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Religious Coping Strategies in Overcoming Emotional Problems among Female Islamic Boarding School Students (A Case Study at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School, Gunung Sari)

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the religious coping strategies employed to address emotional problems among female students at the Al-Aziziyah Kapek Gunung Sari Islamic Boarding School in West Lombok Regency. The research employed a qualitative approach. Data collection methods included observation, interviews, and documentation. The results indicate that common emotional problems faced by female students include academic stress due to memorization demands, conflicts with peers, family issues, and difficulties adapting to the Islamic boarding school environment. To address these challenges, teachers at the Islamic boarding school employ four religious coping strategies: tahkim (educational punishment) as a form of guidance; providing educational and calming advice (mau'idzah); implementing ruqyah syar'iyyah (Islamic recitation) to assist students experiencing severe emotional disturbances; and cultivating prayer and dhikr (remembrance of God) as a spiritual approach to calm the heart and mind. The results indicate that these strategies play a significant role in helping female students manage and resolve their emotional problems religiously and constructively.

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Keywords: religious coping, female students, emotional problems.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are one of the educational institutions that play a significant role in shaping the character and spiritual values of the younger generation. Pesantren not only teach religious knowledge but also emphasize the importance of applying spiritual values in daily life (Hasanah, U., 2025). Through various programs and activities, pesantren aim to develop students (santri) who possess noble character, spiritual intelligence, and the ability to face life's challenges grounded in religious values.

However, amid the rapid development of the times and the challenges of globalization, the process of internalizing spiritual values has become increasingly complex. Santri are confronted with various pressures, both from social and economic environments, which may affect their emotional and spiritual balance. In facing these challenges, santri need effective strategies to maintain their mental and spiritual stability, one of which is through religious coping strategies for dealing with problems using a religious approach (Mujahid, I., 2021).

Religious coping refers to an individual's effort to deal with life pressures by using religious beliefs or practices as a way to reduce stress and build mental strength. For santri, religious coping strategies may include prayer, remembrance of God (dhikr), performing salah (prayer), and believing that every event is part of God's plan. This strategy plays an important role in helping santri internalize spiritual values more deeply and serves as a provision for facing future life challenges. This study aims to explore more deeply how religious coping strategies are implemented at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School. Through this approach, it is expected that effective methods can be identified to optimize the process of character building and spirituality among santri so that they are prepared to face the dynamics of modern life without losing a strong foundation of religious values.

The concept of religious coping refers to coping strategies based on individual religious beliefs and practices in dealing with stress and life difficulties (Utama, I. C., & Akbar, R. F., 2023). Religious coping has been proven effective in enhancing individuals' mental and spiritual resilience, as well as providing a moral and ethical foundation in daily decision-making and actions (Mashuri, S., Futaqi, S., & Sulhan, A., 2024).

At the level of Islamic boarding schools, santri not only learn to memorize the Qur'an and hadith but are also taught to practice Islamic values in every aspect of their lives (Sarwadi, S., & Raihan, N., 2025). This includes social relationships, leadership, and ways of dealing with conflicts

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and challenges they encounter both within the pesantren environment and in the broader community.

In daily life, individuals often face various challenges that cause stress and difficulties. These situations may arise from factors such as academic pressure, interpersonal conflicts, health problems, or changes in social and economic environments (Firmansyah, S. B., & Abidin, Z., 2024). To deal with these challenges, individuals typically rely on coping strategies, which are conscious efforts to overcome problems or reduce the impact of stress experienced.

One coping approach that has received considerable attention is religious coping. Religious coping is defined as a coping strategy based on an individual's religious beliefs and practices (Siswati, V., Abidin, Z., & Zaldi, A., 2023). This approach recognizes that religious beliefs and spiritual practices can serve as sources of strength, peace, and support in facing life's challenges. Individuals who use religious coping rely on prayer, meditation, religious rituals, and an understanding of spiritual meaning to help them cope with stress, maintain emotional balance, and improve overall quality of life.

Research in the psychology of religion has shown that religious coping can significantly contribute to individuals' psychological well-being (Husni, M., & Rohmah, E. S., 2024). This strategy not only affects psychological aspects but also social and spiritual dimensions of individuals. Religious coping facilitates a sense of meaning in life and provides a moral and ethical framework in dealing with various life situations.

In the context of religious education, religious coping also has important implications. In religious schools or Islamic boarding schools, students are not only taught religious theory but are also guided to internalize spiritual values in their daily actions. This process is part of character education aimed at shaping individuals with noble morals and virtuous character in accordance with their religious teachings.

In Indonesia, as a country with a Muslim-majority population, Islamic boarding schools hold a special role in the education and spiritual development of Muslims. Pesantren are not only places for studying the Qur'an and hadith but also institutions where santri learn religious practices, social ethics, and high moral values (Islamic, G., Ishaq, M., & Dayati, U., 2024).

In this context, research on religious coping at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School becomes relevant and beneficial. This study can provide deeper insight into how santri use their religious beliefs to cope with life's challenges, as well as how educational experiences in the pesantren environment influence the use of religion- or spirituality-based coping strategies. By understanding this process, we can identify emotional problems among santri and how strategies

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are used to overcome them, as well as provide valuable input for the development of more effective and sustainable religious education programs. Thus, research on religious coping is not only relevant in academic and psychological contexts but also has significant practical implications in strengthening the quality of education and character development in Islamic boarding schools and other religious educational institutions.

Based on observations conducted at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School, it appears that the emotional lives of female students (santriwati) are quite complex. Some experience pressures arising from various factors such as homesickness, demanding academic and religious schedules, and the dynamics of social relationships with peers. The researcher observed that some santriwati respond to these emotional pressures in different ways. Some tend to withdraw from their social environment, show signs of anxiety, or become easily irritated, while others appear calmer and are able to carry out daily activities more steadily. This phenomenon indicates the need for religious strategies used by santriwati as mechanisms to cope with the emotional pressures they face.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, which is conducted in a natural setting with the aim of interpreting phenomena through various relevant methods (Rofiah, N. H., Kawai, N., & Sudiraharja, D., 2024). Qualitative research produces descriptive data through the understanding of individuals and the environments being observed. Descriptive qualitative research aims to describe current conditions by explaining, recording, analyzing, and interpreting ongoing phenomena in order to obtain accurate information about existing situations (Emzir, 2012). Within qualitative research, there are various methods such as phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative research, and case studies (Sutton, J., & Austin, Z., 2015). Among these methods, the researcher chose a case study approach because it allows for an in-depth analysis of a particular case within a real-life context through multiple data sources such as interviews, observations, and documentation. This study focuses on describing aspects related to religious coping strategies in the internalization of spiritual values at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School.

In qualitative research, the presence of the researcher at the research site is crucial, as the researcher serves as the main instrument and data collector. The researcher interacts directly with the research subjects to obtain data related to the process of religious coping in overcoming emotional problems among students at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School. This research was

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conducted at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School, located in Gunung Sari Village, Gunungsari District, West Lombok Regency, as the site for collecting relevant data.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data are obtained directly from research subjects through observation and interview techniques (Wa-Mbaleka, S., 2019). The primary subjects include female teachers (ustadzah), administrators, and female students (santriwati), with participants consisting of four santriwati, two administrators, and two ustadzah at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School. Meanwhile, secondary data are obtained from existing sources such as books, journals, reports, and other relevant materials that support the validity of the research.

The data collection procedures in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is carried out by directly examining the conditions of the boarding school, student activities, and the process of religious coping in dealing with emotional problems. The researcher uses participant observation by engaging in various student activities. Interviews are conducted using a semi-structured format, allowing flexibility in asking questions while still following an interview guide. Interviews are conducted with teachers, caregivers, students, and other relevant parties to obtain in-depth information about religious coping strategies. Documentation is also used to collect data in the form of records, photos, and other documents related to the research subjects and activities.

The data analysis technique in this study follows the model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation involves simplifying, classifying, and selecting relevant data from interviews, observations, and documentation. The data are then presented in a narrative form to facilitate understanding. The final stage is drawing conclusions or verification, where initial conclusions may change if new evidence is found, but will be considered credible if supported by valid data (Moser, A., & Korstjens, I., 2018).

To ensure data validity, this study applies credibility testing through increased persistence and triangulation. Increased persistence is achieved through careful and continuous observation to ensure accurate and systematic data. Triangulation is conducted in three ways: source triangulation by comparing data from different informants, technique triangulation by using different data collection methods such as observation, interviews, and documentation, and time triangulation by collecting data at different times to ensure consistency and accuracy. Through these techniques, the findings on religious coping strategies in the internalization of spiritual values at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School are expected to be credible and reliable.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Emotional Problems Faced by Female Students at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School

Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School in Gunung Sari is an educational institution that integrates religious and general knowledge with an emphasis on character building, discipline, and spiritual values among female students (santriwati). Although this educational system aims to shape better individuals, in practice the strict structure and high demands also give rise to various emotional problems among the students. These problems are influenced by both internal and external factors, including academic demands, social relationships, family conditions, and difficulties in adapting to the boarding school environment. In addressing these conditions, the boarding school management has implemented various educational and spiritual approaches such as *tahkim* (educational punishment), personal counseling, *ruqyah syar'iyyah*, and the habituation of prayer and *dhikr*, which emphasize not only discipline but also empathy, spiritual strengthening, and mental resilience among the students.

One of the most dominant emotional problems is academic stress related to the demands of memorizing the Qur'an and other religious texts. The high memorization targets that must be achieved within a limited time frame cause students to experience physical fatigue and mental pressure. They often sacrifice their rest time after school activities to meet memorization targets, leading to feelings of anxiety, fear of not meeting expectations, and emotional exhaustion. This condition reflects an imbalance between academic demands and the physical and psychological capacities of the students. The pressure also triggers academic anxiety, which negatively affects concentration and overall psychological well-being. Observations further confirm that the requirement to submit daily memorization becomes a major source of fatigue, boredom, and stress, even causing some students to neglect their school assignments and feel that memorization targets should be adjusted to avoid negative impacts on mental health (Almusaed, A., Almssad, A., & Yitmen, I. 2025).

In addition, social conflict among peers is another significant factor affecting the emotional condition of the students. The intensive interaction within the boarding school environment, where students live closely together with limited personal space, often leads to conflicts arising from differences in opinions, misunderstandings, and dissatisfaction with others' behavior. Conflicts that initially appear minor such as disagreements over shared tasks, queuing for facilities, or ineffective communication—can develop into prolonged tension. As a result, relationships among students may become strained, leading to discomfort, awkwardness, feelings of isolation, and overthinking. Observations indicate that conflicts frequently occur in daily activities such as

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queuing for meals, using shared facilities, and dividing responsibilities, which, if not properly managed, can reduce self-confidence and increase emotional pressure. This suggests that high levels of social interaction, without adequate communication skills, can contribute to emotional disturbances (Chand, S. P., 2025).

Emotional problems also largely stem from family-related factors, particularly feelings of homesickness, lack of communication, and limited parental attention. Students who rarely receive news or visits from their families tend to experience loneliness, sadness, and a lack of emotional support. This condition is often intensified when they compare themselves to peers who receive more attention from their families. Consequently, feelings of being unimportant, unvalued, and a tendency to suppress emotions may arise, leading to emotional stress. Observations show that the lack of family support contributes to decreased learning motivation, emotional instability, and increased vulnerability to psychological pressure. This highlights the crucial role of family support in maintaining the emotional well-being of students during their time in the boarding school (Ranney, M. L., et al., 2015).

Furthermore, difficulties in adapting to the boarding school environment also constitute a major source of emotional problems, particularly for new students. The transition from home life to a highly regulated environment with strict schedules and limited personal space often results in feelings of anxiety, confusion, fear, and alienation. Adaptation challenges include difficulties in building social relationships with new peers, discomfort in using shared facilities such as overcrowded bathrooms, and fear when having to carry out activities alone, especially at night. These conditions lead some students to feel lonely, reluctant to interact, withdrawn, and even develop a desire to return home. Observational findings indicate that this adaptation process creates considerable emotional pressure, largely due to the lack of a sense of security, social closeness, and the ability to adjust to a new environment (Lim, W. M., 2025).

Overall, it can be concluded that the emotional problems experienced by santriwati at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School include academic stress, peer social conflict, family-related issues, and adaptation difficulties. These four factors are interconnected and represent the primary sources of emotional pressure among the students. Therefore, effective intervention strategies are needed that not only emphasize discipline but also address psychological and spiritual aspects, enabling students to manage their emotions in a healthy way and achieve mental well-being throughout their educational experience in the boarding school.

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Religious Coping Strategies Implemented to Address the Emotional Problems of Female Students at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School

Religious coping strategies, or faith-based approaches to dealing with psychological pressure and emotional problems, represent a spiritual method used to help individuals manage emotional distress, particularly within the boarding school environment where religious values serve as the foundation of daily life. At Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School in Gunung Sari, these strategies are systematically implemented by caregivers and teachers to maintain the emotional stability of female students (santriwati), who are vulnerable to mental pressure arising from academic, social, and personal demands. Based on interviews and observations, several main strategies are applied, including *tahkim* (educational punishment), the provision of advice (*mau'idzhah*), *ruqyah syar'iyyah*, and the habituation of prayer and remembrance (dhikr). Tahkim is applied as an initial step in addressing deviant behavior resulting from emotional disturbances, such as rule violations, lack of discipline, or peer conflict. This approach does not involve harsh punishment, but rather educational sanctions such as additional memorization tasks or cleaning duties, aimed at fostering responsibility and self-awareness. The process begins with dialogue to understand the underlying causes of the student's behavior and ends with constructive advice, enabling students not only to recognize their mistakes but also to be motivated to improve themselves. This humanistic approach emphasizes empathy, emotional connection, and the provision of a safe space for students to express their feelings, resulting in more sustainable behavioral change (Bazen, A., Barg, F. K., & Takeshita, J., 2021).

In addition, the provision of advice (*mau'idzhah*) is an important strategy carried out in a personal, gentle, and empathetic manner. Caregivers approach students individually without judgment, creating a comfortable and open communication environment where students feel valued and heard. The advice given not only addresses emotional issues but also strengthens spiritual awareness by reminding students of God's presence, the importance of patience, and the meaning of life's trials. This approach has proven effective in calming emotions, reducing anxiety, and increasing motivation, as students are able to view their problems from a broader and more religious perspective. Furthermore, *ruqyah syar'iyyah* is used as a specific strategy to address emotional disturbances that are suspected to be related to non-physical or spiritual factors. Its implementation is selective and begins with a careful identification process to distinguish between ordinary psychological issues and spiritual disturbances. When signs such as excessive fear, sleep disturbances, or unusual behavior are observed, students may undergo ruqyah through the recitation of Qur'anic verses such as Al-Baqarah, Al-Ikhlas, Al-Falaq, and An-Naas, along with

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protective prayers, conducted in a safe and supportive environment. This approach demonstrates that the boarding school pays attention not only to formal education but also to holistic spiritual recovery while maintaining caution and adherence to authentic Islamic teachings (Amiati, S., Witono, H., & Asrin, A., 2022; Amin, S. M., et al., 2022).

Moreover, the habituation of prayer and dhikr represents the most fundamental strategy and is practiced routinely in the daily lives of students, both individually and collectively. These practices function not only as acts of worship but also as effective spiritual therapy in maintaining emotional stability. Prayer and dhikr help calm the heart, reduce anxiety, and create a sense of peace and closeness to God. In practice, students are encouraged to engage in remembrance after prayers, recite protective supplications, and read specific chapters of the Qur'an when experiencing stress or difficulty sleeping. This habituation creates a balance between spiritual and emotional needs and serves as a means of self-reflection that helps students manage mental pressure more effectively. Overall, the implementation of religious coping strategies at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School reflects a holistic and integrative approach focused on spiritual strengthening, which not only addresses emotional problems in the short term but also builds long-term mental and spiritual resilience among the students.

Independent Coping Strategies of Students

Independent coping strategies among students represent personal efforts undertaken by female students (santriwati) to manage emotional challenges they experience while living in the boarding school environment. One of the most prominent strategies is Islamic self-talk, which refers to an internal dialogue used to calm oneself, build motivation, and maintain emotional stability. In facing pressures such as memorization demands, social conflicts, or self-doubt, students tend to engage in positive inner conversations that reinforce patience, effort, and trust in the process. This form of self-regulation helps reduce anxiety, prevent panic, and improve focus, particularly during demanding academic activities like Qur'an memorization. Observations indicate that students who consistently practice positive self-talk appear calmer, more confident, and better able to persist through difficulties.

Another important coping strategy is the practice of *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness) and *muhasabah* (self-reflection). These practices function as emotional regulation tools, especially when students encounter interpersonal conflicts or emotional distress. By reciting *istighfar*, students are able to soothe their emotions and prevent impulsive reactions, while *muhasabah* encourages them to reflect on their own behavior, fostering self-awareness and personal growth.

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This combination enables them to resolve conflicts more peacefully and maintain healthier social relationships. Field observations further show that when conflicts arise, students often choose to withdraw momentarily, engage in remembrance of God, and return with a calmer and more constructive approach to problem-solving (Aji, Y. A., et al., 2025).

In addition, increasing acts of worship serves as both an emotional coping mechanism and an expression of *birrul walidain* (devotion to parents). For many students, feelings of homesickness and emotional strain are managed by intensifying spiritual practices such as performing additional prayers, reciting the Qur'an, and offering prayers for their parents. This not only provides emotional comfort but also strengthens their sense of purpose, as they believe their عبادah contributes to the well-being of their parents. Observations reveal that students experiencing emotional distress tend to engage more frequently in these spiritual activities, which helps them feel closer to their families despite physical distance and enhances their emotional resilience (Azizi, M. A., et al., 2025; Tongat, T., Nasution, W. N., & Siahaan, A., 2023).

Finally, seeking a positive environment within the boarding school is a crucial coping strategy, particularly for students who struggle with adaptation. Building supportive friendships and joining constructive social or religious groups such as study circles, Qur'anic recitation groups, or religious discussions helps students feel accepted, motivated, and emotionally secure. A positive peer environment fosters mutual support, encouragement, and a sense of belonging. Observational findings show that students who actively engage in such environments adapt more quickly, demonstrate greater emotional stability, and exhibit stronger academic motivation. In contrast, those who lack supportive social connections tend to feel isolated and face greater challenges in adjusting. Therefore, a positive and supportive environment plays a significant role in enhancing both emotional well-being and overall development of the students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the emotional challenges faced by female students at Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School are shaped by a combination of academic pressures, social dynamics, family-related issues, and difficulties in adapting to the boarding school environment. These challenges often manifest as stress, anxiety, loneliness, and emotional instability. To address these issues, the boarding school implements structured religious coping strategies such as educational punishment (tahkim), personal advice (mau'idzah), ruqyah syar'iyyah, and the habituation of prayer and remembrance (dzikir), all of which emphasize empathy, spiritual strengthening, and character development. In addition, students actively engage in independent coping strategies,

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including positive Islamic self-talk, practicing istighfar and self-reflection, increasing acts of worship as a form of devotion to their parents, and seeking supportive social environments. The integration of institutional and personal coping mechanisms demonstrates that emotional well-being among students can be effectively managed through a holistic approach that combines discipline, spirituality, and social support, ultimately helping them develop resilience and maintain psychological stability in a demanding educational setting.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research on emotional problems and coping strategies among female students in Islamic boarding schools, particularly at Al-Aziziyah, should move beyond descriptive analysis toward a more integrative approach that connects psychological conditions with practical interventions and measurable outcomes. Subsequent studies are encouraged to examine how religious coping strategies such as tahkim, mau'idzah, ruqyah syar'iyyah, and the habituation of prayer and dhikr are internalized by students and how effectively they contribute to long-term emotional stability and mental well-being. This is important to bridge the gap between institutional practices and the actual emotional experiences of students in daily boarding school life.

Furthermore, future studies should adopt an interdisciplinary framework by combining perspectives from psychology, education, and Islamic studies. Such an approach would enable researchers to develop a more comprehensive model explaining the relationship between religious coping mechanisms and emotional resilience among students. The development of measurable indicators related to emotional well-being, spiritual intelligence, and adaptive coping based on Islamic values could significantly contribute to the advancement of research in Islamic educational psychology.

In addition, further research should explore various internal and external factors influencing the effectiveness of coping strategies. These may include levels of religiosity, social support systems, personality traits, family background, and the intensity of academic demands. The role of peer relationships and institutional culture should also be examined more deeply, as these factors play a crucial role in shaping students' emotional responses and coping behaviors.

From a methodological perspective, future research is recommended to employ more diverse approaches, such as mixed methods, experimental designs, or longitudinal studies, to complement the predominantly qualitative nature of this study. Field-based research involving psychological assessments or intervention-based studies could provide more robust and dynamic

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insights into how coping strategies evolve over time and impact students' emotional development.

Ultimately, future research is expected to strengthen the role of Islamic boarding schools not only as educational institutions but also as supportive environments for fostering emotional resilience, mental well-being, and spiritual growth. By integrating religious values with psychological approaches, pesantren can serve as a model for holistic education that addresses both the intellectual and emotional needs of students in facing contemporary challenges.

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