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## **Islamic Religiosity and Future Anxiety on Disabled Children's Parents: Parental Acceptance as a Mediating Variable**

**Gumelar Ferdiansyah Pratama<sup>1</sup>, Herdian<sup>2</sup>, Nur'aeni<sup>3</sup>, Suwarti<sup>4</sup>**

Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

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**Abstract.** The birth of a child with special needs introduces a myriad of challenges, triggering complex psychological dynamics in parents that significantly influence their anxieties about the child's future. This research aims to delve into this intricate phenomenon by examining the role of parental acceptance as a mediator in the impact of Islamic religiosity on future anxiety among parents of children with special needs. The study involved 115 parents (46 fathers and 69 mothers) of children with special needs at SLBN Tasikmalaya, selected through purposive sampling. Data collection was executed through the administration of research questionnaires. The analytical framework employed path analysis, an integrated method amalgamating regression analysis and mediation analysis, facilitated by the use of SPSS application version 25. The calculated results revealed that Islamic religiosity exerts an indirect effect, assuaging future anxiety through the mediating influence of parental acceptance. These findings underscore the significant role of parental acceptance in mediating the impact of Islamic religiosity and its potential to contribute to the reduction of future anxiety. Consequently, the study advocates for the implementation of targeted programs aimed at promoting Islamic religiosity and fostering parental acceptance, providing a strategic avenue to mitigate the enduring impacts of future anxiety within this demographic.

**Keywords:** Future anxiety; Islamic religiosity; parental acceptance; disabled children's parents

## **INTRODUCTION**

Most parents dream of having healthy, happy children who can explore the world and participate in community activities. However, the reality for some parents is different. They face the challenge of raising a child with special needs. This can significantly impact the family, creating new challenges for parents and other family members.

This condition significantly changes family life, especially after receiving the first diagnosis that indicates difficulties in the child. Parents' initial reactions tend to be negative, triggered by feelings such as shock, sadness, confusion, and guilt (Girli, 2018; Lestari & Pratisti, 2019; Wardani, 2009). The diagnostic process also often becomes a traumatic experience, difficult to accept by parents at first (Girli, 2018).

Raising a child with special needs is not an easy task, requiring long-term support from parents (Beighton & Wills, 2017; Jiu et al., 2020; McCann et al., 2012). This support includes direct assistance in daily activities, emotional support, and mediation between the child and service providers (Navalkar, 2010).

\*Corresponding author: pratamagumelarferdiansyah@gmail.com

Parents raising children with special needs find themselves navigating a unique psychosocial landscape. Previous research reveals that parents of children with special needs, in contrast to those with typically developing children, report heightened levels of stress (Cousino & Hazen, 2013; Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010; Lee, 2013; Padden & James, 2017), an increased risk of depression (Cousino & Hazen, 2013; Lee, 2013), and frustration (Heiman, 2002). Compared to parents of typically developing children, those with children having special needs often experience social isolation (Cousino & Hazen, 2013), diminished quality of life (Hatzmann et al., 2008; Heiman, 2002; Mugno et al., 2007), and encounter physical health challenges (Caicedo, 2014; Cantwell et al., 2014; Cousino & Hazen, 2013; Gallagher et al., 2015; Seymour et al., 2017). Caicedo (2014) additionally noted that mental health, family functioning, and the burden of caregiving pose significant challenges for parents of children with special needs. Families raising children with special needs often grapple with pressures, emotional burdens, and societal stigmas (McLean & Halstead, 2021). Mothers of children with intellectual disabilities, in particular, report a significantly lower sense of happiness (Emerson et al., 2006). The responsibilities faced by families with children with special needs tend to be more demanding than those of families with typically developing children (Mugno et al., 2007) and a more pronounced sense of pessimism regarding the future (Cantwell et al., 2014).

The challenges faced by parents of children with special needs and their resultant impact on family dynamics are identified as triggers for heightened anxiety, tendencies toward excessive protection, and a sense of inflexibility (Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010; Lardieri et al., 2000; Padden & James, 2017). Case (2000) uncovered personal concerns among parents of children with special needs, specifically regarding their child's ability to adapt to a less constrained environment and apprehensions about the unfolding future.

Parents often harbour a sense of pessimism regarding the future of children with special needs, as they believe that the inherent limitations of these children pose significant obstacles to achieving a successful career (Ariesta, 2016). Research findings presented by Sari and Dewi (2013) also suggested that mothers of children with special needs grapple with a challenging and uncertain role in shaping the trajectory of their offspring's future development.

Various factors contribute to the anxiety experienced by parents, encompassing narrow perceptions, distressing experiences, and a prevailing sense of pessimism about their child's capabilities (Insani et al., 2021). Chan et al., (2018) asserted that parental anxiety is additionally influenced by several mediating mechanisms, including characteristics of the child that are linked to future-related worry, parenting stress, marital conflicts, and family economic pressure. Further research suggests that difficulties faced by a child with special needs in social interactions and relationship-building have repercussions on the mental health of parents, including heightened anxiety (Gray et al., 2011).

Parents of children with special needs grapple with a spectrum of anxieties related to their offspring's future, encompassing aspects such as societal inclusion, educational prospects, financial capabilities, and concerns arising when parents are no longer present (Heiman, 2002). Heiman (2002) adds that parents of children with special needs also harbour anxieties related to their child's adolescence and the potential challenges associated with building their own family in the future. Consistent with other research, it is evident that parents of children with special needs often contend with anxieties surrounding their child's future, particularly concerning independence, career pursuits, and marital prospects (Girli, 2018).

In general, future anxiety is understood as fear, uncertainty, apprehension, and concern about unfavourable changes in one's distant person (Zaleski, 1996). Santoso and Rizkiana (2019)

defined future anxiety as the worry about uncertainty in the future that individuals contemplate regarding the conditions of their lives down the road. In extreme cases, future anxiety can become a source of panic about something tremendously impactful that might happen to someone (Zaleski, 1996). Nevertheless, future anxiety in parents about their children's future is quite natural, as parents share a deep bond with their children and strive to provide the best care and education possible for them (Winarsih & Rohmadan, 2021).

Numerous studies have shown that various factors influence future anxiety. Among the multitude of factors contributing to future anxiety, religiosity (Qolbi, 2020), and self-acceptance (Syams et al., 2023) stand out as noteworthy influences. Religiosity plays a role in reducing anxiety levels by providing emotional and spiritual support that helps individuals cope with life's stressors (Abdel-Khalek et al., 2019). Additionally, engaging in religious activities and embracing religious values positively contributes to one's life, boosting self-esteem and psychological well-being (Fradelos et al., 2020). Individuals with good psychological well-being are less likely to face various mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress (Liu et al., 2009). Participating in religious communities not only offers emotional and social support that alleviates anxiety (Shreve-Neiger & Edelstein, 2004), but also enhances overall life satisfaction (Leondari & Gialamas, 2009). It provides a sense of peace and well-being (Haryanto, 2017; Wulandari et al., 2022). Conversely, holding negative perceptions about God and religion is associated with poor psychological well-being and distress (Scandrett & Mitchell, 2009).

Several previous studies support the assertion that anxiety has an inverse relationship with self-acceptance. There tends to be a pattern whereas one's level of self-acceptance increases, and anxiety levels tend to decrease, or vice (Ginsburg et al., 2004; Manik et al., 2023; McLeod et al., 2007; Wood et al., 2003). More positive self-acceptance significantly reduces anxiety levels, indicating a strong negative correlation between the level of self-acceptance and the level of anxiety (Yusfina, 2016). Contemporary research on individual differences in self-acceptance indicates that the conditional level of acceptance in a social environment is considered an important indicator of self-esteem and mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, low acceptance, and beliefs (Vasile, 2013). Bernard et al. (2013) stated that low self-acceptance levels are positively associated with the emergence of anger and anxiety, as well as suboptimal performance. People with low levels of self-acceptance tend to have higher levels of anxiety (Manik et al., 2023).

This study delves into the often-neglected realm of future anxiety among parents of children with special needs. While existing literature offers glimpses, comprehensive research in this area remains scarce. To address this gap, we explore the potential influence of Islamic religiosity, deeply woven into Indonesian society, on future anxiety. We hypothesize that Islamic religiosity may alleviate future anxiety through the mediating role of parental acceptance. Through this investigation, we seek to illuminate the intricate interplay between Islamic religiosity, parental acceptance, and future anxiety in this unique population. We anticipate that our findings will enrich our theoretical understanding and pave the way for the development of targeted intervention strategies and support systems. Ultimately, we aim to empower parents, fostering resilience and hope as they navigate the challenges and uncertainties of their children's futures.

## METHOD

Employing a causal relationship approach, this study investigates the influence of an exogenous variable, Islamic religiosity, on the endogenous variable, future anxiety, among parents of children with special needs. Parental acceptance serves as a potential mediator in this relationship.

Focusing on families with children enrolled at SLBN (school for children with special needs) Tasikmalaya, a purposive sampling technique identified 115 parents (46 fathers and 69 mothers) who actively participated by completing the relevant questionnaires after providing informed consent.

**Table 1.**  
Research Participant Characteristics

	Characteristic	n	%
Gender	Female	69	60%
	Male	46	40%
Latest Education	Elementary School	60	52.2%
	Junior High School	25	21.7%
	Senior High School	24	20.9%
	Diploma Program	2	1.7%
	Bachelor's Degree	3	2.6%
	Master's Degree	1	0.9%
Types of Disabilities in Children	Visually Impaired	11	9.6%
	Hearing Impaired	15	13%
	Intellectual Disability	70	60.9%
	Physically Impaired	6	5.2%
	Autism	13	11.3%
Stages of Child Education	Preschool	6	5.2%
	Elementary School	68	59.1%
	Junior High School	27	23.5%
	Senior High School	14	12.2%

Three different scales were employed to gather data. The Future Anxiety Scale, developed by Zaleski (1996), was utilized to collect data on future anxiety, comprising 23 items. The Future Anxiety Scale consists of cognitive and physiological components. Participants were instructed to rate statements such as: "I am uneasy about possible mishaps" using a scale ranging from 0 (decidedly false) to 6 (decidedly true). The validity values ranged from 0.329 to 0.815, and the reliability was found to be 0.900, indicating that the Future Anxiety Scale is both valid and reliable.

Data regarding Islamic religiosity were gathered using the Muslim Religiosity Scale (Amir, 2021), which comprised 12 items. The Muslim Religiosity Scale encompasses various dimensions, including religious belief, practice, and experience. Participants responded to statements such as: "How often do you perform the five daily prayers?" using a scale ranging from 1 (seldom) to 4 (always). The validity values ranged from 0.340 to 0.835, with a reliability of 0.771, indicating that the Muslim Religiosity Scale is valid and reliable.

Data on parental acceptance were acquired using the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire Short Form (Rohner & Ali, 2016), which consisted of 13 items. The questionnaire covers several dimensions: warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection. Participants rated statements such as: "I care about what my child thinks, and encourage him/her to talk about it" using a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (always). The validity values ranged from 0.336 to 0.720, with a reliability of 0.734, indicating that the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire Short Form is valid and reliable.

Validating a scale involves several key steps. The process began by clearly defining the measured concept and developing relevant items or questions. Initial testing was carried out with a small sample to refine the items. The content validity assessment was conducted using expert evaluation to ensure comprehensive concept coverage. Reliability testing used Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency and test-retest methods for stability over time.

The method employed to test hypotheses in this research involved regression analysis to examine the relationships among variables and assess direct effects. Additionally, Baron and Kenny's Method for Mediation was used to explore the indirect influence of exogenous variables on the endogenous variable through a mediator variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). This method required meeting specific conditions to establish mediation: the exogenous variable had to show a significant influence on the endogenous variable, the exogenous variable had to influence the mediator significantly, and the mediator had to influence the endogenous variable significantly.

Path analysis was also utilized to analyze the research data. Path analysis is an extension of regression analysis used to examine the role of mediating variables in the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The method employed to test hypotheses in this research involves regression analysis to examine the relationships among variables and assess direct effects. Baron and Kenny's Method for Mediation is also utilized to explore the indirect influence of exogenous variables on the endogenous variable through a mediator variable. The hypothesis testing process is conducted through data analysis using SPSS version 25, with the results presented in Table 2 and Baron and Kenny's Method for Mediation.

**Table 2.**  
Simple and Multiple regression analyses (N=115)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	p Values
	B	SE	Beta	
Islamic Religiosity -> Future Anxiety	-1.272	0.629	-0.187	0.046
Islamic Religiosity -> Parental Acceptance	0.365	0.155	0.217	0.020
(Parental Acceptance) Islamic Religiosity -> Future Anxiety	-0.639	0.585	-0.094	0.277
(Islamic Religiosity) Parental Acceptance -> Future Anxiety	-1.570	0.347	-0.430	0.000

Hypothesis testing involving a mediator variable was conducted using Baron and Kenny's Method for Mediation. The following conditions have been met in the analysis results to support mediation according to Baron and Kenny's theory (1986).

### **The exogenous variable shows a significant influence on the endogenous variable**

Based on the regression analysis results in Table 2, it is found that Islamic religiosity has a significant direct impact on future anxiety ( $B = -0.187$ ;  $0.046 < 0.05$ ). This negative beta coefficient indicates that higher levels of Islamic religiosity are associated with lower levels of future anxiety. The significance level of 0.046, which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05, confirms that this relationship is statistically significant. This finding suggests that individuals' adherence to Islamic practices and beliefs increases, their anxiety about the future tends to decrease.

Religiosity plays a significant role in reducing anxiety levels through the provision of emotional and spiritual support, aiding individuals in managing stress and life pressures (Abdel-Khalek et al., 2019). Furthermore, involvement in religious communities has been proven to provide a sense of tranquillity and well-being (Haryanto, 2017; Wulandari et al., 2022). In Islam, prayer salat and mindfulness towards Allah have been proven to alleviate anxiety (Kamila, 2022; Perwataningrum et al., 2016; Syahdiah et al., 2022; Widystuti et al., 2019; Zaini, 2015). Taqwa, as a religious orientation in Islam, is effective in overcoming anxiety and bringing happiness (Alhafiza et al., 2022; Maham & Bhatti, 2019). Individuals with solid taqwa and faith tend to be less anxious about worldly affairs, whereas those with weak faith tend to be anxious about the future (Alhafiza et al., 2022; Maham & Bhatti, 2019). In the Islamic context, anxiety frequently emerges as an integral facet of life's trials, bestowed by Allah, as articulated in Surah Al-Baqarah, 155 (Nugraha, 2020). Amidst periods of increasing difficulty and anxiety, Islam emphasizes the paramount importance of patience and instils the belief that Allah grants glad tidings to those who remain steadfast in facing life's trials (Nugraha, 2020). Despite this, every trial provided by Allah is tailored to the capacities of His servants (Khamis et al., 2023). Consequently, when confronting anxiety, we can discover serenity and resilience in the conviction that Allah assigns tests commensurate with the abilities He has endowed each individual.

### **The exogenous variable shows a significant influence on the mediator**

Based on the regression analysis results in Table 2, it is found that Islamic religiosity has a significant direct impact on parental acceptance ( $B = 0.217$ ;  $0.020 < 0.05$ ). This positive beta coefficient indicates that higher levels of Islamic religiosity are associated with higher parental acceptance. The significance level of 0.020, which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05, confirms that this relationship is statistically significant. This finding suggests that as individuals' adherence to Islamic practices and beliefs increases, their acceptance improves.

Religiosity in the life of a Muslim has a significant impact on self-acceptance (Aflakseir, 2012). Islamic religiosity often plays a significant role in shaping individuals' lives and serves as a strong foundation for self-acceptance (Sayyidah et al., 2022). Religion can function as a source of strength that motivates individuals to cultivate a profound understanding of themselves, embracing both their strengths and weaknesses (Mukti & Dewi, 2013). Individuals actively participating in religious practices tend to report higher levels of well-being, including self-acceptance (Frazier et al., 2005). According to Jaworski (2002), individuals with strong religious tendencies are likely to have high levels of self-acceptance. Additionally, a positive connection with God can provide individuals with a sense of self-acceptance and emotional comfort when facing life-threatening illnesses (Weaver & Flannelly, 2004).

Furthermore, previous research demonstrates the influence of religiosity on parental acceptance. The higher the level of religiosity exhibited by both fathers and mothers, the greater the level of parental acceptance (Rahmawati, 2018). Research conducted by Wijanarko and Ediati (2016) confirms that the religiosity of fathers and mothers contributes significantly to parental acceptance. Religiosity serves not only as a source of strength but also motivates individuals to understand themselves more deeply, embracing all their strengths and weaknesses (Mukti & Dewi, 2013). The religiosity in the life of a Muslim has a significant impact on self-acceptance (Aflakseir, 2012). Aflakseir (2012) demonstrates that religious concepts in Islam are a strong foundation for achieving positive psychological well-being, including self-acceptance. One of the religious concepts in Islam is tawakal. Tawakal teaches that an individual should entrust all their affairs and life needs to Allah (Zulfian & Saputra, 2021). In the context of self-acceptance, tawakal can be interpreted

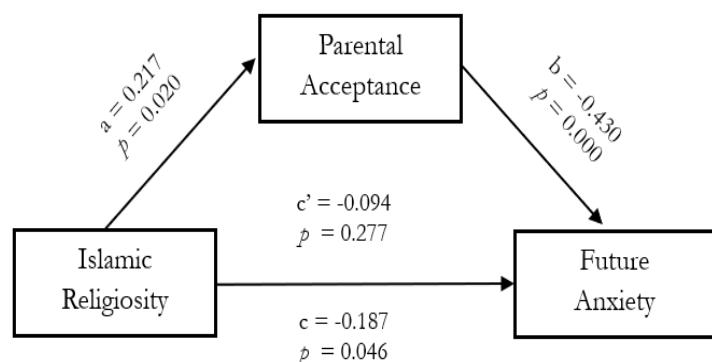
as the awareness that every aspect of ourselves, including strengths and weaknesses, is under the control and wisdom of Allah.

### The mediator must significantly influence the endogenous variable

Based on the regression analysis results in Table 2, if exogenous variables and mediators are included as predictors, the results show that parental acceptance has a significant direct influence on future anxiety ( $B = -0.430$ ;  $0.000 < 0.05$ ). This negative beta coefficient indicates that a higher level of parental acceptance is associated with a lower level of anxiety in the future. A significance level of 0.000, well below the conventional threshold of 0.05, confirms that this relationship is statistically significant and strong. These findings suggest that parents who feel higher levels of acceptance tend to experience significantly lower levels of anxiety about the future.

Contemporary research on self-acceptance underscores the pivotal role of conditional acceptance within social environments as a crucial indicator of self-esteem and mental health issues. These issues encompass a spectrum ranging from anxiety and depression to low self-confidence (Vasile, 2013). In alignment with Bernard et al. (2013), it is revealed that a diminished sense of self-acceptance correlates positively with heightened levels of anger, anxiety, and suboptimal performance. Parental acceptance, especially from the father, and the level of autonomy in children significantly influence their anxiety levels (Yaffe, 2018). Children who perceive their parents as authoritarian tend to experience higher levels of anxiety compared to those who see their parents as authoritative (Yaffe, 2018). The warmth and care provided by both fathers and mothers, characteristic of parental acceptance, play a supportive role in alleviating adolescent anxiety (Raina & Goyal, 2018). Additionally, a warm and accepting relationship between parents and children can be a protective factor, reducing anxiety by minimizing cognitive distortions (Epli et al., 2021).

The above conditions, which are prerequisites based on Baron and Kenny (1986) to support mediation have been fulfilled. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a mediating effect or indirect influence, where parental acceptance mediate the influence of Islamic religiosity on future anxiety.



**Figure 1.**  
Mediation Process Flow

In Table 2 and Figure 1 above, it was found that Islamic religiosity has a significant direct impact on future anxiety ( $B = -0.187$ ;  $0.046 < 0.05$ ) without controlling for the mediator. However, when the mediator is controlled in the data analysis process, Islamic religiosity does not significantly impact future anxiety ( $B = -0.094$ ;  $0.277 > 0.05$ ). Thus, it can be concluded

that parental acceptance, as a mediator variable, provides complete mediation over the relationship between Islamic religiosity and future anxiety. Based on the mediation test, it can be concluded that the Hypothesis indicates the presence of an indirect effect of Islamic religiosity on future anxiety, mediated by parental acceptance, is accepted.

The outcomes of this study resonate closely with and align with the research conducted by Widiastuti and Yuniarti (2017) , revealing that self-acceptance plays a mediating role in the relationship between religiosity and anxiety among individuals with type 2 diabetes. Additionally, other studies not only corroborate but also strengthen these findings, suggesting that self-acceptance serves as a mediator in the relationship between religiosity and anxiety in patients facing chronic illnesses such as cancer, tumours, heart diseases, diabetes, bronchitis, and other life-threatening conditions (Setiawati et al., 2019).

Figure 1 also provides an overview of information regarding direct effects, indirect effects, and total effects: Direct effect (path c') of Islamic religiosity on future anxiety is -0.094, indirect effect (path abx) of Islamic religiosity on future anxiety is  $0.217 \times -0.430 = -0.093$ , and total effect (path c = c' + ab) on future anxiety is  $-0.094 + -0.093 = -0.187$ .

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, the conclusion drawn from this study is as follows: An indirect influence exists where Islamic religiosity affects future anxiety, mediated through parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs. Consequently, this research advocates for implementing targeted programs designed to promote Islamic religiosity and foster parental acceptance. These initiatives offer a strategic approach to mitigating the enduring impacts of future anxiety within this demographic.

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