

# IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ON THE RATES OF DRUG ADDICTION AND SUICIDE – A CASE STUDY OF KASHMIR

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**Abstract:** Over the past three decades, the valley of Kashmir, akin to other regions globally, has witnessed a significant escalation in the prevalence of drug addiction and suicide rates. The objective of this study was to examine the influence of religious education on the resilience and character development of an individual and thereupon on the rates of drug addiction and suicide. To what degree does the provision of religious education throughout the formative years of childhood make an individual strong and resilient, subsequently influencing his inclination to resort to drug addiction and/or suicide when confronted with adversity? In order to perform the study, the data was collected by the administration of a questionnaire to a sample of 125 participants. This group included parents and youth, education professionals, individuals with substance misuse disorders, and personnel from two separate drug rehabilitation institutions. The findings derived from quantitative analysis indicate a statistically significant correlation between religious education and the prevalence of drug addiction and suicide. This study provides valuable insights for parents as well as educational governing bodies regarding the significance of incorporating religious education at home, and within the school curriculum.

**Keywords:** Drug abuse, Drug addiction, Suicide, Religious Education, Islamic Education, Youth, Resilience.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Humanity is facing a myriad of afflictions in the current era. Kashmir, a disputed land for decades, has become the epitome of adversities and challenges. While everyone has been affected greatly, the ramifications on the development of Kashmiri youth are one of the most serious concerns and must be taken care of.

Youths are the foundation of a society. They are the future leaders of a nation. The prosperity or downfall of a nation largely depends on the welfare and progress of its young population. The youth must be fostered from childhood to develop mental, physical, moral, and emotional strength and resilience to confront life's trials and tribulations. If society does not act, the future generation may struggle to confront life's obstacles and may resort to harmful coping mechanisms like drug addiction and suicide. So what measures can and should a society take to ensure that its youth becomes strong and resilient?

Amidst numerous challenges, the Kashmiri youth has given in to drug addictions and suicides. There has been a massive rise in the rates of drug addiction and suicides in the past three decades. According to a study conducted in February 2019 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), around 600,000 people, which is equivalent to 4.6 percent of the whole population of Jammu and Kashmir, are involved in the use of opioid drugs (Ahmad, 2021). Research quoted by the National Human Rights Commission of India reveals that throughout a period of 14 years, more than 20,000 persons in the Kashmir valley were documented to have engaged in suicide attempts (Parvaiz, 2021).

This study aims to examine the influence of imparting religious education to children, on the cultivation of resilience and strong character in individuals, enabling them to effectively confront difficult circumstances instead of resorting to detrimental coping mechanisms such as drug addiction and suicide attempts.

This study is a descriptive research study that expands on prior research conducted by researchers in this domain. Its objective is to analyze the influence of imparting religious education on individuals right from the early stages of development and determine whether this has any effect on the prevalence of drug addiction and suicide attempts among young individuals.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1 Introduction

This literature review assesses the current literature on how religion affects individuals' personalities, emotional strength, and resilience development. The research also examines the current literature about the necessity of religious education in both home and school curriculums. It also presents a conceptual framework for the study.

### 2.2 Impact of Religion

Religion significantly influences how individuals accept, endure, and navigate obstacles in a constructive manner.

As mentioned in The Book of *Zuhd* and Softening of Hearts in Sahih Muslim:

حَدَّثَنَا هَدَّابُ بْنُ خَالِدٍ الْأَزْدِيُّ، وَشَيْبَانُ بْنُ فَرُّوخَ، جَمِيعًا عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ الْمُغِيرَةِ، - وَاللَّفْظُ لِشَيْبَانَ - حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ، حَدَّثَنَا ثَابِتٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ أَبِي لَيْلَى، عَنْ صُهَيْبٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ لِأَخِي إِلَّا لِلْمُؤْمِنِ إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَاءٌ شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَاءٌ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ " .

Suhaib reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: Strange are the ways of a believer for there is good in every affair of his and this is not the case with anyone else except in the case of a believer for if he has an occasion to feel delight, he thanks (God), thus there is a good for him in it, and if he gets into trouble and shows resignation (and endures it patiently), there is a good for him in it. (Sahih Muslim, 2999)

The historical impact of religion on the political and social spheres of human existence is extensive. The examination of societal formation and value systems reveals the significant role of religion in determining patterns of thought and behavior across many eras in history (Rego, 2017), cited in Cordero et al. (2021). Religions have a significant role in shaping individuals' identities and fostering a sense of belonging. They give a shared narrative that aids in comprehending social realities and guiding interpersonal dynamics within a community context (Olmos-Gómez et al. 2020).

The domain of personality and social psychology has seen a growing academic interest in the examination of religiosity during childhood and adolescence (Cordero et al., 2021). According to the findings of Shepperd et al. (2015) cited in Cordero et al. (2021), there exists a negative correlation between the level of religiosity and violent inclinations. The researchers propose that individuals with higher levels of religiosity are more likely to exhibit greater self-control and compassion.

Rahman et al. (2020), in their study, concluded that religion is associated with increased honesty and ethical behaviour in individuals. Laurin, Kay, and Fitzsimon (2012) as referenced by Rahman et al. (2020) suggest that religious beliefs can enhance an individual's conduct. Religiosity might be a reason for individuals becoming more truthful and morally sound, Randolph, Seng and Nielsen (2007); Ramlan Mustapha (2017); Ab Rahman, Z. et al (2018); Salasiah et al (2020), as cited in Rahman et al. (2020). According to Rahmen et al. (2020), religiosity, from an Islamic perspective, is evident by an individual's resilient conduct. Ibnu Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1292-1350) as cited in Rahman et al. (2020) believed that religiosity involves restraining natural impulses to prevent improper actions, refraining from complaining, and abstaining from harmful behaviours like self-harm in response to misfortune.

Moulin-Stožek et al. (2018) conducted a study on secondary school students in Peru and El Salvador as part of a public health project called YOURLIFE. The study aimed to analyze the associations between religious identification, salience, and practice, as well as five markers of risk behaviors, and four markers of prosocial attitudes and behaviors. Apart from abstaining from unsafe behaviors such as engaging in sexual activities, smoking, consuming alcohol, and using illegal substances, the findings of these studies revealed notable associations between religion and both prosocial activities and attitudes.

To further investigate the impact of religion on an individual, Kim-Spoon et al. (2014) conducted a study to explore whether religiousness acts as a moderator in the associations between parents' psychological and physical aggression and adolescent substance use, both directly and indirectly through the mediating factor of adolescent self-control. The results indicated that the religiosity of adolescents could serve as a significant protective factor, effectively modifying the potential pathways leading to substance use, particularly when confronted with risk factors such as harsh parenting and low self-control.

The existing body of literature indicates that religion has a substantial impact on an individual's resilience, enabling them to withstand challenges and distressing circumstances without relapsing to drug addiction or suicide.

### ***2.3 Need for Religious Education***

Religion has been a topic of contention, particularly within academic circles (Cooling, 2012; Moulin & Robson, 2012; Richardson, 2017, as quoted in Moulin-Stožek et al., 2018).

Its role in education has been a subject of significant historical debate and continues to be a contentious issue globally, with varying approaches depending on the national circumstances (Berglund, Shanneik, & Bocking, 2016, as quoted in Moulin-Stožek et al., 2018).

According to the study done by Maisar et al. (2022), Islamic religious education is crucial for developing one's character, particularly in interacting with society. Religion has a crucial role in shaping attitudes and behaviour, sometimes referred to as ethics, morality, and character. No religion promotes ugliness or poor attitude. Islam is a religion that is considered to be a merger of previous religions, encapsulated in al-Quran and elaborated upon in the Hadith of the Prophet.

Al-Ghazali described morality as an inherent attitude within the soul that gives rise to different behaviours. A Muslim teenager's unique personality is shaped by their beliefs and adherence to their religion. He scrutinises all information he receives through the lens of his religion. Similarly, in the approach to either do or refrain from an action. Teachers in an Islamic educational setting demonstrate conduct rooted on piety. This is where young people's character is shaped. He is not readily swayed by negative behaviour stemming from his social surroundings outside school. Rather the character of leadership emerges. Implementing the notion of learning based on faith and piety (IMTAQ) demonstrates a profound and robust learning approach. Without this, Muslim youth are guided to behave like Zombies, acting like automatons devoid of individuality, influenced by external cultures without critical discernment (Maisar et al., 2022).

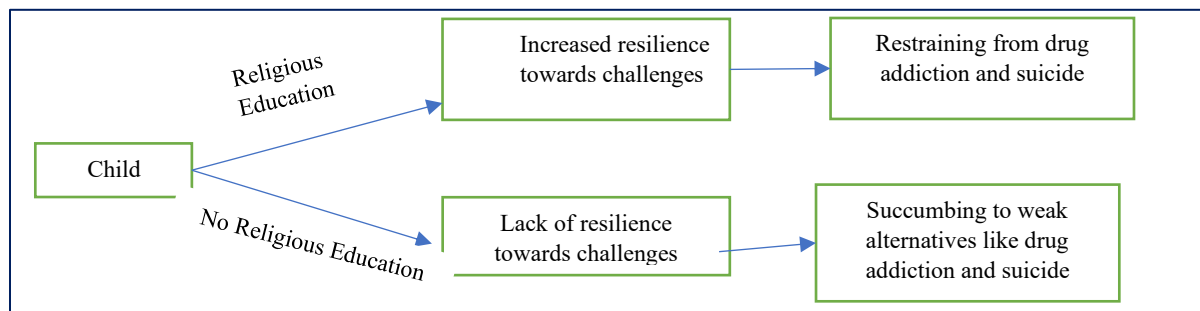
Faheem ul Islam (2019) emphasizes the importance of Islamic education in the article written by him. The author posits that despite the incorporation of modern and Western concepts, even the most sophisticated types of contemporary education are inadequate in equipping individuals with the capacity to face issues in a reasonable manner that aligns with Islamic norms. The statement could not have been expressed in a more powerful and emphasizing way. In his 2019 publication, Faheem ul Islam (2019) emphasizes the importance of Islamic education and pushes for the integration of Islamic knowledge into secular educational institutions. He also suggests the incorporation of modern information into Islamic educational frameworks. According to his perspective, the act of enrolling Muslim youth in non-Muslim educational institutions or engaging them in missionary activities at the elementary and secondary education levels may be considered as an instance of criminal negligence. It is crucial to ensure that all members of the Muslim young population are granted the opportunity to get a comprehensive education that encompasses all facets of Islam, such as its religious tenets, ethical values, legal frameworks, historical progressions, and cultural expressions. It is imperative, both from a legal standpoint and in alignment with the principles of justice as prescribed by Allah (SWT), that we fulfill our responsibility to offer a comprehensive education on Islam, including its principles and goals, to every Muslim child. Failure to do so may result in criminal charges being brought against us (Faheem ul Islam, 2019).

Islam offers a comprehensive set of guidelines for life and aims for a well-rounded, harmonious *weltanschauung* as referenced by Mababaya & Mababaya (n.d.) as stated in Abdi (2017).

Abdi (2017) states that Islam serves as a foundation for the value system that shapes the objectives of Islamic education. Islamic education aims to develop the whole person, encompassing their rational, spiritual, social, and economic aspects. The intended objectives of Islamic education imply that a thorough and unified educational method is necessary for nurturing an upright and versatile individual striving for the harmonious development of the complete personality (Cook, 1999) as referenced in Abdi (2017).

In the academic study done by Bhardwaj (2016), the notion of education is expounded as a complex construct including three essential facets inside an individual's existence: the physical, mental, and spiritual components. Nevertheless, the first two aspects become ineffective if the third aspect is not fulfilled. An education that prioritizes values infuses meaning into every aspect of the learning process and instils a feeling of purpose in one's life. The traditional approach to education provides individuals with a variety of academic credentials and opportunities for attaining work, which are unquestionably of great importance. However, it fails to effectively cultivate moral concepts and virtues within individuals. Spiritual education serves a pivotal role in facilitating a person's understanding of the authentic meaning and purpose of life.

The above review serves as the foundation for the conceptual framework of this study, as seen below:



**Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of the current study**

#### 2.4 Summary and Gap in the Existing Literature

Various research has explored the impact of religion on the life of an individual and the effects and significance of including religious education right from the early developmental stages of an individual, as discussed in the literature review. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that there are still limitations in our comprehension of the matter. Not enough focus has been accorded to guiding the younger generation towards optimal growth and resilience through proper religious guidance. Further research needs to be done on how the absence of religious education and its comprehensive knowledge during childhood and adolescence relate to the increasing prevalence of socially undesirable actions like addiction to drugs and suicide among youngsters and how the vice-versa can result in a strong and resilient generation. Hence further research needs to be conducted to determine the impact of religious knowledge and education on present societal issues and to develop the necessary solutions for improvement. A thorough examination and in-depth explanation are required to understand the underlying causes of increasing drug addiction rates and suicidal ideation cases and the difference made by youth being resilient and emotionally strong as a result of fundamental religious understanding.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research methodology to elucidate the function and influence of religious education in fostering resilience in children, thereby equipping them with the ability to confront problems without succumbing to drug addiction or engaging in suicidal behaviors.

The study was undertaken in Srinagar, the capital city of the valley of Jammu and Kashmir. A total of 125 participants were chosen for the study, encompassing individuals of both male and female genders. As a result of the prevalent use of online platforms for the dissemination and collection of surveys, a total of fifteen responses were considered incomplete and hence omitted from the analysis. Hence, the actual sample size was determined to be 91, as it corresponds to the quantity of suitable responses acquired by survey questionnaires.

The research adopted a cross-sectional design, employing quantitative methodology to obtain the findings. A cross-sectional study was done to collect data from all respondents during a specific time frame, rather than over a prolonged period. The study was carried out by collecting data from participants through the administration of questionnaires, offline as well as online.

In addition to employing the simple random technique as the primary sampling method for the majority of the sample population, alternative sampling strategies, including convenience and purposive sampling, were utilized to gather data.

The study included participants ranging in age from 15 to 70 years old. The ensuing sections contain a detailed overview of the participants' entire profile. The participants in the study consisted of students, parents, educators, and patients from drug addiction centers receiving rehabilitation services, as well as the staff members of these centers, involved in their care.

**Table 1: Demographic data of the respondents (N=91)**

Specification	Category	Frequency, <i>n</i>	Percentage, %
<b>Gender</b>	Male	49	53.84
	Female	42	46.15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	
<b>Age</b>	15-23	18	19.7
	24-32	22	24.1
	33-41	16	17.5
	42-51	17	18.6
	51 and above	6	6.59
	<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	
<b>Social Identity</b>	Parent	17	18.6
	Student	7	7.69
	Educationists/teachers/lecturer/professor	21	23
	Rehab patient	31	34
	Rehab staff	4	4.39
	Others	11	12.08
	<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	
<b>Educational Institute</b>	Secular	61	67
	Religious	17	19
	Undefined	13	14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	

The entirety of the gathered data was subjected to comprehensive examination in order to ascertain the accuracy of responses to the research inquiries.

The questionnaire was made available on an online platform for a certain duration to facilitate the participation of the respondents in the online study. The duration of the study was clearly conveyed to the participants, ensuring that their replies were collected within a suitable timeframe. In order to enhance the quality and comprehensiveness of the responses, several sections of the questionnaire were identified as obligatory, thereby preventing participants from omitting them. Some items under the Demographic section were however kept optional, for the privacy and convenience of the participants.

#### 4. ANALYSIS

The data was gathered through the utilisation of a self-administered questionnaire, which participants completed both online and offline, depending on their convenience and accessibility. The analysis of the acquired data, which was quantitative in nature, was performed using the PSPP computer software, version 1.6.2. PSPP is an open-source alternative to SPSS.

##### 4.1 Validity And Reliability

The survey instrument underwent an evaluation to determine its validity and reliability. The questionnaire's validity in the current study was established by the implementation of face validation, content validation, and construct validation methodologies. The evaluation of the questionnaire's component reliability was performed by employing the Chronbach's Alpha coefficient, which confirmed the internal consistency of the items (Chronbach Alpha > .9).

**Table 2: Reliability statistics of the questionnaire used.**

Chronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.97	21

Factor analysis was conducted using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method in order to find the pertinent variables. The current study utilised the Rotated Component Matrix methodology in combination with the Varimax method, with the objective of achieving a factor loading of 0.5 or greater.

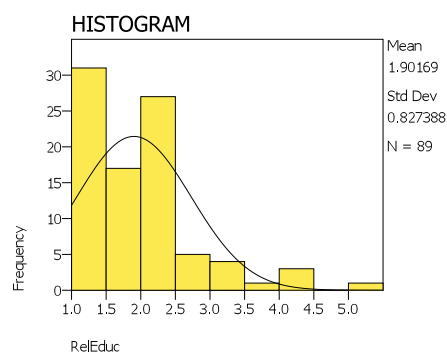
#### 4.2 Descriptive Analysis

After completing Factor Analysis to identify important factors, a subsequent Descriptive Analysis was carried out. The results were obtained through the calculation of the arithmetic mean, which was later evaluated using a preset scale. The researchers utilised a Likert scale, which encompassed a range of five values spanning from 1 to 5. A rating of 1 denoted a high level of agreement, while a rating of 5 denoted a high level of disagreement.

**Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Religious Education**

Variable	N Valid	N Missing	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
RelEduc	89	79	1.90	.83	.68	1.00	5.00

The Graph/ Histogram for the same is shown below:



**Fig. 2 Histogram of Religious Education (IV)**

Upon analyzing the data presented it can be deduced that the mean value is 1.90, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.827.

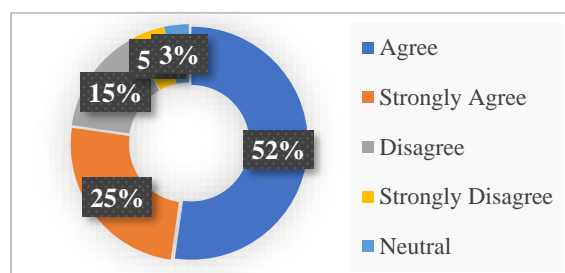
The above interpretations are consistent with the existing literature showing the influence of religion and the necessity of religious education on an individual's spiritual, moral and mental growth, as shown by existing studies done by several researchers like Olmos-Gómez et al. (2020); Maisar et al. (2022); Rahman et al. (2020) and others.

#### 4.3 Analysis through Frequency Charts

To optimize the fulfilment of the study's objectives, pie charts were utilized to graphically depict the frequency of relevant responses acquired throughout the questionnaire administration.

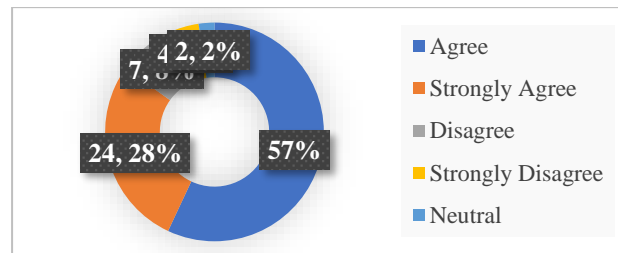
**4.3.1 Statement:** People who are emotionally unstable and weak can take impulsive steps which can harm them, like taking and thus getting addicted to drugs

An individual who is emotionally unstable and weak lacks the resilience to confront life's obstacles. This leads to him surrendering to the temptation to engage in drug use.



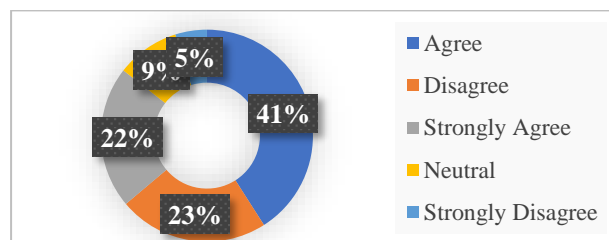
**Fig. 3: Emotionally unstable and weak people are more likely to get addicted to drugs.**

**4.3.2 Statement:** People who are emotionally unstable and weak can take impulsive steps which can harm them, or even be fatal, like committing suicide



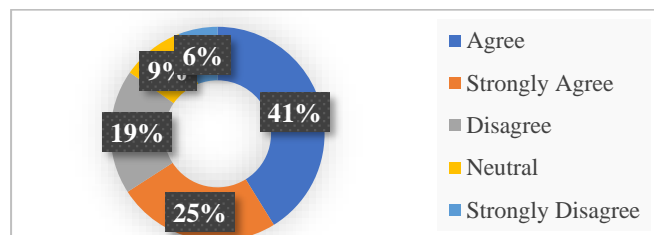
**Fig. 4: Emotionally unstable and weak people are more likely to have suicide ideation and/or commit suicide.**

**4.3.3 Statement:** A person with a proper religious upbringing will not succumb to drug addiction.



**Fig. 5: A person with a proper religious upbringing will not succumb to drug addiction.**

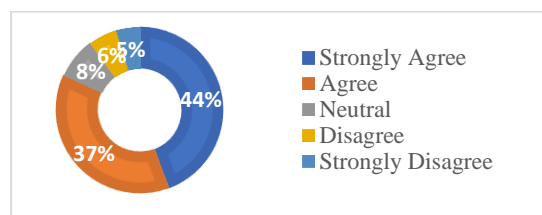
**4.3.4 Statement:** A person with a proper religious upbringing will not succumb to attempting or committing suicides.



**Fig. 6: A person with a proper religious upbringing will not succumb to attempting or committing suicides.**

**4.3.5 Statement:** Teaching religious values in schools will make the students more confident and resilient.

If educational institutions have a properly designed curriculum through which they teach and instill religious beliefs in their students, it is likely that these individuals will acquire elevated self-confidence and resilience as their personal values.

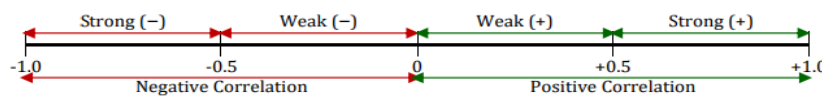


**Fig. 7: Teaching religious values in school will make students more confident and stronger.**

The data presented indicates that 37% of the participants agree, while 44% strongly agree, that the incorporation of religious education in schools promotes the development of confidence and resilience in children throughout the trajectory of their development into adults.

#### 4.4 Correlational Analysis

In essence, the Pearson correlation coefficient is bounded between -1 and +1, denoted as  $-1 \leq R \leq +1$ . According to Gogtay and Thatte (2017), as referenced in Senthilnathan (2019), the interpretation of the correlation coefficient can be determined based on its numerical value, as demonstrated in the following manner:



**Fig. 8: Correlation Coefficient spectrum for interpretation**

According to the table provided, values over +0.5 suggest a robust positive correlation between the independent variables (IVs) and dependent variables (DVs).

A bi-variate correlation analysis was conducted to have a deeper understanding of the association between the Independent Variables (IV), namely Religious Education, and the two Dependent Variables (DV), namely Drug Addiction and Suicide. The information has been displayed in the tables below:

**Table 4: Correlation analysis between Religious Education and Rate of Drug addiction and Suicide Rate**

Independent Variable		Dependent Variables	
		Rate of Drug Addiction	Suicide Rate
Educational Influence (Religious Education)	Pearson Correlation	0.506	0.528
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000

The correlation coefficients of 0.506 and 0.528 demonstrate a statistically significant, positive, and strong relationship between the influence of Religious Education and the rate of Drug Addiction and Suicides, respectively. The p-value is less than 0.000. The alpha level of 0.05 is widely acknowledged, suggesting a substantial degree of statistical significance for the observed correlation. This suggests that the link is unlikely to have arisen by chance or as a result of random sampling. Hence, religious education exerts a substantial influence on the rates of drug addiction and suicide.

## 5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To get the results and findings of the study, several types of analysis methods were employed, including descriptive analysis and frequency charts. It has been established by the study that religious education has a crucial function in helping children develop emotional resilience and strength. An individual's weakness in resilience and emotional fortitude might render them susceptible to many life challenges typically beginning in adolescence. Children who do not receive religious education and guidance often have less resilience and a lack of inner strength as they grow older. The study demonstrates a significant impact of religion and the imperative of religious education on an individual's spiritual, moral, and cognitive development. The ensuing inquiries revealed that those who get religious instruction from childhood through adolescence are more likely to acquire emotional and moral strength and resilience. These individuals have a significantly lower susceptibility to acquiring drug addiction and/or experiencing suicidal thoughts when faced with challenging and/or unfavourable conditions. Furthermore, it elucidated that religion significantly influences the cultivation of resilience in a child. It can be asserted that the absence of religious instruction and consequently the absence of religious principles in a child's upbringing have deleterious consequences on their emotional and moral growth, potentially resulting in an escalation of socially unacceptable behaviours. Therefore, this is closely correlated with the prevalence of drug addiction and suicides.

A correlational analysis was performed to further investigate the association between religious education and the prevalence of substance addiction and suicidal inclinations. The results demonstrated a significant and robust association between the given variables, therefore suggesting that religious education has a substantial impact on the prevalence of substance addiction and suicidal tendencies. Providing a child with comprehensive religious education during their formative phases enhances their convictions, leading to increased emotional and mental resilience. An individual who possesses a profound religious foundation would exhibit increased levels of resilience when faced with challenges, confronting them with unwavering determination rather than avoiding them or resorting to less effective coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse or engaging in suicidal behaviour.

The results are also in line with the conclusion drawn in previous studies conducted by Faheem Ul Islam (2019), Rashed (2020), Ilham (2020), Asrori et al. (2021) and others, which show a similar relationship and effect as has been proved between the different variables in this study.



## 6. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that religion and subsequently religious education is vital, throughout the trajectory of a child developing into an adult, as it has a strong influence on the resilience and character development and hence the decision of individuals to succumb to unwanted actions like substance abuse and suicide, in case of facing adversities.

Individuals with a restricted comprehension or knowledge of the principles of religion may experience distress as a result of the turbulent situations they face. The multitude of daily challenges and difficulties individuals encounter, together with the demanding endeavour of reconciling different aspects of their lives, can be unsettling. Conversely, individuals who have cultivated a profound comprehension and firm foundation in religious ideas, via their upbringing, are inclined to demonstrate a state of calmness and peacefulness when faced with the unpredictable fluctuations of life. These individuals exhibit the capacity to effectively navigate through a variety of situations while maintaining a composed demeanour, demonstrating patience and wisdom in their approach. Participation in religious rituals and observances plays a role in the formation of an individual's internal identity and is positively correlated with their level of religious faith. Consequently, those with a robust spiritual framework have reduced vulnerability to participating in behaviours characterised by timidity, such as addiction and suicide. As the individual advances in years, there is a noticeable inclination towards developing resilience and adopting a positive outlook on life and the obstacles it entails.

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