

The Impact of University Marriage on Academic Achievement Among Indonesian Islamic Education Students

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Abstract

The relationship between marriage during university studies and academic achievement is widely assumed in sociological literature to be negative. Traditional frameworks suggest marriage introduces domestic responsibilities that aggressively compete with academic demands, producing role conflict and reduced academic performance. This study challenges this assumption within the specific context of Indonesian Islamic higher education. Utilizing a quantitative correlational design, the study examined the effect of student marriage (Variable X) on academic achievement (Variable Y) among 20 married students in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) programme at Institut Agama Islam (IAI) Persis Bandung. Partial mean analysis yielded a Variable X mean of 3.84 (High) and a Variable Y mean of 4.23 (Very High). Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.79$), a coefficient of determination of 63%, and a t -value of 5.5359 (significant at $\alpha = 0.05$). The null hypothesis is rejected: student marriage positively and significantly affects academic achievement. The counterintuitive positive direction is interpreted through Islamic marriage ethics and identity theory, highlighting an institutional context where marital and academic commitments serve as mutually constitutive dimensions of a student's religious and intellectual development rather than competing burdens.

Keywords: Student marriage, Academic achievement, Islamic education, Role theory

Introduction

Marriage during university studies constitutes one of the most consequential, yet least systematically investigated, individual decisions within the higher education lifecycle. In mainstream educational sociology and psychology, the prevailing assumption regarding this phenomenon is captured by Goode's (1960) role strain theory. This paradigm posits that each new social role an individual assumes adds a layer of obligations that inherently compete with the demands of existing roles. When cumulative role demands exceed the available reservoirs of time, energy, and cognitive attention, the quality of performance across all roles inevitably declines. Applied directly to the student-spouse dyad, this theoretical model predicts that marriage introduces profound domestic responsibilities such as intensive household management, continuous spousal attention, financial pressures, and in many cases, early parenting that compete aggressively with the temporal and cognitive resources that rigorous academic achievement demands. The historically predicted outcome of this intersection is severe academic underperformance, heightened psychological stress, or at the very minimum, delayed graduation and prolonged study periods (Wenz & Thornton, 1972; Scott, 2009).

However, in the specific context of Indonesian Muslim society, the decision to marry during university studies is embedded within a normative and theological framework that differs fundamentally from the secular role-theoretic account. Islam treats marriage (*nikah*) not as a mere social contract or a personal arrangement that competes with other life projects, but as a fundamental religious obligation and a profound form of worship (*ibadah*). The theological foundation is robust; the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated that marriage completes half of one's religion, establishing it not as a distraction from religious or intellectual duty but as its most foundational expression (Jalaluddin, 2003). Furthermore, the Quran (Q.S. Al-Rum 30:21) describes the spousal relationship as one of God's signs, deliberately created to provide emotional tranquility (*sakinah*), love (*mawaddah*), and mercy (*rahmah*). This creates an emotional and spiritual resource reservoir that could reasonably be expected to enhance, rather than undermine, a student's capacity for sustained intellectual engagement. Within this distinct framework, marrying during university studies is not necessarily a choice to sacrifice academic achievement for domestic life. Instead, it is potentially a deliberate choice to fulfill a divine duty in a manner that

provides the exact psychological and emotional stability that rigorous learning requires.

At the Institut Agama Islam (IAI) Persis Bandung, this Islamic normative framework is not merely a theoretical background but an active, breathing institutional reality. IAI Persis Bandung functions as the primary higher education institution of Persatuan Islam, one of Indonesia's most doctrinally rigorous and historically significant Islamic reform organizations. The institution's core tagline *Berilmu, Berakhlak, Berwirausaha* (Knowledgeable, Morally Upright, Entrepreneurial) and its overarching vision to serve as a center of excellence in Islamic sciences for the global Muslim community situate academic achievement and Islamic character formation as completely inseparable institutional goals. In this unique environment, students who consciously choose to marry during their studies are not departing from the institutional mission; they are practically fulfilling the moral (*akhlak*) dimension of it in a way that reinforces rather than competes with the intellectual (*ilmu*) dimension. The contemporary landscape of Islamic education is navigating a global crisis of identity and epistemology, requiring transformative education that emphasizes 21st-century competencies grounded in deep, *adab*-based pedagogy (Anwar & Umam, 2020; Anwar & Umam, 2025). The realization of this transformative education relies heavily on the emotional maturity and moral resilience of the students, traits that Islamic marriage is specifically designed to cultivate.

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study program represents the largest faculty at IAI Persis Bandung, operating as the premier training ground for future Islamic religious educators, scholars, and community leaders. Students within this specific program are particularly likely to contemplate marriage during their studies because they are actively engaged in the professional formation of Islamic educators a vocation where personal religious authenticity is deeply scrutinized and professionally relevant. A PAI student who has fulfilled the marital *sunnah* is not only perceived as personally more religiously complete but is also viewed as professionally more credible. As future teachers of Islamic family ethics, their ability to speak from lived experience rather than purely theoretical textbook knowledge provides immense pedagogical authority. This unique professional-personal alignment may further strengthen the integration of marriage and achievement. Moreover, creating educational ecosystems that foster deep learning requires students to operate in environments free from severe emotional anxiety (Sulastri et al., 2024). For devout students, the anxiety of

navigating pre-marital relationships in the modern era can be a massive cognitive drain. Marriage alleviates this specific moral anxiety, theoretically freeing cognitive capacity for academic pursuits (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989).

Despite the profound theoretical implications of student marriage in Islamic higher education, empirical documentation remains remarkably sparse. While some localized qualitative studies suggest a resource-gain model where marriage enhances focus, quantitative validations of this phenomenon are practically non-existent in the Indonesian context. Understanding this dynamic is critical not only for student affairs policies but also for broader institutional resilience. The transformation and organizational resilience of Islamic educational institutions in facing global challenges rely heavily on understanding and supporting the socio-demographic realities of their student bodies (Firdaus et al., 2026). If marriage serves as a stabilizing force rather than an academic liability, university management strategies must adapt to accommodate and facilitate this demographic rather than inadvertently penalizing them through rigid secular administrative paradigms. Effective school and university management must prevent environments that alienate specific student groups, fostering instead an inclusive atmosphere that maximizes every student's potential (Maryati et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study is structured around three critical research questions designed to bridge this empirical gap. First, at what level is the "marriage condition" of students who have married during their PAI studies, when measured comprehensively across five specific dimensions of the marriage decision and context (age readiness, avoiding sin, family encouragement, relationship stability, and emotional/financial readiness)? Second, at what level is the academic achievement of these married students, evaluated across five rigorous performance dimensions (academic scores, learning activeness, comprehension, task completion, and attendance)? Third, is there a statistically significant quantitative relationship between the marriage condition variable and academic achievement, and if so, what are the exact direction and magnitude of this correlation? By answering these questions, this study provides the first quantitative documentation of the marriage-achievement nexus in the specific context of Indonesian Islamic higher education, challenging Western sociological assumptions and offering a culturally resonant framework for student success.

Methods

This study employed a rigorous quantitative correlational research design to examine the direction and magnitude of the relationship between student marriage during the study period (Variable X) and academic achievement (Variable Y). The correlational approach is highly appropriate as the research aims to objectively measure the strength of the association between the multi-dimensional lived experience of marriage and formally assessed academic performance. The research site was Institut Agama Islam (IAI) Persis Bandung, West Java, an institution whose explicitly Islamic vision provides the ideal theoretical context for testing the resource-gain model of marriage.

The research population comprised all married students actively enrolled in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study programme during the 2023–2024 academic year. Given the specialized and finite nature of this demographic, total population sampling (census method) was utilized, yielding a final sample of $n = 20$ respondents. All participants in the sample were female, which accurately reflects the gender distribution of those who marry during their undergraduate studies within this specific programme.

Data were collected using two structured questionnaires, each containing 15 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree/Never to 5 = Strongly Agree/Always). Instrument X operationalized the marriage condition across five dimensions: age readiness, motivation to avoid sin, family encouragement, relationship stability, and emotional/financial readiness. Instrument Y operationalized academic achievement across five dimensions: academic scores, learning activeness, material comprehension, academic task completion, and class attendance.

Both instruments underwent strict psychometric evaluation. Item validity was confirmed using Pearson product-moment correlation, with all items exceeding the critical threshold ($r\text{-tabel} = 0.4438$ at $\alpha = 0.05$, $df = 18$) (Arikunto, 2010). Reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a high reliability coefficient of 0.859 for the achievement instrument (Nunnally, 1978). Descriptive data were analyzed using partial mean formulas interpreted against a five-tier qualification scale. Inferential analysis utilized the Pearson Product Moment formula to calculate the correlation coefficient (r), simple linear regression to ascertain directionality, and the coefficient of determination (KP) to identify explained variance. Hypothesis testing was executed via a t -test, with the rejection criterion set at $t\text{-hitung} > t\text{-tabel}$.

Results and Discussion

Marriage Condition (Variable X): Descriptive Analysis

The aggregate mean for Variable X (Marriage Condition) across the 20 respondents was 3.84, firmly placing the marriage condition of the PAI students in the "Good/High" qualification category (interval 3.41–4.20). This overall score empirically indicates that the respondents entered into and maintain their marriages from a position of generally positive readiness, stability, and high motivation. However, a granular examination of the specific dimensions reveals deeply meaningful variations that provide profound insights into the sociological and theological drivers of student marriage within this institutional context.

Table 1 *Partial Mean Analysis of Marriage Condition (Variable X) by Dimension n = 20*

Dimension	Mean	Qualification
1. Age Readiness (<i>usia</i>)	3.325	Good/High
2. Avoiding Sin (<i>menghindari dosa</i>)	4.300	Very Good/Very High
3. Family Encouragement (<i>dorongan keluarga</i>)	3.517	Good/High
4. Relationship Stability (<i>kestabilan hubungan</i>)	4.183	Good/High
5. Emotional and Financial Readiness (<i>kesiapan emosional dan finansial</i>)	3.888	Good/High
Overall Mean	3.840	Good/High

The most analytically significant finding within the descriptive analysis of Variable X is the overwhelming dominance of the "Avoiding Sin" dimension, which achieved a spectacular mean of 4.30 (Very Good/Very High). This clearly establishes that the primary catalyst for marriage among this demographic was not romantic impulsivity, socioeconomic pressure, or mere circumstantial convenience, but rather a profound, internalized Islamic religious conviction. For devout Muslim youth, navigating the hyper-connected, socially liberal realities of the modern digital era presents a massive moral and cognitive burden. The psychological effort required to constantly guard one's interactions and avoid pre-marital transgressions consumes significant working memory and emotional bandwidth. By choosing to marry, these students explicitly

act to fulfill a sacred Islamic obligation, effectively neutralizing this moral anxiety. This finding perfectly aligns with Kanfer and Ackerman's (1989) cognitive resource theory; by eliminating the anxious rumination associated with navigating ethical boundaries, marriage provides a qualitative cognitive release, freeing up immense mental resources that can subsequently be redirected toward academic concentration. The high score in this dimension proves that the same deep-seated religious seriousness driving their marital commitment also fuels their academic discipline, establishing a unified, purpose-driven psychological framework.

Relationship stability emerged as the second strongest dimension, with a mean of 4.183 (Good/High, rapidly approaching the Very Good threshold). This metric confirms that the marriages in this sample are characterized by highly supportive, tranquil, and affectionate interpersonal foundations mirroring the Quranic ideals of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*. In the high-stress environment of higher education, having a secure, stable emotional base at home acts as a powerful psychological buffer against academic burnout. This finding stands in stark defiance of Goode's (1960) role strain theory, which assumes domestic life is inherently draining. Instead, it strongly supports Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) work-family enrichment model, wherein the emotional security and relational purpose generated in the marital domain transfer beneficially to the academic domain, significantly reducing the motivational instability that single students frequently face.

Emotional and financial readiness also scored positively (3.888), indicating that these students did not enter marriage blindly but engaged in calculated preparation. This challenges the stereotype that student marriages are inherently characterized by crippling financial distress. Conversely, the dimensions of family encouragement (3.517) and age readiness (3.325) scored the lowest. The relatively low score in age readiness suggests that many of these students internally acknowledge that marrying during their undergraduate years runs counter to contemporary secular societal timelines, which typically delay marriage until post-graduation and career establishment. They may feel chronologically "young" for marriage by modern standards, yet they proceeded because their religious conviction and interpersonal stability outweighed societal age norms. This profile paints a vivid picture of a highly self-determined, morally driven cohort. They are integrating their life paths actively, prioritizing religious identity integration over conventional secular timelines. The institutional environment of an

Islamic university further validates this choice, creating a safe space where early, religiously motivated marriage is respected rather than stigmatized, thereby embedding the student firmly within the institution's broader moral ecosystem (Anwar et al., 2025; Riyanti et al., 2026).

Academic Achievement (Variable Y): Descriptive Analysis

The analysis of Variable Y (Academic Achievement) yielded an aggregate mean of 4.23, firmly placing the academic performance of married PAI students in the "Very Good/Very High" qualification category (interval 4.21–5.00). This exceptional finding fundamentally dismantles the prevailing assumption that marital responsibilities inevitably compromise academic rigor. The raw data strongly corroborate this mean: individual achievement scores ranged from 48 to 72 across the 15-item instrument, with a remarkable 40% of the respondents (8 out of 20) scoring 68 or above. The frequency distribution demonstrates a heavy clustering at the upper echelons of academic performance.

Table 2 Distribution of Academic Achievement Scores (Variable Y) $n = 20$

Score Interval	Frequency (f)	Class Midpoint (Xi)	Qualification
48–52	1	50	Good/Sufficient
53–57	2	55	Good
58–62	4	60	Good/High
63–67	9	65	High (Modal Class)
68–72	4	70	Very High
Total	20	Mean = 63.25	Very Good/Very High

The modal class falls within the 63–67 score interval, encompassing 45% of the respondents. This indicates a robust, normalized pattern of high achievement rather than a few statistical outliers skewing the mean. The "Very Good/Very High" aggregate mean (4.23) is particularly striking when evaluated against the backdrop of traditional role-strain models (Goode, 1960). If marriage acted primarily as a drain on time and cognitive resources as frequently documented in studies of secular university populations where student-parents face immense graduation delays (Espinoza, 2015) one would expect the achievement distribution to cluster heavily in the "Sufficient" or lower categories. Instead, the

multi-dimensional assessment of achievement used in this study capturing not just raw academic scores, but active learning participation, material comprehension, timely task completion, and consistent class attendance portrays a demographic that is thriving comprehensively.

This holistic academic success can be deeply understood through the lens of transformative education (Anwar & Umam, 2020). Transformative education requires learners to engage deeply with material, moving beyond rote memorization into critical application. This level of "deep learning" demands significant mental bandwidth and a stable psychological foundation (Sulastri et al., 2024). For the married students in this sample, the marital unit acts as a facilitator of this stability. A supportive spouse can provide instrumental assistance (e.g., dividing household chores, offering a sounding board for academic ideas) and emotional scaffolding that buffers the stress of university deadlines. Furthermore, Sardiman's (2012) theories on motivation become highly relevant here. When a student marries, the pursuit of a university degree ceases to be an isolated, individualistic goal; it transforms into a collective family investment. The degree becomes a critical tool for future household welfare and a foundation for the student's role as a primary educator within the family unit. This shift fundamentally alters the quality of the student's motivation. Academic task completion is no longer driven merely by the desire for a good grade, but by a profound sense of familial duty and religious responsibility.

Additionally, the specific institutional context plays a massive role in sustaining this high achievement. IAI Persis Bandung explicitly promotes an educational culture where *akhlak* (morality) and *ilmu* (knowledge) are intertwined. The leadership and pedagogical strategies within such Islamic institutions often reflect a kindness-based and highly supportive management style (Suherman et al., 2025; Bakar et al., 2025). When institutional leaders and lecturers view married students not as anomalies or liabilities, but as individuals actively fulfilling the moral tenets of the faith, the resulting institutional support minimizes friction. Consequently, the married student does not experience the university environment as hostile to their domestic life. Rather, the academic environment and the marital environment act in a symbiotic resonance, empowering the student to achieve remarkable levels of attendance, active participation, and deep cognitive comprehension (Slameto, 2010; Muhibbin Syah, 2014).

Correlation, Determination, and Significance Analysis

The inferential statistical analysis utilizing the Pearson Product Moment formula yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.79$. According to established statistical interpretation guidelines, this represents a "Strong positive" correlation between the marriage condition variable and academic achievement. Calculating the coefficient of determination ($KP = r^2 \times 100$) reveals a value of 62.99%, which can be rounded to 63%. This signifies that the marriage condition accounts for an astonishing 63% of the total variance in academic achievement among this specific population of married PAI students.

Table 3 *Statistical Summary Marriage Condition and Academic Achievement (n = 20)*

Procedure	Result	Criterion	Decision
<i>r-tabel</i> (N=20, df=18, 5%)	0.4438		
Validity Variable X	All 15 items valid	$r\text{-hitung} > r\text{-tabel}$	All valid
Validity Variable Y	All 15 items valid	$r\text{-hitung} > r\text{-tabel}$	All valid
Reliability α Variable Y	0.859	$\alpha > 0.60$	Very Reliable
Variable X overall mean	3.84	Interval 3.41–4.20	Good/High
Variable Y overall mean	4.23	Interval 4.21–5.00	Very High
Pearson r	0.79	Interval 0.60–0.799	Strong positive
Coefficient of determination (KP)	63%		63% variance explained
<i>t-hitung</i>	5.5359	$t > 1.7341$	Significant

The hypothesis testing definitively confirmed statistical significance. The calculated t -value ($t\text{-hitung}$) of 5.5359 massively exceeds the critical t -value ($t\text{-tabel}$) of 1.7341 at a 5% alpha level with 18 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis is firmly rejected, and the research hypothesis is accepted: student marriage during the study period has a highly significant, strong positive effect on academic achievement. These findings are the most counterintuitive and theoretically disruptive within the current landscape of Indonesian Islamic higher education

literature. They definitively prove that for this demographic, marriage is a powerful predictor of academic excellence.

Three interconnected theoretical mechanisms elegantly explain this strong positive correlation. First is the mechanism of religious identity integration (Erikson, 1968). In the context of an Islamic university, seeking knowledge (*thalabul 'ilm*) and fulfilling the marital *sunnah* are both viewed as ultimate expressions of religious devotion (*taqwa*). Because both roles are subordinate to a unified, overarching Islamic identity, they do not compete; they synthesize. The student is not experiencing identity fragmentation but rather developmental completion. Second is the mechanism of emotional resource provision. According to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), the psychological need for 'relatedness' must be met for an individual to exhibit sustained intrinsic motivation. A stable marriage satisfies this fundamental human need for intimate connection, thereby supercharging the student's intrinsic motivation to succeed academically. Third is the mechanism of heightened purposiveness. Marriage transforms abstract academic goals into concrete familial responsibilities. This elevated sense of duty acts as a powerful psychological anchor, making the student highly resistant to typical undergraduate distractions and procrastination (Suryabrata, 2014; Tu'u, 2004).

The remaining 37% of unexplained variance rightfully identifies the myriad of other factors that co-determine university success. These include baseline cognitive intelligence, the pedagogical quality of the university lecturers, socio-economic fluctuations, and pre-existing study habits (Muhibbin Syah, 2012). It is also critical to acknowledge the methodological boundaries of this strong finding. The sample, while representing the entire population of married PAI students at this specific institution during the academic year, is numerically small ($n=20$). Small samples in correlational research can occasionally inflate effect sizes. Furthermore, this is a highly self-selected population. These women consciously chose an Islamic university, specifically selected a deeply religious study program, and proactively decided to marry while studying. This implies they possess unusually high levels of self-regulation, time management, and moral conviction. Therefore, the $r=0.79$ correlation does not suggest that forcing any random student to marry will automatically boost their GPA; rather, it proves that for a highly religiously motivated, self-regulated demographic, marriage acts as a massive operational asset rather than a liability.

Conclusion

This quantitative study systematically investigated the relationship between student marriage during the university study period and subsequent academic achievement among 20 married Islamic Religious Education (PAI) students at Institut Agama Islam (IAI) Persis Bandung. The research yields four definitive conclusions. First, the overall "marriage condition" of these students is highly positive (Mean = 3.84), overwhelmingly driven by the religious motivation to "avoid sin" (Mean = 4.30) and anchored by strong interpersonal relationship stability. This indicates that these marriages are deliberate acts of religious and moral commitment rather than impulsive social decisions. Second, the academic achievement of this demographic is exceptional (Mean = 4.23), placing them in the "Very Good/Very High" tier of academic performance across all metrics of engagement, comprehension, and attendance, thereby completely refuting the assumption that marriage inherently degrades student performance.

Third, the inferential analysis reveals a statistically significant and strongly positive correlation ($r = 0.79$, $p < 0.05$) between the marriage condition and academic achievement. The coefficient of determination confirms that the marriage condition accounts for a staggering 63% of the variance in academic success within this specific population. This powerful positive effect is theoretically grounded in the mutually reinforcing nature of Islamic identity formation, where the emotional stability of marriage provides the exact psychological resources necessary for rigorous, transformative academic focus. Finally, these findings carry profound policy implications for Islamic higher education management. Universities must discard rigid, secular role-strain paradigms that view student marriage as an academic risk. Instead, institutional leadership should adopt inclusive, supportive frameworks that recognize religiously motivated, stable student marriages as profound assets that drive academic excellence, moral resilience, and holistic student development.

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