

Observing Ramadan improves school performance

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Thursday, 13 April 2023

An intensive Ramadan has a positive effect on school performance in the medium run, reveals new research by the University of Cologne.

The study, conducted by Professor Erik Hornung and colleagues in Konstanz and Bern, investigated whether Ramadan affects academic performance beyond the fasting period, and whether the duration of the fast matters.

They found that students who experienced an intensive Ramadan performed on average better at subsequent international student performance tests.

This might be because the various social activities during Ramadan contribute to young people developing new social contacts and a common identity within their school class.

'We found that longer fasting hours during Ramadan positively correlate with higher attendance of religious services among adolescents. Here, students have the opportunity to connect with peers they might not otherwise interact with. Observing religious rituals can serve as a platform for social connection and community building, particularly among young people.'

PISA data from eight European countries also support the findings: in years with longer daily fasting period, young people from Muslim homes catch up faster and reduce the existing gap to other students in the PISA test more so than in years with a shorter fasting period.

The researchers note that this effect was strongest in schools with a higher share of Muslim students. They believe that the performance boost depends on whether many other young people in the immediate environment also practice Ramadan.

"We interpret this as further indication of the identity-forming effect of Ramadan, which has a positive impact on performance," says Professor Hornung.

The study was published in the Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organisation.

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For more information, a copy of the paper, or to speak with the professor, please contact Katie Hurley on khurley@bluesky-pr.com.