon through a case study.

According to Patton (2002), independently coded qualitative data is used to identify the dominant themes, and selected representative citations are presented for each theme as evidence. When differences in coding occur, additional research analysis, or documentary examination can also be undertaken (e.g., examining video evidence). According to Ridder (2014, p. xx), "The most frequent form of data display for qualitative research data in posts is narrative text." This process is formed on three important levels, namely (1) Data collection, (2) Data reduction, and (3) Data presentation. In collecting the study data, this process must be undertaken in accordance with the reality of the situation in the field, and in accordance with the established methods of qualitative data collection.

Findings and Discussion

Based on observations and interviews conducted in the field, the researcher found indicators regarding the influence of religious activities which positively impacted on the academic achievement of students.

Five indicators were noted from the results of the data analysis of the participant interviews, which together form the scheme depicted in Figure 1.

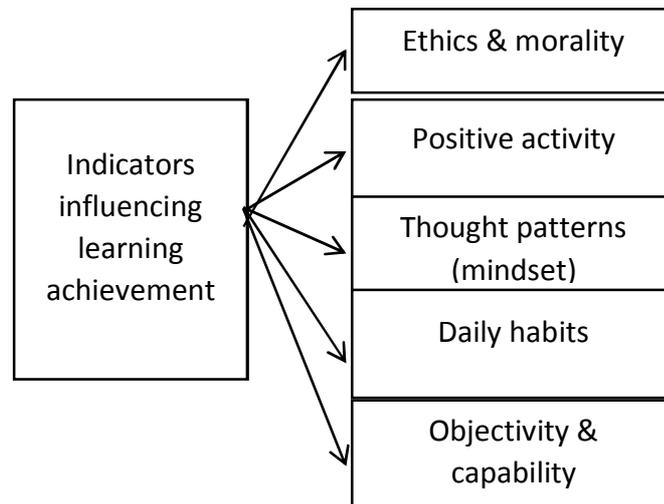


Figure 1. Five indicators that influence learning achievement

The following expands on the five indicators that were found to influence learning achievement in students:

- Students who are active in spirituality/religion have better ethics and morals, and this has an effect on structuring their thinking patterns.
- Students who are active in religion have strict time discipline, including with their study time.
- Students who are active in religion have a keen memory due to an established habit of memorizing.
- Students who are active in spiritual/religion activities have a calmer nature in thinking patterns, which benefits learning through improved understanding of academic lessons.
- Students who are active in spiritual/religious activities have a higher level of validity, objectivity and capability in learning, which leads to the production of increased value.

Learning also functions to develop and build students' academic ability through the recognition of events or phenomena, and then in examining or assessing problems both individually or as part of society, as well as those that are considered universal.

The following two excerpts were taken from the researcher's interviews held with two of the participant students, and who are seen as representative of their peers:

Participant 1

Researcher: *What activities do you do after returning from college?*

Participant 1: *I am quite busy (active) in spiritual / religious activities, both at the mosque or within the community where I live.*

Researcher: *How do you manage your time between lectures and activities?*

Participant 1: *In doing my activities, I apply my learning outcomes as well on campus, thus adding to my insight as a student.*

Participant 2

Researcher: *What activities do you do after returning from college?*

Participant 2: *I am undertake religious activities in the mosques and also in youth activities in the community.*

Researcher: *How do you manage your time between lectures and activities?*

Participant 2: *It seems there is no need for formal arrangements, because as a student I want to use the knowledge I have learned in college, so I consider this as learning whilst in the community.*

From the interview results the authors saw that the students' activities did not interfere with their studies, but that they applied the knowledge gained on campus in the community, which helped lead them to good levels of learning achievement.

One of the aims of learning is for students to be able to understand facts and social events in society that occur in their daily environment. In addition, students are required to develop ways of thinking critically and using or applying economic understanding in relation to daily life and therefore, according to Johnson et al. (2014), in their professional development. Teachers are considered important guides, helping students to understand what to expect when they start their careers, as well as helping students to come up with ideas to resolve problems they may encounter during their learning development.

Learning achievement is a result achieved from a process of activities that bring about behavioral change. In the current study, the activity undertaken was in the form of training, and the researcher aimed to prove the theoretical hypothesis scientifically, but still needed to conclude the results of the research based on tested data and facts from the field.

In conducting the current research, the researcher looked for evidence of a significant difference in student achievement of participants taking part in campus-based activities, especially in the field of spirituality and religion. Islam, as a religion, does not differ that much in terms of its spiritual activities to other mainstream religions.

According to Erzad and Erzad (2017), the quality and quantity of teachers and facilities of educational institutions requires development at the institutional level. Students' interest in learning needs to be enhanced in order that graduates will become more professional.

In describing the background of the topic of the current study, the researcher formulates the problem in the form of qualitative research in order to reveal the learning achievements in the field of religious practices undertaken by students in daily life; in this case, the participants are practicing Muslims. The aim is to assess how they develop their ability to recognize events that take place in the community, how they examine and assess social and daily life problems within the community, and if they recognize and understand ways in which to resolve these issues. In doing so, the students can prepare themselves better in order to join society as a functioning adult. According to Albrecht and Karabenick (2018), intervention efforts in education should foster diverse results that are relevant, and should be theoretically related to improved student motivation and academic achievement.

According to Heyd-Metzuyanim (2015), failure in learning can become a vicious cycle, and students require guidance from their teachers in order to gain in understanding.

Learning achievement is the result achieved from a process of activities that bring about a positive change in someone. Learning achievement is produced through a process of behavioral change at the character level as a result of being exposed to experiences and training. In addition, learners require a skillful mind and soul in order to successfully interpret and understand their lessons and the experiences they have.

In the researcher's opinion, students are able to understand facts and social events in the community that occur within their environment, and that this also helps them to develop ways of thinking critically and to use or apply economic understanding in relation to their daily life.

The impact of measured interventions on student participation varies depending on whether students are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to learn in education at all levels, therefore students' attitudes and extracurricular activities can be seen as a means to improving student learning and understanding (Buckley & Doyle, 2016).

Conclusion

Following the researcher's observations, and having analyzed the study's data obtained through participant interviews, the following conclusions are drawn:

- Learning by students who are active in religious activities can be a means for self-development. Therefore, there is a need to apply efforts in order to increase student learning percentages in line with the development of current technology.
- In order for students to build upon their learning achievements, there is a need for mastery of knowledge. Skills mastered in the field are a proven route to achieving improved test scores and improved academic achievement.
- Every individual needs to learn in order to overcome the problems encountered in daily life.

In order to establish any significant differences in learning achievement, students can actively participate in spiritual/religious activities and/or participating in other extracurricular activities. In accordance with the objectives of the current study, these results are expected to be considered useful all parties.

In future works, the researcher aims to conduct a more comprehensive study using a qualitative or quantitative approach in an effort to reveal additional findings in this area in terms of scientific knowledge with an applied benefit for humanity.

Notes

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