

An Islamic Spiritual Response to the Psychological Effects of Loneliness, Academic Stress, and Bullying on Students in Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren)

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 18-04-2025

Revised 24-05-2025

Accepted 29-05-2025

Keywords:

Islamic Spiritual

Bullying

Loneliness

Academic Stress

Pesantren Students

ABSTRACT

Bullying, loneliness, and academic stress are pressing psychological challenges frequently encountered by students in pesantren settings. This study aimed to investigate the complex interplay between loneliness, academic stress, and bullying among pesantren students, with particular attention to the implications for Islamic spiritual interventions. Employing a correlational research design, the study involved a sample of the students of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, drawn through a multistage random sampling technique from a population of 500 pesantren students. Data were gathered using validated and reliable instruments to assess levels of bullying, loneliness, and academic stress. To investigate the associations among the variables, correlation and regression analyses were employed. The results indicated statistically significant positive associations between loneliness and bullying, as well as between academic stress and bullying behavior, indicating that students who are bullied are more likely to experience loneliness and heightened academic stress. These results underscore the importance of addressing these interconnected psychological issues through holistic approaches. The study highlights the potential of Islamic spiritual responses, such as Islamic counseling and spiritual mindfulness practices, in mitigating the negative psychological effects of bullying, loneliness, and academic stress among students.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a pervasive issue present in various countries, with different forms and prevalence rates. Research indicates that bullying is a global concern, with varying levels of victimization reported across different nations. Studies have shown that bullying can manifest in multiple ways, including physical, verbal, relational, and sexual bullying (Nguyen et al., 2020; Peker & Yalçın, 2022; Yandri et al., 2022). The prevalence of bullying differs significantly among countries, with higher rates reported in areas such as Europe, North America, Russia, Germany, and the United States (Cosma et al., 2020; Hosozawa et al., 2021; Tomapeba et al., 2023). Moreover, Ishak et al (2023) identifies the United States, the United Kingdom, and China as the most productive countries in the field of school bullying research. This productivity refers to their

significant contribution to the body of literature on bullying, producing a high volume of empirical studies, reviews, and theoretical works on the subject, rather than necessarily indicating a higher prevalence of bullying within these countries.

Bullying in Indonesia is a prevalent issue affecting students, with studies showing varying degrees of bullying tendencies among the youth. Research indicates that 41% of Indonesian students have experienced bullying (Munira et al., 2023), and Indonesia ranks second globally in countries with high bullying incidence (Santhoso et al., 2023). Statistical records from 2011 to 2019 show a total of 37,381 reported incidents of violence against children, along with 2,473 documented cases of bullying occurring within educational environments and on social media platforms (KPAI, 2020). Bullying significantly impacts the health and well-being of individuals, especially children and adolescents in schools.

Empirical studies suggest that prolonged exposure to bullying may result in negative psychological and physical health outcomes, such as symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress (Elena, 2022; Yandri et al., 2023). Psychological consequences of bullying can manifest as depression, low self-esteem, and the development of destructive personality traits (Cour et al., 2022; Yıldız, 2023). Research has demonstrated a link between bullying and adverse mental health outcomes, with conventional school-based bullying specifically connected to reduced overall well-being and increased levels of depression (Bokhari et al., 2022). Bullying has been linked to various detrimental psychological effects, such as reduced self-worth, heightened anger, a sense of social isolation and loneliness, elevated academic stress, declining academic achievement, and involvement in maladaptive or deviant behaviors (Sedykh & Myshko, 2022; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Beyond the immediate impacts, bullying can have detrimental long-term effects on mental health, potentially leading to the development of anxiety and depression, trauma, self-harming behaviours, and even suicidal thoughts and tendencies (Jones, 2020; Swearer & Hymel, 2015).

An investigation into a sample of Lebanese adolescents demonstrated a substantial correlation between experiences of bullying victimization and feelings of loneliness (Strindberg, 2023). Furthermore, multicultural adolescents in South Korea have been found to experience increased levels of emotional distress, including social withdrawal and loneliness, as a result of bullying victimization (Eid et al., 2023). A considerable amount of empirical evidence highlights a strong association between bullying and feelings of loneliness. Those subjected to bullying are significantly more likely to encounter social isolation and a heightened sense of loneliness than individuals who have not been victimized.

Academic stress and bullying are interconnected factors that significantly impact students' well-being and academic performance. Studies have identified academic stress, bullying, peer victimization, anxiety, and depression as prevalent contributing factors to self-injurious behaviors among middle school students (Chen et al., 2023). Furthermore, studies have revealed that bullying negatively affects students' academic performance across various subjects, emphasizing its detrimental impact on educational outcomes (Chowdhury, 2020; Rusteholz et al., 2021). The experience of stress stemming from high academic demands on students can serve as a predisposing factor for bullying victimization. Students grappling with academic pressure often experience a decline in self-confidence, making them more susceptible to intimidation and less equipped to defend themselves. This heightened vulnerability renders them prime targets for bullying behaviours. A comprehensive analysis of published research and literature has unveiled a profound connection between bullying behaviours, loneliness, and academic stress. This intricate relationship has far-reaching implications for both individual well-being and educational outcomes. These

studies collectively underscore the importance of addressing loneliness, academic stress, and bullying to promote a safe and supportive environment for students.

Addressing the detrimental psychological effects of loneliness, academic stress, and bullying experienced by students necessitates a comprehensive approach that integrates Islamic spiritual resources with established counseling methodologies. This study posits that a robust Islamic spiritual response can effectively mitigate psychological distress and cultivate a nurturing and inclusive school environment. Islamic Religious Education serves as a foundational element, embedding core ethical values such as compassion (*rahmah*), justice (*'adl*), and mutual respect within students' moral framework, thereby playing a proactive role in bullying prevention (Hasibuan, 2025). Furthermore, Islamic counseling offers culturally congruent strategies to address the mental health sequelae of these stressors, including providing spiritual guidance, fostering resilience through faith-based practices, and employing forgiveness techniques rooted in Islamic teachings to aid victims in their coping and healing processes (Anjasari & Rahmatullah, 2023). The synergistic application of these Islamic spiritual and counseling interventions holds significant potential in promoting the holistic well-being of students facing these challenges.

In the context of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), Islamic spiritual values should not merely be taught, but embedded deeply into the educational atmosphere and daily practices. These values—such as *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), *rahmah* (compassion), *shabr* (patience), *muhasabah* (self-reflection), and *tawakkul* (trust in God)—should manifest in the *pesantren's* curriculum, discipline approach, teacher-student interactions, peer relationships, and spiritual routines such as congregational prayers, *dzikr*, and *muroja'ah* (memorization and reflection of the Qur'an) (Majid, 1997; Azra, 1999).

An ideal *pesantren* holistically integrates Islamic teachings with psychosocial development. This involves fostering a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment that proactively addresses psychological challenges like loneliness, academic stress, and bullying. Such a *pesantren* emphasizes character building (*tarbiyah ruhiyah*), emotional literacy grounded in Islamic ethics, and constructive peer interaction through spiritual mentorship (*muraqabah* and *muhasabah bersama*). Teachers and mentors (*ustadz/ustadzah*) act not only as knowledge transmitters but also as *murabbi*—spiritual and emotional guides (Jaenullah et al., 2022; Zamhariroh et al., 2024). As Al-Ghazali (2008) emphasized, the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) is essential in education to prevent destructive behaviors and cultivate inner peace. *Pesantren*, as institutions rooted in *tazkiyah*, should consciously integrate spiritual practices to foster psychological resilience. Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) modeled empathetic leadership and inclusive educational settings, highlighting the value of *rahmah* (compassion) and *hikmah* (wisdom) in nurturing the youth (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018).

The relevance of this research lies in its contribution to shaping a comprehensive *pesantren* model that prioritizes students' psychological well-being. It highlights the need for *pesantren*-based educational institutions to recognize the impact of psychosocial stressors and respond with structured spiritual and emotional support systems rooted in Islamic teachings. In doing so, *pesantren* can become not only centers of Islamic knowledge but also sanctuaries for personal growth, resilience, and healing—effectively reducing the destructive effects of loneliness, academic stress, and bullying (Haris, 2021; Susanto & Iskandar, 2023).

Based on the previously outlined background and research questions, this study hypothesized that Islamic spiritual response has a significant effect on the psychological impact of loneliness, academic stress, and bullying among *pesantren* students. Specifically, it was suggested

that the application of Islamic spiritual practices—such as *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *tahajjud* prayer, Qur’anic recitation, and *tazkiyatun nafs* (self-purification)—can mitigate the adverse psychological effects associated with these three factors. Through multiple regression analysis, this study examined the relative contributions of loneliness, academic stress, and bullying as independent variables to students' psychological well-being, while also assessing the influence of the Islamic spiritual response as a potential mediating or moderating factor.

The current investigation offers distinct contributions to the existing body of knowledge. Primarily, it is the pioneering study to provide an in-depth account of Islamic spiritual responses to the psychological consequences of bullying, loneliness, and academic stress. Secondly, this research identified the intricate associations among bullying, loneliness, and academic stress, a set of findings absent from prior research endeavors. The current study diverges from Atik's (2006) investigation, which centered on the frequency of bullying and victimization within middle school settings and the impact of variables like locus of control, self-esteem, parenting style, loneliness, and academic achievement on predicting involvement in bullying. In contrast, this research advances the field by specifically examining the intricate associations between bullying, loneliness, and academic stress, thereby enabling a more comprehensive perspective on the determinants of bullying and its outcomes for those who experience it.

METHODS

The present study employed a quantitative methodology utilizing a descriptive correlational design. This approach was selected to investigate the character and magnitude of the associations among bullying, loneliness, and academic stress within the population of *Pesantren* students in Indonesia.

The target population for this study was approximately 500 *Pesantren* students across Indonesia. Due to practical limitations and ease of access, convenience sampling was used. This means we selected students who were easiest to reach and willing to participate, such as those from *Pesantrens* where our team already had contacts or obtained quick permission. For instance, we recruited students from *Pesantren A* and *Pesantren B* because they were readily accessible. It's important to note that this method can lead to sampling bias because participants were not chosen randomly. This means our findings might not fully represent all *Pesantren* students in Indonesia.

We collected data from a total of 305 participants. This sample size was determined based on practical considerations such as available time and resources, and the number of students we could reach with our convenience sampling method. While a statistical formula was not used to determine a minimum sample size (due to the non-random sampling), 305 participants were sufficient for the planned statistical analyses, including correlation and regression. However, these results should be interpreted carefully. Since convenience sampling was employed, our findings primarily reflect the group we studied and might not be generalizable to all *Pesantren* students across Indonesia.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Subjects

No	Characteristic	Description
1	Gender Distribution	Male: 172 students (56.4%) Female: 133 students (43.6%)
2	Age Distribution	15–17 years: 112 students (36.7%) 18–20 years: 143 students (46.9%) 21–22 years: 50 students (16.4%)

3	Educational Level	Senior high school (MA or equivalent): 210 students (68.9%) Early college level (Ma'had Aly or equivalent): 95 students (31.1%)
4	Duration of Stay in Pesantren	All participants had stayed in pesantren for a minimum of 1 year
5	Regional Representation	Students from pesantren in Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and other major islands
6	Type of Pesantren	Salafi-based, modern, and integrated pesantren
7	Language of Instruction	Bahasa Indonesia, local languages, and Arabic

Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire that comprised three primary scales: Bullying Scale, Loneliness Scale, and Academic Stress Scale. Each scale was meticulously developed by the researchers, grounded in established theoretical constructs and relevant scholarly literature. The Bullying Scale was designed based on Olweus's (2013) theory of bullying, which defines it as repeated aggressive behavior intended to cause harm. Items within this scale aimed to measure the frequency and types of bullying experienced by students, including physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying. The Loneliness Scale was constructed adhering to Weiss's (1975) theory of loneliness, distinguishing between emotional and social isolation. Its items explored feelings of being isolated, lacking close companions, and the absence of meaningful social interactions. Finally, the Academic Stress Scale was developed with reference to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional theory of stress, which focuses on an individual's cognitive appraisal of academic demands and available resources. Its items measured the perceived pressure related to assignments, exams, expectations from parents/teachers, and the overall learning environment within the Pesantren. After theoretical grounding, the scale development process involved item generation, followed by expert review for content validity, where two to three experts assessed item relevance, clarity, and language appropriateness. A subsequent pilot test with a small group of students (30-50 participants) helped identify ambiguous or problematic items.

The instrument's validity was rigorously assessed to ensure it accurately measured the intended constructs. Beyond the content validity established through expert judgment during scale development, construct validity was also considered. While these instruments had prior validation in other studies, we conducted further item analysis on our pilot data, such as item-total correlation, to confirm each item's positive correlation with its respective scale's total score. This process confirmed that items consistently measured the same underlying construct. For instrument reliability, the internal consistency of each scale was robustly demonstrated by high Cronbach's Alpha values: Bullying Scale ($\alpha = 0.91$), Loneliness Scale ($\alpha = 0.87$), and Academic Stress Scale ($\alpha = 0.89$). These high alpha values indicate excellent internal consistency, confirming that the items within each scale coherently measured their intended constructs. The entire questionnaire utilized a Likert-type format (e.g., ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) and was administered in Indonesian language to ensure clarity and accessibility for all participants.

Data collection was conducted after obtaining appropriate permissions from *Pesantren* authorities and informed consent from all participants. Questionnaires were distributed in person and collected on the same day to maximize response rates and reduce missing data. Anonymity and confidentiality of participants were strictly maintained throughout the study. The data derived from the questionnaires were subsequently analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.0. The primary data analysis in this study involved correlation and multiple regression techniques to examine the relationships among the research variables: bullying, loneliness, and academic stress. Correlation analysis was initially applied to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationships between two variables at a time. Subsequently, multiple regression analysis was employed to investigate how the independent variables of bullying and loneliness simultaneously

predict or explain the variance in the dependent variable, academic stress. Specifically, this analysis allowed us to identify the relative contributions of each predictor (bullying and loneliness) to academic stress, and to determine if there were synergistic or independent relationships among them. Prior to conducting the regression analysis, classical regression assumptions such as normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity were checked to ensure the validity of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before conducting data analysis, several prerequisites for regression testing, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, were met.

Table 2. Psychological Experience Intensity Intervals

Psychological Issue	Intensity	Percentage	Frequency	Description
Loneliness	Moderate to High	68.5%	209	Reported experiencing moderate to high levels of loneliness
	Low to None	31.5%	96	Reported little or no experience of loneliness
Academic Stress	Moderate to High	75.1%	229	Reported experiencing moderate to high academic stress
	Low to None	24.9%	76	Reported little or no academic stress
Bullying	Experienced / Witnessed	39.7%	121	Reported having experienced or witnessed bullying
	Not Experienced	60.3%	184	Reported no experience or witnessing of bullying

Table 2 presents the intensity of psychological experiences related to loneliness, academic stress, and bullying. Approximately 68.5% of students ($n = 209$) reported experiencing moderate to high levels of loneliness during their studies, while 31.5% ($n = 96$) reported low or no loneliness. Academic stress was reported at moderate to high levels by 75.1% ($n = 229$) of the students, with 24.9% ($n = 76$) experiencing low or no academic stress. Bullying experiences or witnessing bullying were reported by 39.7% ($n = 121$), whereas 60.3% ($n = 184$) reported no such experiences.

Table 3. Results of Classical Assumption Testing in Multiple Regression Analysis

No	Assumption Test	Method Used	Result / Sig. Value	Threshold / Criteria	Decision
1	Normality of Residuals	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	0.001 ($p < 0.05$)	Sig. > 0.05 = normal distribution	Not normal (K-S test), but acceptable due to CLT and P-P plot inspection
		Histogram & Normal P-P Plot	Approx. normal curve	Visual inspection	Residuals approx. normal
2	Linearity	Scatterplot & Partial Regression Plot	Linear pattern observed	Visual linear relationship	Linearity assumption met
3	Multicollinearity	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	1.136	$VIF < 10$	No multicollinearity
4	Heteroscedasticity	Glejser Test (loneliness)	0.998 ($p > 0.05$)	Sig. > 0.05 = no heteroscedasticity	No heteroscedasticity
		Glejser Test (academic stress)	0.806 ($p > 0.05$)	Sig. > 0.05 = no heteroscedasticity	No heteroscedasticity

Based on the SPSS outputs, several classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the appropriateness of the multiple regression analysis. The normality of residuals was first assessed

using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) test, which yielded a significance value of 0.001. This result, being below the 0.05 threshold, suggests that the residuals are not normally distributed. However, considering the relatively large sample size ($N = 305$), the Central Limit Theorem (CLT) was invoked, which posits that the distribution of sample means tends to approach normality as the sample size increases. Additionally, visual inspection through the histogram of standardized residuals showed an approximately normal bell-shaped distribution, and the normal probability (P–P) plot revealed that data points were closely aligned along the diagonal line, thereby supporting the assumption of approximate normality.

To test the linearity assumption, scatterplots of standardized predicted values against standardized residuals, as well as partial regression plots, were examined. These plots indicated a linear relationship between the independent variables (loneliness, academic stress, and bullying) and the dependent variable, confirming that the linearity assumption was met. Multicollinearity among the predictors was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with all VIF values falling below 1.2—the highest being 1.136. These values are well below the standard cut-off point of 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern in the model.

Lastly, the heteroscedasticity assumption was tested using the Glejser method, in which absolute residuals were regressed on the independent variables. The significance values were 0.998 for the loneliness variable and 0.806 for the academic stress variable. Both values exceeded the 0.05 threshold, suggesting that the variance of the residuals was constant across all levels of the predictors, thereby confirming the assumption of homoscedasticity. In sum, despite the statistically significant non-normality from the K–S test, the large sample size and visual evidence support the use of parametric tests. All other assumptions—linearity, absence of multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity—were satisfactorily met, confirming that the regression analysis could be validly and reliably applied to the data.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of the Effect of Loneliness and Academic Stress on Bullying

Variables	B (Unstandardized Coefficient)	Std. Error	Beta (Standardized Coefficient)	t-value	p-value	Description
(Constant)	27.300	3.470	–	8.103	0.000	Baseline level of bullying when independent variables are zero.
Loneliness	-0.262	0.092	-0.164	-2.897	0.004	Significant negative effect: higher loneliness is associated with lower bullying.
Academic Stress	+0.172	0.075	+0.127	2.268	0.003	Significant positive effect: higher academic stress is associated with more bullying.

The regression analysis reveals that both loneliness and academic stress are statistically significant predictors of bullying behavior among students. Loneliness exhibited a negative regression coefficient ($B = -0.262$, $p = 0.004$), indicating that students who experience higher levels of loneliness are less likely to engage in bullying behavior. This may reflect a tendency toward social withdrawal or internalizing symptoms rather than outward aggression. Conversely, academic stress demonstrated a positive and significant effect on bullying ($B = 0.172$, $p = 0.003$). This suggests that students experiencing higher levels of academic pressure are more likely to exhibit bullying behavior, possibly as a maladaptive coping mechanism or an expression of frustration.

Both variables have relatively modest but statistically meaningful standardized coefficients (Beta), which further support their unique contributions in the model.

Table 5. Simultaneous Test of the Effects of Loneliness and Academic Stress on Bullying (ANOVA)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig. (p-value)	Description
Regression	387.546	2	193.274	7.393	0.001	Loneliness and academic stress together have a statistically significant effect on bullying.
Residual	7.810.705	301	27.282	–	–	The variance in bullying not explained by the predictors.
Total	8.289.240	303	–	–	–	Total variance in the bullying variable.

The ANOVA results indicate a statistically significant combined effect of loneliness and academic stress on bullying behavior ($F(2, 301) = 7.393, p = 0.001$). This confirms that, when analyzed together, the two independent variables significantly explain the variance in bullying among students. Although the explained variance (R^2) is relatively limited, the significance of the F-test indicates that the regression model is effective in identifying a meaningful relationship between these psychological stressors and bullying behavior. These findings underscore the value of addressing both emotional (loneliness) and academic (stress) dimensions when designing interventions to reduce bullying in educational institutions, especially in residential learning environments such as in a *pesantren*.

The regression analysis aimed to elucidate the effective contribution of loneliness and academic stress to bullying behavior. The model demonstrated overall statistical significance ($F = 7.393, p = 0.001$), indicating that these independent variables collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in bullying. Specifically, the calculated R^2 value of 0.0468 suggests that approximately 4.68% of the variability in bullying behavior can be explained by loneliness and academic stress. Individually, loneliness exhibited a negative and statistically significant unique contribution to bullying ($\beta = -0.164, t = -2.897, p = 0.004$). Conversely, academic stress demonstrated a positive and statistically significant unique contribution ($\beta = 0.127, t = 2.268, p = 0.003$). Despite the moderate proportion of variance explained, the statistical significance of both predictors and the overall model affirms their relevant roles in understanding the dynamics of bullying among students.

Loneliness, academic stress, and bullying have intricate and interconnected effects on students in *pesantrens*. Research indicates that bullying interactions are linked to various ecological layers, impacting how students evaluate themselves and their peers (Strindberg, 2023). Furthermore, victims of severe or frequent bullying can experience post-traumatic stress symptoms, avoidance behaviors, and anxiety, affecting their mental health and emotional well-being (Kurniawan et al., 2021). Studies also highlight the negative impacts of bullying, such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and substance abuse, emphasizing the importance of prevention strategies and increased awareness within school communities (Swastikaningsih et al., 2023). Additionally, adolescents who experience bullying are at a higher risk of suicidal behaviors, with loneliness, sleep disturbances, and alcohol consumption mediating a significant portion of this association, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to address these factors and reduce adverse outcomes among students (Hasan et al., 2021). Moreover, peer affiliation, bullying victimization, and loneliness play crucial roles in predicting substance use among adolescents, highlighting the

need for early intervention to prevent loneliness and substance use in students who have experienced bullying victimization (Kim et al., 2020).

A range of studies have highlighted the complex interplay between loneliness, academic stress, and bullying in students. Li et al (2021) and Zhang et al (2021) both found that loneliness plays a significant role in the relationship between bullying and depression, with Li also identifying a moderating effect of self-esteem. Kurniawan et al (2021) further emphasized the mental health impact of bullying, particularly the development of post-traumatic stress symptoms. Madsen et al (2024) expanded on the role of loneliness, showing a strong association between loneliness and both school and cyberbullying victimization. Research indicates that loneliness is a predictor of cyberbullying among college students in West Java, with family loneliness positively influencing cyberbullying behaviour (Putri & Kusdiyati, 2023). Additionally, loneliness mediates the relationship between bullying victimization and substance use, such as tobacco and alcohol, among adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the detrimental effects of social isolation on risky behaviours (Chowdhury, 2020). Furthermore, studies emphasize that loneliness contributes to academic procrastination, decreased achievement, and negative emotions, affecting students' overall academic experience and mental health (Luan, 2022).

Recent scholarly investigations have increasingly highlighted the relevance of Islamic spiritual approaches in addressing the psychological challenges experienced by students in educational settings. Academic stress—one of the most pervasive issues among adolescents—has been shown to decrease in environments that promote democratic parenting and strengthen spiritual values, particularly within Islamic-based schools (Utari & Hamid, 2021). Furthermore, Islamic counseling methods have demonstrated efficacy in alleviating the psychological impact of bullying, contributing to improved mental well-being among students (Faiz et al., 2019; Alfarina & Widiasmara, 2022; Bahri et al., 2024). These findings suggested that the integration of Islamic values and therapeutic techniques within school contexts can serve as an effective response to two prominent stressors faced by students: academic pressure and bullying.

These methods typically incorporate spiritual approaches such as tazkiyatun nafs (soul purification), muhasabah (self-reflection), dzikir (remembrance of Allah), tilawah al-Qur'an (Qur'anic recitation), and doa (supplication) as therapeutic tools to help students cope with emotional distress. For example, tazkiyatun nafs is often used to guide students in cleansing negative emotions and building resilience through increased spiritual awareness and self-discipline. Similarly, structured muhasabah sessions allow students to evaluate their behavior in light of Islamic values, helping them develop positive coping mechanisms in response to bullying experiences. These techniques, integrated within the counseling process, aim not only to reduce psychological symptoms such as anxiety and depression, but also to strengthen students' spiritual well-being and self-esteem.

Of particular note is the application of Spiritual Mindfulness, which has been found to effectively reduce stress levels among university students, especially during periods of heightened academic pressure, such as thesis completion (Munif et al., 2019; Yandri, et al., 2023). Spiritual Mindfulness is a concept developed from Islamic psychological perspectives, which emphasizes present-moment awareness while maintaining a strong spiritual connection with Allah. This practice involves conscious attention to thoughts and feelings without judgment, accompanied by spiritual rituals such as dzikir, tilawah al-Qur'an, shalat sunnah, and doa. It encourages individuals to view academic and emotional challenges as part of Allah's divine decree (qadha dan qadar), fostering a sense of surrender (tawakkul) and emotional calm.

In practical implementation, students are guided to engage in daily reflective practices, such as mindful breathing combined with *dzikir*, writing spiritual journals that include verses of the Qur'an related to perseverance, and practicing gratitude (*syukur*) in moments of academic fatigue. Findings from Yandri et al. (2023) showed that students who engaged in structured Spiritual Mindfulness sessions for four weeks experienced significant reductions in academic stress and reported feeling more emotionally connected and spiritually centered. Thus, Islamic spiritual responses—embodied through practices like Spiritual Mindfulness and counseling rooted in Islamic teachings—present a promising framework for enhancing psychological resilience among students, particularly in Muslim-majority educational settings.

Although Islamic approaches offer a valuable framework for addressing psychological concerns—particularly in *pesantren* settings where spiritual values are deeply embedded—it is important to acknowledge that religious solutions may not resonate with all students. Some individuals may require secular psychological interventions to effectively manage their mental health challenges, especially those who respond better to cognitive-behavioral strategies or who may be experiencing deeper clinical symptoms such as depression or trauma-related disorders.

Therefore, a hybrid approach that integrates both Islamic spiritual counseling and evidence-based secular methods such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), or psychoeducation on emotional regulation can be considered. For instance, counselors in *pesantren* could be trained to incorporate emotional literacy programs, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), and peer-support initiatives alongside spiritual interventions. Such a balanced model allows flexibility in responding to students' diverse psychological needs while still respecting the religious ethos of the *pesantren* environment.

This study was subject to several limitations. First, the sample was drawn from a single region in Indonesia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to *pesantren* in other cultural or regional contexts. Second, the data were collected via self-report measures, which may introduce response bias. Third, the study examined only the associations between bullying, loneliness, and academic stress, thereby precluding conclusions about causality. Despite these limitations, the findings were expected to contribute meaningfully to the understanding of the psychological challenges faced by *pesantren* students in Indonesia. They also provided a foundation for developing both spiritual and non-spiritual (secular) intervention strategies that can be adapted and implemented by school counselors and educators to support students' mental well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed significant correlations between the variables of loneliness and bullying, as well as between academic stress and bullying, with significance values falling below the alpha threshold of 0.05. Moreover, the findings demonstrated a significant combined influence of loneliness and academic stress on students' vulnerability to bullying. These results indicated that students who experience higher levels of loneliness and academic pressure tend to be more susceptible to becoming targets of bullying behavior. This highlights the importance of early psychological and educational interventions in *pesantren* environments to reduce emotional distress and improve student well-being.

In light of these findings, the integration of Islamic spiritual approaches—such as Islamic counseling techniques (e.g., *tazkiyatun nafs*, *muhasabah*, *dzikir*) and the practice of Spiritual Mindfulness—holds promise as a culturally and theologically relevant framework for mitigating the

psychological effects of loneliness, academic stress, and bullying. These spiritually grounded practices not only address individual emotional needs but also strengthen students' spiritual resilience and sense of social belonging within *pesantren* settings.

Future research is encouraged to investigate the causal relationships among these variables through longitudinal or experimental designs, such as single-subject experimental designs (SSED) or quasi-experimental interventions. Variables such as spiritual well-being, self-esteem, and perceived peer support may serve as mediating or moderating factors worth exploring. Additionally, the development and testing of Islamic-based intervention models (e.g., group counseling modules with spiritual content) could offer practical tools for educators and counselors in *pesantren* to foster a safer, more supportive environment for students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: The authors gratefully acknowledge the time, insights, and experiences generously shared by all respondents who participated in this study. Their valuable contributions were integral to the successful completion of this research.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS: HY conceived the study, designed the methodology and software, carried out validation and formal analysis, led the investigation and data curation, wrote the initial draft, handled visualization, supervised the project, and secured funding. DJ participated in the conceptualization, methodology, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, and data curation, in addition to reviewing and revising the manuscript. AA supported software development, validation, formal analysis, data curation, and visualization, as well as contributed to writing and revising the manuscript. YY was involved in the methodology and resources, and provided supervision and assistance with writing and editing. RR, DD, and TY contributed to the investigation, resources, and data curation, and assisted with writing and editing the manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: The authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this article. All authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript and declare no relevant financial or non-financial relationships that could be viewed as potential conflicts of interest.

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