The Relationship between Teaching Quality of Religious Teachers and Students' Religious Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study has been to study the relationship between teaching quality of religious teachers and students’ religious behavior in 2014. Research methodology has been applied and descriptive-correlational in terms of purpose and data collection respectively. In this study, the statistical population included all the fourth grade teachers of elementary schools in Tehran amounting to 432 persons, out of which a sample size of 328 persons was selected based on Morgan’s table and through stratified random sampling. The data was collected by using a 27-item researcher-made questionnaire. In order to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach’s alpha was adopted and the obtained coefficient was 0.89. Besides, in order to measure the validity, content-related validity was adopted; and the questionnaires were approved of by the related experts. Analysis of the data obtained from questionnaires was carried out through one-sample t-test and correlation test by using SPSS software. The findings indicated that there is a significant relationship between religious education syllabus content, quality of teaching methods, arranging religious programs in school and religious education syllabus duration, appropriate manners of expression and teachers’ personality, and students’ religious behaviors.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 21 September 2014
Received in revised form 4 December 2014
Accepted 14 December 2014
Available online 2 January 2015

Keywords:
teaching quality, religious teachers, religious behaviors, religious education syllabus

INTRODUCTION

One of the basic factors for advancement in every society is its educational system. Educational quality clarifies future developments of every society. The subject of quality in educational system is considered to be one of the main and critical pillars, which greatly affects the country’s fate in a direct manner. It is because quality can be expressed as a combination of efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and ability to innovate and educational status. So development of every country depends on its capability and pace of that country’s educational system. Today, quality improvement in education has become necessary such as in other fields including industry and health care, because it determines the performance of educational system in society, and since the effective performance of educational organizations forms the performance basis of a society and nation; therefore, quality improvement in education is considered one of the important indices in the improvement educational organizations’ improvement [12].

Therefore, the role of education is to provide the conditions for growth and revealing human tendencies and it continues throughout the human life. Education is a goal-based process. Thus quality of education is definable based on the following goals:

Excellence in education [20], increasing the value of education, added value in education [7], harmony of educational outcomes with planned goals, characteristics, features and requirements, preventing defects in education process [6], fulfillment or non-fulfillment of education clients’ expectations and demands [17].

On the other hand, religious behaviors are a series of human behaviors which are derived from religious acquisitions and leanings as well as the nature of seeking God and demanding religion [9]. The simplest definition for behavior is that behavior is the action performed or the word uttered by an individual; however, in psychology, behavior refers to any activity done by an organism and is observable or measurable by another
organism [27]. Besides, religion is a set of teachings and instructions originated from God and imparted to the Holy Prophet through revelation to be conveyed to the people by Him to guide people to follow them [9].

In 21st century, paying serious attention to the important matter of education is considered to be among the key and major objectives of governments; our country, Iran, is not deprived of global developments because of its interaction with surrounding environment, and given the global attitude towards subjects such as education for all, lifelong education, education for better life, particular methods are required for further covering the population in need of education or increasing the quality of education. Therefore, it should be considered that the way teachers teach can play a role in improving students’ learning. Since our society is a religious community, people could protect the dominant culture of the country from the invasion of enemies by relying on lifesaving commands of Islam; it is because the enemies intend with all their power to make people, especially students, pessimistic about the regulations of Islam by all-out invasion to rich culture of the society rooted in pure Mohammadian Islam, and to cause the most important period of education which forms during childhood to be faced with problems. Without doubt, education system has a heavy responsibility, because this entity has the responsibility to educate majority of children. In education system, religious courses are among the courses considerably emphasizing the students’ intellectual and religious aspects and these courses should be able to meet their religious and intellectual needs in terms of content; of course, a good and complete content is not sufficient alone for success, but more importantly, there should be teachers who can depict that content through an eloquent and attractive expression in the minds of the students. It is where the sensitive and critical role of teachers and paying attention to teaching quality becomes apparent [25]. Some of the previously conducted studies are as follows.

Zandvanian Naeni et al. [34] found that all the four factors of family, school, friends and the media play a significant role in students’ tendency towards doing religious practices. Nasiri et al. [16] found that 1) there is a relationship between training methods of principals, vice-principals and teachers, and the internalization of Islamic values in the students; 2) there is a relationship between lesson contents and the internalization of Islamic values in the students; 3) there is a relationship between physical environment of the school and the internalization of Islamic values in the students; 4) there is a relationship between the implementation of religious programs and the internalization of Islamic values in the students. Zangeneh [35], in a study titled “Assessment of the Students’ Attitude towards Prayer and Studying factors Affecting it”, found that students’ attitude towards prayer and religious practices is very important in order to know their degree of commitment to and following religious practices and rituals, and students’ attitude towards prayer determines their reactions to prayer. Bahrami [4] found that there is a significant difference between tendency towards prayer among girls and boys; besides, junior high school female students’ tendency towards prayer was stronger than boys; and finally, existence of prayer room in the school and its appropriate facilities as well as the importance of parents’ role in tendency towards prayer are among the other effective factors. Alavi [1] found that students’ religious behavior has a desirable state. Baghestani [3] found that religious lessons’ and Quran’s content appropriate to educational and religious needs of the students as well as the content of Islamic law lessons about the students’ religious issues are effective at moderate level; and planning in organizing religious events in religious education and parents’ behavior in students’ tendency towards religious programs as well as studying religious books by the families and peers in students’ tendency towards religion are highly effective. Rymarz [22] found out that there is an absolute necessity for differentiating between the clarity of religious education and religious education textbook. Broor [5] also found that the quality of religious education curricula plays a role in estimating students’ religious behavior and has positive effect on their religious performance. Line [14] found that there is a strong relationship between individual religiosity (e.g. saying prayers) and academic performance.

Familiarity with methods and techniques of teaching and applying them assists in easy and quick achievement of educational goals [32]. Understanding of ‘general teaching methods’, ‘specific methods for each lesson’, ‘educational psychology’, developmental psychology’, ‘modern methods of evaluation’, ‘use of educational materials’ and ‘techniques for class management’ is essential and necessary for any teacher, so that the teacher can appropriately fulfill the important task he/she is responsible. Unfamiliarity with these sciences and techniques causes the teacher to unknowingly hurt his/her learners’ mental health in an irreparable manner; particularly, if we consider that any teacher is also the instructor of children and adolescents who are at his/her disposal in their best years of living and the most appropriate psychological condition, and it is the teachers who are responsible to educate and train them and prepare them for a prosperous life and building a advance society (Sadat, 1991). According to the changes in society, the role of education in today world is to train an individual and prepare him/her to effectively participate in life activities. In other words, education should provide the opportunity and conditions for developing general talents and abilities of the students up to maximum capacity, so that they can play their role in a changing and complex society in a desirable manner. It is evident that in such conditions, the role of education, and naturally, the role of assessment or evaluation as well as the methods of teaching to the students change.

Studying the teacher’s teaching quality is one of the most important issues which on one hand, provides a proper feedback in fundamental decision makings and analyzing educational problems for the education
officials because teachers, who are responsible for educating society’s human resources, are themselves among the important elements of educational structure and their quantitative and qualitative decline has a direct impact on their educational performance, and on the other hand, mastery of lesson content, class management and utilizing educational skills as well as possessing appropriate behaviors in the class are among the most important factors affecting teacher’s teaching process and feedback of students’ assessment can be considered the most important criterion for recognizing the impact of teaching in the classroom [8]. Therefore, here, performance of teacher in the role of executive manager of the small educational environment of the class and in the role of founder of academic thoughts and social responsibilities has the utmost function in educating future human resources and building future. Thus the researcher intends to answer whether there is a relationship between teaching quality of religious teachers and elementary students’ religious behavior from the viewpoint of teachers in Tehran.

According to the above question and using the previous studies, following research questions are posed:
1. Is there a relationship between religious education syllabus content and students’ religious behaviors?
2. Is there a relationship between quality of teaching methods and students’ religious behaviors?
3. Is there a relationship between arranging religious programs in school (such as lectures and having communal prayer) and students’ religious behavior?
4. Is there a relationship between religious education syllabus duration and students’ religious behaviors?
5. Is there a relationship between appropriate manners of expression and teachers’ personality, and students’ religious behaviors?
6. Is there a relationship between the quality of educational components of religious lessons and students’ religious behaviors?

Methodology:

The research methodology of the present study has been applied and descriptive-correlational in terms of purpose and data collection. In this study, the statistical population included all the fourth grade teachers of elementary schools in Tehran amounting to 432 persons, out of which a sample size of 328 persons was selected based on Morgan’s table and through stratified random sampling. In order to collect data, a 27-item researcher-made questionnaire has been used. In order to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach’s alpha was adopted and the obtained coefficient was 0.89 which shows that the research instrument has an acceptable reliability. Besides, in order to measure the validity, content-related validity was adopted; and the questionnaires were approved of by the related experts. In this questionnaire, 5-point Likert scale was adopted. Analysis of the data obtained from questionnaires was carried out through one-sample t-test and correlation test by using SPSS software.

Findings:

In this section, statistical tests such as one-sample t-test (for examining the status of variables) and correlation test (for testing the relationship between variables) were used. However, before administering these tests, the presumption of using them, i.e. normality of data distribution was examined through Shapiro–Wilk test (S-W) and Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (K-S), in order to ensure the normality of the data. In normality tests, in order to examine the normality, the null hypothesis stating the data distribution is not normal is examined at the confidence level of 95%. Thus the value of significance level of these tests is less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis stating the data in not normal is rejected and alternative hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, the distribution of data is normal. Statistical assumptions are arranged as follows for normality test; H0: data distribution is not normal and H1: data distribution is normal. The following table shows the K-S and S-W tests for the variables and dimensions of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S-W test statistic</th>
<th>Significance level of S-W test</th>
<th>K-S test statistic</th>
<th>Significance level of K-S test</th>
<th>Variables and components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>religious education syllabus content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.563</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>quality of teaching methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.431</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>arranging religious programs in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.244</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.503</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>religious education syllabus duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.651</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>appropriate manners of expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.603</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Religious teachers’ personality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above table, because the significance level is less than 0.05 for all the variables, it can be said with 95% confidence that the null hypothesis stating the data distribution is not normal, is rejected and alternative hypothesis stating the data distribution is normal, is confirmed.

After reviewing the normality, one-sample t-test was carried out. This test is used only for tests of the sample mean and it has been used for determining the status of statistical sample in terms of the quality of religious variables as well as students’ religious behavior in this study. For this purpose, mean score of the
variables is compared to the average value of 3. In this regard, null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis are as follows for one-sample t-tests; H0: mean score of the variable or the component has no significant difference with the assumed mean (3). H1: mean score of the variable or the component has a significant difference with the assumed mean (3). Results related to one-sample t-test for the variables and dimensions of the study are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Results of one-sample t-test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable or component</th>
<th>Test result</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>religious education syllabus content</td>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>14.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality of teaching methods</td>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>15.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arranging religious programs in school</td>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>18.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious education syllabus duration</td>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>11.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appropriate manners of expression</td>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>10.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious teachers’ personality</td>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>12.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ religious behavior</td>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>14.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above table, since t values are larger than 1.96 for all the variables and consequently, significance level is less than 0.05, null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is confirmed for all variables and dimensions. It means that at confidence interval of 95%, there is a significant difference between the mean for variables or dimensions and the assumed mean for the population (3). Lower and upper limits show the confidence interval between the mean for variables or dimensions and 3, which positive for all the variables and dimensions. In other words, from the viewpoint of the teachers answering the questions, the state of quality of the religious education syllabus content, quality of teaching methods, arranging religious program in school, religious education syllabus duration, appropriate manners of expression, religious teachers’ personality, and students’ religious behavior is above average.

After t-test, it is time to carry out correlation test in order to achieve main findings of the study. Correlation test measures the intensity and type of the relationship (direct or reverse) between two variables; and in this study, it has been carried out for the relationship between educational components of religious education and students’ religious behavior. In this regard, null and alternative hypotheses related to the correlation test are as follows; H0: educational components of religious education have no significant relationship with students’ religious behavior. H1: educational components of religious education have a significant relationship with students’ religious behavior. The following table shows the results related to correlation test for the relationship between the variables.

Table 3: Results of correlation test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test result</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>correlational relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.732</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>religious education syllabus content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>quality of teaching methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.712</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>arranging religious programs in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>religious education syllabus duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>appropriate manners of expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1 confirmed</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Religious teachers’ personality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above table, since the significance level is below error level (0.05) in all the relationships, as a result, null hypotheses are rejected at the confidence level of 95% and alternative hypotheses are confirmed. It means that the relationship between educational components of religious education and students’ religious behavior is significant from the viewpoint of the responding teachers. The positive sign of correlation coefficients in the above table also shows that there is a direct relationship between the variables, i.e. they are aligned.

Conclusion:

Since human being is inherently oriented towards religion, religious sensation intrinsically exists and should be educated and the best place for religious and ethical education is the Islamic insight classes; and authors and teachers of religious textbooks are responsible for the guidance of young generation. Thus the content of the curricula should be designed in a way that stimulate the students to think and seek truth; and it is during the discovery of such truths that the God and religion and the necessity to follow religious orders manifest for the students, and it teaches them the spirit of acceptance through reasoning. Besides, teacher as the important element in education should apply the required skills in teaching and classroom, because the development of the individuals of the society is connected to its educational system. Teachers, given the role they play in education, should be able to adopt different methods in teaching. Therefore, revising traditional teaching methods and
replacing them with modern methods in order to improve teaching quality and equip the learner with the goal of quality learning are essential. Teachers should adopt an approach which is persuasive, seeks creativity and support and facilitate learning, and finally, result in increased participation of the students in lesson contents as well as increased teaching quality of teachers [29]. Therefore, this study, given the importance of this matter, examined the relationship between teaching quality of religious teachers and students’ religious behaviours; the following discussion and conclusion is presented based on the existing research questions.

The present study indicated that there is a significant relationship between educational components of religious education courses (religious education syllabus content, quality of teaching methods, arranging religious programs in school and religious education syllabus duration, appropriate manners of expression and teachers’ personality) and students’ religious behavior. These findings were confirmed by the previously conducted studies; for example, Razavi Tousi found that generally, watching religious animations reinforces the audiences’ religious behavior, and the gender and the adolescents’ religious background play a role in this impact. Ziaedini [33], in a study titled “a Study of the teaching methods of the teachers in elementary and junior high school levels in Kerman”, concluded that their activities outside the classroom are very low and many teachers do not have a lesson plan, and there is no significant relationship between elementary schools and junior high schools. Shirshahi [31], in a study titled “a Review of High School Students’ Opinions about the Religious Values and Beliefs”, found that there is a significant relationship between girls’ and boys’ religious attitude; girls’ religious attitude has been stronger than boys’. Badl anzadeh [2] found that the role of teachers’ teaching method by using mass media and technology in teaching has an impact on students’ tendency towards religious education. Samare Rezae [30], in his study titled “a Study of the (Urban and Rural) Elementary Level Teachers’ Performance in Bam Town in Applying Teaching Methods and Teaching Aids”, concluded that elementary level teachers have only used more or less active teaching methods and some teaching aids in teaching mathematics and experimental sciences. Altogether, main activities of teachers have been based on utilizing traditional, direct, teacher-oriented methods of teaching; teaching has been carried out without utilizing teaching aids, particularly in teaching social sciences, religious education and literature. Saeedi [26] found that respecting adolescents’ personality and performing religious rituals in school as well as inviting celebrities who are loved by the adolescents to the rituals plays the major role in attracting adolescent to participation in their religious rituals. Mooney [15] found that religiosity increases students’ studying hours and decreases participation in nigh parties. And Peter AIDS found that this relationship exists through allocating appropriate time for learning different courses including religious education, and the more the time of holding religious education classes are distributed between other curricula, the more religious motivation appropriate to needs and spirit of students is fostered. Klare found that rural students who participated in church activities gained better grades in school. This study indicated that participation in church activities not only results in improvement of educational progress, but also raises social qualification and self-perception. Penholow et al. [19] found that religiosity variables, particularly much attention to religion and religious feelings, considerably predict sexual behavior. Jeynes found that high religious commitment in students has positive effects on their educational status. Park [18] indicted that young people’s religiosity has a positive and significant relationship with academic achievement. Based on the current research findings, following suggestions are proposed.

- It is suggested that religious teachers themselves participate in religious programs in the school such as joining in communal prayers, and religious lectures related to different occasions in order to raise students’ motivation.
- It is suggested that authors and planners of religious education textbooks use attractive and related topics in the content of syllabus in order to raise students’ motivation.
- It is suggested to reward the students who have had appropriate ethical and moral behaviors in addition to students who have had academic progress at the end of each month.
- It is suggested to replicate the present study in other districts and cities.

REFERENCES