

# Understanding Coping Strategies in Islamic Boarding School Adolescents: Literature Review

Shafira Aurellia Indaryanto Putri<sup>1</sup>, Novi Qonitatin<sup>2</sup>

{[shafiraaurellia98@students.undip.ac.id](mailto:shafiraaurellia98@students.undip.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>, [noviqonitatin@lecturer.undip.ac.id](mailto:noviqonitatin@lecturer.undip.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>}

Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia <sup>1, 2</sup>

**Abstract.** Adolescents in pesantren face unique stressors, and understanding how they cope with these challenges is crucial for developing targeted psychological support programs to improve their well-being. The purpose of this scoping review is to synthesize existing research on stress and coping strategies among adolescents in Islamic boarding schools, identify research gaps, and map emerging patterns or trends that may inform future studies and interventions. This study employed a scoping review methodology, analyzing ten relevant research articles through predefined keywords on Google Scholar. The review found that students experience stress from academic demands, strict rules, and social pressures. Most use emotion focused coping strategies, such as religiosity and social support, while some use problem focused coping. This study highlights the coping strategies used by adolescents in Islamic boarding schools, emphasizing the role of religious practices in managing stress. Future research should explore the long-term effectiveness of these strategies and the impact of institutional support on enhancing student well-being.

**Keywords:** coping stress, adolescents, islamic boarding school

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, with over 244,41 million adherents of Islam in 2024 [1]. This demographic reality is deeply reflected in the country's education system, where religious-based institutions play a significant role in shaping the character and development of the younger generation [2]. Among these institutions, *pondok pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) hold a prominent and historical place in providing not only religious education but also moral and social values that are considered essential in Indonesian society [3,4].

Recently, data from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama RI) reported more than 36,000 *pesantren* [5] operating across the archipelago, accommodating over 5 million students (*santri*) [6]. These institutions, spread throughout urban and rural areas, offer a unique living-learning environment where students many of whom are adolescents reside in dormitories under the close supervision of religious teachers (*kiai* or *ustadz*), follow strict daily routines, and adhere to religious obligations as an integral part of their education [7].

Adolescence is a critical developmental period marked by significant physical, emotional, and social changes [8]. During this stage, individuals are highly vulnerable to stress due to academic demands, identity formation, peer relationships, and family expectations [9]. For adolescents who reside in Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, these stressors may be

compounded by the unique living environment, strict daily routines, and religious obligations that distinguish pesantren life from conventional schooling systems [10,11].

At the same time, they must adapt to the demanding life within a boarding school environment, which includes separation from family, reduced personal freedom, structured activities from dawn until night, and high expectations both academically and religiously [12,13]. These conditions can present significant psychological challenges. Studies in Indonesia have shown that pesantren adolescents often report moderate to high levels of stress due to homesickness, academic and religious pressures, interpersonal conflicts, and the overall rigidity of their environment [14].

If not addressed adequately, such stress can lead to negative psychological outcomes, including anxiety, depression, fatigue, reduced academic motivation, and social withdrawal [15,16]. These issues not only affect students' academic achievement but also their overall well-being and long-term development [17,18]. Therefore, understanding how adolescents in pesantren cope with stress becomes essential. Coping refers to the mental and behavioral efforts employed to handle both internal and external sources of stress [19]. These strategies may vary significantly depending on personal traits, social support, religious beliefs, and environmental factors specific to *pesantren* life [20,21].

This article is a literature review that aims to gather and synthesize existing research related to stress and coping strategies among adolescents living in Islamic boarding schools. By identifying common coping patterns, examining their effectiveness, and exploring culturally and religiously contextual factors, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of psychological resilience in pesantren adolescents. Ultimately, the findings are expected to contribute to the development of psychological support and intervention programs that are responsive to the needs of adolescents in religious boarding school environments in Indonesia. Despite the growing number of studies on adolescent stress and coping in pesantren environments, there remains a lack of synthesis regarding how these findings relate to each other, the consistency of outcomes across studies, and the extent to which religious coping strategies are integrated. This review is needed to systematically map the findings, identify consistencies and variations, and clarify research gaps—particularly in the operationalization of religious coping strategies.

## **2. Literature Review**

Stress is a natural response experienced by individuals when faced with demands that exceed their coping resources. To manage stress effectively, individuals often utilize coping strategies psychological and behavioral techniques aimed at reducing the adverse effects of stress [22]. Coping is broadly defined as the mental and behavioral efforts employed to manage internal and external stressors [23].

According to Cardile et al. [24] coping strategies involve improving one's coping skills through processes such as mastery, reduction, and minimization of stress via both psychological and behavioral means. These strategies are not only reactive but can also serve preventive functions by preparing individuals to face future stressors more effectively [25].

Lazarus described one of the most influential figures in coping research, conceptualized coping as a dynamic and situational process that includes both problem solving efforts and emotion regulation strategies [26]. He described coping as the most realistic and simplest form

of problem-solving, involving active management of thoughts and behaviors in order to overcome or adapt to stress-inducing situations. Coping, therefore, includes both cognitive and behavioral components and functions to help individuals endure or mitigate pressures whether real or perceived [22].

Lazarus and Folkman proposed two major types of coping [27] namely (1) problem focused coping, which aims to deal directly with the source of stress by changing the situation or one's interaction with it, and (2) emotion focused coping, which is aimed at managing the emotional response to the stressor, particularly when the source of stress is beyond the individual's control.

The effectiveness of coping strategies depends on several factors, such as personality traits, the nature and intensity of the stressor, and the social and cultural context [28]. Inappropriate selection of coping strategies where the chosen method does not fit the nature of the stressor can lead to ineffective stress management, and may even result in additional psychological problems [29]. In the context of adolescents, especially those living in highly structured environments like Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), coping becomes a critical skill that supports both psychological well-being and academic success.

### 3. Methods

This study employed a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria to guide the selection of articles for review. The inclusion criteria consisted of the following: (1) the article discusses the concept of students or santri in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*); (2) the article provides an explanation of stress coping strategies within the *pesantren* context; (3) the article contains complete sections, including abstract, methodology, results, and discussion; and (4) the article was published within the time frame of 2023 to 2025. The screening process followed four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. From an initial pool of 47 articles, 28 were removed due to duplication or irrelevance. After applying inclusion criteria, only 10 full-text articles met all the requirements and were included in the final synthesis. Thematic synthesis was used to analyze the extracted data from each article.

Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria comprised the following: (1) student theses or undergraduate final projects (non-peer-reviewed scientific publications) and (2) the article is incomplete or lacks essential structural components.

The literature search was conducted using Google Scholar as the primary database. Keywords used for the search included "*santri*", "*strategi coping*", and "*pondok pesantren*". Articles retrieved from the database were first screened to avoid duplication by identifying and removing those with identical titles. The selected articles were then further filtered based on the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Articles that presented only abstracts without full text were excluded from the analysis.

Following this filtering process, the remaining articles were subjected to data extraction. The extracted data were organized in a table that included information such as the author(s) of the article, the year of publication, the aim of the study, the research methodology used, and the main findings. This process allowed for a structured synthesis of the literature on stress coping strategies among adolescents in Islamic boarding schools.

## 4. Result

This study is a literature review in the form of a narrative review. The articles were retrieved from the Google Scholar database. The selected articles were written in Indonesian and published between the years 2023 and 2025. The keywords used in the article search were "santri", "coping strategies", and "pondok pesantren". In total, 10 articles were included in this review. From these articles, information was extracted for analysis, including the title of the literature, year of publication, research subjects, research design, and findings. The extracted data were then analyzed for their relevance to the review topic, followed by conclusions and suggestions based on the analysis of the ten previous studies that aligned with the issues discussed in this literature review. These 10 articles were identified through a systematic search process, where articles were filtered using inclusion and exclusion criteria, and further selected based on full-text availability and relevance to the topic of adolescent stress and coping in pesantren settings.

Table 1. Extraction findings article

No.	Author's	Year	Purpose	Method	Result
1	Aisyah Putri, Nina, dan Susaldi	2025	to determine the relationship between coping strategies, social support, religiosity and anxiety levels in facing exams in class 9 of SMP Pondok Pesantren Cendekia Amanah Depok.	The research employed a quantitative design using a correlational method and a cross-sectional approach. A total sampling technique was used, involving 30 respondents from SMP Pondok Pesantren Cendekia Amanah, Depok. Following the proposal defense in October 2024, data collection was conducted on January 22, 2025.	The results of the study indicate that coping strategies (p-value = 0.000), social support (p-value = 0.000), and religiosity (p-value = 0.000) all have p-values < 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between coping strategies, social support, and religiosity with the level of anxiety in facing exams among 9th-grade students at SMP Pondok Pesantren Cendekia Amanah Depok.
2	Alwi Mahardhika Sodik, Mochamad Widjanarko, Suharsono	2023	This study aims to examine the origins of stress and elucidate coping mechanisms employed by	This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews involving four santri in Kudus. Data were collected through observation,	Findings reveal that stress arises from three sources: internal factors, familial influences,

			students experiencing monotony and pressure in Islamic boarding schools.	interviews, and documentation. The interviews explored motivations, challenges, and coping strategies in memorizing the Qur'an. Data were analyzed through categorization and interpreted using Lazarus and Folkman's coping theory, with validity ensured through triangulation and member checks.	and environmental pressures. The coping strategies implemented by the subjects involve regulating interactions between individuals and the environment through problem-solving, decision-making, and direct actions.
3	Putri Syarifah, Ira Darmawanti	2023	The purpose of this research is to get an overview of the coping strategies used by students at Islamic Boarding School X.	The research method used is a qualitative research method using a case study approach. The participants in this study were 4 students who memorized the Al-Qur'an as well. Data was collected using a semi-structured interview technique to participants and SO (Significant Other). The data analysis technique in this study uses thematic data analysis. The test used for the validity of the data in this study is triangulation of sources and using reference materials.	The study found that all four participants used both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping involved repeating readings when memorization was difficult. Emotion-focused coping varied among individuals, including calming down, withdrawing, staying silent, sharing with others, and praying to Allah SWT for peace and help.
4	Rina Priarni, Ayep Rosidi, & Serani Dara Listya	2024	This study seeks to explore and explain in depth the application of stress coping strategies as a means to address bullying behavior among children at the	This study adopts a qualitative approach. Data were gathered through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The collected data were then interpreted to derive meaning, from which conclusions were	The findings of the study indicate that the application of stress coping strategies at Al-Hikmah Gedanganak Islamic Boarding

			Al-Hikmah Gedang Islamic Boarding School in Ungaran.	formulated.	School primarily involves emotion- focused coping techniques, such as self-control, seeking social support, positive reinterpretation, acceptance, and denial.
5	Yanti Asmarani, Ros Mayasari, Aulia Afriany, Khairunnisa Syamsu	2024	This study aims to explore the stress dynamics experienced by new students at Pondok Pesantren Modern Al- Ikhlas Labunti.	A qualitative approach was employed using narrative inquiry to understand the personal experiences of students in depth.	New students at Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Ikhlas Labunti experience stress due to frustration, difficulty adapting, and challenging physical and social environments. Symptoms include physical discomfort, emotional distress, and behavioral changes. Their coping strategies mainly involve emotion-focused coping, positive reappraisal, and accepting responsibility.
6	Sri Ratnawati	2024	To describe the stress coping strategies of students who successfully completed their education.	Quantitative descriptive study with 63 second-grade high school students as the sample.	Students used both emotion- and problem-focused coping; confrontational coping was the most commonly used strategy.
7	Nurul Izah,	2023	This study aims	Using a qualitative	To cope, students

	Dewi Khurun Aini, Baidi Bukhori	to describe the stress and coping strategies of female students at the Tahfidzul Qur'an Putri Islamic Boarding School in Semarang.	phenomenological method with Amadeo Giorgi's analysis, participants were selected purposively—female residents aged 18–25.	use both emotion-focused strategies (such as reading the Qur'an, listening to murottal, and engaging in spiritual practices) and problem-focused strategies (such as tahajjud prayer, seeking advice from ustadzah, and managing time wisely by reducing distractions like social media).
8	Anisa Aulia, 2024 Priyadi Nugraha Prabamurti, & Aditya Kusumawati	The study aimed to analyze the coping behaviors of female tahfiz students who face stress from balancing their Quran memorization with college responsibilities.	This research utilized a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design, involving 60 female tahfiz students selected through total sampling.	The study found that age ( $p = 0.036$ ) was associated with emotion-focused coping behaviors but not with problem-focused coping. Other factors, including college major, knowledge, attitudes, facilities, access to information, and support from close individuals, did not significantly relate to coping behaviors. The study suggests that Islamic boarding schools reconsider the minimum age

					requirement for tahfiz programs and implement mental health promotion efforts in collaboration with health and educational institutions.
9	Finanin Nur Indana, Husnun Halimah	2024	The purpose of this study was to examine the stress coping strategies used by female santri at the Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo boarding school.	This research employed a descriptive quantitative approach. The study's population consisted of santri aged from adolescence to adulthood, with a sample size of 140 out of 216 students selected using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique.	The study found that 72.9% of santri used emotion-focused coping, while 66.4% used problem-focused coping. There was a significant difference in coping behaviors between adolescent and adult students ( $p = 0.033$ ). The study concluded that effective coping strategies can reduce stress levels.
10	Aisyatin Kamila, Faidatul Hasanah	2023	This study aims to identify and describe the psychological problems faced by students in the language dormitories at Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School, Sukorejo	A qualitative approach was used, involving 7 students who had been in the dormitory for at least 2 years, aged 17 and over. Data was collected through observation and interviews.	The students primarily used emotion-focused coping strategies, often diverting their problems and stressors by creating new issues to manage them.



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Based on Table 1, it is shown that among the 10 reviewed research articles, 4 articles (40%) were published in 2023, 5 articles (50%) in 2024, and 1 article (10%) in 2025. Regarding research methods, 7 articles (70%) employed a qualitative approach, while the remaining 3 articles (30%) used a quantitative research approach. Based on the study by Putri, Nina, and Susaldi [30], there is a significant relationship between coping strategies, social support, and religiosity with exam anxiety among 9th-grade students at SMP Pondok Pesantren Cendekia Amanah Depok ( $p < 0.05$ ). Based on the study by Sodik, Widjanarko, and Suharsono [31], stress among santri originates from internal, family, and environmental factors. Coping strategies involve problem solving, decision-making, and direct actions, as explained through Lazarus and Folkman's coping theory. Based on the study by Syarifah and Darmawanti [32], students at Islamic Boarding School X used both problem focused and emotion focused coping. Problem focused coping involved repeating Qur'anic recitations, while emotion-focused coping included calming down, withdrawing, sharing with others, and praying to Allah SWT. Based on the study by Priarni et al [33], stress coping strategies among children at Al-Hikmah Gedang Islamic Boarding School primarily involve emotion focused coping, including self control, seeking social support, positive reinterpretation, acceptance, and denial. Based on the study by Yanti Asmarani et al [34], new students at Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Ikhlash Labunti experience stress due to adaptation challenges and environmental pressures. Their coping strategies predominantly involve emotion-focused coping, positive reappraisal, and accepting responsibility. Ratnawati [35] found that students who successfully completed their education used both emotion and problem focused coping strategies, with confrontational coping being the most commonly used method. Izah et al [36] found that female students at the Tahfidzul Qur'an Putri Islamic Boarding School in Semarang cope with stress using both emotion focused strategies (e.g., reading the Qur'an, listening to murottal, spiritual practices) and problem-focused strategies (e.g., tahajjud prayer, seeking advice from ustadzah, time management). Aulia et al [37] found that age was significantly associated with emotion focused coping behaviors among female tahfiz students balancing Quran memorization and college responsibilities, while other factors like major, knowledge, and social support showed no significant relation. Indana & Halimah [38] found that female santri at the Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo boarding school predominantly used emotion focused (72.9%) and problem focused (66.4%) coping strategies, with significant differences in coping between adolescents and adults ( $p = 0.033$ ). Kamila & Hasanah [39] found that students in the language dormitories at Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School primarily used emotion-focused coping strategies, often managing stress by diverting problems or creating new ones as a form of distraction. Islamic boarding schools are characterized by their full-time residential system, spiritual-based curriculum, and discipline-focused routines. Students are expected to memorize the Qur'an, participate in religious rituals, and adhere to a highly structured environment guided by Islamic values and teachings.

## 5. Discussion

### Causes of stress

Based on the findings from the ten reviewed articles, the discussion regarding the causes of stress among students in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) reveals that academic demands and social environmental factors are the primary stressors.

Several studies, such as those by Ratnawati [35] and Sodiq [31], highlight strict regulations and high academic pressure as the main contributors to stress. This is supported by the findings of Putri et al [30], Kamila & Hasanah [39], and Izah et al [36], which point to heavy Qur'an memorization loads, numerous school subjects, and difficulty in adapting as significant stressors for students.

Additionally, environmental discomfort also contributes to stress, as mentioned by Asmarani et al [34], where unclean surroundings and poor adaptation were stress-inducing factors. Bullying was also identified as a cause of stress in the study by Priarni et al [33].

In responding to these stressors, most students tended to use emotion focused coping strategies, such as increasing religiosity, being patient, praying, reading the Qur'an, and seeking social support. Problem focused coping strategies, such as reviewing memorization or seeking help from peers, were used less frequently. Interestingly, problem-focused strategies were more actively employed in contexts of higher stress or dual academic demands (e.g., Qur'an memorization alongside college obligations), as seen in the studies by Syarifah & Darmawanti [32] and Izah et al [36].

In conclusion, the main sources of stress for *pesantren* students stem from internal institutional pressures and the dual roles they must fulfill as students and Qur'an memorizers, and these stressors are predominantly addressed through spiritual and emotional coping mechanisms rather than direct problem solving approaches.

### Coping stress used by *santri*

The findings of the reviewed studies indicate that emotion focused coping strategies are the most commonly used by students in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to manage stress. These strategies include religious practices (e.g., praying, reading the Qur'an, listening to murottal, performing tahajjud), emotional regulation, patience, and seeking social support from friends, ustadzah, or family members. Such approaches are deeply rooted in the religious and cultural context of the *pesantren* environment, where spiritual activities are integral to daily life.

Emotion focused coping was particularly dominant in studies by Asmarani et al [34], Putri et al [30], Kamila & Hasanah [39], and Indana & Halimah [38], who found that students tended to turn inward or upward (toward God) when faced with stressors related to academic pressure, adaptation difficulties, and environmental discomfort. Even in cases of bullying, as noted by Priarni et al [33], emotional coping was the preferred strategy.

On the other hand, problem focused coping was used less frequently but emerged in certain contexts especially when students were actively seeking solutions to specific challenges, such as managing study schedules or improving memorization outcomes. For example, Syarifah &

Darmawanti [32] and Izah et al [36] reported that some students managed stress by continuing their memorization routines or seeking practical help from peers.

One study by Ratnawati [35] identified confrontive coping as a dominant strategy, which involves facing stressors directly with assertive actions. This suggests that while emotional coping dominates, some students also develop more active strategies depending on personal characteristics or situational demands.

Overall, the studies reveal that pesantren students rely more heavily on emotion-focused coping, especially those involving religious and spiritual practices, reflecting the influence of their unique educational and cultural environment. However, the combination of both emotion and problem focused coping appears to be most effective, especially in complex or chronic stress situations. From an Islamic perspective, stress is often viewed as a test of faith (fitnah) and an opportunity for spiritual growth. The pesantren environment reinforces this view through religious practices such as dhikr, prayer, and recitation of the Qur'an, which not only serve as coping strategies but also as forms of worship and inner purification (tazkiyatun nafs). Thus, the dominant use of emotion-focused coping in these settings aligns with Islamic teachings on patience (sabr) and reliance on God (tawakkul).

## 6. Conclusion

This scoping review explored stressors and coping strategies among adolescents in Islamic boarding schools. The review found that students commonly experience stress due to strict regulations, academic pressure, homesickness, high routines, environmental discomfort, bullying, and difficulty adapting. In response, most students predominantly use emotion focused coping strategies, particularly those rooted in religious practices such as Qur'an recitation, prayer, and seeking spiritual support, while a smaller number employ problem focused strategies like time management and seeking academic help.

These findings highlight the importance of religious and cultural context in shaping how students manage stress within pesantren environments. The study contributes to the field by identifying coping trends specific to Islamic boarding school settings, which may inform the development of context sensitive psychological support programs.

Future research is recommended to explore the effectiveness of these coping strategies in the long term and to examine the role of institutional support in enhancing student well-being.

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