

The Religiosity of Master's Students in the IAT Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga from William James' Perspective

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Abstract

The religious development of postgraduate students has received limited scholarly attention, particularly regarding the interaction of academic and spiritual experiences within Islamic higher education. This study aims to analyze the religious development of Master's students in the Quranic Studies and Tafsir program, Class D, at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta through the perspective of William James' theory of religious experience. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed to explore the lived religious experiences of students in academic, personal, and social contexts. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations involving eight purposively selected informants and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal two distinct patterns of religious development: four students experienced significant growth in religiosity, while the remaining four showed relatively stable religious orientations. These developmental processes were shaped by internal factors, including religious beliefs, personal reflection, and spiritual awareness, together with external factors, such as academic discussions, social interactions, and campus religious activities. The findings demonstrate that the dimensions of ineffability, noetic quality, and transiency proposed by William James are reflected in the religious experiences of the students, highlighting the transformative role of subjective spiritual encounters. The novelty of this study lies in its integration William James' theory of religious experience in the context of Islamic postgraduate education offers a deeper understanding of graduate students' religious development. These findings imply that Islamic higher education institutions should strengthen reflection-based learning, dialogical classrooms, and structured spiritual development programs to foster religious growth among students while contributing to the advancement of the psychology of religion literature within contemporary Islamic higher education.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perkembangan keagamaan mahasiswa Program Magister Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir Kelas D di UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta melalui perspektif teori pengalaman religius William James. Penelitian ini mengkaji pengalaman religius mahasiswa dalam aspek akademik, individu, dan sosial. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi terhadap delapan informan yang dipilih secara purposif Hasil Penelitian Menunjukkan Adanya Perubahan Perkembangan Keagamaan Yang Beragam Sebanyak empat mahasiswa mengalami peningkatan yang signifikan dalam religiusitas, sedangkan empat mahasiswa lainnya tidak mengalami perubahan yang signifikan Faktor internal, seperti keyakinan, pemahaman agama, dan refleksi spiritual, serta faktor eksternal, interaksi sosial, dan kegiatan keagamaan

di kampus, berperan penting dalam membentuk dinamika tersebut. Unsur-unsur pengalaman religius berupa *ineffability*, *noetic quality*, dan *transiency* sebagaimana dikemukakan oleh William James tercermin dalam pengalaman para informan, yang menunjukkan bahwa pengalaman subjektif memiliki peran penting dalam transformasi spiritual. Lingkungan akademik UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, melalui dialog akademik, pengajian, dan berbagai aktivitas keagamaan, turut memengaruhi perkembangan religiusitas mahasiswa. Namun, mahasiswa telah memiliki pemahaman dan praktik keagamaan yang mapan cenderung tidak mengalami perubahan yang signifikan. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi antara pendidikan akademik dan refleksi spiritual dalam mendukung perkembangan keagamaan mahasiswa pascasarjana. Perguruan tinggi Islam perlu memperkuat program keagamaan berbasis refleksi, dialog, dan pendampingan spiritual guna memperkaya pengalaman religius mahasiswa. Selain itu, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap literatur psikologi agama dengan memperluas pemahaman mengenai pengalaman religius mahasiswa pascasarjana dalam konteks pendidikan tinggi Islam.

A. INTRODUCTION

In life, every person undergoes religious development, during which they often reflect on life's meaning, spiritual goals, and relationship with God. Experiences such as loss, crises, or major achievements can help them understand religion. Religion or religiosity forms a value system that governs certain rules (Grant et al., 2023). Generally, people see these regulations as standards for conducting themselves in a way that is consistent with their religious convictions. Religiosity offers many benefits to everyone, whether in terms of a value system, motivation, or life guidance; however, its most significant impact is as a shaper of conscience (Saleh, 2022, p. 581). It is important to understand that religiosity is an aspect or part of human life based on the rules or scriptures contained within a religion, which serve to bind an individual or group to God, humanity, and the surrounding natural world (Exline et al., 2022).

Previous studies and research on religious development among college students have focused on two aspects: *first*, religiosity in psychological studies (Ihsani & Utami, 2022). According to Fridayanti, religiosity in society has two sides; on the one hand, it can lead to love and compassion, but on the other hand, religion is often associated with examples of bad behavior (Fridayanti, 2016, p. 200). Every individual's behavior in society is determined by their experiences and the development of their religious beliefs. *Second*, attitudes and behavior in religious practice. In this context, the behavior observed in human life is a manifestation of their beliefs regarding God. According to Mami Hajaroh, the presence of religious institutions in society can help enhance religiosity in every individual's life. Similarly, each university in Indonesia has

its own religious activities, both on and off campus (Hajaroh, 1998, p. 20). The existence of discussion forums on religion, studies, and other religious activities serves as a platform for the personal development of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students in terms of religiosity and spirituality (Lih et al., 2024).

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University (UIN) Yogyakarta is one of Indonesia's leading Islamic higher education institutions that integrates Islamic values with academic excellence to foster intellectual and spiritual development. In recent years, Islamic universities have increasingly emphasized strengthening religious character in students in response to the challenges posed by globalization, digitalization, and changing socio-cultural dynamics, which have influenced the ways young adults understand and practice religion. Nevertheless, recent studies indicate that university students' religiosity is not always accompanied by deeper religious experiences or meaningful spiritual transformation. Instead, religiosity is often limited to cognitive understanding and ritual practices, while students' subjective religious experiences receive relatively little scholarly attention.

Previous studies have primarily examined religiosity among university students from the perspectives of religious commitment, commitment, moral behavior, or moderation. However, limited research has explored how postgraduate students experience religious development through their personal religious experiences, particularly within Islamic higher education institutions, using William James' theory of religious experience. Consequently, the processes through which academic, personal, and social experiences contribute to religious development remain poorly understood.

This discrepancy may be attributed to the predominance of quantitative approaches that measure religiosity through standardized indicators while paying less attention to the subjective and phenomenological dimensions of religious experience. The dynamic process of religious transformation among postgraduate students has not been adequately explained (Aditya et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the religious development of Master's students in Class D of the Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta through the perspective of William James' theory of religious experience. By employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research seeks to reveal how students interpret their religious experiences within academic,

personal, and social contexts and how these experiences contribute to their religious development.

Several studies have examined religiosity and religious life among university students from different perspectives. Aryani (2015) investigated the orientation, attitudes, and religious behavior of students at a public university in Yogyakarta. The study found that the religious orientation of students significantly influenced their attitudes and religious behavior in academic and social life. Second, Hidayat (2017) examined the religious behavior of students in the Islamic Education program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung and reported that religious understanding and campus religious activities played an important role in shaping the religious behavior of students. Third, Saleh (2022) analyzed the dimensions of religiosity in education and concluded that educational institutions substantially contribute to strengthening religious values among students through both curricular and extracurricular activities.

These previous studies share similarities with this research in examining religiosity and religious life among university students within the context of Islamic higher education. However, they differ in several important respects. Previous studies have mainly focused on religious orientation, religious behavior, and the educational dimensions of religiosity. In contrast, they paid limited attention to the process of religious development based on the subjective religious experiences of students. Moreover, none of these studies specifically investigated postgraduate students in the Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta through the perspective of William James' theory of religious experience.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration William James's theory of religious experience with the analysis of religious development among postgraduate students in an Islamic higher education setting. Unlike previous studies, this research uses a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore how academic, personal, and social experiences interact to shape students' religious development. This perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of religious transformation experienced by postgraduate students and extends the application of William James' theory to contemporary Islamic higher education.

Therefore, this study explores and analyzes the religious development of Master's students in Class D of the Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta through the perspective of William James' theory of religious experience. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the internal and external factors

influencing students' religious development, examine how academic, personal, and social experiences contribute to their religiosity, and enrich the literature on the psychology of religion within the context of Islamic higher education (Gilbertson et al., 2022).

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to explore the religious development of master's students based on their lived religious experiences. The phenomenological method was chosen to understand how students interpret and experience religiosity within the academic, personal, and social contexts of Islamic higher education. The study was conducted at the Master's Program in Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The research participants consisted of eight first-semester students from Class D, purposively selected from a total population of 16 students. The selection criteria included students who were willing to participate, actively engaged in academic and religious activities, and able to describe their religious experiences in depth.

The primary research instrument was the researcher, supported by semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and field notes. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and non-participant observations to obtain comprehensive information regarding the religious experiences and development of participants. The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. This analytical process enabled the researcher to identify themes related to religious experiences of students and interpret them through the perspective of William James' theory of religious experience.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, this study applied source and technique triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews and observations. In addition, member checking was conducted by confirming the interview results with the participants to ensure that the interpretations accurately reflected their experiences.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Religious Development

According to Triyani, religious development is a process that every individual in society experiences to understand their God (Supratna & Septian, 2021, p. 78). According to Yulmida Amir, religious development or religiosity refers to a person's level of belief in God's existence and His laws, worship, and significant experiences of God's presence (Amir, 2021, p. 49). Meanwhile, according to Iswati, religiosity is the depth of a person's faith in a religion and the level of knowledge they possess about that religion, as demonstrated by adhering to rules and fulfilling sincerely in daily life related to worship (Iswati, 2019, p. 67).

Religiosity can occur when a person engages in religious activities, whether rituals or other practices, with a heart that is submissive and obedient to God, leading them to experience religious feelings such as happiness, peace, a sense of closeness to God, and the ability to exercise self-control (Main. 2021).. Additionally, a religious person may exhibit two tendencies as a result of their religious development: First, becoming a peaceful and friendly person. Second, to become a person who harbors prejudice and hostility (Aryani, 2015, p. 59).

2. Master's Degree Students

Students are agents of change who can steer the country in a better direction. Students are an essential part of this nation because they possess critical and visionary thinking (Suzanawaty et. al., 2021, p. 72). Students pursuing bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degrees are a vital component of the higher education system. According to Wawan Wahyudi, students are individuals with fundamental physical and mental capabilities that need to be developed through education, whether at home, at school, or within their own social environments (Scheitle & Dabbs, 2021, p. 96).

According to Siwoyo, a graduate student is someone who is studying and pursuing a master's degree (S2) at a university, whether public or private, or at another institution equivalent to a university, and who is considered to possess a high level of intelligence, the ability to think logically, and the ability to plan their actions. Critical thinking, quick action, and precision are traits that may be present in every graduate student (Syafitri & Rahma, 2021). In an academic context, Ismail S.W. argues that graduate students have a social responsibility to strengthen the academic traditions of higher education. They will enable master's graduates to become part of societal

development by refining the education and learning process through thesis writing (Wekke, 2019).

3. William James

Komarudin (2012) stated that William James was a leading figure in psychology and a founder of the philosophical school of pragmatism. He also examined the phenomenon of religious experience in considerable depth (Komarudin, 2012, p. 471). Jackson Lears describes William James as a classic American philosopher who believed in the power of reason to transform society and rejected the pessimistic outlook associated with European thought. Lears (1987, p. 84) further portrays James as an influential thinker who confronted uncertainty and emerged as an iconic figure in American intellectual history. According to Sobur, William James was a leading figure in American psychology and the brother of the renowned novelist Henry James. He further explains that James studied at Harvard University and Harvard Medical College, where he later taught physiology, psychology, and philosophy. (Smith & Milan, 2022).

Evans (1990) argues that many people regard William James as the founder of contemporary American psychology. However, James openly opposed experimental psychology and laboratory methods. Despite this stance, James and his seminal work *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) exerted a profound influence on the development of experimental psychology (Evans, 1990, p. 433). Furthermore, James believed that religion could influence how people behave. According to James, the religious impulse in humans is nearly as compelling as any other impulse. Consequently, religion must be the subject of broader social discussion and research (Ismail, 2012, p. 5).

4. Religious Development of Master's Students

Religiosity is a multidimensional construct that encompasses beliefs, worship practices, religious experiences, moral values, and social behavior. Rather than being expressed solely through ritual activities, religiosity is reflected in the integration of faith into everyday life, personal commitment, and social responsibility (Amir, 2021, p. 49; Saleh, 2022, p. 581). Within Islamic higher education, religiosity develops through the interaction between academic learning, spiritual reflection, and participation in religious activities, which together contribute to the intellectual and spiritual growth of students (Chanifah et al., 2021). From an Islamic perspective, religiosity refers to the comprehensive implementation of Islamic teachings in both belief and practice (Muhaimin, 2001, p. 297), while Paloutzian (1996) defines religiosity as an individual's

commitment to God, expressed through beliefs, religious experiences, worship, and moral conduct.

The interview findings indicate that religious knowledge and previous religious experiences play an important role in shaping the religious development of first-semester master's students in the Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir program. Participants explained that their understanding of religion had been formed through family education, formal schooling, and continuous learning experiences before entering university. Academic discussions, interaction with lecturers and peers, and participation in religious activities further enriched their religious experiences during their postgraduate studies. These findings support recent studies suggesting that spirituality-based learning environments strengthen religious awareness through reflective and dialogical educational experiences (Chanifah et al., 2021; Saleh, 2022, p. 581). In addition, participants emphasized that religious experiences involve both emotional and spiritual dimensions that strengthen faith and religious commitment.

The experiences of Informants D, B, R, and A indicate that postgraduate education does not automatically lead to significant religious development. These participants had already established relatively stable religious beliefs before entering graduate school; therefore, rather than transforming existing religious values, their academic experiences primarily reinforced existing religious values. This finding is consistent with Amir's (2021) argument that religiosity develops through the long-term internalization of religious values. Likewise, Ott and Vonk (2025) reported that students with strong pre-existing religious commitments tend to demonstrate greater religiosity stability throughout higher education.

Unlike the previous group, N, M, W, and MA demonstrated significant religious development during their postgraduate studies. Their narratives reveal that academic dialogue, Qur'anic interpretation, interaction with lecturers and fellow students, and participation in religious activities encouraged deeper spiritual reflection and strengthened their commitment to religious practice. These findings are consistent with those of Chanifah et al. (2021), who found that spirituality-based learning environments facilitate the internalization of religious values. Similarly, Fara (2026) argues that meaningful academic experiences contribute to Muslim students' religious identity and sense of belonging within higher education institutions.

Based on the interview findings, it can be concluded that the religious development of the participants followed two distinct patterns. Four students

experienced significant growth in religiosity, whereas the remaining four students maintained relatively stable religious orientations. These differences demonstrate that the interaction of internal factors, including beliefs, personality, and spiritual awareness, with external factors, such as family background, academic environment, social interaction, and religious learning opportunities, shape religious development. These findings support Alwi's (2018) framework while extending recent studies that emphasize the important role of spirituality-based higher education in fostering religious maturity among students (Chanifah et al., 2021; Saleh, 2022, p. 581). From William James' perspective, these findings illustrate that religious development emerges from subjective religious experiences that vary according to each individual's psychological, spiritual, and social background (Supriatna & Septian, 2021).

5. Analysis of Data on the Religious Experiences of Master's Students Based on the Perspective of William James

William James conceptualizes religion as a deeply personal and subjective experience that primarily belongs to the private sphere of human life. According to James, religion encompasses the feelings, actions, and experiences of individuals insofar as they perceive themselves to be in relation to what they regard as the Divine. He further distinguishes religious experience into two major orientations: the *healthy-minded* and the *sick soul*, both of which represent different pathways through which individuals experience and interpret spirituality (Komarudin, 2012, p. 472; William James, 1902). Contemporary studies continue to affirm the relevance of James's perspective by emphasizing that religious experience is not merely expressed through institutional religious practices but also through personal meaning-making, spiritual reflection, and transformative experiences that shape individuals' religious identity and psychological well-being (Main, 2021; Cole Turner, 2021). Furthermore, recent scholarship argues that James's concepts of *ineffability* and *noetic quality* remain valuable analytical frameworks for understanding how subjective spiritual experiences contribute to religious commitment and personal transformation in contemporary society (Fuertes & Dugan, 2021).

The findings indicate that the religious experiences of the Master's students were diverse and reflected different patterns of religious development. Interviews conducted with eight first-semester students in Class D of the Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta between December 23 and 27, 2024, revealed that participants interpreted religiosity through various dimensions,

including worship practices, academic learning, personal reflection, and social interaction. While four participants reported significant growth in their religiosity, the remaining four perceived their religious commitment to be relatively stable throughout their postgraduate studies. Desi Amelia (D. Amelia, 2025) describes the religious experiences she had while pursuing her master's degree: *"My religious experience during my master's program did not undergo significant changes in terms of religious practice, but in terms of religious understanding, I observed that the development of religiosity was very diverse, which made me more open-minded and less quick to judge or justify someone else's religious experience."* In my interactions with professors, peers, or religious communities, I found it very helpful to gain a broader perspective on reality, particularly regarding religion." This first respondent preferred to participate in religious discussions in class during lectures, and the off-campus activities they attended were webinars related to their field of study, namely, Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis. According to the participants, this helped broaden their religious understanding.

Muklis Sore recounted a spiritual experience that shaped his religious views and beliefs: *"I once had a profound spiritual moment while attending a religious study session on Surah Al-Kahfi. This experience made me feel closer to God and helped me realize the importance of patience and faith. It strengthened my faith and brought me inner peace. My religious development has undergone significant changes. I have come to better understand the importance of historical and social context in interpreting religious texts. My religious practices have become more reflective and tolerant. I have also become more concerned with social issues and justice* (Sore, 2025). This second respondent lives at the Krapyak boarding school, and participating in activities such as religious study sessions, sholawatan, and other activities helps improve his religious devotion.

Akbar Rahman also shared his spiritual experiences and described the role of campus activities in his religious development: *"The spiritual experiences I've had occurred while reading the Qur'an; moments when doubts in my heart were healed by reading the Qur'an and its translation. In my opinion, campus activities can serve as a motivating reminder to always do good and be diligent in worship* (A. Rahman, 2025). The third respondent has lived in the Darul Ummah Islamic boarding school since his undergraduate studies and practices the religious teachings imparted at the boarding

school where he resides. According to Abdussalam, the activities at the boarding school helped deepen his religiosity (Abdussalam et al., 2021).

Like the second and third respondents, Muhammad Rizqi Aulia said, *"So far, my religious understanding and practices haven't changed because I've long held a broader concept of religion."* In my opinion, interactions with friends, professors, and religious communities have helped deepen my religious understanding; for example, we can see that what we understand may not necessarily be received by others. From this, we learn that religiosity has its own degrees and levels, and that everyone has a different level of religiosity (Aulia, 2025). Lives in Pondok Krapyak, just as the second respondent mentioned earlier. In his view, interaction between faculty members and religious communities can help deepen the religious experience of each individual.

Nadia Utari, the fifth respondent, shared whether she had ever faced religious doubts or a crisis of faith while pursuing her master's degree. She stated, *"I have never experienced any doubts during my master's program, but in terms of my religious practice, I have re-evaluated teachings or schools of thought that are inconsistent with the teachings of Islam itself, as they could hinder my spiritual growth."* However, I have seen significant progress in my spiritual development; for example, I now fast more often and engage in more Quranic recitation (N. Utari, 2025). From the interview with the fifth respondent, it can be concluded that, when it comes to religiosity, one must be more careful in choosing a school of thought or teachings to follow, as this can have an impact on each individual's religious practice. Moreover, many sects in society have strayed from the teachings of the Qur'an and the hadith.

Muhammad Afdal, the sixth respondent, said, *"I have had many religious experiences in my studies, in my social life, and in my personal life. For example, in my studies, I encountered material that made me realize how limited my religious knowledge was, which left me feeling frustrated and ready to give up. However, I managed to rediscover my inner passion by improving the quality of my religious practice, both in worship and in other aspects. I am certain that God is always with us, no matter what our circumstances are, as long as we involve God in every step of our journey"* (Afdal, 2025). The sixth respondent experienced a deepening of their religious faith by improving their religious practice and understanding. Additionally, the sixth respondent frequently participated in off-campus religious activities, such as webinars and religious study groups, to enhance their religiosity.

Wahyu Ananda said, *"During my master's program, I haven't participated in any religious activities on campus; however, I attend Mr. Fahrudin Faiz's religious study sessions outside of campus. Through these sessions, we are instilled with an ethos and enthusiasm for worship and learning, as well as a drive to broaden our horizons, which helps us become better people in the future (Ananda, 2025) .* The seventh respondent preferred classroom discussions that reviewed material covered in previous courses. In his view, attending religious lectures both on and off campus can continue to broaden our horizons, whether in matters of religion or other fields of knowledge. The final respondent, Fitra Nabila Kadir, said, *"The religious experience I have had is through riyadhoh, which is an effort undertaken with the aim of serving as a means to facilitate all matters."* After having this religious experience, I feel closer to religious and spiritual values by praying for our professors, and this serves as a means for me and a blessing that will eventually return to us (F. N. Kadir, 2025).

Based on the interview findings, the religious experiences of the first-semester Master's students in Class D of the Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir program demonstrate diverse patterns of religious development that are consistent with William James' theory of religious experience. Internal factors, including religious beliefs, spiritual awareness, and prior religious understanding, together with external factors, such as academic engagement, interaction with lecturers and peers, and participation in campus religious activities, significantly influenced the religious development of the students. Of the eight participants, four reported substantial improvements in both their religious practices and religious understanding, whereas the remaining four maintained relatively stable levels of religiosity throughout their postgraduate studies.

These findings indicate that religious development among postgraduate students is determined not only by formal religious education but also by individuals' subjective interpretation of their lived experiences. This finding is consistent with Amir's (2021) argument that religiosity develops through the integration of belief, religious experience, worship, and moral commitment. Similarly, Chanifah et al. (2021) found that spirituality-based learning environments in Islamic higher education encourage students to internalize religious values through reflective learning and academic dialogue. Saleh (2022) also emphasized that higher education institutions play an important role in strengthening religious maturity by integrating intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dimensions within the learning process.

From William James' perspective, the participants' experiences illustrate the characteristics of *noetic quality*, in which students gained deeper religious insights through academic learning and personal reflection. Several participants also demonstrated elements of *transiency*, as moments of intensive prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and self-reflection generated meaningful spiritual experiences that strengthened their commitment to religious practice. These findings reinforce James's argument that religious experience is fundamentally subjective and that spiritual transformation varies according to each individual's psychological, social, and religious background. Similar conclusions have been reported by Scheitle and Dabbs (2021), who found that the interaction between personal beliefs and the academic environment shapes religious identity among graduate students, and by Upenieks and Eagle (2026), who emphasize that spiritual experiences contribute to individuals' psychological resilience and religious commitment.

The other four did not experience an increase because they felt that they had already reached a stable religious concept or because of a lack of involvement in religious activities. The religious experiences of the master's students in the Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis program reflect the following elements as outlined by William James: ineffability, noetic quality, ancience, and passivity. This process also underscores that religious experience is an inner journey involving emotions, understanding, and connection to divine values. The academic environment on campus must continue to provide space for spiritual reflection and religious discussion to support the development of religiosity among graduate students.

Discussion

1. Summary

The religious experiences of Master's students in Class D are dynamic and influenced by internal variables, such as personal beliefs and understanding, as well as external variables, such as academic and social environments. William James's method is relevant for understanding the variations in the religious experiences of master's students. Regarding variations in the religious development of master's students in the Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis program, four students demonstrated significant improvement in their religious practices and understanding across personal, social, and environmental dimensions. The other four did not experience improvement because they felt that they had already reached a stable religious concept or because

of a lack of involvement in religious activities. Factors such as a lack of involvement or stagnation in beliefs can hinder students' religious growth, but an academic environment that supports spiritual reflection and religious activities can enhance students' religiosity.

2. Reflection

Each Master's student in the Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis program, Class D, has a different religious experience. Some master's students feel better after performing religious rituals and participating in religious activities, while others remain stagnant despite being aware of the importance of spiritual reflection. A supportive academic environment, such as class discussions, interactions with instructors, and religious communities, greatly encourages students' religious development. This highlights the importance of Islamic higher education institutions in serving not only as places of learning but also as spaces for strengthening religious values. This study demonstrates that integrating religious practices with academic learning can enhance the religiosity of master's students. Some students face religiosity or stagnation issues, but this can be viewed as a developmental phase. In line with William James's theory of the *"sick soul,"* crises or doubts often serve as the first step toward a deeper understanding and a stronger conviction. Universities must create more inclusive and effective programs that support each student's journey of religiosity.

3. Interpretation

This study applies William James's theory of religious experience to examine the religious development of Master's students in Class D of the Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The findings reveal that students experienced different patterns of religious development influenced by both internal factors, including religious beliefs, prior religious understanding, and spiritual awareness, and external factors, such as academic learning, interaction with lecturers and peers, and participation in campus religious activities. Four participants demonstrated significant religious growth, reflected in a stronger commitment to worship, a deeper understanding of Qur'anic interpretation within its historical and social contexts, and greater concern for social justice and community engagement.

These findings indicate that religious development is a dynamic process that results from the interaction between individual spiritual experiences and the educational environment. This finding supports Amir's (2021) argument that

religiosity develops through the integration of belief, worship, religious experience, and moral commitment. Similarly, Chanifah et al. (2021) reported that spirituality-based learning in Islamic higher education strengthens the religious awareness of students through reflective learning and meaningful academic dialogue. Saleh (2022) further emphasized that higher education institutions contribute to the religious maturity of students by integrating intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dimensions within the educational process.

The experiences reported by the participants illustrate the dimensions of noetic quality and transiency from William James's perspective, whereby students gained new spiritual insights through academic learning, reflection, and religious practice. Their experiences also demonstrate that subjective religious encounters can transform the perspectives of individuals and strengthen their commitment to religious values. Similar patterns have been identified by Scheitle and Dabbs (2021), who found that the interaction between personal beliefs and the academic environment shapes the religiosity of graduate students, and by Upenieks and Eagle (2026), who argue that meaningful spiritual experiences enhance religious commitment and psychological resilience. Furthermore, Fara (2026) highlighted that academic environments that encourage dialogue and reflection contribute positively to Muslim students' religious identity and sense of belonging in higher education. Therefore, this study's findings reinforce William James's argument that religious development is not merely the result of formal religious instruction but emerges through individuals' subjective interpretation of their lived religious experiences.

Meanwhile, the other four students did not show significant growth, typically because they already possessed a stable religious understanding or were less involved in religious activities. Relevance to William James's theory: The religious experiences of these master's students, including elements such as spiritual intimacy, reflective values, and emotional dynamics, align with James's concepts of the "healthy soul" and the "disturbed soul." Some students experienced stagnation or a religiosity crisis, but they viewed this as a step toward spiritual maturity."

4. Comparison

A comparison of this study with previous research reveals significant differences and findings. Fridayanti (2016) focused on examining two aspects of religiosity: love and compassion versus negative behaviors associated with religion. Mami Hajaroh (1998) highlighted the role of religious institutions in shaping

individual religious behavior within society. Meanwhile, this study uses William James's theory to examine the religious development of master's students in the Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis program, Class D, at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. This study focuses on individual religious experiences and their impact on personal, social, and societal life. Thus, while previous studies tended to focus on the impact of religiosity on society, this study offers a more specific approach by focusing on graduate students and their subjective experiences.

5. Implications and recommendations

This study contributes to the understanding of religiosity experiences of students based on William James's theory. This study also enriches the literature on religious growth in higher education settings, particularly among graduate students. Religiosity is not merely normative but also involves profound psychological processes, as evidenced by the emphasis on religiosity-associated personal and emotional experiences. A limitation of this study lies in its sample scope, as it involved only eight students from a single program (Quranic Studies and Exegesis) in a specific class; thus, the results cannot be generalized to all graduate students. Furthermore, this study did not thoroughly address other social and cultural contexts, such as the influence of family or the broader community outside the campus. Building on this study, other researchers can further explore the development of religiosity using William James's theory. For example, by expanding the research sample to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the development of religiosity among graduate students, including more subjects from other faculties, academic programs, or universities.

D. CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the religious development of Master's students in Class D of the Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta through William James's theory of religious experience. The findings indicate two patterns of religious development. Four students experienced significant growth in religiosity, reflected in stronger worship practices, deeper religious understanding, and greater concern for social issues, while the other four students maintained relatively stable religiosity due to their previously established religious beliefs. These findings demonstrate that the interaction of internal factors, such as beliefs and spiritual awareness, and external factors, such as academic learning, social interaction, and religious activities, influences students' religious development. The dimensions of *ineffability*, *noetic quality*, *transiency*, and *passivity* proposed by William James were evident in the religious experiences of the participants. The findings imply that Islamic higher education institutions should strengthen reflective and dialog-based religious learning to support the spiritual and academic development of students. Future research should involve a larger and more diverse sample across different universities and employ comparative or longitudinal approaches to further examine the dynamics of religious development in Islamic higher education.

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