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Mindfulness, Critical Thinking, and Students' Religiosity in Islamic Religious Education Learning

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Abstract

The development of students' religiosity has become an important concern in Islamic Religious Education, particularly amid the challenges posed by the digital era, which exposes adolescents to diverse sources of religious information. While previous studies have primarily examined mindfulness and critical thinking separately, limited research has explored their combined contribution to students' religiosity. This study aimed to investigate the influence of mindfulness and critical thinking on students' religiosity in Islamic Religious Education learning. A quantitative explanatory design was employed involving 185 Grade XI Muslim students at SMAN 9 Malang, Indonesia, selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected using validated questionnaires measuring mindfulness, critical thinking, and religiosity, and analyzed through multiple linear regression. The findings revealed that mindfulness had a positive and significant effect on students' religiosity ($\beta = 0.311$; $p < 0.001$), while critical thinking also exerted a positive and significant influence, emerging as the stronger predictor ($\beta = 0.469$; $p < 0.001$). Simultaneously, both variables significantly predicted students' religiosity ($F = 78.369$; $p < 0.001$), explaining 46.3% of the variance in religiosity ($R^2 = 0.463$). These results suggest that religiosity is strengthened through the interaction between self-awareness and reflective reasoning. Mindfulness facilitates the internalization of religious values through conscious awareness, whereas critical thinking enables students to evaluate and contextualize religious teachings in everyday life. The study highlights the importance of integrating mindfulness-oriented and critical-thinking-based learning strategies within Islamic Religious Education to foster more reflective, meaningful, and sustainable religiosity among students.

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Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology and the increasing flow of global information have fundamentally changed the way adolescents learn, interact, and construct their identities. For Generation Z, the digital environment provides broad access to knowledge, including religious content. However, this openness also presents challenges. Religious information is often encountered in fragmented forms, consumed instantly through social media, and received without adequate guidance or critical examination (Jamaludin et al., 2024; Murjani, 2022; Sulaeman et al.,

2024). As a consequence, adolescents are increasingly exposed to diverse religious discourses while facing difficulties in developing a deep and meaningful understanding of religious values.

This situation has contributed to a phenomenon often described as the paradox of religiosity. Many adolescents continue to express religious identities through symbols and ritual practices, yet these expressions are not always accompanied by reflective understanding or consistent, value-based behavior (Ruslan et al., 2025). Religiosity in this context is more visible in external practice than in personal awareness, moral commitment, and daily conduct. Such conditions warrant serious attention because adolescence is an important developmental stage during which individuals begin to form personal beliefs, moral orientations, and long-term value systems (Mudarris et al., 2025; Tohari, 2024).

Several studies conducted in Indonesia indicate that challenges related to adolescent religiosity remain prevalent. Research involving senior high school and Madrasah Aliyah students found that although religious beliefs and ritual practices were relatively strong, the internalization of religious values and their manifestation in positive behavior varied considerably among students (Mastiyah, 2018). Similar findings were reported by Budiman (2015), who observed that some Indonesian Muslim adolescents were skeptical of formal religious practices and showed limited engagement in meaningful religious activities. Other studies have linked low levels of religiosity with various forms of juvenile delinquency and negative social behavior (Putri & Nurlaila, 2023). These findings reinforce the argument that religiosity cannot be measured solely through worship practices or religious knowledge, but must also be reflected in attitudes, character, and social behavior.

Recent evidence also suggests that religious literacy alone is insufficient to explain variations in religiosity among young Muslims. Although the religiosity index of Indonesian Muslim Generation Z is relatively high, the relationship between religious literacy and religiosity appears weak, indicating that religious knowledge does not automatically translate into personal commitment and value internalization (Jamilah et al., 2024). Moreover, unrestricted exposure to religious content through digital media may encourage superficial interpretations of religious teachings when adolescents lack adequate reflective and critical capacities (Radinata et al., 2025). These conditions point to the need for a deeper understanding of the psychological factors that support the development of meaningful religiosity among students.

Within the Indonesian educational context, Islamic Religious Education (abbreviated in Bahasa as PAI) occupies a strategic position in fostering students' religious awareness and character development. PAI is expected to facilitate not only the acquisition of religious knowledge but also the cultivation of values that guide students' personal and social lives. Nevertheless, learning practices in many classrooms remain largely focused on cognitive achievement and content mastery. While this approach is important, it does not always provide sufficient opportunities for students to reflect upon religious values, connect them with personal experiences, and translate them into everyday actions. Consequently, there is a growing need for learning approaches that encourage deeper awareness and reflection within religious education.

One concept that has gained increasing attention in educational research is mindfulness. Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as an awareness that emerges through deliberate attention to present experiences in a non-judgmental manner (Greco et al., 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2023). In educational settings, mindfulness has been associated with improved concentration, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being, all of which contribute to more meaningful learning experiences (Phan et al., 2022). Within Islamic Religious Education, mindfulness offers opportunities for students to engage more consciously with religious teachings, allowing them to move beyond memorization

toward deeper appreciation and internalization of religious values (Rahmania Azis et al., 2024). Studies further suggest that mindfulness practices integrated with Islamic values can strengthen ethical awareness and help adolescents respond more wisely to social and moral challenges (Rokhmah et al., 2025).

Alongside mindfulness, critical thinking also plays an important role in the formation of students' religiosity. In educational discourse, critical thinking is commonly associated with the ability to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and solve problems. Yet its relevance extends beyond academic performance. Critical thinking enables students to examine beliefs, reflect on values, and interpret religious teachings within broader social realities. Through such processes, students can develop a more thoughtful and contextual understanding of religion rather than relying solely on unquestioned acceptance. Despite this potential, studies on critical thinking in PAI have predominantly focused on learning outcomes and cognitive achievement, leaving its relationship with religiosity comparatively underexplored.

A review of previous studies reveals several limitations. Research on mindfulness generally emphasizes emotional well-being, stress reduction, or value internalization, whereas studies on critical thinking focus largely on cognitive competencies. Likewise, investigations of religiosity in PAI often examine worship practices, learning motivation, or religious behavior. As a result, limited attention has been paid to how self-awareness and reflective thinking interact to shape students' religiosity. Existing scholarship has yet to provide a comprehensive explanation of how these psychological processes interact within the context of Islamic Religious Education.

These limitations indicate both empirical and theoretical gaps. Empirically, studies simultaneously examining mindfulness and critical thinking as predictors of students' religiosity remain scarce. Theoretically, there remains a limited understanding of how awareness-based and reflective-cognitive processes complement one another in the development of religiosity. This gap is important because religiosity is a multidimensional construct that encompasses understanding, appreciation, commitment, and behavior. A comprehensive explanation, therefore, requires attention to both the experiential and reflective dimensions of religious life.

In response to these issues, the present study develops an integrative perspective that connects mindfulness and critical thinking to explain students' reflective religiosity. Mindfulness is viewed as a foundation for cultivating awareness of personal experiences and religious values, while critical thinking supports reflection, evaluation, and contextual understanding of religious teachings. Examining these two constructs together is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how religiosity develops among adolescents in contemporary educational settings.

Based on this rationale, the study investigates the effects of mindfulness and critical thinking on students' reflective religiosity in Islamic Religious Education. Specifically, it addresses three research questions: (1) Does mindfulness significantly influence students' reflective religiosity? (2) Does critical thinking significantly influence students' reflective religiosity? and (3) Do mindfulness and critical thinking simultaneously influence students' reflective religiosity? Accordingly, the proposed hypotheses are: H1, mindfulness positively and significantly affects students' reflective religiosity; H2, critical thinking positively and significantly affects students' reflective religiosity; and H3, mindfulness and critical thinking jointly have a positive and significant effect on students' reflective religiosity.

Method

This study employed a quantitative explanatory design to examine the influence of mindfulness and critical thinking on students' religiosity in Islamic Religious Education. The study emphasized measuring variables, statistically analyzing numerical data, and testing hypotheses to explain relationships among the variables under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research was conducted at SMAN 9 Malang, Indonesia. The population consisted of 331 Muslim students enrolled in Grade XI during the 2025/2026 academic year. A two-stage cluster random sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, six out of ten Grade XI classes were randomly selected as sampling clusters. In the second stage, students in the selected classes were randomly selected in proportion to achieve the required sample size. The minimum sample size was estimated using the Slovin formula, $n = N/[1 + N(e)^2]$ with a population of 331 students and a 5% margin of error, resulting in a minimum requirement of 181 respondents. The final sample consisted of 185 students, exceeding the minimum requirement and considered adequate for multiple regression analysis.

Data were collected over three sessions conducted on 13 February 2026, 24 February 2026, and 3 March 2026. Questionnaires were distributed online via Google Forms under the researchers' supervision to ensure standardized administration procedures and data completeness. A total of 185 students completed the questionnaire and agreed to participate voluntarily in the study.

The research instrument consisted of three self-report questionnaires measuring mindfulness, critical thinking, and students' religiosity. The mindfulness instrument was developed based on the multidimensional mindfulness framework proposed by Baer et al. (2006), encompassing indicators of attention, present-moment awareness, and non-judgmental acceptance. Critical thinking was operationalized using indicators adapted from Ennis's (2011) critical thinking framework, including clarity and precision, focus and consideration of the overall situation, reason-based judgment, openness to alternatives, metacognitive awareness, open-mindedness, and reflective judgment. Students' religiosity was measured using the multidimensional religiosity framework developed by Glock & Stark (1965), covering the dimensions of belief, religious practice, religious experience, religious knowledge, religious consequences, and commitment to the religious community. All items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Negatively worded items were reverse-coded before analysis.

Prior to data collection, the instruments were tested for validity and reliability. Item validity was assessed using the Corrected Item-Total Correlation technique in IBM SPSS Statistics 27, with a minimum acceptance criterion of $r \geq 0.30$. The results indicated that 23 of 30 mindfulness items, 27 of 30 critical thinking items, and all 30 religiosity items met the validity criterion and were retained for further analysis. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a value of 0.70 or above considered acceptable. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.896 for Mindfulness, 0.959 for Critical Thinking, and 0.965 for Religiosity, indicating high levels of internal consistency.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Results

Variable	Valid Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Mindfulness (X_1)	23 of 30	0.896	Reliable
Critical Thinking (X_2)	27 of 30	0.959	Reliable
Students' Religiosity (Y)	30 of 30	0.965	Reliable

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Prior to hypothesis testing, several classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the suitability of the data for regression analysis. Normality was assessed using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test on unstandardized residuals. Multicollinearity was examined through Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, while heteroscedasticity was tested using the Glejser method.

The normality test produced a Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic of 0.039 with an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.200, indicating that the residuals were normally distributed. The multicollinearity test showed Tolerance values of 0.746 and VIF values of 1.340 for both independent variables, demonstrating the absence of multicollinearity. Furthermore, the Glejser test yielded significance values of 0.561 for Mindfulness and 0.355 for Critical Thinking, both exceeding 0.05, indicating homoscedasticity.

Table 2. Results of Regression Assumption Tests

Assumption Test	Statistical Result	Criterion	Conclusion
Normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)	KS = 0.039; Sig. = 0.200	Sig. > 0.05	Normal distribution
Multicollinearity	Tolerance = 0.746; VIF = 1.340	Tolerance > 0.10; VIF < 10	No multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity (Glejser)	Sig. = 0.561 (Mindfulness); 0.355 (Critical Thinking)	Sig. > 0.05	No heteroscedasticity

After all assumptions were satisfied, hypothesis testing was conducted using multiple linear regression. The partial effects of mindfulness and critical thinking on students' religiosity were examined using t-tests, while the joint effect of both independent variables was analyzed using an F-test. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was also calculated to determine the proportion of variance in students' religiosity explained by mindfulness and critical thinking. Through these procedures, the study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of both variables to the development of students' religiosity within the context of Islamic Religious Education.

This study adhered to established ethical principles in educational research, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' rights. Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the administration of SMAN 9 Malang. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to decline or withdraw at any time without academic consequences.

To protect participants' privacy, the questionnaire was administered anonymously through Google Forms and did not collect personally identifiable information. All responses were treated confidentially and used solely for academic research purposes. The data were analyzed and reported in aggregate form to ensure that individual participants could not be identified. The study posed no physical, psychological, or academic risks to the participants.

Findings

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the effects of mindfulness and critical thinking on students' religiosity. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
Constant	9.088	9.423	-	0.964	0.336
Mindfulness (X_1)	0.645	0.131	0.311	4.939	0.000
Critical Thinking (X_2)	0.579	0.078	0.469	7.453	0.000

The analysis produced the following regression equation: $Y = 9.088 + 0.645X_1 + 0.579X_2$ where Y represents students' religiosity, X_1 represents mindfulness, and X_2 represents critical thinking. Both independent variables have positive regression coefficients, indicating that increases in mindfulness and critical thinking are associated with higher levels of students' religiosity. Based on the standardized coefficients, critical thinking ($\beta = 0.469$) demonstrated a stronger contribution than mindfulness ($\beta = 0.311$).

Partial Effects of Mindfulness and Critical Thinking

The significance of each predictor was examined using the t-test. The results showed that mindfulness significantly predicted students' religiosity ($t = 4.939$, $p = 0.000$). Similarly, critical thinking significantly influenced students' religiosity ($t = 7.453$, $p = 0.000$).

These findings indicate that both hypotheses, H1 and H2, were supported. Mindfulness and critical thinking each contributed positively and significantly to students' religiosity.

Simultaneous Effect of Mindfulness and Critical Thinking

The simultaneous influence of mindfulness and critical thinking on religiosity was tested using ANOVA. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	32147.080	2	16073.540	78.369	0.000
Residual	37328.325	182	205.101	-	-
Total	69475.405	184	-	-	-

The ANOVA results revealed an F-value of 78.369 with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that mindfulness and critical thinking jointly have a significant effect on students' religiosity. Therefore, hypothesis H3 was accepted.

Coefficient of Determination

The explanatory power of the regression model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of Estimate
0.680	0.463	0.457	14.321

The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.680$) indicates a relatively strong relationship between the independent variables and students' religiosity. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.463$) shows

that 46.3% of the variance in students' religiosity is explained by mindfulness and critical thinking. The remaining 53.7% is attributable to other variables not included in the model.

Furthermore, the model yielded an effect size of:

$$f^2 = \frac{R^2}{1 - R^2}$$

$$f^2 = \frac{0.463}{1 - 0.463}$$

$$f^2 = 0.862$$

According to Cohen's criteria, this value represents a large effect size, indicating that mindfulness and critical thinking jointly provide substantial explanatory power for students' religiosity.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for all study variables are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Aggregate Mean Score	Category
Mindfulness (X ₁)	185	35	103	80.07	9.363	3.48	High
Critical Thinking (X ₂)	185	50	135	99.68	15.723	3.69	High
Students' Religiosity (Y)	185	79	150	118.43	19.430	3.95	High

The categorization of aggregate mean scores followed the criteria presented in Table 7.

Table 5. Aggregate Mean Score Classification

Mean Score Range	Category
1.00-1.79	Very Low
1.80-2.59	Low
2.60-3.39	Moderate
3.40-4.19	High
4.20-5.00	Very High

Based on these criteria, mindfulness (M = 3.48), critical thinking (M = 3.69), and students' religiosity (M = 3.95) were all classified as high. Among the three variables, students' religiosity showed the highest aggregate mean score and was closest to the very high category. Despite the generally high levels observed, the standard deviations indicate noticeable variation among respondents, suggesting differences in the extent to which mindfulness, critical thinking, and religiosity are expressed.

Discussion

Mindfulness and Students' Religiosity

The findings demonstrate that mindfulness has a positive and significant effect on students' religiosity. This result indicates that students who are more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and learning experiences tend to develop stronger religious awareness and commitment. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, mindfulness enables students to engage with religious teachings more consciously, allowing religious values to be understood not merely as knowledge but as meaningful personal experiences.

This finding is consistent with Kabat-Zinn's (2023) view that mindfulness involves deliberate attention to present experiences without judgment. It also supports Brown and Ryan's (2003) argument that mindfulness strengthens self-awareness and self-regulation, two capacities closely related to value-based behavior. Within the Islamic tradition, these characteristics resonate with the concepts of *muraqabah*, *ihsan*, and *kehusyu'*, which emphasize awareness of God's presence and sincerity in worship (Arroisi & Dzunnurain, 2023). Similar conclusions were reported by Rahmania Azis et al. (2024) and Rokhmah et al. (2025), who found that mindfulness-based approaches in Islamic education contribute to the development of spiritual awareness and religious behavior.

From the authors' perspective, mindfulness appears to function as a bridge between religious knowledge and religious experience. Students may possess adequate knowledge of Islamic teachings, yet knowledge alone does not automatically translate into religious awareness. Through mindfulness, students become more attentive to their inner experiences and daily actions, allowing religious values to be processed at a deeper psychological level. As a result, religiosity develops not only as compliance with religious norms but also as a conscious commitment that influences attitudes and behavior. The variation in mindfulness scores observed among students further suggests that awareness develops gradually and is shaped by both personal and educational experiences. Consequently, creating learning environments that encourage reflection and self-evaluation remains essential for strengthening students' religiosity.

Critical Thinking and Students' Religiosity

The results also reveal that critical thinking has a positive and significant effect on students' religiosity. Moreover, its contribution is stronger than mindfulness's. This finding suggests that students' religiosity is closely related to their ability to analyze, evaluate, and reflect on religious teachings rather than simply accepting them at face value.

The result aligns with Ennis (2011), who defines critical thinking as reasonable and reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe and how to act. Likewise, Facione (2013) emphasizes that interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference are central elements of critical thinking. When applied to PAI learning, these abilities help students move beyond a purely textual understanding of religion and encourage them to connect religious teachings with the realities they encounter in everyday life.

The stronger influence of critical thinking may reflect the challenges contemporary adolescents face. Today's students live in an environment saturated with information, including religious content available on social media and other digital platforms. Under such conditions, religiosity cannot depend solely on the transmission of religious doctrines. Students increasingly need the ability to assess information critically, distinguish credible religious perspectives from misleading ones, and understand the relevance of religious values in contemporary contexts. This

interpretation is supported by Radinata et al. (2025), who found that inquiry-based religious learning increases students' engagement with religious issues, and by Qosthalani et al. (2025), who reported that reflective and contextual learning approaches foster deeper religious understanding.

An important implication of this finding is that critical thinking should not be viewed as a threat to religiosity. On the contrary, the results indicate that reflective reasoning can strengthen religious commitment when appropriately facilitated through PAI learning. Students who understand the rationale behind religious teachings are more likely to develop convictions grounded in understanding rather than conformity alone.

The Combined Contribution of Mindfulness and Critical Thinking

The simultaneous effect of mindfulness and critical thinking confirms that students' religiosity develops through the interaction of awareness and reflection. The regression model explains 46.3% of the variance in religiosity, indicating that both variables constitute substantial predictors of religious development among students.

This finding can be interpreted through Glock and Stark's (1965) multidimensional framework of religiosity. Mindfulness primarily contributes to the experiential dimension by strengthening awareness, spiritual sensitivity, and appreciation of religious experiences. In contrast, critical thinking contributes more directly to the intellectual and consequential dimensions by encouraging students to understand, evaluate, and apply religious teachings in everyday situations. Together, these processes support the development of religiosity that is not only believed and practiced but also understood and lived meaningfully.

In the authors' view, the relationship between mindfulness and critical thinking is complementary rather than competitive. Mindfulness helps students become aware of religious experiences, while critical thinking enables them to interpret and evaluate those experiences. Awareness without reflection may lead to religiosity that is emotionally meaningful but insufficiently examined, whereas reflection without awareness may produce understanding that is intellectually strong but less connected to personal experience. The findings suggest that religiosity becomes more robust when both capacities develop simultaneously.

This interpretation is also relevant when viewed through the lens of Fowler's theory of faith development. Adolescents are situated in a transitional phase in which beliefs are increasingly examined, questioned, and reconstructed. During this process, mindfulness provides the awareness needed to appreciate religious experiences, while critical thinking enables students to reflect on and make sense of them. Together, they support the emergence of a more mature and personally owned faith.

Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications

This study contributes to the growing body of research on adolescent religiosity by demonstrating that mindfulness and critical thinking function as complementary psychological pathways in the development of religious awareness. Previous studies have generally examined these constructs separately. The present findings show that religiosity is shaped through the interaction between awareness-based processes and reflective-cognitive processes.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings enrich the multidimensional understanding of religiosity proposed by Glock and Stark, which emphasizes the connection between personal spirituality and social responsibility. Religiosity emerges not merely as a matter of religious

knowledge or ritual practice but as a process involving awareness, reflection, meaning-making, and ethical commitment.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that PAI learning should move beyond a sole focus on content delivery. Learning activities that encourage reflection, dialogue, inquiry, *muhasabah*, reflective writing, and contextual discussion of contemporary issues may help students connect religious teachings with their personal experiences and social realities. This argument is consistent with Mastiyah (2018), who emphasized the importance of strengthening religious appreciation and internalization rather than focusing exclusively on religious knowledge. In this regard, integrating mindfulness and critical thinking may provide a meaningful pathway to developing a form of religiosity that is reflective, contextual, and sustainable in students' lives.

Conclusion

This study shows that *mindfulness* and critical thinking in Islamic Religious Education learning have a positive and significant influence on students' religiosity. In part, these two variables have been proven to contribute to increasing students' religious awareness, with critical thinking as the more dominant variable. At the same time, these two variables have a significant effect, indicating that integrating them into the learning process can more effectively shape students' religiosity.

Quantitatively, the regression model explained 46.3% of the variation in students' religiosity, indicating that *mindfulness* and critical thinking are important factors in the formation of religious awareness. However, 53.7% of the variance is explained by factors outside the model that also affect students' religiosity, such as family environment, social interaction, and religious experiences. This confirms that student religiosity is a complex construct and is influenced by various internal and external dimensions.

The findings of this study suggest that Islamic Religious Education needs to be developed more holistically by integrating self-awareness and critical thinking skills. This approach is oriented not only towards cognitive understanding but also towards the internalization of values and deep reflection, so as to foster more conscious, rational, and contextual religiosity in students. Going forward, further research is suggested to examine additional variables and adopt a more diverse approach to broaden the understanding of the factors influencing students' religiosity.

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