



Emotional Intelligence and Participation in Dhuha Prayer at the Class Level: A Descriptive Correlational Study among Islamic Junior High School Students

Fawwaz Adzansyah Islamy¹, Yatny Mariam Lestari², Fiki Febriani³, Nur'aeni⁴

Fakultas Psikologi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto

Email: fawwazislamy@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in students' character development and academic success. In the context of Islamic education, religious habituation such as Dhuha prayer is viewed not only as a spiritual practice but also as a means of strengthening self-regulation and emotional management. This study aimed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and participation in Dhuha prayer at the classroom level in an Islamic junior secondary school (Madrasah Tsanawiyah). The study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive-correlational design. The population consisted of all students of MTs Muhammadiyah 04 Purbalingga, with a sample of 113 students selected through convenience sampling. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS), while data on Dhuha prayer participation were obtained from class attendance records. Data analysis was conducted at the classroom level by calculating the mean EI scores and average Dhuha prayer participation, followed by Spearman correlation analysis. The results revealed a very strong positive association between mean emotional intelligence and Dhuha prayer participation across classes ($\rho = 1.00$; $N = 3$). This association reflects a consistent pattern at the class level and should be interpreted cautiously due to the limited number of analytical units and the correlational nature of the study. This research contributes theoretically to the literature on emotional intelligence and religious practices and provides practical implications for strengthening character education through structured religious habituation programs in schools.

Keywords: character education, Dhuha prayer, emotional intelligence, islamic school, religiosity

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) has increasingly been recognized as a key factor in students' learning success and character development. Recent meta-analytic evidence indicates that students' EI contributes significantly to academic achievement, with a moderate-to-high effect size ($r \approx 0.39$) (Quílez-Robres et al., 2023). More broadly, EI encompasses the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and express one's own emotions as well as those of others in an adaptive manner within social and academic contexts (Ridwan Hermawan et al., 2025).

In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, strengthening Islamic character through the habituation of religious practices remains a major concern. Dhuha prayer, a recommended voluntary prayer performed in the morning, is regarded not only as a spiritual obligation but also as a means of fostering discipline and self-regulation. Several studies have suggested that routine religious practices such as Dhuha prayer help students develop time awareness, prioritize activities, and cultivate self-discipline (Zahara Nst et al., 2024).



Research examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and students' religious activities has produced mixed findings. Some studies emphasize that a religious school environment, often referred to as a "religious culture," has a positive impact on EI. For instance, Azizurrahman et al. (2023) reported that religious culture in madrasahs contributed significantly to students' emotional intelligence ($R = 0.454$; $p < 0.05$).

Other studies, however, have reported contrasting results. Wahyono's study (2017) conducted in a senior high school context found that the correlation between the frequency of Dhuha prayer and students' EI scores was very weak ($r = 0.140$) and statistically non-significant (Wahyono, 2019). In this context, students' engagement in Dhuha prayer did not appear to influence their emotional intelligence. Such discrepancies may be attributed to differences in school contexts, research methodologies, and EI measurement instruments. Moreover, existing studies have predominantly focused on individual-level analyses or single-school samples. To date, little attention has been paid to examining the correlation between emotional intelligence and Dhuha prayer participation at the aggregated class level in madrasah settings.

Overall, the literature suggests that emotional intelligence and religious habits play complementary roles. A systematic review by Graça and Brandão (2024) highlights that religious coping strategies are closely associated with emotion regulation and psychological well-being. In the educational domain, recent discussions of emotional intelligence dimensions based on the frameworks of Goleman and Salovey Mayer within Islamic education contexts conclude that emotion management such as empathy, self-awareness, and self-control can be integrated into Islamic religious education to foster holistic Islamic personality development (Ridwan Hermawan et al., 2025).

The primary issue underlying this study is the relatively low level of emotional intelligence management and religious participation among students. Evidence indicating that a substantial proportion of Indonesian adolescents exhibit low levels of EI (Khalillah et al., 2025), combined with social problems such as bullying and student violence, reflects weaknesses in character development and self-regulation. These conditions call for innovative educational interventions. One potential approach is strengthening the integration of routine religious activities within the school environment as part of character education. Dhuha prayer represents one form of voluntary worship that can be optimized in this regard.

The concept of emotional intelligence adopted in this study is grounded in the ability model, which conceptualizes EI as a set of competencies related to recognizing, understanding, managing, and expressing emotions adaptively in social and academic contexts. A systematic study by Sharma, Nguyen, and Smith (2025) demonstrates that consistent religious or spiritual engagement is associated with emotion regulation abilities, a core dimension of emotional intelligence (Brandão, 2025).

From a religious coping perspective, worship practices such as morning prayers, including Dhuha prayer, can be viewed as coping mechanisms that help individuals manage stress and academic pressures. Mastiti (2025) found that religious coping serves as a significant protective factor against stress in educational settings, suggesting that regular worship practices may function as adaptive strategies for students' emotional regulation.

Furthermore, the integration of religious education within the curriculum has been shown to enhance students' emotional intelligence and mental resilience in facing social and academic challenges. Shodiq (2025) emphasizes that religious education contributes significantly to the development of emotional intelligence and student resilience, supporting the argument that the habituation of worship practices promotes students' emotional and spiritual development in a holistic manner (Shodiq, 2024).

To address the identified gap, this study adopts a descriptive-correlational approach. By analyzing aggregated data, the study offers a practical means of identifying patterns between emotional intelligence and participation in Dhuha prayer. Preliminary findings indicate a positive relationship: classes with higher average EI scores tend to exhibit higher levels of participation in Dhuha prayer. These results suggest that better collective emotion management is associated with greater consistency in students' engagement in religious practices. In other words, strengthening students' emotional intelligence through character education may enhance their collective motivation to participate in voluntary worship activities.

The specific objectives of this study are to: (1) measure the average EI scores of each class, (2) assess the level of Dhuha prayer participation in each class based on attendance records, (3) examine the correlation between the two variables at the class level, and (4) interpret the implications of the findings. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the literature on the relationship between emotional development and religious interventions in education. Practically, the findings may serve as recommendations for madrasah administrators to strengthen Dhuha prayer habituation programs as part of character education. As suggested by previous research, the habituation of Dhuha prayer should be reinforced in a structured and sustainable manner as a means of fostering discipline, emotional regulation, and students' religious attitudes. Collaboration between schools and parents also needs to be enhanced to ensure consistent character development. Thus, this study not only tests a correlational hypothesis but also provides a practical foundation for religion-based character education strategies.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive-correlational design. The purpose of this design was to describe students' levels of emotional intelligence at the class level and to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and participation in Dhuha prayer without applying any treatment or manipulation to the research subjects. Descriptive-correlational designs are commonly used in psychological and educational research to investigate patterns of relationships among variables as they naturally occur.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all students of MTs Muhammadiyah 04 Purbalingga, totaling 152 students. The research sample comprised 113 students who voluntarily completed the questionnaire in full. Sample selection was conducted using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience/voluntary sampling, in accordance with field conditions. This technique was chosen because participation in completing the questionnaire was voluntary; not all students could be reached or were willing to participate. Therefore, all available respondents who met the criterion of complete questionnaire responses were included in the sample.

However, it is important to note that the unit of analysis in this study was the class, not the individual student. This decision was based on the nature of the Dhuha prayer participation data, which were available only in the form of class-level attendance records. Consequently, the analysis of the relationship between emotional intelligence and participation in Dhuha prayer was conducted at the class level. Although emotional intelligence data were collected at the individual level, they were aggregated into class-level averages to align with the structure of the Dhuha prayer participation data.

Research Variables

This study involved two main variables:

Emotional Intelligence (EI) as the independent variable, defined as an individual's ability

to recognize, understand, manage, and express emotions adaptively within social and academic contexts (Mayer & Salovey, 1993).

Participation in Dhuha Prayer as the dependent variable, defined as the level of students' participation in performing Dhuha prayer based on class-level attendance records routinely documented by the madrasah. Religious participation is conceptualized as a form of religious behavior reflecting students' self-regulation and consistency in spiritual practices (King & Boyatzis, 2015).

Research Instruments

The instrument used to measure students' emotional intelligence was the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) developed by Schutte et al. (1998). The EIS consists of 33 items rated on a Likert scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). This instrument has been psychometrically validated and widely used in previous research. The total score across the 33 items represents each student's level of emotional intelligence.

Data on participation in Dhuha prayer were obtained through documentation of Dhuha prayer attendance records compiled by the madrasah. The attendance data were available in the form of the number of students who did not participate in Dhuha prayer per class and per month. For analytical purposes, these data were transformed into indicators of Dhuha prayer participation, with higher values reflecting higher levels of participation. Subsequently, participation scores were summarized by calculating the average level of Dhuha prayer participation for each class.

Data Collection Techniques

Emotional intelligence data were collected through the administration of the EIS questionnaire to the student sample. The questionnaires were distributed in classrooms and completed independently by the students. The researcher ensured that each questionnaire was fully completed and followed the provided instructions. Meanwhile, data on Dhuha prayer participation were obtained from school-issued attendance documents related to Dhuha prayer activities. These attendance records consisted of class-level summaries of student participation in routine Dhuha prayer activities and were processed as contextual data reflecting school religious practices.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software with the following steps:

1. Calculating the average emotional intelligence score for each class.
2. Calculating the average level of Dhuha prayer participation for each class.
3. Examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and participation in Dhuha prayer using Spearman's rank correlation test (Spearman's rho).

The Spearman correlation test was selected due to the limited number of units of analysis and the class-level nature of the data. Therefore, a nonparametric test was considered more appropriate, as it does not require the assumption of normal data distribution (Conover, 1999; Field, 2024). The level of statistical significance used in this study was $\alpha = 0.05$. Given the very limited number of analytical units (three classes), the Spearman correlation analysis in this study is intended as an exploratory indicator of directional association rather than as a statistically robust inferential test. The correlation coefficient is therefore interpreted descriptively to identify rank-order consistency between variables at the class level, not to support population-level generalization.

Methodological Limitations

This study has a methodological limitation related to the measurement of Dhuha prayer participation, which was available only in aggregated class-level form. Consequently, the findings of this study are not intended to generalize the relationship between emotional intelligence and participation in Dhuha prayer at the individual level, but rather to describe

patterns of association at the class level. Explicit acknowledgment of this limitation is essential to ensure appropriate interpretation of the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on Spearman's rank correlation analysis conducted at the class level, a perfectly consistent rank-order pattern was observed between mean emotional intelligence scores and levels of Dhuha prayer participation ($\rho = 1.00$; $N = 3$). This result indicates that the ordering of classes in terms of emotional intelligence aligns exactly with the ordering of Dhuha prayer participation. However, given the extremely small number of analytical units, this finding should be interpreted as a descriptive pattern of association rather than as evidence of statistical generalizability or causal influence. This finding indicates a very strong association between the two variables; however, it should be interpreted strictly as a correlational relationship rather than as evidence of a direct causal effect.

Descriptive analysis revealed differences in students' emotional intelligence scores across grade levels. The highest mean EI score was observed among seventh-grade students, with a mean of 123.23 ($SD = 14.87$; $N = 35$). This was followed by ninth-grade students, who demonstrated a mean EI score of 120.55 ($SD = 17.86$; $N = 44$). The lowest mean EI score was found among eighth-grade students, with a mean of 112.21 ($SD = 21.67$; $N = 34$). Overall, the mean emotional intelligence score across all classes was 118.87 ($SD = 18.67$; $N = 113$). These findings suggest that students' emotional intelligence levels vary across grade levels, with relatively higher scores observed in Grades VII and IX compared to Grade VIII.

Table 1. Mean Emotional Intelligence Scores of Students by Grade Level

KELAS	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
7	123,23	35	14,874
8	112,21	34	21,671
9	120,55	44	17,864
Total	118,87	113	18,670

From a theoretical perspective, emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others, which plays a crucial role in supporting students' academic and social success (Goleman, 2004). The present findings are consistent with the study by Marwani and Siti (2025), which demonstrated that students' emotional intelligence can develop significantly through religious activity-based interventions, particularly in the dimensions of self-awareness and self-regulation. Other studies have similarly emphasized that students' emotional intelligence is influenced by the school environment, teacher support, and structured religious habituation programs (Alimni et al., 2022; Regita et al., 2025). Differences in emotional intelligence across grade levels may also be explained through Erikson's psychosocial development theory, whereby seventh-grade students, who are transitioning into secondary education, tend to exhibit higher enthusiasm and adaptability toward character-building programs, including religious activities that support emotional intelligence development (Utomo & Mindani, 2025).

Participation in Dhuha prayer was analyzed using class-level attendance documentation. The recorded number of students who did not participate in Dhuha prayer was transformed into an indicator of Dhuha prayer participation, with higher values indicating better levels of participation. The results indicate that Grade VII demonstrated the highest level of Dhuha prayer participation, with a mean score of -17 , followed by Grade IX with a mean score of -21 . In contrast, Grade VIII showed the lowest level of participation, with a mean score of -27 . Overall, the average level of Dhuha prayer participation across all classes was -21.67 . These differences suggest variation in Dhuha prayer participation across grade levels,

with a tendency toward higher participation in Grades VII and IX compared to Grade VIII.

Table 2. Mean Dhuha Prayer Participation by Grade Level

Kelas	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
7	-17,0000	1	.
8	-27,0000	1	.
9	-21,0000	1	.
Total	-21,6667	3	5,03322

Note. Values closer to zero indicate higher levels of Dhuha prayer participation. N = 1 indicates that Dhuha prayer participation data were derived from aggregated class-level attendance records rather than individual observations

Differences in Dhuha prayer participation across grade levels are consistent with findings from qualitative and quantitative studies in madrasahs and secondary schools, which suggest that the habituation of Dhuha prayer is not always evenly distributed across grades. Instead, it is strongly influenced by students' phases of adaptation to the school's religious culture, the duration of exposure to habituation programs, and the extent of systemic support provided by schools and teachers (Luthfi & Mustofa, 2024; Santosa et al., 2022).

Students who have recently entered a new educational level are typically in an adjustment phase as they adapt to new routines. Consequently, consistency in performing voluntary religious practices such as Dhuha prayer may vary during this period (Santosa et al., 2022). In contrast, classes that have been engaged in habituation programs for a longer period tend to exhibit more stable participation patterns, particularly when such programs are supported by consistent supervision, teacher role modeling, and a strong religious school climate (Nuranjani et al., 2025; Santosa et al., 2022).

Studies by Hasanah et al. (2024) and Widyatri and Sabardila (2023) further emphasize that the collective habituation of Dhuha prayer can foster discipline, inner calm, and self-control among students. Nevertheless, external factors such as individual motivation, family support, and the broader social environment also play a significant role in shaping the consistency of students' participation in religious practices (Kamila et al., 2025; Regita et al., 2025).

However, this correlation should be interpreted with caution due to the very limited number of units of analysis. Therefore, the result primarily reflects a pattern of association between emotional intelligence and Dhuha prayer participation at the class level, rather than serving as a basis for generalizing the relationship at the individual level.

Table 3. Results of Spearman's Rank Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Dhuha Prayer Participation

		mean_ei	partisipasi_dhuha
Spearman's rho	mean_ei	Correlation Coefficient	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
		N	3
	partisipasi_dhuha	Correlation Coefficient	1,000**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
		N	3

** Note. The correlation reflects rank-order consistency across three classes and should be interpreted as exploratory rather than inferential. Statistical significance values are reported descriptively and do not imply generalizability.

From a scientific perspective, these findings underscore the existence of an associative relationship between engagement in religious activities and the development of students' emotional intelligence. This result is consistent with the study by Marwani and Siti (2025), which demonstrated that structured Dhuha prayer programs can enhance emotional intelligence, particularly in the dimensions of self-regulation and self-awareness. Similar findings reported by Regita et al. (2025) and Yusup et al. (2023) also indicate that religious discipline contributes significantly to the strengthening of students' emotional intelligence.

From a psychological standpoint, religious activities such as Dhuha prayer function as forms of religious coping that may enhance emotion regulation, empathy, and intrinsic motivation (Brandão, 2025; Graça & Brandão, 2024). In addition, studies by Wahab et al. (2022) and Wijaya et al. (2024) emphasize that religious values, such as taqwa (piety) and gratitude, play an important role in shaping emotional intelligence by fostering self-emotional appraisal and empathy. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that the present study employed a correlational design at the aggregated class level; therefore, no causal inference can be drawn regarding the relationship between participation in Dhuha prayer and emotional intelligence. The findings should be interpreted as associative in nature, as also highlighted in previous research.

The results of this study offer important implications for the development of character education programs in schools. The structured and consistent integration of religious activities, such as Dhuha prayer, may serve as an effective strategy for fostering students' emotional intelligence, which in turn supports academic achievement, psychological well-being, and the development of positive character traits. Schools are encouraged to strengthen collaboration among teachers, parents, and the broader social environment to support the habituation of religious practices and the holistic development of students' emotional intelligence.

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the correlational analysis was conducted at the class (aggregate) level, resulting in a very limited number of units of analysis ($N = 3$), which restricts the generalizability of the findings to the individual level. Second, the correlational research design does not allow for causal conclusions regarding the relationship between participation in Dhuha prayer and emotional intelligence. Third, other potentially influential variables, such as family support, intrinsic motivation, and social environment, were not examined in depth. Fourth, participation in Dhuha prayer was derived through score transformation procedures, which may introduce measurement bias and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that levels of emotional intelligence and participation in Dhuha prayer vary across grade levels. This variation suggests that students' emotion regulation abilities and the consistency of their participation in Dhuha prayer are not uniform across different classes. Furthermore, the study revealed a positive relationship between mean emotional intelligence and the level of Dhuha prayer participation at the class level. Classes with higher average emotional intelligence tended to demonstrate higher levels of participation in Dhuha prayer. These results indicate that better collective emotion management is associated with greater consistency in students' engagement in voluntary religious practices. Accordingly, the research objectives have been achieved, and Accordingly, the research objectives have been achieved, and the proposed hypothesis regarding an association between emotional intelligence and participation in Dhuha prayer at the class level is supported in an exploratory and

descriptive sense, with the understanding that the observed relationship is associative rather than causal.

Based on these findings, the strengthening of Dhuha prayer habituation programs in schools should be implemented in a planned and sustainable manner as part of character education. Dhuha prayer activities should not be positioned merely as routine religious practices, but also as a means of fostering discipline, emotional regulation, and students' religious attitudes. In addition, teachers and school administrators are encouraged to integrate emotional intelligence development into learning activities and religious habituation through supportive and reflective approaches. Collaboration between schools and parents should also be reinforced to ensure that the development of students' emotional intelligence and religiosity occurs consistently in both school and family environments. For future research, it is recommended to employ research designs that allow for individual-level analysis with larger sample sizes and to consider additional relevant variables. Such approaches are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and students' religious behavior and to enable stronger and more robust conclusions.

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