Exploring Muslim College Students' Experiences: Implications for Appropriate Integration of Secular and Madrasah Education for Academic Achievement and Personal Development

Khadiguia Ontok-Balah

Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, College of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato, PHILIPPINES

Abstract: **The five (5) Muslim college students' experiences are examined in this study along with how these experiences affect their achievement and development in both secular and madrasah education. The results of the data analysis, interpretation, and findings' implications shed light on the benefits of pursuing both secular and madrasah education. Integrating academic knowledge with religious teachings and developing critical thinking abilities, the merging of these two educational approaches delivers a comprehensive learning experience. Participants emphasized the value of upholding Islamic teachings and performing religious obligations, which serve as incentives for pursuing education in both secular and madrasah contexts. The study also emphasizes the value of madrasah education in maintaining Islamic knowledge, developing morals and spirituality, fostering a sense of self, and strengthening communities. The challenges faced by Muslim college students are also discussed, along with the coping mechanisms used to get beyond these barriers, including time management, academic achievement, and personal hardships. The study emphasizes the comprehensive strategy of integrating secular and madrasah education, which helps the improvement of society and the overall development of people.**

Keywords: **Muslim students in colleges, madrasah education, secular education, integration, academic achievement, and challenges.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is a secular state and the Filipinos' contemporary access to a solid pathway to secular education is the education that does not promote a religion or faith, nor does it teach or demand instruction in a religious doctrine. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term secular refers to "something not concerned with spiritual or religious matters, which is essentially worldly." A secular state is one in which religion is not allowed to meddle with the collective concerns of the people (Khan, 2010). It provides instruction in secular subjects such as mathematics and science, etc. and to gain employable skills.

But how do Muslims situate themselves in a secular state like the Philippines? For Muslim Filipinos, Islam is the way of life thus, their education should not be separated from the Islamic faith. To gain knowledge of the Islamic faith, Muslims have a private school called madrasah (pl. *madaris*) (Blanchard, 2007). One of the primary purposes of Islam was to encourage people to learn and acquire gnostic knowledge (ma'arif). The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of knowledge, the value of learning, and the role of scholars, teachers, and pupils (Ahmed, 2018).

Madrasah is an Arabic word that means "school." It is derived from the root word *dars*, which refers to a learning process that is carried out through drill lessons. The following words are derived from the same root: (1) *mudarres*, which means male instructor, while *mudarresah* means female teacher; and (2) *derrasah*, which means learning or studied subjects. Ismael (1995). Furthermore, madrasah (plural Madaris) refers to Muslim private schools that place a strong focus on Islamic studies and Arabic literacy. It is a privately run school that is supported by the local community and foreign donors, mainly those from Islamic or Muslim countries. The Madaris are Mindanao's oldest educational institutions and are widely regarded as the single most essential factor in the preservation of the Islamic faith and culture in the Philippines. An Arab missionary, Sayyid Ab Bakr, also known as Sharif-ul Hashim, arrived on Jolo Island in the early 15th century. Abu Bakr established political authority by establishing the sultanate as a political structure, with himself as the first sultan. During his 30-year reign, mosques were built and madaris were established (Abubakar, 1983).

There are three primary types of madrasahs in the Philippines: (1) traditional or weekend madrasah. Religious instruction is mostly provided. It is classified as non-formal education because of the following characteristics: (a) courses are held only on Saturdays and Sundays, or on days agreed upon by the teacher and the students/pupils, and (b) there is no formal curriculum; (c) it is not graded and may include multi-age groups; and (d) its teachers are merely required to be graduates of a madrasah or an imam (Muslim religious leader); (2) developmental or formal madrasah – this sort of education provides hierarchically structured education and sequential learning that is generally aligned with the formal school system. It functions similarly to a regular school, with pupils progressing from madrasah *edadi* (pre-school) through madrasah *sanawi*h (high school). The curriculum focuses on Islamic religious and cultural subjects, as well as some mathematics and science classes, and Arabic is used as the medium of instruction. Madaris students, as expected, lack the competitive talents required for work and are ineligible for transfer to conventional schools because the Madaris do not follow the approved curriculum of the Department of Education. This type is not recognized or accredited by the Department of Education; and (3) Standard private madrasah – this type of madrasah has been harmonized, updated, and altered to become a component of the Philippine education system by the issuance of DepEd Order No. 51, s. In 2004, the Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris was developed. All madrasah schools in the country must now accept and implement the same curriculum to obtain official registration and certification.

The enriched curriculum is also mandatory in public schools, requiring the teaching of Arabic language and Islamic concepts to Muslim students across the country in areas with a Muslim population. The establishment of madrasahs, or Islamic schools, in the Philippines is thought to have coincided with the spread of Islam, which was brought by Arab missionaries and Malay adventurers who settled in Sulu and the western Philippines. Madrasah instruction was primarily conducted at the home of the pandita or *guro*, a word for "teacher," however courses were also held in the masjid or mosque on occasion. Lessons focused solely on reading and writing Arabic as a way of reading the Qur'an (Alonto, 1986).

On the other hand, secular education includes the study of public laws that protect citizens from unfair preference and discrimination from a body of clerics organized for the coercive purpose of performing an apostolic work, a tradition of biased theological preaching and teaching passed down through generations, and certain serious offenses specified in sectarian laws affecting specific religious communities.

A secular state is one in which religion is not permitted to interfere with the general concerns of the populace, according to the Oxford Dictionary, and is defined as "something not concerned with spiritual or religious matters, which is essentially worldly. Education that is not founded on a belief in religion or the divine is referred to as secular education. The idea of secularization holds that moral instruction and other types of education shouldn't be founded on religion or other spiritual convictions. Anyone who supports or subscribes to secularism does not subscribe to any form of divine faith.

The secular school does neither promote nor require religious doctrine nor does it teach or require it. The "religious" school is distinct from the "secular" school. The latter offers training not just in secular subjects like mathematics and physics, but also in religious education courses or even theology based on the faith promoted by the school. The promotion of faith is at the heart of the religious school's mission. For example, the Ateneo de Naga is a private religious school that teaches Catholic Christianity. A Madrasah is a private Islamic religious school. The primary concern of the public secular school is its sensitivity to public and party politics; it is prone to administrative and legislative officials' interests in performance ratings or "votes" that become antagonistic to academic quality. The government's ability to establish reliable safeguards for quality assurance in its primary and secondary schools falls far short of expectations. Performance measures are so closely tied to financial rewards or budgetary benefits that performance results are no longer objective. Legislators strive for the creation of state universities and colleges (SUCs) despite a lack of qualified personnel and funds to reap the political

rewards of having established a public secular school. The "secular" school differs from the "religious" school. The latter offers training not just in secular subjects like mathematics and physics, but also in religious education courses or even theology based on the faith promoted by the school. The promotion of faith is at the heart of the religious school's mission (Tabora, 2015).

Removing moral content from the educational system is a result of blocking the sources of virtues, moral cultivation is denied. There will be no piety and no control of knowledge over power if there is no moral content, moral dignity, or God-consciousness. It will be like an elephant with no control, capable of running over anything in its path. As a result, the secularization of education will produce and prepare future generations devoid of God's consciousness and human dignity. Secularizing education in Muslim countries would imply that textbooks will be free of Quranic ideas and prophetic injunctions. Individuals are empowered by secularization because it allows them to plan, choose, and legislate without regard for religious or revelational direction. In truth, secularism is committed to human reason's self-sufficiency (Khan, 2010).

Students enroll in secular on weekdays and madrasah on weekends. This situation is hardly conducive and motivating to gain proper learning since students are fully occupied every day. As these children progress different needs and demands arise. Some students continue attending madrasah, while others concentrate on secular education. Thus, this study was interested to study the experiences of Muslim college students in situating their schooling both in secular and madrasah education. To provide context for this study, it explored the experiences of schooling in secular and madrasah education of Muslim college students.

The Philippines is a secular state, and contemporary Filipinos have access to secular education, which serves as a reliable road to educational achievement and does not encourage, teach, or demand learning in any one religion or belief system. Learning should not be isolated from Islamic beliefs because Islam is a way of life for Muslims worldwide and in the Philippines. Therefore, the educational conditions and experiences of Muslim college students should combine secular education from a public institution with religious instruction from a madrasah. These all served to address the main research question, which was "What are the experiences of Muslim college students, and how do these factors contribute to their success in both secular and madrasah education?"

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research to explore the experiences of Muslim college students in secular and madrasah education. The qualitative research process involved emerging questions, data collection in participants' settings, inductive data analysis, and interpretation by the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology was chosen as the method to precisely portray the participants' experiences: (1) meaning and knowing are social constructions that are always incomplete and developing; (2) the investigator is a part of the experience being studied, and the investigator's values play a role in the investigation; (3) bias is inherent in all research and should be articulated at the outset; and (4) bias is inherent in all research and should be articulated at the outset; (4) Participants and investigators share knowledge and collaborate; (5) common modes of communication (e.g., words or art) are significant; and (6) meanings may not be shared by all participants (Boss, Dahl, & Kaplan, 1996; Swinton & Mowat, 2006). The study included five individuals as participants, named Adam, Ibrahim, Musa, Aisha, and Sarah, with diverse backgrounds and achievements in both secular and madrasah education. Adam, Ibrahim, and Musa were male students, while Aisha and Sarah were female students. In secular education, three participants held a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (BSCE), and two participants had a Bachelor of Science in International Relations (BSIR) with graduation in June 2022. In madrasah education, two participants were "Sanawih" graduates (Senior High School Graduates), and three were at the "Sanawih" level (Senior High School Level). The participants received distinctions and awards in both secular and madrasah education, reflecting their achievements. By purposefully selecting participants with diverse backgrounds and achievements in both systems, the study aimed to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of Muslim college students in navigating their education. The study employed preliminary interviews and questionnaires to gather information, and the participants provided details about their educational attainment and awards. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and identify patterns in the participants' accounts (Gion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). Thematic analysis is a popular technique for detecting, evaluating, and reporting patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Ethical considerations were addressed, including voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, anonymity, and acknowledging previous research. The study aimed to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of Muslim college students in navigating education in both systems.

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presented in this section are the analysis of data, interpretation, and implications of the findings. All these were meant to answer the overarching research question: "What are the experiences of Muslim college students, and how do these experiences contribute to their success in both secular and madrasah education?".

Madrasah Education and Islamic Teachings

Madrasah education holds significant importance. Firstly, it plays a vital role in preserving and transmitting Islamic knowledge from one generation to another. Madrasahs focus on teaching the Quran, Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, and other religious subjects, ensuring the preservation of Islamic teachings and traditions (The Guardian, 2021). Secondly, madrasah education emphasizes moral and spiritual development. Students learn ethics, values, and principles derived from Islamic teachings, shaping their character, instilling a sense of purpose, and fostering a connection with a higher power (Satar, 2022). Thirdly, madrasah education provides a sense of personal identity and belonging to Muslim students. It helps them understand their faith, values, and cultural heritage, strengthening their sense of belonging to the Muslim community and promoting a positive self-identity (HuffPost, 2021). Lastly, madrasah education contributes to community building by nurturing a shared understanding and values among community members. It helps create a cohesive community that can work together towards common goals and address societal challenges (Daily Sabah, 2021).

Participants shared their common experiences in studying both secular and madrasah education. Learning both secular and madrasah education offers several advantages. Firstly, it provides a holistic education that combines academic knowledge with religious teachings, allowing students to develop a well-rounded understanding of various subjects and fostering a balanced worldview. Secondly, the integration of secular and madrasah education enhances critical thinking skills, enabling students to analyze information from multiple perspectives, evaluate different viewpoints, and make informed decisions.

The participants explained that their interest in secular and madrasah education systems was primarily based on the teachings they received from madrasah. Ibrahim (participant 2) related his interest in enrolling in both secular and madrasah education. As he relates his interest in the task, he used the teachings he received from the madrasah that is based on the *Hadith* or the collection of traditions containing the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (*Sallallahu allaihi wasallam* or "*saw*" –peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the accounts of his daily practice, referred as the *Sunnah* - constitute the major source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Qur'an:

According to Hadith, learning about Islam and learning about the religion is wajib or farduh, which means religious duty; something that Muslims are obliged to do to gain rewards in this world and the hereafter.

Ibrahim's interest in schooling in both secular and madrasah is central to the interest that schooling is obligatory for Muslims to fulfill duties for this world and the hereafter. Participant 1, Adam's interest to pursue schooling in secular and not leaving behind madrasah was based on the information that learning and studying Islamic values and teachings for him is "*faraduh kifaya*" [meaning becoming more actively associated with commitment to Islam (s.w.t.)]. Adam shared his thoughts on this as he also became a Mudir to young learners in the *Ibtidah* (elementary level) in Madrasah. When he graduated from *Sanawih*, he could not continue in *Kulliyah* (College in Madrasah) due to the overlapping of the class schedules with secular class schedules. So, he could not continue because Kulliyah's classes are held on Mondays and Tuesdays. He continues to regularly attend the madrasah, not as a student but as a Mudir (teacher) to young students in the Ibtidah (elementary level), despite his frustration and his intense desire to be connected with the madrasah.

The other participants had the consensus that studying in both secular and madrasah is a form of receiving "*taqwah*" or receiving guidance from Allah (swt). Also based on the statements of Participant 5 (Sarah) the same function of adherence was also observed in her interest in schooling both in secular and madrasah:

"As Muslims, we need to maintain our education in secular and madrasah. It's a way of our lives, secular studies have a big part of our daily life, as a source of living and learning about other things. Islamic studies are made obligatory upon us, as it is the way of attaining Jannah (paradise)".

Musa, participant 3, shared his learnings from Madrasah which can be found in the Holy Qur'an that made him even more interested in schooling in both secular and madrasah:

"There is wisdom found in the Qur'an which helped me. Imaam As Shaafiey Rahimahullah said: طلب العلم أفضل من صلاة النافلة
talab aleilm 'afdal min salat annaafila Seeking knowledge is better than supererogatory prayers he also said: من أراد الدنيا

فعليه بالعلم ومن أراد الآخرة فعليه بالعلم ومن أرادهما معا فعليه بالعلم) *man 'arad addunya faealayhi bil eilm waman 'arad alakhirat faealayhi bil eilm waman 'aradahuma maean faealayhi bil eilmi*). *Whoever desires this world, then seek knowledge, and whoever desires the Hereafter, then seek knowledge, and whoever desires both, then seek knowledge".*

Prioritizing Islamic teachings within madrasah education is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it ensures that students receive a strong foundation in their faith, aiding in their spiritual growth and connection with Islam (Alam, 2022). Secondly, Islamic teachings provide moral guidance based on ethical principles derived from the Quran and Hadith, equipping students to navigate moral dilemmas and make ethical choices in their personal and professional lives (The New York Times, 2021). Thirdly, prioritizing Islamic teachings can help counteract extremist ideologies. By promoting a balanced and moderate understanding of Islam, students are equipped with knowledge that rejects radical interpretations and fosters a peaceful and inclusive worldview (Arab News, 2022). Lastly, prioritizing Islamic teachings promotes religious literacy among Muslims, enabling them to deepen their understanding of their faith, engage in meaningful religious practices, and articulate their beliefs and values to others (The Jakarta Post, 2022).

Participant 4 (Aisha) used her learning from Madrasah on how she got interested in schooling in both secular and madrasah as she also stated verses from the Holy Qur'an about finding the r*isq* (any solid substance that is used as a source of nourishment) and *hikmah* (wisdom, philosophy; rationale, and underlying reason):

 "Islam is a religion of Allah. The purpose of creation is to worship Him alone. The secular study gives way for one to receive sources of income from employment. He gave us strength to find our rizq in this world not forgetting the hereafter. In this Quranic verse, Allah highlights the high value of one having been blessed with wisdom and knowledge (Quran, Surah Al-Baqara, Verse 269). He grants Hikmah to whom He pleases, and he, to whom Hikmah is granted, is indeed granted an abundance of good. But none remembers (will receive punishment) except men of understanding. "Hikmah is translated as wisdom stands for knowledge with the power of discerning what is true and right. It means the knowledge, and understanding of the Quran, and the Sunnah and one's ability to speak and act in the correct and right way".

Participant 3 (Musa) also referred to the teachings in the *Hadith* and his interest in schooling in secular and madrasah:

It is written in the Hadith that schooling or learning is the best compared to praying fasting, and hajj. Why? After all, we know that those are our connections to Allaw (May He Be Praised and Exalted). The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, you will be unable to know how to pray, how to fast, and how to hajj if you do not know their relevance and meaning if you know to learn. This is the foundation of learning.

Aisha emphasized the value that in the situation of the Muslim people in general that life in the world is as if a journey that one is a traveler that needs to prioritize achieving results of being mindful that we are not permanent in this world and what will be its consequence in the day of judgment. Aisha's sharing captured Musa's recounts:

My basis for balancing is based on the words of the Prophet that you consider yourself as a traveler or transient in this world. When we are mindful of our situation, we would prioritize what will be the outcome if we are frequently mindful of the results upon thinking that we are not permanent in this world on the day of judgment.

This ability is crucial in navigating the complexities of the modern world. The combination of both forms of education promotes cultural awareness and tolerance by exposing students to different cultures, religions, and beliefs, fostering mutual understanding and respect (Khaliq, 2021). This contributes to the creation of an inclusive society that values diversity. Learning both secular and madrasah education expands career opportunities for students. They acquire a strong foundation in academic subjects like math, science, and languages, opening doors to various professions, while their knowledge of Islamic teachings can lead to opportunities in religious education, community leadership, or Islamic scholarship (The Straits Times, 2022).

The combination of secular and madrasah education provides a range of advantages, including a holistic education, critical thinking skills, cultural awareness, and expanded career opportunities. Madrasah education holds significance in preserving Islamic knowledge, fostering moral and spiritual development, strengthening personal identity and belonging, and building cohesive communities. Prioritizing Islamic teachings within madrasah education ensures that students receive a strong foundation in their faith, provides moral guidance, counters extremist ideologies, and promotes religious literacy among Muslims. This comprehensive approach contributes to the holistic development of individuals and the betterment of society.

The other participants had the consensus that studying in both secular and madrasah is a form of receiving "*taqwah*" or receiving guidance from Allah (swt). Also based on the statements of Participant 5 (Sarah) the same function of adherence was also observed in her interest in schooling both in secular and madrasah:

"As Muslims, we need to maintain our education in secular and madrasah. It's a way of our lives, secular studies have a big part of our daily life, as a source of living through our career and professional development and learning about other important things. Islamic studies are made obligatory upon us, as it is the way of attaining Jannah (paradise)."

Challenges and Coping Strategies

Information that additionally emerged in the interviews was the unique challenges encountered by Muslim college students in secular education as well as in madrasah education, while also exploring their coping strategies to navigate and overcome these obstacles. The participants faced numerous challenges throughout their schooling journey, each presenting unique obstacles to overcome. One of the challenges they encountered was low energy, which made it difficult to maintain focus and productivity. Additionally, as the eldest child in the family, they felt pressured to be a role model for their younger siblings and assist their parents, adding to their responsibilities.

Another challenge they faced was the perception that being serious in schooling could lead to premature aging, causing them to feel self-conscious about their appearance. They also struggled with a bookish professor, which may have impacted their learning experience. In college, the participants found themselves overwhelmed with multiple tasks and responsibilities, making it challenging to stay on top of everything. Furthermore, the death of their father and their mother's unemployment required them to take on caregiving duties while juggling their studies.

Difficulty with time management posed another hurdle for the individual, leading to a lack of focus and underperformance. The shift to online classes during the pandemic exacerbated these challenges, as they felt the learning experience was less effective without interaction with classmates and professors. Experiencing disappointment from a failure in a mid-term examination further affected their motivation and confidence. Additionally, they struggled with academic excellence in both secular and madrasah education, encountering confusion and difficulty excelling academically at the madrasah's senior high school level.

Personal challenges, such as a broken heart, difficulty choosing a college course, lack of confidence, excessive time spent on social media, and feeling isolated due to pandemic restrictions, added to their struggles. Despite receiving an IP (Incomplete Grade) in their undergraduate thesis, it did not significantly impact their overall grade.

Sarah, participant 5, claimed that she was not intelligent enough to understand International Relations topics:

"I am not intelligent. Just because I am not intelligent and I put too much effort. I repeat studying my lessons to understand it."

Sarah's effort made her become more diligent and achieve better as she never thought that despite her negative self-perception of her cognitive ability, she remained accountable for her academic success and when she graduated from college with a secular education, she received a Latin honor as Cum Laude. When she was asked the follow-up question, did she ever experience regretting putting in more effort? She responded that she did not regret it at all especially, after the positive consequence it had on her.

The same effort was put forward by Musa. When he arrived home and did not fully understand his lessons, he would go over and over just to master the topics in his Engineering subjects. Musa recounts:

For instance, if I do not understand my lessons when I arrive home, I study over and over so when the examination comes, I am ready. That's why, sometimes I even top the exams in the class.

The strictness of secular education teachers and instructors posed additional challenges, and the individual had to make sacrifices, such as giving up socializing and playtime to prioritize their studies. They temporarily stopped attending the madrasah to focus on secular education and faced scheduling conflicts when attempting to resume their madrasah education.

Musa and Aisha shared that they could not join gala (outings) and other family gatherings like weddings and other family celebrations. But Aisha believed that studying his lesson and not being able to join in the social gatherings and friends' outings, is worth it because she was able to receive Latin honors in the secular education.

Aisha remembered that:

"I get invited by my friends for outings and going out for a leisurely walk around USM Avenue but I didn't go with them because I sometimes had exams the next day. But I did not regret declining their invitations because, modesty aside, I received an award as a Magna Cum Laude".

Musa, on the other hand, also experienced the same regretful situation as he would miss opportunities for socialization with friends and relatives as he shared:

I don't get to join outings with friends and other social gatherings like weddings. I cannot even play online games even if I desire to because I regret wasting my time other than time spent studying."

Musa is also an achiever as three times Dean's Lister but, when the popularity of the online class, his achievement was not as rewarding as before the pandemic.

Balancing multiple commitments became particularly difficult, especially with the strict attendance requirements of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) in secular education. Relationship issues and the pressure to gain respect as the eldest child in the family further added to their challenges.

Financial difficulties also affected the individual's schooling experience, although they were partially supported by a DOST scholarship. They faced disadvantages in both secular and madrasah education, including sacrificing time, knowledge, and social interactions, as well as issues related to health and exercise due to lack of sleep.

Sarah shared that she already got tired of traveling. Aside from being tired, she would also experience a financial shortage of going home every week as she needed to be home to study on the weekends in Madrasah. She recalled:

Sometimes, I get tired from traveling home and I easily run out of allowance because of going home to study in madrasah. But when I have no more allowance, I ask for money from my uncle, the brother of my late father."

Despite the challenges, the individual did not encounter significant difficulty in balancing their schooling, and their educational success in madrasah education was evident during their elementary years. They managed to maintain financial stability through their DOST scholarship and eventually opted to board a nearby boarding house to accommodate their class schedule.

Throughout their schooling experience, the individual navigated numerous challenges, demonstrating resilience and determination in their pursuit of education.

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Sarah's effort made her become more diligent and achieve better as she never thought that despite her negative self-perception of her cognitive ability, she remained accountable for her academic success and when she graduated from college with a secular education, she received a Latin honor as Cum Laude. When she was asked the follow-up question, did she ever experience regretting putting in more effort? She responded that she did not regret it at all especially, after the positive consequence it had on her.

Study Strategies in Balancing Secular and Madrasah Education

In their pursuit of academic success in both their secular education and madrasah studies, the participants employed a range of study strategies and carefully managed their study schedules. They recognized the importance of effective time management and prioritized their tasks accordingly. The individual acknowledged the benefits of teaching their classmates, as it helped enhance their comprehension of the topics. They also made a conscious effort to avoid distractions such as online games and social media, which could consume valuable study time. Drawing inspiration from senior Civil Engineering students, the individual benchmarked their study strategies to ensure a focused and efficient approach.

In the madrasah setting, the individual sought guidance from Ustadz and teachers, engaging in discussions after the Zuhur prayer on weekends. This interaction provided valuable insights and a deeper understanding of the subjects. While preparing for exams, the individual adopted a strategic approach by avoiding last-minute cramming and instead familiarizing

themselves with the Math and engineering courses. They recognized the importance of understanding the professors' strategies and adapting their study methods accordingly.

Various study techniques were employed, including memorization, note-taking, and prioritization of important topics. The individual found value in providing meanings to the learning topics and summarizing key points to teach their classmates. They emphasized the importance of reviewing notes, rewriting information, and taking study breaks to avoid information overload. Additionally, they recognized the significance of physical health and ensured sufficient rest, healthy eating, and sleep.

The individuals structured their study schedule around their prayer times, utilizing the early morning hours after the Fajar prayer and the evening hours after Aisha prayer. They believed that studying during these times when their mind was fresh and focused would yield better results. Their dedication and effective study strategies led to academic achievements, culminating in graduating as a cum laude Civil Engineering student in their secular education.

Although they had to discontinue their madrasah education, the individual found an opportunity to contribute by teaching Kinder pupils while serving as an Ustadz. This experience allowed them to apply their knowledge and skills in a teaching role.

Thus, the participants' commitment to academic success, combined with their disciplined study strategies and careful time management, enabled them to excel in their secular education and make meaningful contributions to the field of education.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, the analysis of data, interpretation, and implications of the findings shed light on the experiences of Muslim college students and how these experiences contribute to their success in both secular and madrasah education. The participants expressed the advantages of studying both secular and madrasah education, including the development of a well-rounded understanding, critical thinking skills, cultural awareness, and expanded career opportunities. Madrasah education was highlighted as important for preserving Islamic knowledge, fostering moral and spiritual development, strengthening personal identity and belonging, and building cohesive communities. Prioritizing Islamic teachings within madrasah education was seen as crucial for spiritual growth, ethical decision-making, countering extremist ideologies, and promoting religious literacy. The participants also shared the challenges they faced in their schooling journey, such as low energy, pressure to be role models, bookish professors, overwhelming tasks, family responsibilities, time management difficulties, and the impact of the pandemic. However, they demonstrated resilience and coping strategies to overcome these challenges and achieve academic success. Overall, the findings highlight the significance of a comprehensive approach to education that combines secular and madrasah learning, enabling Muslim students to thrive academically, spiritually, and personally.

The findings of this study have several implications for various stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and Muslim communities. These implications are as follows:

1. Educational Institutions: The study highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing the experiences of Muslim college students. Educational institutions should strive to create inclusive environments that accommodate the needs of Muslim students, allowing them to integrate their secular and madrasah education effectively. This may involve providing resources, support services, and flexible schedules that enable students to balance their academic and religious commitments.

2. Curriculum Development: The study emphasizes the value of incorporating Islamic teachings and principles within the secular curriculum. Educators should consider integrating relevant Islamic content, perspectives, and values into various subjects to promote a comprehensive and balanced education. This approach can enhance students' understanding of their religious identity while fostering critical thinking skills and promoting cultural diversity.

3. Interfaith Dialogue: The study underscores the importance of promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding within educational settings. Encouraging interactions between students from different religious backgrounds can foster mutual respect, dispel misconceptions, and promote a harmonious learning environment. Institutions should facilitate opportunities for interfaith discussions and collaboration, promoting tolerance and empathy among students.

4. Policy Considerations: Policymakers should consider the findings of this study when formulating educational policies. Policies should promote the integration of secular and madrasah education, recognizing the unique needs and contributions of Muslim students. This may involve providing support for madrasah institutions, encouraging collaborations between secular and religious educational institutions, and addressing any legal or administrative barriers that hinder the integration of these two forms of education.

5. Community Support: Muslim communities should support and encourage Muslim college students to pursue both secular and madrasah education. Providing mentorship, guidance, and financial assistance can help students navigate the challenges they may face and promote their academic success. Mosques, community organizations, and families can play an active role in supporting students' educational endeavors and fostering a sense of belonging.

Thus, the implications of this study emphasize the significance of recognizing and embracing the adequate and proper integration of secular and madrasah education. By doing so, educational institutions, policymakers, and Muslim communities can contribute to the academic success, holistic development, and cultural enrichment of Muslim college students.

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