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## **Academic Commitment of Muslim Filipino Students in an Islamic Boarding School: A Phenomenological Study at Islamic Boarding School**

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### **Abstract**

This phenomenological study investigates the academic commitment of Muslim Filipino students attending Pondok Pesantren in Indonesia within the framework of transnational Islamic education. The research is grounded in Kobasa's Academic Hardiness Theory and aims to understand how these students sustain long-term engagement in Islamic studies despite facing linguistic, cultural, and educational challenges. Using Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological analysis, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving seven purposively selected participants. The findings reveal that academic commitment is nurtured through an interplay of personal, spiritual, and institutional factors. Structured daily routines, internalized religious motivation, and spiritual disciplines such as *tabajjud*, fasting, and Qur'an memorization serve as strong intrinsic drivers. At the same time, institutional vision, regulatory systems, peer collaboration, and family encouragement create a supportive ecosystem that reinforces persistence and resilience. Academic commitment among these students thus emerges not merely as persistence in study but as a spiritual journey integrating faith, self-discipline, and communal service. The study contributes to the growing discourse on Islamic educational resilience by demonstrating how faith-based pedagogy and pesantren culture cultivate enduring academic motivation across cultural boundaries. The implications emphasize the need for transnational Islamic education institutions to integrate contextualized, spiritually anchored learning frameworks that strengthen students' moral identity, academic perseverance, and adaptive competence in multicultural environments.

**Keywords:** Academic Commitment, Muslim Filipino Students, Islamic Boarding School, Phenomenology

### **Abstrak**

*Studi fenomenologis ini menyelidiki komitmen akademik mahasiswa Muslim Filipina yang belajar di Pondok Pesantren di Indonesia, dalam kerangka pendidikan Islam transnasional. Penelitian ini berlandaskan pada Teori Ketahanan Akademik Kobasa dan bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana mahasiswa-mahasiswa ini mempertahankan keterlibatan jangka panjang dalam studi Islam meskipun menghadapi tantangan linguistik, budaya, dan pendidikan. Menggunakan analisis fenomenologis tujuh langkah Colaizzi, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi partisipan, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan tujuh partisipan yang dipilih secara purposif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa komitmen akademik dipupuk melalui interaksi faktor pribadi, spiritual, dan institusional. Rutinitas harian yang terstruktur, motivasi keagamaan yang terinternalisasi, dan disiplin spiritual,*

seperti *tabajud, puasa, dan hafalan Al-Qur'an*, berfungsi sebagai pendorong intrinsik yang kuat. Pada saat yang sama, visi institusional, sistem regulasi, kolaborasi antar teman sebaya, dan dukungan keluarga menciptakan ekosistem pendukung yang memperkuat ketekunan dan ketahanan. Komitmen akademis di kalangan siswa ini muncul bukan hanya sebagai ketekunan dalam belajar, tetapi juga sebagai perjalanan spiritual yang mengintegrasikan iman, disiplin diri, dan pengabdian kepada masyarakat. Studi ini berkontribusi pada wacana yang berkembang tentang ketahanan pendidikan Islam dengan menunjukkan bagaimana pedagogi berbasis iman dan budaya pesantren menumbuhkan motivasi akademis yang berkelanjutan di berbagai batas budaya. Implikasinya menekankan perlunya lembaga pendidikan Islam transnasional untuk mengintegrasikan kerangka pembelajaran yang kontekstual dan berlandaskan spiritual yang memperkuat identitas moral siswa, ketekunan akademis, dan kompetensi adaptif dalam lingkungan multikultural.

**Kata Kunci:** Komitmen Akademik, Siswa Muslim Filipina, Sekolah Islam Berasrama, Fenomenologi

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays a pivotal role in nurturing intellectual growth, moral integrity, and spiritual consciousness among Muslim learners worldwide. It offers a holistic framework that integrates religious values with academic development, aiming to form individuals who are both intellectually capable and spiritually grounded (Mecha Madra et al., 2024). Within Southeast Asia, Indonesia's pesantren system represents a distinctive model of such integration, combining classical Islamic scholarship with general education in a residential, disciplined, and community-based environment (Achmadin et al., 2024; Baihaqi et al., 2023; Fauzi et al., 2025; Iskamar et al., 2025). Pondok Pesantren Al Fatah in Temboro, East Java, exemplifies this transnational model, attracting students from various countries, including the Philippines, who seek spiritual enrichment and religious excellence (Badriza, 2022; Khabibah et al., 2024).

Despite the expansion of transnational Islamic education, research exploring the lived experiences of international students in pesantren remains limited. Existing studies have examined the pedagogy and curriculum of pesantren (Albariki et al., 2024; Zainuddin et al., 2025), the integration of religious and modern education (Alhail et al., 2025), and character formation through Islamic values (Aryasutha et al., 2025; Khadir & Suud, 2020; Mustikamah et al., 2025; Nurdy & Ahmad, 2025). However, there is a scarcity of studies focusing on how foreign students especially Muslim Filipino learners develop and sustain academic commitment within these faith-based institutions. The absence of such studies leaves a conceptual gap in understanding how spiritual motivation, cultural adaptation, and institutional context interact to shape academic perseverance. Thus, this study seeks to address that gap through a qualitative, phenomenological approach that captures students' personal and collective narratives (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

The study specifically aims to explore how Muslim Filipino students at Pondok Pesantren Al Fatah develop and maintain their academic commitment to Islamic studies in a cross-cultural learning environment. Academic commitment in this context is understood as a sustained dedication, motivation, and focus toward achieving educational goals, rooted in religious conviction and moral responsibility (Chukwuorji et al., 2018). The phenomenon offers a unique lens to understand how faith, discipline, and social context converge to strengthen students' persistence and engagement in religious learning.

Theoretically, this research draws on Telfah (2022) Academic Hardiness Theory, particularly emphasizing the dimension of commitment as a key component of resilience (Bashori & Moerdijat, 2023; F M Suud et al., 2024). The theory explains how individuals maintain purpose and engagement under challenging circumstances through three

interrelated traits: commitment, control, and challenge. Within the pesantren context, these dimensions resonate with Islamic principles of sabr (patience), mujahadah (striving), and niyyah (intentionality), which serve as spiritual foundations for enduring commitment and adaptive coping.

Using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method (Ningsih, 2025), this study aims to illuminate how academic commitment is formed through personal aspirations, spiritual practices, and institutional support systems. The research contributes theoretically by contextualizing academic hardiness within a transnational Islamic education framework and practically by offering insights for educators and pesantren administrators. The findings are expected to reveal how faith-based pedagogy and pesantren culture foster academic perseverance and resilience, enriching global discussions on Islamic educational psychology and cross-cultural student development.

## METHODS

The study adopts a qualitative research design, specifically Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method. This approach is appropriate for exploring the depth and complexity of participants' subjective experiences, especially those rooted in cultural, spiritual, and academic contexts (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). The phenomenological framework aims to understand how students experience and make meaning of their academic commitment within the pesantren environment. The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al Fatah, a prominent Islamic boarding school in Temboro, East Java, Indonesia. Known for its strong emphasis on Islamic piety and transnational reach, the pesantren provides an ideal setting to study the experiences of international Muslim students, particularly those from the Philippines. Seven (7) Muslim Filipino students (*santri*) were selected through purposive sampling. Participants had to meet the following requirements in order to be considered: Filipino nationals, enrolled and residing at Pondok Pesantren Al Fatah, willing to discuss personal and educational experiences, have a Philippine address, and be diverse in terms of age, duration of residence, and prior educational background in order to enhance data variance. Data were gathered using three main techniques: Semi-structured interviews, participant observations and document analysis.

The data analysis in this study employed Colaizzi's seven-step procedure, which began with a thorough reading of all transcriptions of participant data for a general overview, followed by a scanning for significant statements and formulation of meanings from them. The meanings were then clustered into thematic groups, yielding a derivation of a whole description and a discernment of a core structure of studied phenomena. The analysis was theory-grounded using Kobasa's (1982) concept of commitment. The ethical considerations were stringently adhered to: informed endorsement by participants, change of name for anonymity, and total confidentiality. The research also noted sensitivities for religions and cultures by adhering to a suitable time and venue for interviews and observation, and by undertaking interviews and observations during suitable times and in suitable places. To earn trustworthiness in the research, data triangulation was employed using interviews, observation, and document, while member checking helped in establishing correctness in interpretations. Also, thick descriptions were employed in helping in transferability, and reflexive journaling was kept in focus in order for researcher bias to be identified and managed during research proceedings.

**Table 1: Demographic Data**

<b>Informant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Year Level</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Tribe</b>	<b>Civil Status</b>	<b>Work of Parents</b>	<b>Gender</b>
<b>1</b>	25	9th	Basilan	Tausug	Single	Business	Male
<b>2</b>	27	8th	Basilan	Tausug	Married	Farming	Male
<b>3</b>	32	10th	Zamboanga City	Tausug	Married	Business	Male
<b>4</b>	26	8th	Zamboanga City	Tausug	Married	Former Politician	Male
<b>5</b>	37	6th	Sulu	Tausug	Married	Business	Male
<b>6</b>	23	3rd	Sulu	Tausug	Single	Retired Teacher	Male
<b>7</b>	30	10th	Davao	Tausug	Single	Business	Male

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

The findings of this phenomenological study illuminate how Muslim Filipino students at Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah experience and construct academic commitment through their everyday academic, social, and spiritual lives. Rather than portraying academic commitment as a uniform outcome of institutional mechanisms, the analysis reveals how students interpret, negotiate, and internalize their learning environment based on personal meanings and life trajectories.

### **Structured Programs and Routines**

Drawing on in-depth interviews, prolonged participant observations, and document analysis, this phenomenological study reveals a typology of lived academic commitment that emerges from how students make sense of their daily academic and spiritual experiences at the pesantren. Academic commitment is experienced through sustained engagement with structured routines that gradually cultivate discipline and focus, alongside the internalization of institutional vision and values that align personal aspirations with communal and religious goals. At the same time, students negotiate regulatory frameworks as enabling structures that support adaptation and self-regulation within a cross-cultural learning environment. Their commitment is further sustained through reliance on social and support networks, particularly familial encouragement and peer relationships that foster belonging and motivation. These lived experiences are deeply intertwined with spiritual practices that provide meaning, inner strength, and resilience. Taken together, these interrelated experiences do not function as isolated themes, but as distinct yet overlapping modes through which students experience, interpret, and sustain academic commitment in the pesantren context.

### **Institutional Vision and Values**

Some students experience academic commitment as a value-oriented and identity-based process, deeply intertwined with the pesantren's institutional vision that integrates religious devotion with educational aspirations. For these students, commitment is not merely sustained through external compliance with institutional rules, but emerges through a gradual personal identification with the moral purpose of the pesantren. This identification reshapes how students understand learning not only as an academic obligation, but as a form of religious responsibility and future service.

Students describe the pesantren's vision as providing a moral horizon that guides their academic perseverance. One participant reflected, *"The vision of this pesantren inspires me to be a good Muslim and contribute to my community"* (Informant 1), indicating that academic effort is experienced as part of a broader ethical project. Another student articulated how this vision fostered future-oriented meaning: *"I plan to build a madrasa in my hometown to spread Islamic teachings"* (Informant 5). In this sense, academic commitment is lived as preparation for social and religious contribution, rather than individual achievement alone.

For several students, engagement with the institutional vision also led to a transformation of initial intentions. What began as short-term educational goals evolved into deeper, long-term commitment as students encountered the pesantren's moral narratives and role models. As one participant noted, *"At first, I only intended to study for a year, but the mission here convinced me to stay longer and learn more"* (Informant 7). This shift reflects a phenomenological process in which meaning is progressively reconstructed through everyday interactions, reflective learning, and communal practices.

Document analysis further reveals that the pesantren systematically embeds its vision within both religious and general curricula, reinforcing this internalization of values. Lessons in Islamic studies, character education, and general subjects consistently emphasize the integration of knowledge (*'ilm*), faith (*iman*), and ethical conduct (*akhlaq*). Through this curricular integration, students come to experience academic commitment as a moral and spiritual alignment between personal aspirations and institutional ideals, thereby sustaining persistence and engagement over time.

### **Regulatory Frameworks**

Academic commitment is experienced by many students as a continuous process of negotiating and internalizing institutional regulations, particularly within the context of cultural and linguistic transition. Rather than being perceived solely as restrictive controls, rules are gradually experienced as enabling structures that provide clarity, order, and emotional security. This shift in perception reflects how students move from external regulation toward self-regulated academic engagement.

Students describe how clear expectations regarding time management, behavior, and technology use create a stable learning environment that supports focus and reduces cognitive overload. One participant explained, *"Rules about proper behavior and use of time help me stay focused"* (Informant 2), indicating that regulations function as practical guides for organizing daily academic life. Another student highlighted the role of rules in easing social and cultural adjustment: *"Following the rules makes it easier to adapt to the community"* (Informant 3). In this sense, regulations are experienced not as punitive mechanisms, but as shared norms that facilitate belonging and mutual understanding.

For international students navigating unfamiliar linguistic and cultural settings, these regulatory frameworks offer predictability and structure that mitigate uncertainty. The consistency of rules helps reduce distractions associated with adaptation stress, allowing students to redirect attention toward learning and spiritual growth. Over time, compliance with institutional regulations evolves into internalized discipline, where students no longer follow rules out of obligation but out of an emerging sense of responsibility and self-control. Through this lived process of negotiation, academic commitment is sustained as students align institutional expectations with their own developing capacities for regulation and perseverance.

### Social and Support Networks

For many students, academic commitment is lived and sustained as a relational experience, rooted in emotional connections with family members and reinforced through peer solidarity within the pesantren community. Commitment is not experienced as an individual endeavor, but as an ongoing relational process in which motivation, endurance, and responsibility are continuously shaped through meaningful social ties. These relationships function as emotional anchors that help students remain committed despite physical distance, cultural transition, and academic demands.

Students describe how emotional bonds with family members in their home country serve as enduring sources of motivation and moral responsibility. One participant shared, *“Thinking of my family back home gives me strength and commitment”* (Informant 2), reflecting how family presence is experienced not physically but affectively, sustaining perseverance through memory, obligation, and hope. This emotional connectedness transforms academic effort into a form of reciprocity and filial responsibility, rather than personal achievement alone.

Within the pesantren, peer relationships play a critical role in shaping students' everyday academic and emotional experiences. Friendships are described as spaces of mutual understanding where students share challenges, encourage one another, and co-construct strategies for coping with academic pressure and cultural adjustment. As one student noted, these relationships make it easier to adapt and remain focused (Informant 3). Participant observations of communal study sessions, shared living arrangements, and collective worship further reveal how daily interpersonal interactions cultivate a sense of belonging, which in turn strengthens persistence and academic engagement. Through these relational experiences, academic commitment is sustained as a socially embedded and emotionally meaningful process.

### Spiritual Practices and Growth

A distinctive typology of academic commitment emerges among students who experience their learning journey as spiritually anchored and meaning-centered. For these students, academic perseverance is not primarily driven by external expectations or institutional demands, but is sustained through ongoing spiritual practices that shape inner orientation, emotional balance, and moral intention. Practices such as fasting, daily Qur'an recitation, and *khuruq* are lived not as isolated rituals, but as embodied spiritual experiences that continuously inform how students understand effort, struggle, and purpose in learning.

Students describe fasting as a practice that strengthens self-control, patience, and endurance, qualities they directly associate with academic persistence. One participant stated, *“Fasting for four years has strengthened my faith and commitment”* (Informant 4), indicating how bodily discipline is experienced as reinforcing mental and emotional resilience. Similarly, daily Qur'an recitation is described as a source of calmness and renewed motivation. As another student explained, the regular engagement with the Qur'an provides inner peace that helps maintain focus and emotional stability in academic activities (Informant 5).

Engagement in *khuruq* is experienced as further deepening spiritual awareness while fostering responsibility, discipline, and attentiveness to communal obligations. One participant noted that participation in *khuruq* improved focus and strengthened commitment by aligning personal conduct with spiritual values (Informant 6). Through these practices, students experience academic effort as an extension of worship rather than a separate or competing domain. Collectively, these spiritual disciplines function as existential anchors, integrating academic commitment with a deeper sense of spiritual purpose and enabling students to persevere with sincerity, balance, and meaning.

**Table 2. Phenomenological Typology of Academic Commitment**

Mode of Lived Commitment	Core Lived Meaning	Key Experiential Characteristics	Illustrative Evidence
Discipline-Oriented Commitment	Academic commitment is experienced as self-discipline cultivated through routines	Internalization of schedules, persistence, time awareness	Tahajud, Qur'an memorization, structured daily routines
Value-Oriented Commitment	Commitment emerges from identification with institutional moral vision	Alignment of academic goals with religious and communal values	Desire to serve community, plans to establish madrasa
Regulation Negotiated Commitment	Commitment shaped through internalization of institutional rules	Rules as enabling structures, self-regulation, adaptation	Compliance with time, behavior, and technology regulations
Relationally Sustained Commitment	Academic perseverance as socially and emotionally embedded	Family motivation, peer solidarity, sense of belonging	Family encouragement, peer study groups
Spiritually Anchored Commitment	Academic effort integrated with spiritual purpose	Inner strength, emotional balance, meaning-making	Fasting, Qur'an recitation, khuruz

## DISCUSSION

### Structured Programs and Routines

At Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah, orderly daily routines like tahajud prayers, Qur'anic recitations, and studies create discipline and facilitate concentration, thus solidifying students' academic and religious commitment (Document 4). Day 1 and Day 3 observations verified active participation in group work and the dynamic balance of intellectual and religious activities. Informant 1 reported, "*I learned to follow the daily schedule to ensure I do not miss both prayers and studies,*" while Informant 2 reported, "*Waking up early for tahajud has been hard at first but now's part of my routine forming stronger discipline.*" Informant 3 contributed, "*Ordinary routines such as Qur'an memorization assist me in practicing discipline and give a sense of accomplishment.*" These insights validate the utility of disciplined formats when fostering long-term commitment. Secondary literature supports the utility of structured environments: (Dahlan et al., 2025; Syaifuddin & Ahwan, 2024) contends routine creates a sense of predictability and stability; Bandura's (2012) Social Learning Theory posits consistent routines solidify action; and Fuligni et al. (2012) reported structured preschool routines enhance participation and development. For Islamic context situations, (Na'imah et al., 2021, 2025) highlight the utility of formal programs engendering both educational progress and religious well-being. Though researchers such as Oğuztürk (2025) and Liang et al., (2026) issue cautions about over-stratification, they recommend balancing prediction with release less of an issue in religious-based schools such as pesantren where structure complements intrinsic drive. Jiang et al. (2023) validated how formal routines enhance self-management in the domain of physical and mental care parallel educational situations where routines build self-discipline reflected by Informant 2's routine for tahajud. Structured environments facilitate collaboration as demonstrated by Leinhardt et al. (1987) and gratify physiological as well as self-realization needs according to Maslow's hierarchy (Schneider & Alderfer, 1973). Both benefits are reflected by Zainuddin (2018), who highlight the integrated utility of Islamic educational stratification. Generally, the pesantren integrated routine model

instills focus, discipline, as well as commitment and matches extant theory and empirical support as well as fosters a transformational learning experience.

### **Institutional Vision and Values**

The pesantren's aim of restoring Islamic practices and educating students to uphold Islamic teachings (Document 1) is a unifying influence which links personal and scholarly development for greater commitment. The blending of religious and non-religious curricula (Document 2) strengthens this linking by relating students' learning to their personal beliefs and moral development. Reflections on Day 3 found students wishing to be teachers and community leaders clear indicators of their internalization of the pesantren's institutional vision. As stated in Interview, Theme 4, even a few students wish to establish madrasas and train future scholars, illustrative of how their long-term ambitions sustain their endurance and deepen their scholarly commitment.

Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah's institutional vision has a significant role to play in fostering students' long-term academic commitment and intention. Informant 1 reported, "*The vision of this pesantren inspires me to be a good Muslim and contribute to my community in the future,*" illustrating how the pesantren's mission instills dedication as well as a motive to serve society. Informant 5 reported, "*I plan to build a madrasa in my hometown to spread Islamic teachings,*" and Informant 7 remarked, "*At first, I only intended to study for a year, but the mission here convinced me to stay longer and learn more* (Kroth & Boverie, 2000)." These illustrate how the institution's goals complement personal goals and create a sense of common purpose. This dynamic is reinforced through Durkheim's (theory of moral education), as schools impart collective consciousness by matching individual values with societal objectives. This is the case with the pesantren's religious and academic curricula (Document 2), which direct moral development. Biasin (2018) transformative learning framework corroborates such alignment with the institution's values increasing personal commitment as well (illustrated on Day 3 when students reported hopes of becoming educators and community role-players). Informant 5's long-term goal supports Bronfenbrenner's (ecological systems theory), stressing the interaction of the institution's structure and individual progress. Badri and Malik (2024) studies complement this by noting how Islamic schools instilling moral and religious values engender strong sense of identity and purpose increasing student persistence. Informant 7's prolonged duration mirrors Abd Jalil's (2022) findings about the importance of Islamic education in instilling sense of social responsibility (Suud et al., 2025). Compared with the secular system where matching of values is intricate (Syukur Rahmatullah et al., 2021), the pesantren's single religious frame of reference simplifies such alignment and strengthens commitment. Bandura's (theory of social learning) supports such an account since role Models and communal reinforcement underpin the resultant behavior (illustrated in the case of Informant 5 who wants to "educate future scholars") such communal intention has an echo in Wenger's (2012) communities of practices stressing mutualness in support of action which increases participation. The importance of such communal influence is verified by Dasgupta (2022) and Delgado (2024) as illustrating how such modelling produces moral development in Islamic premises. The pesantren's adaptable, value-oriented approach allows for individual objectives, as in the case of Informant 1's wish to contribute to his community, while permitting long-term commitment as evident in the case of Informant 7. This mirrors the ideals of Ryan and Deci's (2012) self-determination theory and finds an echo in Bashori (Bashori & Moerdijat, 2023) and Suud (Suud & Salsabillah, 2024) work on the resilience of institutions. On the whole, the pesantren's vision operates as much as an orienting framework as an enabling transformation which matches organizational principles

with individual and societal ambitions and undergirds long-term commitment through an Islamic educational philosophy.

### Regulatory Frameworks

The strict regulatory frameworks (Document 3) provide essential structure and boundaries that promote focus and academic commitment. Observations on Day 3 confirmed that students' disciplined adherence to daily routines reflects the effectiveness of these rules in sustaining a conducive learning environment. Despite facing challenges such as language barriers and cultural differences (Interview, Theme 5), students demonstrate resilience through consistent compliance with established norms. Informant 2 remarked, "*Rules about proper behavior and use of time help me stay focused and avoid distractions,*" while Informant 3 shared, "*Following the rules makes it easier to adapt to the community and environment here.*" Similarly, Informant 4 emphasized, "*Strict rules around the use of technology ensure that we focus on studies and not unnecessary distractions.*" These insights highlight how regulatory frameworks not only maintain order but also foster adaptation, focus, and sustained commitment. The regulatory frameworks provide a clear structure that reinforces focus and dedication among students. They are widely recognized in contemporary educational and psychological literature as critical components for fostering disciplined learning environments, enhancing student focus, and maintaining commitment to goals. In the context of Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah, the strict regulatory frameworks described in Document 3 and supported by observations and interviews exemplify this principle. Informant 2 emphasized that "*rules about proper behavior and use of time help me stay focused and avoid distractions,*" illustrating how clear boundaries guide students in prioritizing their academic and spiritual responsibilities. Similarly, Informant 3 highlighted that "*following the rules makes it easier to adapt to the community and environment,*" reflecting the role of structured norms in easing cultural transitions. These insights align with Bandura's (1991) theory of self-regulation, which suggests that external structures, such as institutional rules, provide scaffolding for developing self-discipline and intrinsic motivation.

Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah policies are prominent in promoting attention to scholarship and diligence. Aqmar, (2025) noted the function of orderly environments in religious schools to promote self-control when such spaces reinforce students' religious and cultural beliefs. Liu & Li, (2025) also noted that explicit rules help reduce distractions and boost scholarship focus. Pesantren policies reflect the same direction as Informant 4 noted, "*Tight rules governing the usage of technology help us focus on studies and not unnecessary distractions.*" Covington (2009) also noted that institutionally formulated explicit guidelines fortify interest by eradicating doubt as well as injecting security. A boarding schools study by Taylor and Baker (2021) has equivalents in connecting strict rules to higher success but at the possible expense of autonomy as identified by Ryan and Deci (2000) in revisiting Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Pesantren addresses the concern by the favorable spin placed on rules as noted by Informants 3 and 4. The pesantren system has the support of structure while leaving space for intrinsic interest.

Culturally, the pesantren's regulatory system accords with Hofstede's (1984) collectivist model, where conformity is valued for the good of social harmony. Informant 3 confirmed, "*Following the rules makes it easier to adapt to the community.*" (Sahayu et al., 2026; Triana et al., 2025) concurred, discovering culturally attuned rules in Islamic schools facilitate easing of social and linguistic adaptation, an argument borne out by (Mirawati et al., 2025; Prismadianto et al., 2025), who noted the importance of individualized regulatory systems in enhancing resilience. Whereas Western theorists such as Freire (1970) (Madkan et al., 2025) in condemn autocratic systems as restrictive, Robinson et al. (2022) counter that systems can facilitate individual development

when culturally translated. This balance is evident in the pesantren system where structure provides scaffolding but not limitation (Fatah et al., 2025; Hasan et al., 2024; Helmy et al., 2021).

Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) Framework emphasizes the agency of external structures through their facilitation of students' progress by their mediation of early impediments such as differences in language (Informant 4: "*Language barriers can be overcome as days pass by*"). The structures promote internalization and self-regulation. Research by Dweck (2006) and Huang et al. (2021) supports this, referencing the achievement of such growth mindset through controlled environments and feedback in the manner of persistent expectations (Muhtadin et al., 2023). Overall, the governing system at Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah exhibits an equally balanced model of structure and autonomy under the auspices of theories such as SDT, ZPD, and growth mindset. By synchronizing institutional discipline with cultural and spiritual values, the pesantren cultivates resilience, integration, and long-term scholarly commitment in students.

### Social and Support Networks

Family and community support, alongside peer collaboration, are critical in sustaining students' academic dedication. Interview data revealed that emotional and financial backing from families significantly bolsters perseverance (Interview, Theme 3). Informant 1 shared, "*My parents have always supported me financially and emotionally, which motivates me to continue*," while Informant 2 added, "*Thinking of my family back home gives me strength and commitment to succeed*." Observations on Day 2 and Day 3 further confirmed that informal gatherings and peer interactions foster communal engagement and reinforce motivation. As Informant 3 stated, "*The friendships I have here make it easier to adjust and stay focused on my studies*." These collaborative efforts among peers enhance not only adjustment but also a shared sense of purpose. Support networks provide a foundation for students to remain motivated and dedicated throughout their journey. The role of social and support networks in maintaining students' dedication is widely recognized in both empirical literature and theoretical frameworks, including more recent studies. Family and community support systems provide emotional, financial, and motivational backing, forming a critical foundation for students' resilience and perseverance. For example, (Kahu & Nelson, 2018).

Theory of Student Retention underscores the importance of social integration in academic success, arguing that a student's ability to form meaningful relationships within their educational environment directly influences their persistence. This aligns with the observations from Day 2 and Day 3, which highlight the significance of peer interactions and collaborative efforts in fostering a sense of community and shared purpose among students. Informants emphasized similar dynamics, with one stating, "*Thinking of my family back home gives me strength and commitment to succeed*" (Informant 2). This sentiment is supported by Bourdieu's concept of social capital, which posits that networks of relationships provide individuals with resources that enhance their ability to achieve goals (Kahu & Nelson, 2018).

Recent research furthers our insights on how networks of social relations inform persistence in academia (Huang et al., 2020). demonstrate how emotional and financial support from families dramatically increases students' psychological well-being and strengthens their resolve and persistence. As Informant 1 reported, "*My parents have always supported me financially and emotionally, which motivates me to continue*." Peer support is equally crucial, (Li et al., 2022) confirmed how group activities build a sense of belonging and educational success. Informant 3 testified to the same effect with "*The friendships I have here help me find the pace easier and help me focus on my studies*." In highly tense, diverse environments such as pesantrens, resilience is interdependent with such support networks. Theory of Ecological Systems

underscores the impact of microsystems such as the family and the peer group, while Hofstede's (2001) in (Azizah et al., 2024; Rachmawaty & Bahiroh, 2025) collectivism dimension illustrates the efficacy of common norms in plotting dense, support-oriented collectivities. Ahmed et al. (2021) highlight how pesantrens engender religious communalism, (Ansari, 2025) note how religious affinity networks strengthen resilience in religious-based schools. Conversely, the lack of support networks isolates students and engenders weak persistence (Arif et al., 2024; Syaifuddin & Ahwan, 2024). However, the pesantren's system fortifies the contrary forces through an innate sense of collectivity born out of its value-oriented collaborative nature. Ultimately, the interplay of the family's support, the peer support along with the support of the whole community keeps student commitment strong and consistent across both classic approaches and recent proof on the long-term efficacy of the support network on educational adaptation. The Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah illustrates the model by blending the individual support along with the support from the classroom and the community as a whole into the religiously rooted and resilient educational system.

### **Spiritual Practices and Growth**

Spiritual routines such as fasting, Qur'anic education, and khuruz are central to students' academic dedication and personal development. Observations and documents highlight how practices like tahajud and daily Qur'an memorization reinforce faith and discipline (Document 4; Observation, Day 1), while also strengthening students' commitment to both academic and personal growth. Interviews reveal that students find these routines deeply rewarding, enhancing their focus and motivation (Interview, Theme 6). Informant 4 shared, "*Fasting for four years has been challenging but it has strengthened my faith and commitment.*" Similarly, Informant 5 stated, "*Practices like Qur'an recitation daily bring me peace and keep me motivated,*" while Informant 6 noted, "*Activities such as khuruz improve my focus and deepen my faith, keeping me committed to my studies.*" These narratives affirm the role of spirituality as a sustaining force in the students' academic journey. Spiritual practices play a fundamental role in shaping the dedication and resilience of Muslim Filipino students at Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah. Practices such as tahajud (night prayers), fasting, Qur'an recitation, and khuruz (spiritual outreach) deeply influence their commitment to both academic and spiritual pursuits. As Informant 4 reflects, "*Fasting for four years has been challenging but it has strengthened my faith and commitment,*" underscoring how these practices nurture a sense of discipline and endurance. Similarly, Informant 5 highlights that "*Practices like Qur'an recitation daily bring me peace and keep me motivated,*" while Informant 6 notes, "*Activities such as khuruz improve my focus and deepen my faith, keeping me committed to my studies.*" These experiences align with broader theoretical frameworks in psychology and education, which emphasize the role of spirituality as a transformative force in fostering resilience and motivation.

Theoretically, this aligns with Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, where consistent engagement in spiritual routines builds a sense of accomplishment and mastery, reinforcing self-discipline and commitment. Spiritual activities such as fasting and prayer, which require deliberate effort and persistence, cultivate what Seligman (2011) describes in positive psychology as "*grit*" – the passion and perseverance to achieve long-term goals. Research by Tisdell (2003) also affirms the centrality of spirituality in adult learning, suggesting that spiritual practices offer learners a profound sense of purpose, ultimately enhancing their dedication to education. Moreover, Walker and Dixon (2002) emphasize that spiritual growth fosters resilience by providing individuals with coping mechanisms to navigate personal and academic challenges.

Recent studies further support these claims. For example, (Lestari et al., 2025; Ramadhan & Albab, 2025) found that students engaged in structured spiritual routines reported enhanced emotional stability and academic focus, especially in faith-based learning environments like pesantren. Similarly, Safaria and Saputra (Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025) demonstrate that Islamic spiritual practices, particularly tahajud and Qur'anic recitation, positively influence students' mental health and resilience, aligning closely with Informant 5's experience of peace and motivation through Qur'an recitation. Likewise, (Nugraha et al., 2025) emphasize the importance of spiritual activities in fostering perseverance and clarity of purpose among pesantren students, a notion echoed in Informant 6's perspective on khuruz as a tool for focus and faith.

Empirical studies further corroborate these findings. For example, a study by (Carling et al., 2008) on the impact of spiritual disciplines in education found that consistent engagement in prayer and scripture reading significantly enhances students' academic focus and personal well-being. (Zinnbauer et al., 2024) argue that spiritual practices contribute to a strong sense of identity and belonging, which are critical for maintaining commitment in communal and academic settings like pesantren. In the context of fasting, (Lama et al., 2026) demonstrate how self-regulation practices improve not only physical endurance but also psychological resilience (Brenner & Stewart, 2026), supporting Informant 4's account of fasting as a challenging yet rewarding practice.

Blending spirituality in Islamic learning settings is reflective of other religious campuses' practice. As a comparison, Christian theological students have devotional routines which, as reported by (Mahalle & Zailani, 2025), improve emotional well-being as well as college persistence. The Islamic practice of khuruz and tahajud, though, brings a unique communal as well as solo aspect, promoting a combination of individual maturation as well as community participation. The example by Informant 6 of khuruz making a person more attentive and faithful is a representation of this distinct feature. While non-religious systems do not typically experience this integration of spirit and academy, (Susanto et al., 2025) posit that without holistic frameworks, resilience in students can be limiting (Sukirjo et al., 2025). The pesantren format, in contrast, allows for cultivation of both foundation of spirit and adaptation, as (Lathifah et al., 2025) describes. (Handayani & Utari, 2024) noted an additional outcome of greater community commitment and participation in students who have experienced these everyday routines.

Religious practices at Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah strengthen discipline, persistence, and strong scholarly commitment. This interweaving of ritual and learning mirrors pedagogical and psychological hypotheses as well as maintains unique cultural-religious values. Through individual and collective enactments, such practices engender a form of learning commitment favorable to whole-person growth and transferable across religious education sites. Central to such commitment are students' intrinsic interests and future prospects. As shown through Interview Theme 1, such considerations as curiosity, concern over issues of security, and membership in groups have strong influences on their decision to commit to Islamic studies. Interview Theme 4 illustrates how future intentions to contribute to their societies undergirds persistence and harmonizes goals in academy with broader societal contributions. Informant testimony verifies such processes: "*I came here because of the tabligh movement in Basilan, which inspired me to deepen my Islamic knowledge,*" reported Informant 1; "*Curiosity about contradictions in teaching led me to commit to further learning,*" reported Informant 2; whereas Informant 3 specified, "*Safety concerns in my hometown pushed me to study abroad and commit fully to this program.*" These testaments illustrate how individual as well as spiritual considerations and environmental considerations congregate to inspire educational commitment, analoguing Self-Determination

Theory's concern over the importance of intrinsic interest as an incentive to long-term commitment (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Recent scholarship affirms the dynamic of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in Islamic education. (Ezel Acar & Erozan, 2024; Sitepu et al., 2025) emphasize students' intrinsic motivation rooted in individual development and responsibility as multiplied by extrinsic encouragement such as encouragement by the teacher and reinforcement by the institution. (Sholihah et al., 2024) likewise show how formalized religious activities such as congregational prayer and Qur'an recitation foster both religious devotion and external motivation. Informant 4's ideal of constructing a madrasa illustrates the dynamic of the interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and corresponds with (Zabidi et al., 2023), who discovered that the wish to be a "Caliph of God" supports student commitment and corresponds to Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) expectancy-value theory on purposeful goal seeking. Push-Pull Theory (Maringe & Carter, 2007) likewise accounts for the impact of external stimuli such as security and opportunity as exemplified by Informant 3's account but where intrinsic motives remain crucial for long-term participation. For (ISMAIL et al., 2024), support by the peer group as well as the environment complements individual aspiration while Rahawarin et al. (2020) confirm students typically seek Islamic education out of pure faith for spiritual development and serving the community. For (Cahyanti et al., 2024), intrinsic motive triggers the start but formal notice from the institution maintains it. Correspondingly, (ISMAIL et al., 2024) associate Islamic ideals such as *ikhlas* with internalized commitment and support both individual and communal commitment.

At Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah, Muslim Filipino students maintain academic commitment within a multi-dimensional arrangement of organized routines, mutual institutional objectives, disciplined regulation, spiritual routines, and strong support networks. Daily routines such as tahajud, Qur'an memorization, and class participation internalize discipline and focus, consistent with growth mindset and self-determination theory (SDT), which emphasize autonomy and regularity. Observations and interviews highlight how the routines enable balance between religious and academic imperatives. The pesantren's vision connects individual aspirations with communal objectives such as becoming educators or opening madrasas, reflective of the confluence of individual agency and communal obligation. Systems of regulation, guided by the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), integrate discipline and autonomy and encourage resilience in a culturally grounded context (Fitriah M Suud et al., 2024). Peer support as well as those from their families and broader community reinforce commitment consistent with Tinto's student retention model and contemporary scholarship on social integration. Spirituality routines fasting, reading the Qur'an, and khuruz are integral to the transformation of students and reflective of the Islamic pedagogic ideal of the confluence of faith and learning. The motivations of students derive from intrinsic motivations such as theological searching and self-betterment as well as extrinsic motivations such as safety and peer influence parallel to SDT as well as literature on dual systems of motivations. In short, Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah illustrates a culturally vibrant and spiritually centered model of education sustaining long-term academic commitment through the blending of personal, institutional, and communal aspects.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Muslim Filipino students at Pondok Pesantren Al Fatah demonstrate a profound level of academic commitment that goes beyond mere persistence. Their dedication is primarily driven by intrinsic religious motivation, reinforced by structured institutional routines, spiritual discipline, and strong social support systems. These findings highlight that academic commitment within transnational Islamic education is not solely an academic pursuit but an integrated process of faith, identity, and service. The results also challenge the assumption that external demands are the main drivers of persistence, showing instead that spiritual and communal values are central to long-term academic engagement. Theoretically, this research extends Kobasa's Academic Hardiness Theory by contextualizing the concept of commitment within an Islamic educational framework. It introduces the idea of Islamic academic commitment, which merges spiritual devotion, institutional ethos, and community-based resilience. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for pesantren administrators and educators to design faith-integrated, culturally sensitive learning environments that harmonize discipline and autonomy. Structured spiritual routines such as tahajud, fasting, and Qur'an memorization can serve as pedagogical strategies to strengthen students' resilience and motivation. Nonetheless, this study is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single institution, which restricts generalizability. Future research should expand across multiple pesantren and include diverse demographic profiles to deepen understanding of academic commitment among transnational Muslim learners. Despite these limitations, the study provides a meaningful contribution to Islamic educational psychology by proposing a holistic, faith-based model of educational resilience and perseverance.

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