

## Students and School Learning Environment Motivate Success of Excellent Islamic Education Teachers (EIET)

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the extrinsic factors that motivate the excellence of Excellent Islamic Education Teachers (EIET) through a case study. This study was conducted by interviews among the EIET, their colleagues, school principal and students at eight different secondary schools in Malaysia. All of the interviewed and observed data were processed, analyzed and organized using the NVivo Version 7.0 to develop theme and matrix table with regards to the extrinsic factors influencing the excellence of EIET. The study reveals that students and learning environment has been the major factors in encouraging the EIET success.

**Keyword:** *students, attitude, Islamic learning environment, success, discipline, Excellent Islamic Education Teachers (EIET)*

### INTRODUCTION

Teachers are arguably the most important group of professionals for our nation's future. Many factors have been examined in an attempt to find which one promote teacher's motivation. In this current study, few external factors have been identified to boost driving force towards teachers' excellence, particularly among Excellent Islamic Education Teachers (EIET) (Jasmi, 2010). The researchers emphasize two major influences, which includes students and their school-learning environment. According to Peck *et al.* (1977) and Alam dan Farid (2011), there is a correlation between teacher's motivation and student self-esteem. Students that possess good attitude and high cognitive abilities ease the teacher's burden in teaching, hence allow the teachers to prepare more academic plans for their improvement in the upcoming class session. Rothman (1981) also added that this association exists because teachers serve as more than just educators; they also act as role models.

In addition, the school environment is also important as EIET requires a conducive environment to achieve excellence at schools (Adeolu Joshua & Modupe A., 2012). A good working environment generally comprises of happy colleagues (Alam & Farid, 2011), supportive school principals (Jasmi *et al.*, 2010), brilliant and hardworking students (Dweck, 2008; A Shukor, Jasmi, & Mohd Noor, 2013) and many others. The incorporation of Islamic practice in the school atmosphere also created a better student personality with high academic performance (Jasmi & Ilias, 2011; Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014). If all parties take part in helping and supporting each other, more EIET could be produced.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Mahathir Muhammad (2011) in his 2020 Vision, education has become a top priority in Malaysia for the country's achievement of developed nation status. In order to achieve a good education system, high quality teachers need to be recruited in schools towards effective learning. The teachers, like other professionals must have appropriate teaching skills, knowledgeable in the subjects taught, creative in teaching methods and expert in the technology to produce the effective teaching and learning (Orlich *et al.*, 2001). Apart from this, there are also other possible extrinsic factors may contribute to the excellence of teachers such as students' attitude or behavior, school learning environment as well as discipline enforcement (Halimah, 2006).

Attitude plays an important role to achieve success in one particular area. It is generally defined as tendency of a person to respond in a positive or negative way on something, such as ideas, situations or individual. Attitude is closely related to opinions, beliefs and sometimes is based on our experience. It can also be associated with cognitive style, which refers to the way individuals process information. Student's cognition also was suggested to be one of the strong predictor in academic success (Gagne & St. Pere, 2002; A Shukor, Jasmi, & Safar, 2013).

A good learning environment also helps to achieve student's success. Such environment generally consists of happy colleagues and students, as well as positive working surroundings (Adeolu Joshua & Modupe A., 2012). Poor school environment will lead to psychological sickness among the teachers, hence, makes them feel dissatisfied. This dissatisfaction would naturally affect their work behavior. When frustrated teachers communicate in class, the students may sense the negativity, which in turn will greatly affect their academic achievement (Amin *et al.*, 2013).

In Islamic perspective, an efficient learning environment is incomplete without religious practice, especially if majority of the population at school is Muslim. According to Saini (2005), school environment that reflect a real Islam is the one that provide a harmonious atmosphere, where respect and affection is expressed among each other. The school not only implements educational activities that lead to student's success, but also own capabilities in developing students with better Muslim personality. Kolej Islam Sultan Alam Shah (KISAS) for instance is one of successful models of an Islamic school in Malaysia. The principal believed that their success is attributed to the high disciplinary in academic studies and other Islamic diligent practice such as performing Sunat Hajat and Tahajjud prayers, zikir and fasting on Monday and Thursdays consistently (Kamsari, 2010).

When a harmonious atmosphere and environment is achieved, students will have school-loving attitude, thus, reduce misconducts and disciplinary problems. In Malaysia, there are several types of students' misconducts that commonly reported at school level as such truancy, bullying, stealing, usage of offensive language, being late to classes and damaging school properties (Sang, 2001). According to Ming (2005), these problems are due to the learning environment that are less conducive. For instance, tables and chairs arrangement are too crowded, uncomfortable hot weather, insufficient lights and air and low classroom hygiene. In addition, a large number of students in the classroom will cause the students to receive improper treatment by the teachers. As a consequence, the students felt bored, frustrated and failed to follow lessons taught in class, which in turn leads to misbehaving.

## OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The study was set up to examine extrinsic factors that encourage the excellence of EIET. This research will attempt to answer “What form of extrinsic factors induce success among EIET?” and which of those factors contribute most to their performance.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive survey design, where it is based on case study selection. The researchers identified eight schools as listed by Majlis Guru Cemerlang Malaysia (MGCM), where EIET were allocated. Those (eight) EIET must possess these following characteristics: (1) Were ranked in DG 48 or 52 (2) Experienced in teaching Form 1, 2 and 3 students (4) Experienced in teaching Islamic Education (*Pendidikan Islam*), Syariah, Usuluddin and Tasawwur Islam (5) Represent various types of secondary schools from different location (e.g. urban and rural schools, Islamic and *kebangsaan*-type schools, boarding and non-boarding schools, and schools that are located in the west and east coast, north, south and central Peninsular of Malaysia) and (6) Occupied seniority in (1), (2), (3) and (4) categories.

The study was conducted via interview sessions between the selected EIET, their colleagues, the school principals and students in those eight schools. Sample observation and data analysis were carried out to support the interview data. Field notes and diaries were employed too, for data processing and analysis. After all the transcripts (including field notes and diary reports) were verified and reorganized, the researchers began compiling the data gathered using N’Vivo 7.0 program to obtain finding theme and pattern. The researchers also need to acquire consent of experts regarding the theme built, where the list are as in Table 2. The experts’s level of agreement on the theme is calculated using Cohhen Kappa calculation (Cohen *et al.*, 2007) (Table 1).

**Table 1** Cohen Kappa agreement level indicator

Indicator	Cohen Kappa value
Very high	0.9 <
High	0.89-0.70
Modest	0.69-0.30
Low	0.30>

**Table 2** List of Expert Panel Analysis of Qualitative Data Theme Building Consent

No	Experts	Representative	Position	Expertise	Level (Cohen Kappa)
1.	Expert A	Institute of Education, IIUM	Associate Professor, Dr.	Islamic Education ( <i>Pendidikan Islam</i> )	0.94
2.	Expert B	Department of Educational Foundation and Humanities, Fac. of Education, UM	Senior Lecturer, Head of Department, Dr.	Teachers Education and Islamic Education ( <i>Pendidikan Guru dan Pendidikan Islam</i> )	0.92
3.	Expert C	Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan, UPM	Senior Lecturer, Head of Department, Dr.	Islamic Education, Educational Value and Pedagogy ( <i>Pendidikan Islam, Pendidikan Nilai, dan Pedagogi</i> )	0.92

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Based on the semi-structured question about “What form of extrinsic factors induce success among EIET?”, there are two major patterns of extrinsic factors that motivate EIET excellence. They include students and school learning environment. Student’s discipline also played role in increasing performance of EIET, however it is not that prominent compared to the first two factors mentioned previously (Table 3).

**Table 3** Students and Environmental Factors on EITE excellence in S1-S8

Factors	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
Students	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Religious school surroundings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School discipline	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	X

Keynotes: S=school, x=data.

Table 4 showed a tabulated data of students factor that helps EIET success in S1-S8. According to the respondents, is thought that students with high cognitive skills had motivated those EIET and other teachers. By employing high cognitive development, the students reduced their dependency towards EIET during teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, the students still need a little guidance from their teachers in order to achieve good academic performance (T1S1, 437; G2S1, 791; GCPI1, 1515; GCPI2, 132; G1S3, 190; G2S3, 444; GCPI3, 820; G2S4, 385; G1S7, 208).

**Table 4** Tagging data of student factor towards EITE excellence in eight selected schools

SCHOOL	EITE 1-8	P1 S1-S8	P2 S1-S8	T1 S1-S8	T2 S1-S8	P/PK S1-S8	AD S1-S8	O S1-S8
S1	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	-
S2	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	-
S3	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	-
S4	X	X	X	X	X	X		
S5	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	-
S6	X	X	X	-	X	-	-	-
S7	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-
S8	X	-	X	X	-	-	-	X

Keynotes: S=school. S1-S8=School 1-School 8, x=data. EIET= Excellence Islamic Education Teachers, P=student, P/PK= Principal/Senior assistant, AD-=Document analysis, O=observation

According to PS4 (104): (GCPI: FLKG/PP), they sense a significant relationship of students with high cognitive ability and a good behavior, as explained: “Our students are already “selected” students, and they created only fewer disciplinary problems.” On the other hand, students with low cognitive level appeared to demonstrate lack of motivation and initiative, which drive them to be less focus in class (PS4; G2S5, 374; G1S7, 414). There are some evidence suggested that students with weaker cognitive development will not lead to any significant changes in their academic performance, although various efforts has been implemented for them (G2S2, 716).

Student’s interest during the learning process also played an important role towards EIET and student’s success. When the students feel enthusiastic on one particular subject or in the teaching process, these will indirectly drive the students to explore more about the knowledge and information

that are going to be delivered by the teachers (GCPI1, 1519).

Some students were found to give full concentration in particular subject in class when their favorite EITE is teaching (P2S1, 397; P2S5, 366). In addition to interest, student's cooperative attitude also helps to excel both EITE and students.

Anom (1973) suggested that students attitude towards their teachers encourage them to learn and achieve well in school. Students who obey teacher's instruction in class such as by completing their homework and following all sorts of programs planned by the teachers will definitely assist them towards success( GCPI1, 1532; G1S2, 567; P1S2, P1S2; P1S3, 769; P1S4, 508; P1S5, 446; GCPI6, 894; P1S6, 406; P2S6, 326; GCPI7, 769; P1S7, 438; P2S8, 422; GCPI8, 397). In fact, students with mild cognitive skills also able to achieve well, except they have to express a good attitude (G2S2, 738) in class. The examples of student's bad behavior that hinders them from excellence includes obstinate, refuse to received advice (P1S3, 769), hypocrite (P2S3, 472), arrogant (GCPI2, 307; GCPI8, 1175), lack of cooperation towards P& P EITE (G1S4, 425; G2S5, 374), and laziness (P2S8, 149). Students who have a positive attitude would certainly ease their teacher's task in teaching as they no longer need to waste time to discipline students (Abdul Razak, 2006).

Apart from students, Islamic learning environment factor has also contributed in influencing subsequent impact on both EITE and student success (Table 5).

**Table 5** Tagging data of religious schools surrounding factor towards EITE excellence in eight selected schools

SCHOOL	EITE 1-8	P1 S1-S8	P2 S1-S8	T1 S1-S8	T2 S1-S8	P/PK S1-S8	AD S1-S8	O S1-S8
S1	x	-	x	x	-	-	-	x
S2	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	x
S3	x	x	-	x	x	x	x	x
S4	x	x	x	x	-	x	-	x
S5	x	x	x	x	x	-	-	-
S6	x	x	x	x	x	-	-	-
S7	x	x	x	x	-	x	-	-
S8	x	x	x	x	-	x	-	-

Keynotes: S=school. S1-S8=School 1-School 8, x=data. EIET= Excellence Islamic Education Teachers, P=student, P/PK= Principal/Senior assistant, AD-=Document analysis, O=observation

According to P2S2 (530): "*When religious activities are often held, it make us comfortable ...*" This remarks clearly explained the role of religious programs to create a comfortable environment for students to learn. Islamic Education Committee in schools at Malaysia generally implement many types of religious activities such as religious talks and programmes such as *Maulid al-Rasul*, awal Muharram, Israk dan Mikraj, *Nisfu Syaaban*, Ramadan, *Nuzul al-Quran*, as well as *Maal Hijrah* (P2S1, 432; ADS2, 408; P1S2, 469; P2S2, 554; ADS3, 56, 58; G1S5, 389; P1S5, 464; G1S6, 404; P1S8, 504). Apart from the annual religious programs as mentioned above, there are also periodically-religious programs which includes *Solat camp*, *Tilawah al-Quran*, *Tadarus al-Quran* or Quranic studies class (ADS2, 387; P2S2, 558; ADS3, 39; G1S6, 404; G1S7, 228; GCPI7, 839; GCPI8, 601; P1S8, 505), marhaban, Hajj camp, noble morals campaign (ADS2, 387; P2S2, 558), Islamic funeral course, (G1S6, 407), tazkirah and *usrab* (GCPI2, 310;

ADS3, 45; G1S4, 499; P1S5, 464; G1S7, 227; GCPI8, 1236), religious lectures and talks (ADS3, 37; GCPI4, 1024; G2S5, 398); religious ritual programmes such as *Qiyammullail* dan Islamic worship camps (ADS2, 387; P1S2, 479; P2S2, 557; PS2, 223; ADS3, 54; G1S4, 507; GCPI4, 451; GCPI8, 603), *Qurban* (ADS3, 55), zikir or spiritual exercise (GCPI2, 310; OS2, 72; P2S5, 392; GCPI7, 831), and fasting program on Monday and Thursday, and breaking fast programs (G1S3, 419; G1S6, 404).

Similarly, the school also organized daily religious ritual programs such as Zuhr and Asr prayer at daily schools and five-times prayers for boarding schools (G2S2, 792; ADS3, 30; GCPI4, 452; P1S5, 463; GCPI7, 830; P2S8, 388), daily al-Quran reciting (ADS3, 32; G1S4, 492; GCPI5, 1088) and Yassin and al-Ma'thurat reciting. Other types of seasonal religious programs carried out are listed as the following: (1) weekly Solat Hajat (ADS3, 34; G1S4, 498; P2S4, 737; GCPI5, 1088; G2S6, 197; GCPI7, 831; GCPI8, 1242), (2) donation program for Hari Raya Puasa (ADS2, 417), (3) Yaasin reciting and solat hajat prior to examination (GCPI1, 1042; P2S1, 433; P1S2, 469; PS4, 116; G1S6, 403) and (4) other Islamic acculturation programmes as such by distributing religious literature via flyers, brochures, school magazines, and tazkirah (ADS2, 300; ADS3, 62).

According to the respondents, these types of religious programs help to keep a healthy environment, bring joy and peace to students at school (G1S1, 506; G1S3, 575; GCPI3, 1265), soften an individual's heart, thus creating student with high Islamic quality in their moral and characteristics (P1S3, 575; 798; GCPI4, 451; P1S4, 522; P2S4, 744; G1S5, 452; G2S5, 404; G2S6, 358; P2S7, 446; GCPI8, 1243; P1S8, 514). It also help to create the student's awareness towards Islam continuously (P2S4, 745; P1S5, 470; P2S5, 545; P2S8, 388) as well as cultivating Islamic way of life (GCPI5, 1096). The daily prayers too, help the students to built a better self-discipline (G2S2, 796; P2S7, 447) when seeking knowledge with no or lesser disruption (OS4, 97). Other common practices such as Yassin reciting and Solat Hajat prayers programmes also assist the students to construct *tawakkal*, together with a strong determination to succeed in the examinations (GCPI1, 1042; P2S1, 433). In "The book of knowledge" written by Imam Al-Ghazali (1962), he advices that a student must first cleanse his soul from any sinful tendencies and bad behavior before the studying, as knowledge is placed at one's heart. With bad temperament, the student may be able to acquire knowledge but he may not worth it. Hence, these practices should be an ongoing process and not only done when it is closer to examination only.

The final part that contributing to the EITE success is the enforcement of school discipline (Table 6). The enforcement of school discipline is described as the strictness in of one school in enforcing obligatory laws and school regulations to all students, as well as imposing penalties for those who violate (P1S2, 444; P2S2; P1S3, 798; G1S4, 486; PKS8, 108). According to P2S2 (530): (GCPI: FLKG/PP/PD),

*"If facilities provided at school is uncomfortable, will we manage to cope in our studies? The answer is that we, cannot give full attention in class. The school discipline enforcement is also very important and the teachers should play their role in developing student's good behavior. If not, we will face other problems at school as such bully and other types of interference..."*

*(P2S2, 530)*

From the above statement, the enforcement of school discipline is critical, and usually followed by the development of religious programs. Its purpose is to maintain good students to keep behaving, students who get caught in negative activities could change, and those who are depraved and

refuse to revolutionize are terminated from studies. Through this strict enforcement, students will feel safer at school than getting involved in social problems such as gangsterism, sex before marriage and many others. According to the respondents too, the absence of these problematic students yielded a safer environment for example, from vandalism (ADS2, 409), and this makes both student and parents feel relieved and happy (P1S3, 816). As a consequence, students can focus more on their academic activities, while the teachers and EITE feel more motivated in designing educational programs that could help the student's success (P2S2, 544), for instance by implementing additional class and *program latih tubi*.

The emphasis of discipline enforcement among S5, S6 and S7 schools however were not detected by the researchers in this study. The S5 environment was found to be similar to that S4, where it is equipped with religious school surroundings, while S7 is located in the suburban area. It is evident that this school has not been exposed to discipline problems since a very close relationship that developed among the villagers hinders the students from involved in things that are against school regulations (G2S7, 194; GCPI7, 364).

**Table 6** Tagging data of school discipline enforcement factor towards EITE excellence in eight selected schools

SCHOOL	EITE 1-8	P1 S1-S8	P2 S1-S8	T1 S1-S8	T2 S1-S8	P/PK S1-S8	AD S1-S8	O S1-S8
S1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
S2	-	1	2	-	-	-	5	-
S3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
S4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
S5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
S6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
S7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
S8	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

Keynotes: S=school. S1-S8=School 1-School 8, x=data. EIET= Excellence Islamic Education Teachers, P=student, P/PK= Principal/Senior assistant, AD-=Document analysis, O=observation

## DISCUSSIONS

From the tabulated data above, this study showed that there are two most important themes that contribute to student's academic success, which includes religious school surrounding, as well as student's interest towards subjects learned and teacher's teaching style.

In one study by Sumari et al. (2010) (with majority participants are Muslims), one of the important determining factors contributing to student's academic performance and moral development is religiosity. The parents indicated that daily prayer is a routine they imposed on their children since their early age. Those children were trained to perform prayers five times daily from age of seven. According to the parents too, they said that religiosity can be instilled in children just before they were born. Some mothers even read verses of Quran every day, and fast on certain days during their pregnancy. They also emphasize their children to read verses of Quran at certain age, when they grow up: "I encourage my children to read Quran every day. My children have finished reading the holy book at the age of 8".

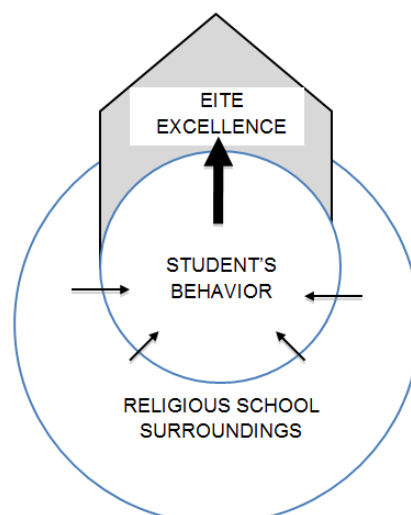
These practices should not apply only when they are at home. Saini (2005) believed that true Islamic surrounding at school able to provide harmonious environment, distribute love, care and respect, hence lead to implementation of various educational activities that leads pupil achievement. It is suggested that school management must work out in many ways in order to create a school culture environment filled with Islamic faith values and morality. This is important for students to feel happy and safe, ambitious to serve and strive towards success, both in seeking Allah's pleasure (reda) and in academic-wise (Hashim, 1999). As for example, by performing Hajat and Tahajjud prayers, zikr, as well as fasting on Monday and Thursdays consistently. Part of this culture is also known as muqarabah nature, where the individuals feel that God (Allah) is always watching our doings. If every school members appreciate this value, they will realize and perform their duties with sincerity, and following this, an effective learning and working environment can be developed.

At school, student's academic performance can also be influenced by the their attitudes towards teacher's teaching style. Students who exhibit positive manner such as showing interest during classes and studying hard improved their academic excellence. It also simplifies the process of teachers' teaching practice in the classroom (Stephens & Crawley, 1994). Besides teacher's teaching style, students' attitude on particular subject or topic learned could also influence their academic performance. Yahaya & Hashim (2008) currently reported attitude of students in Mathematics and its relationship to their achievement in this subject. The researchers found out that students who did not perform well in this subject are often associated with their minimal enthusiasm or negative perception towards Mathematics. These also contributed to their low self-esteem while studying.

Generally, interest is defined as a driving force or tendency of one focusing on a person, thing or activity. According to Andimori (2000), interest act as motivational variables to every individual. The student's interest towards learning activity is very important because it can produce motivation to promote student's achievement towards success. It motivates the students to work harder in understanding the subject of interest and stimulate inquisitiveness to increase their depth of knowledge. Those students who demonstrated laziness and lack of curiosity were found to have difficulties to give full attention in class (Rajecki, 1989). While those with high interest and motivation not only success in their academic but also ease teacher's teaching process.

## RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Based on the pattern of findings indicated in this study, the researchers produce a model called Extrinsic factors motivating EITE Model (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** Extrinsic Factors that Motivate Success of EITE (EFMS-EITE) Model



The model explained that students and religious school environment are two important factors that motivate EITE and other teachers towards excellence. The integration of religious practice in school will provide many positive implications to students, especially on their attitude towards positive behavior. As a consequence, the students become more determined and motivated in gaining knowledge. While its impact on teachers, they felt less burden when teaching and have more time to set up other additional academic programs to make sure their student achieve well in examination. This indirectly increases their work performance too.

## CONCLUSION

This study has discussed the objective, methodology, findings and discussion on extrinsic factors that contribute to EITE success. Results from the pattern of findings demonstrated that EFMS-EITE Model could serve as a benchmark to the teachers, EITE and the school itself to improvise their work reputation. According to the model too, the indicated extrinsic factors, which includes students and religious school environment proved in increasing teachers' motivation towards excellence.

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