

Conflict Mitigation and Coping Mechanism Strategy for New Students at API ASRI Tegalrejo Islamic Boarding School

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Keywords

Conflict Mitigation; coping mechanism; New Students; Islamic Boarding School; Thomas-Kilmann.

Article History

Submission : 30-05-2026
Revised : 01-06-2026
Publish : 10-06-2026

Abstract

The transition period of new students in the pesantren environment is often colored by various adaptation problems, such as homesickness, interpersonal conflicts, social anxiety, and difficulties adjusting to a disciplined and structured dormitory life system. If not managed properly, this condition can hinder the self-adjustment process and affect the psychological well-being of students. This study aims to analyze the conflict mitigation strategies implemented by the management and examine the coping mechanism used by new students in dealing with pressure during the adaptation period at the Syubbanul Wathon Tegalrejo Islamic Boarding School. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were obtained through passive participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of six new students, two roommates, one security administrator, and the head of the purposively selected boarding school. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana models through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawn, and strengthened by triangulation of sources and techniques. The results of the study showed that the administrators applied five conflict management styles based on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), namely competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and adaptive accommodation according to the characteristics of the students' problems. Meanwhile, new students use two forms of coping mechanisms, namely emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping which develop gradually during the adaptation process. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of the Thomas-Kilmann and Lazarus-Folkman perspectives in explaining the relationship between management conflict mitigation, social support, coping mechanisms, and the success of student adaptation. These findings imply that pesantren management needs to integrate discipline, social assistance, and psychological support to create a more adaptive and mentally healthy educational environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Pondok pesantren is an Islamic educational institution that has distinctive characteristics because it not only functions as a place of learning, but also as a living environment that shapes the personality of students for twenty-four hours. Life in Islamic boarding schools requires students to adapt to various rules, cultures, and patterns of social interaction that are different from their family environment and community of origin. As a *total institution*, pesantren regulates almost all aspects of the lives of its residents, ranging from worship activities, learning, to daily social life (Insani & Arbarini, 2025). This condition makes the adaptation process a very important phase,

especially for new students who have to adjust to a structured and collective life system. On the other hand, students come from diverse cultural backgrounds, habits, and parenting patterns, so the potential for conflicts and psychological pressures during the transition period is something that is difficult to avoid.

The early period of living in a pesantren is often a challenging period as students are faced with significant environmental changes. These changes include separation from the family, adjustments to strict rules, as well as demands to build new social relationships in a relatively short period of time. Hasanah's research shows that difficulties in self-adjustment in new students are

generally characterized by the emergence of feelings of depression, *homesickness*, anxiety, and difficulty in following the rhythm of a crowded pesantren life (Hasanah, 2024). If this condition does not receive proper treatment, it can interfere with the psychological well-being of students and reduce the quality of their social interaction in the pesantren environment.

Adaptation problems not only have an impact on the emotional state of individuals, but also affect the sustainability of the educational process. Pane and Lubis emphasized that the inability of students to adjust can give rise to the desire to leave the pesantren and even lead to the decision to drop out (Pane & Lubis, 2024). The findings show that the problem of adaptation is not just a personal problem, but an institutional problem that requires serious attention. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools need to develop a mentoring system that is able to help students overcome psychological pressure from the beginning of their stay. Support from dormitory administrators, teachers, and peers is an important factor in creating an environment that supports the adaptation process optimally.

In line with this, Nurdin and Nur's research shows that the success of student adaptation is greatly influenced by the quality of social support received from the surrounding environment (Nurdin & Nur, 2025). This support can be in the form of emotional assistance, providing information, or assistance in solving various problems faced by new students. The presence of an effective support system allows the pressures that arise due to environmental changes to be transformed into a learning experience that strengthens the independence and maturity of students. Thus, the adaptation process is not only understood as the ability of individuals to survive, but also as the result of interaction between personal factors and the environment of the pesantren organization.

This phenomenon was also found at the API ASRI Tegalrejo Islamic Boarding School. Based on the results of interviews with two guardians, it was found that various forms of conflict experienced by new students during the transition period were found, including intrapersonal conflicts in the form of deep longing for family, interpersonal conflicts due to differences in character and habits between students, as well as environmental pressures that arise due to the tight schedule of activities and limited privacy space (Walikamar, 2026). These various problems have the potential to cause emotional fatigue, decreased

motivation, and a tendency to withdraw from the social life of the pesantren. This condition shows that the adaptation process of students cannot be separated from the institution's ability to manage conflicts and provide adequate psychological support.

From the perspective of Islamic education management, conflict is not always seen as a negative phenomenon that must be avoided, but rather as part of organizational dynamics that need to be managed constructively. Effective conflict management can help create a healthy educational environment and support the overall development of students. Therefore, pesantren management is required not only to be oriented to the function of supervision and discipline enforcement, but also to be able to build an organizational climate that pays attention to the mental health of students. A humanist approach is needed so that conflicts that arise during the adaptation period can be identified early and resolved through educational mechanisms and oriented towards character development.

Previous studies have discussed a lot about student adaptation, social support, and conflicts in the pesantren environment. However, most of those studies tend to focus attention on one aspect separately. Research on student adaptation emphasizes more on individual psychological factors, while research on conflict management focuses more on organizational strategies in maintaining order and discipline. As a result, the relationship between the conflict management system implemented by the institution and the psychological response of students in facing pressure has not been comprehensively explained. These limitations indicate the need to develop a perspective that is able to connect the organizational dimension and the psychological dimension in one integrated analytical framework.

The research gap of this research lies in the lack of optimal integration between conflict management approaches and coping theory in explaining the adaptation process of new students in the pesantren environment. Most previous studies only measured the success of adaptation through end-result indicators, such as the level of comfort, independence, or success in surviving in Islamic boarding schools. In fact, the adaptation process is a series of interactions that involve conflict management strategies by institutions and coping mechanisms carried out by individuals simultaneously. The weakness of previous research is that it has not been able to explain how conflict management strategies applied by

dormitory administrators can affect the coping choices used by students when facing pressure during the transition period.

Based on these gaps, this study integrates the Thomas-Kilmann conflict management model with the Lazarus-Folkman coping theory as the main conceptual framework. The Thomas-Kilmann model explains various conflict management styles that can be used by dormitory administrators in dealing with student problems, such as *competing*, *collaborating*, *compromising*, *avoiding*, and *accommodating*. Meanwhile, the Lazarus-Folkman theory explains how individuals respond to pressure through *problem-focused coping* and *emotion-focused coping strategies*. The integration of these two theories is important because the conflicts that arise in the pesantren environment are not only determined by the actions of the organization in managing the situation, but also by the ability of students to interpret and respond to the pressure they experience. By connecting these two perspectives, this study is expected to be able to provide a more complete understanding of the relationship between conflict management strategies at the organizational level and coping mechanisms at the individual level in the process of adapting new students at the API ASRI Tegalrejo Islamic Boarding School.

METHODS

This study uses a case study method with a qualitative approach through field research to gain a deep understanding of conflict mitigation strategies and *coping mechanisms* for new students in the pesantren environment. The research was carried out at the Syubbanul Wathon Tegalrejo Islamic Boarding School, Magelang, during the January-March 2026 period. The selection of location is based on the characteristics of pesantren that apply high discipline with heterogeneous student backgrounds so that it becomes a relevant context to study the dynamics of adaptation conflicts. Informants were selected using *purposive sampling* techniques based on considerations of direct involvement in the phenomenon being studied (Lenaini, 2021). The research informants consisted of six new students, two roommates, one security administrator, and one head of the boarding school. The number of informants is considered adequate in qualitative research because it represents the perspectives of individuals, daily companions, and policy makers so as to allow for data depth and source triangulation. The six new students were selected

based on operational indicators that showed obstacles to adaptation, namely often expressing *homesickness*, difficulty following pesantren routines, tendency to withdraw from social interactions, decreased motivation to learn, and emotional complaints identified through initial observation and recommendations from the guardian.

Data collection was carried out through passive participatory observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation studies in the form of pesantren rules, dormitory activity reports, and student assistance records. The researcher plays the role of the main instrument for capturing the subjective meanings that emerge in the informant's experience (Rispani et al., 2025). Data analysis follows the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana which includes data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. Operationally, the analysis process begins with *open coding* of interview transcripts to identify units of meaning related to adaptation conflicts, conflict resolution strategies, and forms of student coping. The codes that have similarities are then grouped into thematic categories, such as intrapersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict, social support, *problem-focused coping*, and *emotion-focused coping*. The next stage is the interpretation of inter-category relationships to find patterns and meanings that explain the relationship between management conflict management strategies and students' psychological responses. To ensure the validity of the data (*trustworthiness*), the study applied source triangulation and triangulation techniques through comparison of interviews, observations, and documentation (Hariawan et al., 2025). The interpretation of the data was then analyzed using the Thomas-Kilmann model to map conflict management strategies and the Lazarus-Folkman theory to identify coping mechanisms used by students during the adaptation process.

DISCUSSION

Conflict Mitigation through the Thomas-Kilmann Perspective (TKI)

Based on field findings, the conflict mitigation strategy applied at the Syubbanul Wathon Tegalrejo Islamic Boarding School shows that conflict management is not carried out alone through a disciplinary approach, but through a combination of five conflict management styles as described in the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). These findings indicate that the success of the adaptation of new students is not

only determined by the individual's ability to adjust, but also by the organization's ability to manage the social and psychological dynamics that arise during the transition period. In contrast to some previous studies that placed conflict as a disruption to the educational process, this study shows that conflict can actually be an instrument of social learning if managed systematically and humanely. These findings strengthen the view that pesantren are not only discipline-based educational institutions, but also a space for the formation of psychological resilience through structured social interaction.

In the dimension of competition style, the management implements regulatory enforcement consistently through a dense and structured schedule of activities. These findings are in line with the research of Alfarisi et al. (2022) which states that organized discipline is able to reduce deviant behavior and improve the regularity of students' lives. However, the results of this study show a wider dimension. Strict rules not only function as a tool of social control, but also act as a mechanism for *attention redirection* from emotional pressure to productive activities. This condition explains why new students who experience homesickness actually feel helped by a strict routine. In other words, discipline in the context of pesantren doubles as an instrument of organizational control as well as a means of psychological regulation.

This phenomenon is interesting because it is different from some of the educational psychology literature which often associates strict rules with increased psychological pressure on students. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, the strictness of the rules is actually accepted positively because it is supported by a collective culture and strong religious values. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of competition styles is strongly influenced by the social context in which the policy is implemented. Therefore, the success of this strategy does not solely come from strict rules, but from the ability of the management to explain the meaning behind these rules so that students see them as a means of coaching, not a form of restriction of freedom.

In addition to the competition style, the collaborative style is the most dominant strategy in creating a healthy adaptation climate. Room deliberations that are held regularly provide space for students to express the difficulties they experience during the adjustment process. These findings reinforce the results of Khotimah's (2025) research which confirms that participatory

dialogue is able to reduce interpersonal conflicts through increasing a sense of belonging to the group. However, this study found an aspect that has not been discussed much in previous research, namely the function of room deliberation as a medium for the formation of *emotional social support* which directly affects the success of the student coping mechanism.

The existence of the deliberation forum shows that open communication allows new students to build a sense of *psychological safety*. This sense of security is an important prerequisite for the emergence of the courage to express personal problems, including feelings of longing for family, social anxiety, and difficulty in following the rhythm of pesantren life. Theoretically, this condition explains how the collaborative style not only resolves conflicts that have occurred, but also functions as an instrument for conflict prevention through strengthening interpersonal relationships between students and administrators.

The findings on the compromising style show that management seeks to create a balance between individual needs and collective interests. This strategy is widely used in minor conflicts that arise due to differences in character, habits, and preferences between students. The results of this study are in line with Sofia (2021) who stated that compromise is an effective strategy to maintain group harmony in a boarding education environment. Nevertheless, the study shows that the success of a compromise is determined not only by the reach of an agreement, but also by the speed with which management responds to the conflict before it develops into a larger problem.

From the perspective of pesantren education management, the presence of administrators as mediators has a very strategic function. The management not only acts as a problem solver, but also as a shaper of a constructive dialogue culture. Thus, compromise becomes a means of social learning for students to understand differences, control personal egos, and develop interpersonal communication skills. This aspect shows that successfully resolved conflicts can produce educational values that contribute to the formation of student character.

In the avoidance style, this study finds a different interpretation of the general understanding of conflict avoidance. In many studies, avoidance styles are often seen as less effective because they have the potential to delay problem resolution (Rahman & Khoirunnisa, 2019). However, the findings at the Syubbanul

Wathon Islamic Boarding School show that avoidance is carried out selectively and planned. The management uses a temporary postponement strategy as an effort to create a more stable emotional state before the mediation process is carried out.

This strategy shows the practice of *strategic postponement* or strategic pause that has not been widely discussed in the pesantren conflict management literature. The management realizes that decisions taken in a state of high emotion have the potential to produce less objective solutions. Therefore, temporary postponement is not a form of indifference, but rather a mechanism to improve the quality of conflict resolution. This finding is one of the new contributions of the research because it shows that avoidance styles can be productive when used situationally and supported by clear follow-up.

Furthermore, the *accommodating* style is seen through the provision of intensive assistance to students who have difficulty adapting more than their friends. This approach shows the humanist side of the pesantren management system which is often only perceived as an institution with a high level of discipline. These findings are in line with Aziz et al. (2024) who affirm the importance of continuous supervision and support in improving the quality of education services. In addition, research by Ngaini et al. (2025) also shows that collaboration between leaders and educators has a significant influence on the development of students' character.

However, this study found that accommodation was not carried out in the form of a comprehensive relaxation of the rules. The management still maintains the applicable disciplinary standards, but provides a more personalized approach to students who need special attention. Thus, accommodation serves as a service differentiation strategy that allows each student to obtain support according to their psychological needs. These findings show that flexibility in conflict management does not mean reducing the quality of discipline, but rather adapting the coaching approach to individual conditions.

Overall, the results of the study show that the effectiveness of conflict mitigation does not lie in the dominance of one particular style, but in the ability of administrators to combine various styles adaptively according to the context of the problems faced. The combination of competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and accommodation forms a dynamic conflict

management system that is responsive to the needs of new students. This finding is different from previous research which generally only identifies the most dominant conflict style without explaining the inter-style relationship in supporting the student adaptation process.

Santri Coping Mechanism Strategy: From Pressure to Independence

In addition to the managerial aspects explained through the Thomas-Kilmann perspective, this study also analyzes the adaptation process of new students through the *Coping Mechanism* theory developed by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman. This theory is used to understand how students assess, respond, and manage the pressures that arise during the transition period in the pesantren environment. In contrast to student adaptation research which generally only measures the success rate of self-adjustment, this study seeks to explain the psychological processes that occur behind these successes. Thus, the focus of the research is not only on the final results of adaptation, but also on the mechanisms that allow students to survive and develop in an Islamic boarding school environment that has high social demands and discipline.

Theoretically, Lazarus and Folkman divide coping strategies into two main categories: *emotion-focused coping* and *problem-focused coping*. The findings of the study show that the two strategies are not used separately, but complement each other in the process of adapting new students. These results enrich the findings of Arifin et al. (2023) who stated that new students tend to experience *culture shock* in the early days of living in dormitories. This study found that the success of adaptation is not only determined by the individual's ability to manage stress, but also by the quality of social support available in the pesantren environment. In other words, the coping mechanism of students develops through the interaction between internal and external factors.

Research found that in the early stages of arrival, most students were more dominant in using *emotion-focused coping*. This condition is understandable because the main problem they face is not a real conflict that can be resolved immediately, but rather emotional pressure in the form of longing for family, anxiety about a new environment, and social uncertainty. Because of this, the strategies used are more oriented towards managing emotions than problem solving. These findings show that the initial phase of adaptation

is a phase of emotion regulation, where students try to stabilize their psychological condition before being able to interact optimally with the social environment of the pesantren.

Table 1. New Santri Adaptation Strategy Based on Lazarus & Folkman Theory

Yes	Coping Strategy	Manifestation of Santri Behavior in the Field
1	Problem-Focused Coping	Discuss with friends, report to management, and find independent solutions
2	Emotion-Focused Coping	Engage in religious, extracurricular activities, and seek emotional support from peers

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the coping strategy of students has developed gradually. These findings are interesting because they show that adaptation is not a process that takes place instantaneously. In contrast, adaptation is a dynamic process that moves from managing emotions to solving problems directly. These results differ from some previous studies that tend to see coping as a fixed response. In this study, it was found that the coping strategy changed according to the level of comfort and social experience of students during their stay at the Islamic boarding school.

Anisa's statement (2026) shows that room deliberation activities and experiences shared by room guardians have a significant influence on students' ability to manage emotional pressure. These findings not only show the existence of social support, but also show a cognitive *reappraisal* process or cognitive reappraisal of the situation at hand. Anisa no longer sees her

existence in the pesantren as a source of suffering, but rather as a means to achieve a greater goal, which is to make her parents happy. This change in perspective is an important factor that explains why emotional pressure can be transformed into motivation to learn and enthusiasm for undergoing pesantren activities.

From the perspective of educational psychology, this phenomenon suggests that the success of coping does not solely depend on the individual's ability to control emotions, but also on the success of the environment in providing meaning to the experiences experienced by the individual. These findings expand on the results of Dahlia's (2018) research which emphasizes the importance of emotional stability in adolescence. This research shows that emotional stability can be formed through the interaction between self-reflection and social support provided by significant figures such as roomkeepers.

Figure 1. Application of Emotion-Focused Coping through Recital Activities in the Islamic Boarding School Environment



Religious activities carried out by students have a broader function than just fulfilling spiritual obligations. Based on the results of interviews and observations, recitation, dhikr, and

congregational worship activities are effective emotional regulation mediums for new students. These findings reinforce the view that religiosity can function as a source of *psychological*

resilience. However, this study found a new aspect that the effectiveness of religious activities does not stand alone, but is strengthened by the social interactions created during the activities. Thus, the benefits of religious activities arise due to the combination of the spiritual dimension and the social dimension.

In addition to religious activities, students also use extracurricular activities as a coping strategy. Nasya's statement (2026) shows that

leisure time is the most vulnerable period to give rise to homesickness. Therefore, involvement in extracurricular activities functions as a *distraction coping strategy*. These findings explain why extracurricular programs have a greater contribution than just talent development. In the context of student adaptation, extracurricular activities play a role as a social integration medium that helps students build a new identity in the pesantren environment.

Figure 2. Qiro'ah Extracurricular Activities on Friday



When analyzed more deeply, involvement in extracurriculars shows a process of forming a *sense of belonging*. Students who are active in group activities tend to build a network of friends and gain social support faster. These findings are in line with the research of Nurdin and Nur (2025) which emphasizes the importance of peer support in the adaptation process. However, this study found that social support is not only the result of friendship relationships that have been formed, but can also be built through the design of institutional programs that are deliberately designed to improve social interaction.

As the length of stay in the pesantren increases, the use of *problem-focused coping* begins to appear more dominant. In this phase, students no longer only try to suppress emotions, but begin to try to address the source of the problem directly. This shift in strategy shows an increase in psychological maturity and reflective thinking skills. The findings show that successful adaptation does not stop at the ability to survive, but develops into the ability to solve problems independently.

Syifa's (2026) statement that she chooses to meet with administrators when facing problems

shows that social *support seeking* is a form of *problem-focused coping*. Interestingly, this action was carried out not because of dependence, but because of trust in the competence of the management as a mediator. This indicates that the success of coping is greatly influenced by the quality of interpersonal relationships built between students and administrators. In other words, administrators not only play a role as a law enforcer, but also as a psychological resource for students.

A similar phenomenon can be seen in the experience of Eva (2026) who tries to resolve conflicts independently before asking for help from management. These findings show the development of negotiation, communication, and decision-making skills in students. From the perspective of character education, this ability is an important indicator of the social maturation process. The results of this study show that pesantren function as a social laboratory that allows students to learn to manage conflicts constructively through direct experience.

When compared to previous research, the novelty of this research lies in its success in explaining the relationship between the conflict

mitigation strategies implemented by administrators and the development of coping mechanisms for students. Most previous studies have addressed the two aspects separately. This research shows that management policies, social support, and coping strategies are a series of interrelated processes. This means that the success of student adaptation is not only the result of individual ability, but also the result of pesantren management design that supports the psychological development of students.

These findings produce a new conceptual model that explains the relationship between managerial aspects and psychological aspects in

the adaptation process of new students. The model shows that the conflict mitigation strategies implemented by the management will result in strong social support. Social support then affects the development of students' coping mechanisms, both in the form of *emotion-focused coping* and *problem-focused coping*. In the end, the combination of these two strategies will determine the success rate of student adaptation in the pesantren environment.

Based on these findings, the conceptual model produced in this study can be described as follows:



This model shows that social support acts as a connecting variable that explains how conflict management strategies at the organizational level can affect the success of adaptation at the individual level. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the development of an integrative model that connects the management dimension of pesantren education with the dimension of student adaptation psychology. Meanwhile, his practical contribution is to provide a foundation for pesantren managers to design a mentoring system that is not only discipline-oriented, but also strengthens the social support and mental health of students during the transition period.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the success of the adaptation of new students at the Syubbanul Wathon Tegalrejo Islamic Boarding School is not only determined by the individual's ability to adjust, but also by the effectiveness of conflict management implemented by the pesantren administrators. Based on the perspective of the

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), the management combines five conflict management styles, namely competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and accommodation flexibly according to the characteristics of the problems faced by the students. Rule firmness functions as an instrument for the formation of discipline as well as a means of psychological regulation, while chamber deliberation, conflict mediation, strategic pause, and personal assistance are forms of social support that strengthen the adaptation process. From Lazarus and Folkman's perspective, new students at the beginning of the transition period tend to use *emotion-focused coping* through religious, extracurricular, and peer support activities to manage homesickness and emotional distress. As experience and social comfort increase, the strategy evolves into *problem-focused coping* characterized by the ability to resolve conflicts independently, discuss with friends, and seek the help of administrators when needed. The findings of this study produce an integrative conceptual model that explains that conflict mitigation carried

out by administrators forms strong social support, the social support then strengthens the development of student coping mechanisms, and ultimately encourages the success of adaptation characterized by emotional stability, independence, and harmony of social relationships. Thus, the main contribution of this research lies in integrating the Thomas-Kilmann conflict management perspective and the Lazarus-Folkman coping theory in explaining the adaptation process of new students, thus providing a theoretical and practical basis for the development of pesantren education management that is more humanistic, adaptive, and oriented towards the mental health of students.

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