

# Exploring Peer Support as a Determinant of Religious Character and Student Well-Being in Faith Based-Education

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**Abstract:** This study explores the role of peer support as a determinant of religious character formation and student well-being in faith-based schools using a mixed-methods design. Quantitative data from 195 students were collected via Likert-scale questionnaires assessing peer support, religious character, and psychological well-being. Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews and participant observation to capture how peer interactions function in daily school life. Findings show that peers serve as motivators, supervisors, advisors, and role models, reinforcing religious values and promoting positive social and emotional experiences. Peer support enhances student well-being by fostering a sense of belonging, emotional reassurance, academic motivation, and social skills such as empathy and teamwork. Religious character and peer support operate synergistically: religiosity provides meaning and life direction, while peer support energizes daily religious practices. The study highlights that integrating peer relationships with teacher-facilitated school programs creates a holistic educational environment that nurtures both spiritual development and psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** Peer support, Religious character, Student well-being, Faith-based education.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Research on the formation of religious character and student well-being in education has gained increasing attention over the past two decades (Biggs & Carter, 2016). This interest is based on the understanding that education is not only a means of transmitting knowledge but also a space for shaping students' identity, values, and psychosocial well-being (Lubis & Anggraeni, 2019; Tambak & Sukenti, 2020). Within this framework, peer support plays a critical role, as horizontal relationships among students often exert greater influence than guidance from teachers or parents, particularly during adolescence (Wentzel *et al.*, 2017).

Indonesia, as the country with the world's largest Muslim population, provides a unique context to investigate how peers contribute to linking religious values with student welfare. Faith-based educational environments can serve as social laboratories for reinforcing religious character, while simultaneously posing challenges to students' psychological balance and well-being.

The formation of religious character is a central objective in faith-based education, particularly in societies with strong religious traditions, such as Indonesia. Religious character is understood not only in terms of ritual compliance but also encompasses moral values, empathy, solidarity, and integrity in daily life (Anggraeni *et al.*, 2019). Meanwhile, student well-being reflects the psychological, social, and

emotional welfare of students, which directly influences their learning motivation, academic achievement, and resilience in facing challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reveal a concerning trend in juvenile delinquency in Indonesia. In 2021, there were 6,325 cases of juvenile delinquency, representing a 10.7% increase from the previous year (Suryadin, 2020). These cases include gang fights, drug abuse, and sexual violence. Several underlying factors contribute to this high rate of delinquency, including insufficient parental attention and affection, peer influence, weak character education, and limited opportunities for self-expression. Consequently, adolescents often lack strong moral foundations and are more susceptible to delinquent behavior. This underscores the importance of understanding how peer relationships interact with student well-being within the holistic educational process.

Several previous studies have demonstrated that peer support significantly influences the development of students' religious identity and emotional well-being. For instance, King and Boyatzis (King & Chris J., 2004) found that interactions within peer groups can strengthen the internalization of religious values. Similarly, Chen *et al.* (2022) reported that peer support serves as a protective factor against academic stress and enhances overall well-being.

Building on these findings, this study is grounded in several assumptions: *first*, that faith-based education embodies a distinctive value orientation that emphasizes not only character formation but also student well-being; *second*, that religious character development can be meaningfully influenced by peer

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interactions; and *third*, that previous studies have yet to fully examine peer support as a dual determinant linking religiosity and student well-being within a comprehensive analytical framework.

This study addresses a gap in the literature by examining peer support as a dual determinant of religious character formation and student well-being within the educational context. The objectives of the study are threefold: (1) to analyze the role of peers in shaping religious character through school programs, (2) to investigate how peers contribute to student well-being through positive social interactions, and (3) to examine the function of peers as a linking mechanism between religious character and student well-being.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Peer Support

Peer support in the context of education refers to emotional, informational, instrumental, and social norm assistance derived from peer relationships (Liu et al., 2025). Drawing on Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), peers function as significant role models whose behaviors, attitudes, and value orientations are observed, internalized, and imitated by students. At the same time, Social Support Theory (Cohen & Wills, 1985) explains that supportive peer interactions provide psychological resources that reduce stress, enhance emotional coping, and strengthen a sense of belonging. During adolescence, when peer groups become the primary social reference point, these mechanisms shape both religious behavior—through shared practices, reinforcement of moral norms, and modeling of piety—and psychological well-being, by fostering self-worth, security, and positive emotional experiences. Thus, peer support is not merely a social factor, but a theoretically grounded determinant of students' religious development and mental health.

Peer-based interventions and programs can positively influence students' mental health and academic engagement, though their effectiveness depends on program design and the quality of peer relationships. While Lickona (Lickona, 1992) provides a general foundation for character education, a more specific theoretical grounding for peer influence can be drawn from Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, which posits that learning and value internalization occur through social interaction and collaborative meaning-making, and from Wentzel & Wigfield (1998) who highlight the role of supportive peer relationships in fostering motivation, belonging, and prosocial behavior in school settings. In educational research, peer support is often conceptualized across several

dimensions: emotional support as empathy and encouragement), instrumental support as academic assistance), informational support as guidance or advice), and normative roles as monitoring and reinforcing shared behavioral or moral expectations). These dimensions illustrate how peer groups contribute not only to students' psychological well-being but also to the development and reinforcement of value-oriented behaviors.

### 2.2. Religious Character

Religious character refers to the consistency of attitudes, values, and behaviors rooted in religious teachings, such as commitment to worship, moral values (honesty, empathy), and social practices that reflect religious norms (Anggraeni & Maharani, 2024). To deepen the theoretical grounding, the analysis can be linked to Kohlberg's theory of moral development (Bouhmama, 1984), which suggests that moral reasoning progresses through identifiable stages influenced by social interaction, and Fowler's faith development theory (Fowler & Dell, 2006), which explains how religious belief and commitment evolve through interpersonal dialogue, reflection, and community belonging. Integrating these frameworks helps clarify how peer relationships can shape religious character both cognitively (moral reasoning and faith understanding) and behaviourally (practice, ritual, and everyday conduct).

Research from various cultural contexts such as Carlo (2014) on the development and correlates of prosocial moral behaviours. King & Boyatzis (2015) on adolescent religious identity formation demonstrates that peer groups play a key role in facilitating meaning-making, identity negotiation, and moral norm reinforcement. These works underline that religious development is a socially situated process shaped by relational contexts, and therefore, peer dynamics must be considered a central factor rather than a background variable.

In character education literature, the formation of religious character should ideally go beyond ritual compliance; it involves the internalization of values so that they become part of the learner's identity. Character education studies emphasize the need to synergize the formal curriculum, daily school practices, and the social environment (including peers) to achieve this internalization (Nantara, 2022).

In addition to family and religious institutions, peer groups are influential social agents in shaping the religious experiences and value priorities of children and adolescents. Peer relationships that support religious discussion, participation in joint religious

activities, and religious behavior models can strengthen religious commitment and consistent moral expression.

### 2.3. Student Well-Being

Student well-being is a multidimensional construct that encompasses emotional well-being (positive affect, reduction of stress symptoms), psychological well-being (sense of purpose, self-acceptance), social well-being (quality of relationships), and academic well-being (engagement, achievement) (Zheng *et al.*, 2026). Therefore, the quality of peer relationships plays an important role in buffering academic stress while also serving as a source of motivation and meaning.

Various empirical studies show that peer social support has a significant relationship with various indicators of student well-being, ranging from reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, increased life satisfaction, to higher involvement in school activities. This support can serve as a buffer against academic stress and social pressure, as well as a source of intrinsic motivation that strengthens students' sense of connectedness and self-esteem (Marciano & Viswanath, 2023).

### 2.4. Faith-Based Education

Religious-based educational institutions carry out the explicit function of socializing values as outlined in the curriculum, collective rituals, and extracurricular activities aimed at instilling religious norms (Abubakar *et al.*, 2025). In this context, peer groups are often more structured in the form of religious study groups and peer mentoring, so that the potential influence of peers on religiosity and well-being can be more pronounced, either as a reinforcer of values or, if not managed properly, as a source of socio-normative pressure.

The main functions of such institutions include (a) the socialization of religious values, (b) the formation of moral character, and (c) the provision of a social community that supports daily religious practices. Meta-analytic evidence and reviews show that schools rooted in religious traditions often produce significant differences in non-academic outcomes, moral attitudes, and prosocial behavior (Bahri *et al.*, 2025).

## 3. METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design. This design was selected as it allows the complementary integration of quantitative and qualitative methods (Sugiyono., 2014). The quantitative phase was conducted first to

empirically examine relationships among variables, followed by the qualitative phase to gain deeper insights into the mechanisms through which peer support shapes religious character and enhances student well-being in faith-based schools.

The study was conducted at SMPN 2 Bojong, Pekalongan, Indonesia. Participants included students, classroom teachers, religious teachers, and school principals. In the quantitative phase, the study involved 195 students, selected through total sampling from the school population. In the qualitative phase, participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling, including teachers, students, and school administrators with relevant and in-depth knowledge.

**Data Collection:** In the quantitative phase, a Likert-scale questionnaire (1–5) was used to measure three key variables: religious character, peer support, and student well-being. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), Pearson correlation, and mediation analysis following Baron & Kenny (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In the qualitative phase, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted twice with teachers, students, and principals to explore the role of peer support in detail. Participant observation was carried out during curricular and extracurricular activities, classroom interactions, and school social environments. Additionally, document analysis was conducted, reviewing school guidelines, syllabi, and policies related to the formation of religious character.

**Data Analysis:** Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS to examine relationships among variables, correlation, and mediation models. Qualitative data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), following stages of data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, defining and naming themes, and producing a narrative report with direct quotations. A cross-case synthesis was employed to compare variations in participants' experiences.

Finally, quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through methodological triangulation. Quantitative data provided empirical evidence of the strength of relationships among religious character, peer support, and student well-being, while qualitative data explained the mechanisms by which peer support functions as a motivator, supervisor, advisor, and role model, and how these roles affect student well-being. The integration of both approaches resulted in a comprehensive understanding, encompassing both statistical significance and contextual meaning within faith-based educational practice.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Peer Support in Religious Character Formation through School Programs

The formation of students' religious character is influenced not only by peer closeness but also by how teachers leverage these relationships within school programs, both inside and outside the classroom. In this context, peers act as motivators, supervisors, advisors, and role models in strengthening religious values each with a theoretical grounding in established educational and social psychology frameworks.

**As motivators,** peers help fulfill the need for belonging and relatedness, fostering intrinsic motivation toward religious practices an idea aligned with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020). **As supervisors,** peers act as agents of positive norm reinforcement, consistent with Social Control Theory (Krohn & Massey, 1980), where social bonds and shared expectations regulate students' behavior. Meanwhile, the roles of *advisor* and *role model* reflect the core mechanisms of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), whereby religious values and practices are transmitted through observation, imitation, and interpersonal feedback.

By anchoring these peer roles in relevant theories, the analysis demonstrates that peer influence in religious character formation is not incidental but embedded within broader psychological and social learning processes. This theoretical linkage strengthens the argument that peer-based strategies, when properly facilitated through school programs, can significantly contribute to sustained religious character development.

**Motivator.** Motivators provide encouragement that stimulates behaviour's aimed at achieving specific goals (Rahman, 2024). In the context of religious character formation, peers motivate one another to cultivate devotion to God during both class activities and extracurricular practices, such as greeting with "Salam," praying together, reciting the *Asmaul Husna*, performing congregational prayers, and giving charity (*infaq*). Motivation arises from both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Extrinsic motivation comes from external influences, such as inviting peers to pray, perform charity, or study diligently together (Muzayanah & Anggraeni, 2023). Furthermore, peers encourage moral values such as compassion, sharing, and mutual assistance, reflected in charitable acts and helping classmates in need. They also motivate care for the environment, reinforcing the value of love for creation.

**Supervisor.** Peers function as monitors within the student community, and such mutual oversight reflects care and affection, in line with Santrock's concept of love expressed through supervision and reminders (Chenot *et al.*, 2009). The supervisory role includes reminding each other to pray on time, give *infaq*, act honestly, and respect rules. Peers also maintain a conducive learning environment by encouraging focus, cooperation, discipline, patience, and adherence to classroom responsibilities, as well as practicing courteous social interactions outside the classroom, such as the Salam, Greet, Smile.

**Advisor.** Peers significantly influence both social and academic aspects by providing guidance and advice. This includes instructing correct prayer procedures, correcting mistakes in recitations of prayers or *Asmaul Husna*, and encouraging proper religious practices, demonstrating high concern for spiritual understanding among students.

**Role Model.** Peers serve as examples whose behaviour's guide others toward positive conduct. This includes demonstrating sincere prayer, disciplined study habits, punctuality, proper attire, orderly departure from school, and respectful communication. Students tend to emulate peers who exhibit good behaviour, thereby reinforcing religious character and social norms (Gladstone & Cimpian, 2021).

Based on the findings, the role of peers as role models is most visible in worship practices that reflect one's relationship with God. Students tend to emulate peers who consistently perform prayer, recite *Asmaul Husna* with devotion, and show attentiveness in worship. This supports the view of Pratiwi *et al.* (2021), students who choose to associate with peers exhibiting positive behaviour tend to emulate those behaviour's, whereas those interacting with peers displaying negative behaviour are more likely to adopt similar negative actions.

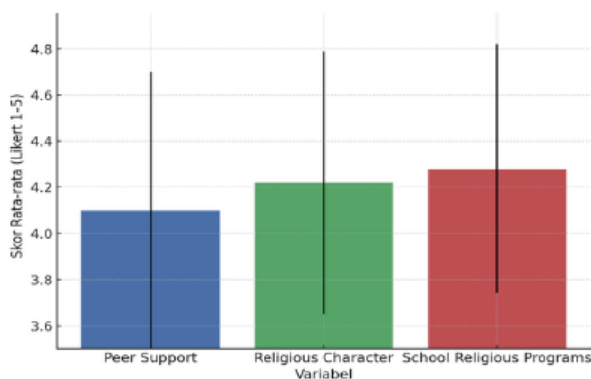
However, these peer roles should not be understood as separate or merely descriptive categories. Rather, they form an interactive and hierarchical process in religious character formation. The role model function occupies the highest influence because it embodies values in visible action, serving as the referential standard for other peer roles. The motivator role encourages the desire to follow that example by fostering emotional closeness and shared identity. The advisor role supports understanding and reflection by providing guidance and justification for religious practices. Meanwhile, the supervisor role reinforces consistency through gentle reminders and normative accountability within the peer group.



Thus, religious character formation occurs not only through imitation but through a layered relational mechanism, where motivation, guidance, normative control, and exemplary behavior reinforce one another. This analytical perspective clarifies that peer influence in religious contexts functions as a structured social process rather than a set of isolated behaviors.

Furthermore, peers also serve as role models in terms of discipline and politeness. This includes setting examples by arriving on time, sitting neatly, leaving school in an orderly manner, wearing uniforms and accessories according to regulations, and demonstrating proper communication. By modelling positive behaviour, peers become examples for other students within the school environment, encouraging others to follow suit (Masturin, 2023)

A schematic representation of the role of peers in fostering religious character is presented in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1:** Role of Peers in Fostering Religious Character.

Quantitative analysis of 195 students revealed differences in contributions among peer support, religious character, and school religious programs. Likert-scale scores (1–5) indicate that school religious programs received the highest average score ( $M = 4.27$ ), followed by students' religious character ( $M = 4.20$ ), while peer support scored slightly lower ( $M = 4.10$ ). Substantively, this indicates that school religious programs act as the primary facilitator of religious character formation and student well-being by providing opportunities for the internalization of spiritual values and creating a supportive moral and psychosocial ecosystem. Nonetheless, peer support remains significant, though its impact depends heavily on the school context. Peers function as motivators, supervisors, advisors, and role models, but their influence is amplified when integrated with school policies and teacher guidance.

These findings highlight that the development of students' religious character is not solely the result of personal relationships with peers, but emerges from

the interaction between social experiences and structured school programs. Therefore, integrating school religious programs with peer support is a key determinant in enhancing student well-being. For faith-based schools, these results imply the strategic importance of collaborative approaches such as peer group mentoring, student community activities, and cooperative learning, where peers are active agents in shaping religious character and promoting psychosocial well-being, rather than passive beneficiaries.

#### 4.2. Peers' Contribution to Student Well-Being through Positive Interactions

The contribution of peers to students' well-being cannot be separated from the religious context in which these interactions occur. Positive peer interactions at school are not limited to emotional or social support in a general sense but also involve shared spiritual meaning-making. Such interactions align with the view that well-being in religious educational settings is not merely psychological, but also spiritual in nature where comfort, motivation, and resilience are strengthened through shared belief and collective worship. Therefore, peer relationships contribute to student well-being not only by fulfilling needs for belonging and acceptance, but also by nurturing *spiritual connectedness*, which further stabilizes emotional and moral development. This distinguishes the role of peer support in religious schools from that in secular contexts, situating well-being within a framework of shared faith, values, and religious identity.

Student well-being improves when students engage in positive interactions with their peers. These interactions manifest as emotional support, social skills development, and mutually reinforcing academic encouragement. Such support helps students feel more confident, motivated, and better equipped to cope with the pressures of learning.

Peers as providers of emotional and social support. Research shows that peers play a crucial role as a source of meaningful social and emotional support. Students' well-being is enhanced when they have enjoyable and supportive peers (Allen *et al.*, 2023). The greater the social-emotional support received, the higher the level of student well-being. These findings are consistent with theoretical perspectives that emphasize how various forms of peer support contribute significantly to improving students' psychological and social welfare (Weber & Eriksen, 2021).

Based on the study's findings, the role of peers as motivators in shaping student well-being is closely

linked to the aspects of relationships and positivity. Strong peer relationships foster a positive environment where students feel accepted, valued, comfortable, less lonely, and supported by both peers and teachers, which in turn increases their motivation to learn.

The role of peers as motivators is also closely connected to resilience. When peers provide mutual support, they help cultivate mental resilience, enabling students to cope with stress and overcome challenges. Which suggests that robust social support can strengthen mental resilience and equip individuals to face difficulties effectively.

Peers also play a significant role in developing social skills. Social skills refer to an individual's ability to establish and maintain effective social relationships within their environment (Steenkamp & Goosen, 2025). These skills can be nurtured through peer interactions, as peers provide guidance, feedback, and collaborative experiences. Based on the study's findings, the role of peers in developing social skills as part of fostering student well-being is closely linked to the aspects of relationships, strength, and engagement. Students' participation in positive interactions or peer-to-peer communication can cultivate empathy, enabling them to collaborate more effectively in solving problems due to a shared sense of understanding. This aligns with Anggia research, which found that social support from peers can enhance social skills such as communication, teamwork, and empathy (Anggia & Murti, 2025).

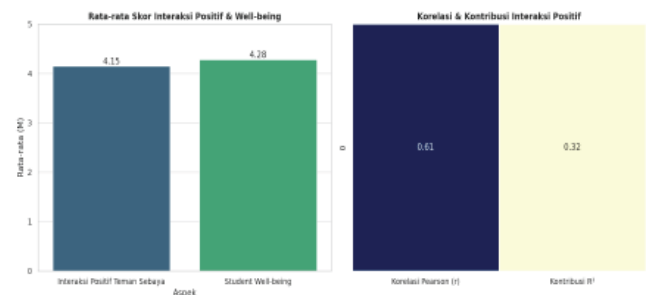
Moreover, well-developed social skills help students make positive choices regarding their social circles and avoid deviant behaviour. Similarly, Tianingrum and Nurjannah (2020) demonstrate that strong social skills enable adolescents to select constructive peer groups and reduce the likelihood of engaging in negative or harmful behaviour's.

The Positive role of peers as academic influencers .The role of peers as academic influencers in shaping student well-being is closely linked to positivity. Positive peer interactions, such as providing feedback and encouragement, create a supportive and enjoyable learning environment that enhances student motivation. This is consistent with the findings of Putri and Prijambodo (2020), who reported that frequent and meaningful interactions among peers foster a more engaging learning atmosphere, enabling students to share knowledge and participate in discussions, thereby boosting their motivation to learn.

Anggie further highlight that peers can offer encouragement and serve as positive role models, which increases students' motivation and engagement in learning. Consequently, peer support contributes to

improved academic performance (Anggraeni *et al.*, 2023). The impact of peers as academic influencers is also tied to engagement, purpose, and learning outcomes. Peers who actively participate in school activities help each other find meaning and purpose, act as learning partners, and support one another in achieving academic goals.

The description of how peers contribute to student well-being through positive interactions can be illustrated by the following Figure 1.2.



**Figure 1.2:** Peers Contribute to Student Well-Being Through Positive Interactions

Positive interactions with peers play a significant role in improving student well-being. This can be seen from the relatively high average value of positive interactions ( $M = 4.15$ ;  $SD = 0.62$ ), which is followed by a high level of student well-being ( $M = 4.28$ ;  $SD = 0.58$ ). In other words, students consistently assess that emotional support, social acceptance, and academic collaboration from peers provide a more meaningful learning experience.

The correlation analysis results show a positive and strong relationship between positive peer interactions and student well-being ( $r = 0.61$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). These findings confirm that the higher the quality of students' relationships with their peers, the higher their levels of happiness, school engagement, and life satisfaction.

Furthermore, the results of simple linear regression analysis show that positive peer interactions can explain 32% of the variation in student well-being ( $R^2 = 0.32$ ). The positive regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.57$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) reinforces the evidence that an increase in positive interactions directly contributes to an increase in student well-being. The heatmap visualization showing these correlation and contribution values underscores that positive interactions are not just an additional factor, but one of the main determinants in shaping student well-being in faith-based education environments.

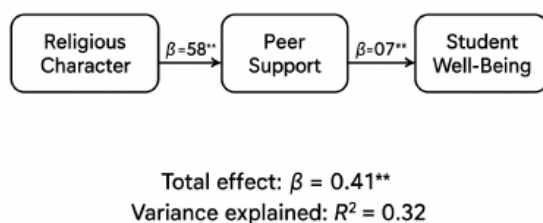
Practically, these results indicate that schools need to develop programs that encourage the creation of healthy and collaborative social relationships among students. Thus, the role of peers is not only as social

supporters but also as catalysts in shaping religious character and improving students' psychological well-being.

#### 4.3. Peers Serve as a Bridge Between Religious Character and Student Well-Being

Peer support not only helps students become more religious but also makes them feel happier and more meaningful. Religious activities carried out with peers, such as prayer or religious group study, have been shown to strengthen religious values while improving students' psychological well-being.

The role of peers as a link between religious character and student well-being can be seen in Figure 1.3.



**Figure 1.3:** Religious Character and Student Well-Being.

The results of the study indicate that peer support not only strengthens students' religious character but also improves student well-being. The average scores for the three variables were in the high category (religious character:  $M = 4.32$ ; peer support:  $M = 4.18$ ; student well-being:  $M = 4.25$ ). This indicates that students in religious schools have relatively strong levels of religiosity, social support, and psychological well-being.

Pearson's correlation analysis shows a significant positive relationship between religious character and student well-being ( $r = 0.54$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, religious character is also closely related to peer support ( $r = 0.58$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). These findings indicate that more religious students tend to have stronger peer support networks. Furthermore, peer support has the highest correlation with student well-being ( $r = 0.61$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), showing that religious-based social relationships play an important role in student happiness and meaningfulness.

Mediation analysis using the Baron & Kenny (1986) model reinforces these findings. Religious character has a direct effect on student well-being ( $\beta = 0.41$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). However, when the variable of peer support is included, this effect decreases but remains significant ( $\beta = 0.27$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). The mediating effect proved to be significant (Sobel test,  $z = 3.45$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) with an additional contribution of 17% to the variance in student

well-being. This means that peer support acts as a mediator that strengthens the contribution of religious character to student well-being.

Religious character and peer support form an integral whole, religiosity provides a moral foundation, while social support from peers provides pleasant and meaningful emotional experiences. Religious activities carried out together, such as prayer, *shalawat*, or religious group study, not only strengthen religious values but also become a source of happiness, meaning, and psychological well-being for students.

Based on interviews and observations, it was revealed that students perceive religious activities not merely as spiritual routines but also as spaces of togetherness and sources of emotional support. Peer support in a religious context differs from general social support because it carries a spiritual dimension. Students feel more valued and find greater meaning when their peers remind them to join congregational prayers, recite the Qur'an, or discuss moral values. Such interactions build a community that is both academic and spiritual.

Students described their peers as role models and motivators. They encourage one another, offer gentle reminders when someone begins to slack off, and share religious experiences. This form of support nurtures a sense of togetherness and strengthens emotional bonds, which directly enhances happiness, optimism, and life's sense of meaning.

Peer support also creates a safe space for students to express their religious values without fear of judgment. Thus, it can be concluded that religious character and peer support work synergistically, religiousness provides meaning and direction in life, while peer support offers the social and emotional energy needed to embody those values in daily practice. Together, they not only contribute to student well-being but also shape holistic character development.

Peer support provides a safe space for students to express their religious values without fear of judgment. Thus, it can be concluded that religious character and peer support work synergistically. Religiousness provides meaning and direction in life, while peer support provides social and emotional energy that brings religious values to life in everyday life. Both contribute not only to student well-being but also shape a religious school ecosystem that is psychologically healthy.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study explores that peer support is a critical factor in shaping religious character and enhancing

student well-being. Quantitative findings indicate that religious character, peer support, and student well-being are strongly interrelated, with peer support serving as a significant mediator that amplifies the influence of religiosity on well-being. Mediation analysis reveals that while religious character directly contributes to student well-being, its effect becomes more pronounced when facilitated by peer support.

Peer support is shown to extend beyond mere social interactions, encompassing a spiritual dimension as well. Peers function as motivators, supervisors, advisors, and role models. They encourage one another in practicing religious values, provide gentle corrections for inappropriate behavior, offer guidance on moral and spiritual principles, and model these values through daily conduct. This role becomes even more effective when teachers strategically integrate peer support into both intra-curricular and extracurricular programs, thereby directing student relationships toward the strengthening of religious character.

The role of peers in fostering student well-being is reflected in positive interactions that generate emotional and social support. Such support helps students feel accepted, valued, and motivated. Consequently, peers not only reinforce religious values but also contribute to holistic development spiritual, emotional, social, and academic.

In conclusion, this study confirms that the integration of religiosity, peer support, and teacher facilitation in managing student interactions forms a synergistic framework that enhances overall well-being. Religion-based education, therefore, should provide greater space for strengthening peer networks as sources of emotional support and academic motivation, ensuring that students' religious development is aligned with happiness, life meaningfulness, and academic success.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample was restricted to students in religious schools, limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader educational settings. Second, the cross-sectional design does not allow for causal inferences regarding the long-term effects of peer support on well-being. Future research should adopt longitudinal and comparative approaches across diverse school contexts, integrate qualitative methods to capture deeper narratives of peer influence, and examine the role of digital peer interactions in shaping religious character and well-being in contemporary educational environments.

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