Spiritual Coping Strategies to Reduce Academic Stress: a Phenomenological Study of Emerging Adulthood among PAI Students

Nova Nur A'ini*)
IAIN Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia
E-mail: nova2211110131@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id

Nurul Wahdah
IAIN Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia
E-mail: nurul.wahdah@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id

Surawan
IAIN Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia
E-mail: surawan@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id

*) Corresponding Author

Abstract: Spiritual coping strategies are an important approach in helping students reduce academic stress in emerging adulthood. This study aims to identify the factors contributing to academic stress among PAI students at IAIN Palangka Raya, understand how to deal with it through spiritual coping strategies, and understand the factors that influence spiritual coping. This study used a qualitative approach of phenomenology type, with the subjects being 7 PAI students from the batches of 2020, 2021, and 2022. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which are in-depth interviews to explore participants' experiences, views and perceptions. Data validation was conducted using member checking techniques, then analyzed through three stages: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. The results showed that the main factors affecting academic stress of PAI students at IAIN Palangka Raya include anxiety about one's ability, parents' expectations, competition with friends, task load, and tight class schedule. The spiritual coping strategies used are self-directing, deferring, and collaborative. Meanwhile, the success of spiritual coping strategies was influenced by education, life experience, and maturity of thinking. This study shows that integrating spiritual aspects is essential in helping students deal with academic stress in an Islamic education environment, and can serve as a basis for designing spiritual-based mentoring or counseling programs in religious tertiary institutions. The practical implication of these findings is that Islamic educational institutions need to develop curricula, guidance services, and mentoring programs that explicitly accommodate spiritual approaches in dealing with academic pressure, in order to create a more supportive and holistic learning environment for students.

Abstrak: *Strategi koping spiritual adalah pendekatan penting dalam membantu mahasiswa mengurangi stres akademik pada masa dewasa awal. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap stres akademik di kalangan mahasiswa PAI di IAIN Palangka Raya, memahami cara menghadapinya melalui strategi koping spiritual, dan memahami faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi koping spiritual. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif jenis fenomenologi, dengan subjek sebanyak 7 mahasiswa PAI dari angkatan 2020, 2021, dan 2022. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, yaitu wawancara mendalam untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman, pandangan, dan persepsi peserta. Validasi data dilakukan menggunakan teknik member checking, kemudian*

dianalisis melalui tiga tahap: kondensasi data, presentasi data, dan penarikan kesimpulan atau verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa faktor utama yang mempengaruhi stres akademik mahasiswa PAI di IAIN Palangka Raya meliputi kecemasan terhadap kemampuan diri, harapan orang tua, persaingan dengan teman, beban tugas, dan jadwal kelas yang padat. Strategi koping spiritual yang digunakan adalah mengarahkan diri sendiri, menunda, dan kolaboratif. Sementara itu, keberhasilan strategi koping spiritual dipengaruhi oleh pendidikan, pengalaman hidup, dan kedewasaan berpikir. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa mengintegrasikan aspek spiritual sangat penting dalam membantu siswa mengatasi stres akademik di lingkungan pendidikan Islam, dan dapat menjadi dasar untuk merancang program pendampingan atau konseling berbasis spiritual di perguruan tinggi agama. Implikasi praktis dari temuan ini adalah bahwa institusi pendidikan Islam perlu mengembangkan kurikulum, layanan bimbingan, dan program mentoring yang secara eksplisit mengakomodasi pendekatan spiritual dalam menghadapi tekanan akademik, guna menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih mendukung dan holistik bagi siswa.

INTRODUCTION

Student is a complicated transition period in a person's life cycle, especially in the emerging adulthood age range, which is between 18 and 25 years old (Anggraeni, 2023). This age stage is characterized by self-discovery, emotional independence, and adjustment to various social and academic demands (Arnett, 2024). In the Indonesian context, the dynamics of emerging adulthood are also influenced by cultural factors such as extended family expectations, religious norms, and collective pressure to be economically and socially independent (Sugiharto & Agustina, 2024; Wijaya & Utami, 2021)

Students in emerging adulthood are faced with various pressures, such as increased academic responsibilities, family demands, social pressures, and concerns about the future (Hamdanah & Surawan, 2022; Nugraha, 2023; Ariyadi et al., 2025). In the lecture environment, academic stress is one of the forms of psychological pressure most experienced by students (Bela et al., 2023). This stress can come from piling up assignments, rigorous exams, pressure to achieve high grades, and demands to complete studies on time (Stubbs et al., 2023; Alvanajati et al., 2024). If this stress is not handled properly, it can have a negative impact on mental health, decrease motivation to learn, and even lead to serious psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, or burnout (Yasmin et al., 2020; Aida et al., 2025).

There are many strategies that can be pursued to help students reduce academic stress (Jeyasingh, 2022). These include psychological approaches such as relaxation techniques, time management, and counseling, as well as social approaches involving support from peers, family, or lecturers (Alhasani & Orji, 2025; Fadhil et al., 2025). However, one strategy that has recently begun to attract attention in psychological and educational studies is spiritual coping (Szcześniak et al., 2020). Spiritual coping refers to the way a person uses the values of spirituality or religiosity as a source of strength to cope with life stresses, including academic stress (Ekwonye et al., 2020).

Students who have a strong spiritual life tend to be more able to find meaning in difficulties, feel connected to something

bigger than themselves, and have hope and inner calm in facing challenges (Rosyad, 2021; Surawan & Mazrur, 2020). This becomes even more interesting when studied on PAI students, who in the education process are not only required to understand the cognitive aspects of religion, but are also expected to have spiritual depth and morals that reflect Islamic values (A'ini & Majidi, 2024; Sofiana & Afwadzi, 2021; A'ini et al., 2025). Theoretically, the focus on Islamic Education students is important because there is a dual role that must be lived, namely on the one hand there are academic demands and on the other hand there are demands for symbolic religiosity (Kurniasih et al., 2024).

PAI students are required to excel academically as well as to be role models in the appreciation of Islamic values, both in speech, attitude, and daily behavior (Mahariah, 2020). This position creates a typical double pressure, especially in situations of academic stress, because there is an expectation to maintain a religious image that is in line with the scientific and moral identity established by the study program (Ahmad & Surahman, 2023). Thus, the study of spiritual coping strategies in PAI students becomes very relevant to understand how academic and spiritual stresses are managed simultaneously in the context of Islamic higher education.

Although there have been many studies on academic stress and coping strategies, gaps are still evident in the context of emerging adulthood, especially among students with an Islamic education background. In addition, previous studies have not categorized spiritual coping strategies based on the indicators proposed by Pargament, (2001). Previous studies such as those conducted by Lutfi & Asyanti, (2023) have explained the importance of spiritual coping as a way of overcoming life pressures in emerging adolescents. While there is research from Rahmawati & Asyanti, (2023) which explains the spiritual coping used by adolescents who commit self harm. The research from Dunn et al., (2020) also

explains the philosophy of spiritual coping carried out to overcome pressure on the elderly.

Therefore, this study has its own differences and uniqueness, namely by exploring in depth the forms of spiritual coping strategies used by students in dealing with academic pressure in emerging adulthood, and analyzing how these strategies can contribute to reducing academic stress. Another uniqueness of this study lies in the use of indicators of spiritual coping strategies from Pargament, (2001) namely; namely Self-Directing, Collaborative, and Deferring.

In his theoretical framework, Pargament (2001) divides spiritual coping strategies into three main categories: (1) Self-Directing, where individuals rely on themselves in dealing with problems; (2) Deferring, where individuals leave problem solving entirely to God; and (3) Collaborative, where individuals build partnerships between themselves and God in dealing with stress. This model is important as a foundation for understanding spiritual dynamics in overcoming stress, especially in PAI students who are in the emerging adulthood phase.

This research is particularly interesting because it combines two aspects that are often separated, namely academic stress and spirituality. In high-stress situations, students need not only academic skills or social support, but also a strong spiritual foundation to maintain their emotional and mental stability (Zahro, 2024). This helps to understand more deeply how Islamic values are applied in the coping strategies that students use in their daily lives.

The importance of this research lies in its contribution to a more comprehensive coping strategy. In the world of Islamic education, an approach that integrates spiritual aspects is needed so that student development programs are not only cognitive or technical, but also include character building and mental resilience through a religious approach (Chanifah et al., 2021; Husniah et al., 2025; Syahmidi et al., 2025). The results of this study can be used as a foundation in

designing a spiritual-based mentoring or counseling program that is more in line with the needs of PAI students, as well as a reference for other Islamic educational institutions in dealing with students' psychological problems as a whole.

Based on the above background, this study aims to understand the factors that cause academic stress in PAI students of IAIN Palangka Raya emerging adulthood, analyze the spiritual coping strategies used, and understand the factors that influence these coping strategies.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design, aiming to deeply understand participants' subjective experiences related to the academic challenges they face (Kusumajanti et al., 2025). This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring participants' experiences in dealing with academic stress.

The participants in this study consisted of seven PAI students at IAIN Palangka Raya, selected through purposive sampling, which is the deliberate selection of participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The inclusion criteria used include: being in the early adult age range, being from the 2020, 2021, and 2022 cohorts, and having a Grade Point Average (GPA) below 3.0. The number of participants was found to be seven because in qualitative research, especially phenomenological research, the main focus is on the depth of data, not the number. A small sample size is considered adequate if the data obtained has reached information saturation, meaning no new significant information is found from additional interviews (Henny et al., 2024).

Data collection was conducted through observation and in-depth interviews to explore participants' experiences and perceptions in more detail on the topic under study. Data validity in this study was maintained through member checking, which involved asking participants to review the interview results or the researcher's initial interpretations to ensure they were consistent with the participants' experiences (Humble & Radina, 2025). Meanwhile, data reliability was maintained through consistency in conducting interviews, using the same interview guidelines for all participants, and researcher reflection to minimize subjective bias.

Data analysis followed the model proposed by Miles et al., (2020), which consists of three stages: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Each stage was conducted iteratively, allowing the researcher to reflect on and adjust findings throughout the process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Factors Affecting Academic Stress

Based on observations in the field, it was found that some students experience academic stress. This stress arises due to the various pressures they face during the study process. Academic stress is a psychological condition commonly experienced by students in response to pressures stemming from academic demands (Fuente et al., 2020; Adom et al., 2020). Factors that influence the emergence of academic stress are very diverse, such as anxiety about self-ability, parental expectations, competition with peers, task load, and busy class schedules (Hansi & Senevirathne, 2025; Saeed et al., 2020).

1. Self-Assessment Anxiety

Many students experience stress because they doubt their academic abilities (Yasmin et al., 2020). Some of them even think that they have the wrong major or feel that they are not competent enough to complete the lectures (Hasanah, 2023). This is reflected in the statements of several research participants. FR, a 2020 PAI student, stated:

"I was once stressed because I doubted my abilities, and I felt myself very stupid." (February 22, 2025).

FS, a student of PAI class of 2021, also revealed:

"I once doubted my own abilities, because in the third semester I started to feel that I had the wrong major." (February 24, 2025).

Apart from FS, AN also had doubts about her abilities because she felt she had the wrong major. The same thing was also felt by MY, a student of PAI class of 2021, who stated:

"Once in a while I feel doubt about my abilities when I have a lot of assignments." (Februari 26, 2025).

Furthermore, MF, a PAI student class of 2020, also said:

"Honestly, it was because I doubted my ability and had thoughts of quitting college." (Februari 27, 2025).

In addition, MZ a PAI student class of 2021, also stated:

"Sometimes I feel doubtful about my academic abilities, thinking whether I can pass certain subjects." (March 04, 2025).

However, unlike the others, MU, a PAI student in the class of 2022, did not feel depressed because he doubted his abilities. Research from Firnando & Suhesty, (2024) also states that doubts about one's own abilities are often experienced by students, especially in the early stages of college. This can be caused by pressure to achieve academic achievement. This phenomenon is closely related to the concept of impostor syndrome, which is a feeling of unworthiness or inadequacy of one's own achievements despite having clear evidence of competence (El-Ashry et al., 2024). A systematic review by Yang et al., (2024) In a cross-cultural systematic review, it was found that impostor syndrome is universal and has a significant impact on the self-confidence, motivation, and mental health of students in various countries, including Asian and Western contexts.

2. Parental Expectations

High expectations from families are also a factor that causes stress for some students (Haspolat & Yalçın, 2023). Students feel burdened to get good grades so as not to disappoint their parents (Ladapase & Sona, 2023). This is reflected in the statement made by AN, a 2021 PAI student:

"I was once depressed when the grades started to come out, because parents must expect a lot from their children, so that's what made me depressed." (February 25, 2025).

The same thing was also experienced by MZ, a PAI student class of 2021, who stated:

"There are definitely expectations of my family and those closest to me that make me burdened". (March 04, 2025).

Meanwhile, MU, FR, FS, MY, and MF did not experience pressure from family or close people's expectations of their academic achievements.

Research from Ulfa & Nurjaman, (2023) also revealed that pressure from parents often makes students feel burdened, which in turn can interfere with students' learning motivation and academic performance. This is reinforced by Ghanantika, (2024) which found that the social dimension of perceived parental expectations is a consistent predictor of academic anxiety, especially in the student age group. Rizwan et al., (2020) study, which surveyed 977 students in Punjab, Pakistan, found a significant positive correlation between perceptions of parental expectations and academic stress. Regression results showed that parental expectations predicted 88% of the variation in academic stress.

3. Competition with Peers

Some students feel stressed because they have to compete with their friends in academic matters (Gisela et al., 2025). Feelings of being rivaled can trigger stress, especially if students feel left behind or less competitive than their peers (Lee et al., 2021). This is reflected in the statement made by MF, a PAI student class of 2020, revealed:

> "Honestly, if you feel competed with your own friends, yes, although not entirely because of that." (February 27, 2025).

Meanwhile, MU, FR, FS, AN, MY, and MZ stated that they had never been depressed because of competition with peers. Research by Khafifah et al., (2023) found that academic competition between peers in class can increase the stress burden for students. In line with that, research from Mildawani et al., (2022) revealed that self-regulation and focus on personal processes, not social comparison, play an important role in maintaining the mental health of students in a competitive environment. Lee et al., (2020) shows that competitive tension causes emotional stress and cynicism, two main dimensions of academic burnout among Korean students and South Korean student students

4. Task Load

Students feel stressed due to the many tasks that have piled up (Mir & Roy, 2024). Some students admit to having difficulty managing time, especially for students who also work while studying (Lovin & Bernardeau-Moreau, 2022). As stated by FS, a 2021 PAI student:

> "The number of assignments has also made me depressed and overwhelmed because now I am studying while working." (February 24, 2025).

Meanwhile, MY, a student of PAI class of 2021, revealed that:

> "Once in a while I feel doubtful about my abilities when I have a lot of assignments." (February 26, 2025).

In addition, MU a PAI student class of 2022 also stated:

> "The number of tasks that accumulate is enough to make me feel depressed." (February 17, 2025).

The same thing was also experienced by FR, a student of PAI class of 2020 who felt stressed because of the many tasks. Meanwhile, AN, MF, and MZ never felt pressure due to accumulated tasks. Research from Tibus & Ledesma, (2021) also revealed that task load is a significant factor in triggering academic stress. This phenomenon is also supported by Sprung & Rogers, (2021) which states that students who have multiple roles, such as working while studying, tend to experience role conflicts that can affect life balance and mental health. A study by Yangdon et al., (2021) with a sample of 385 Science and Technology students in Bhutan found that heavy workloads contribute significantly to dissatisfaction with campus life and a decline in emotional management skills.

5. Busy Course Schedule

Students who have to divide their time between learn and work often feel overwhelmed (Picton, 2021). The tight schedule of lectures, especially courses that last all day, makes students experience fatigue and lack of rest time (Mesra et al., 2021). Meanwhile, FS, a 2021 PAI student, said:

> "For the tight scheduling of lectures, honestly I feel pressured but I just keep going." (February 27, 2025).

Other than that, a statement from MY, a 2021 PAI student

> "The tight class schedule also sometimes makes me a little depressed,

so I just don't have enough time to rest." (February 26, 2025).

In addition, MZ, a student of PAI class of 2021, also revealed:

"I feel pressured because of the tight schedule, especially while working at night, so I often feel sleepy during morning classes." (March 04, 2025).

The same thing was also felt by FS and FR who felt pressured due to the tight schedule of classes, because they had to study while working. Meanwhile, MU and AN did not feel pressured because of the busy class schedule. Research by Gusy et al., (2021) also states that high time pressure on students can cause fatigue and decreased productivity related to health. This is also reinforced by research by Aryani & Hartono, (2024) which states that students often feel overwhelmed because they have to meet academic demands as well as work responsibilities, which can exacerbate stress levels and reduce learning motivation. Research conducted by Picton, (2021) on medical students at the University of Birmingham in the UK concluded that high academic and clinical workloads cause stress, anxiety, and fatigue. The dual roles of work and study exacerbate the imbalance in life.

Academic stress factors are interrelated and reinforce each other. Self-doubt can be exacerbated by high parental expectations, adding to psychological pressure (Mufatihah et al., 2025). Heavy course loads and busy schedules become even more stressful, especially for students who have to divide their time between school and work. Competition with peers can also reinforce feelings of low self-confidence. Thus, academic stress is not caused by a single factor but rather the result of a complex interaction between academic, social, and personal pressures (Rahmawati et al., 2025)

Table 1. Factors Affecting Academic Stress

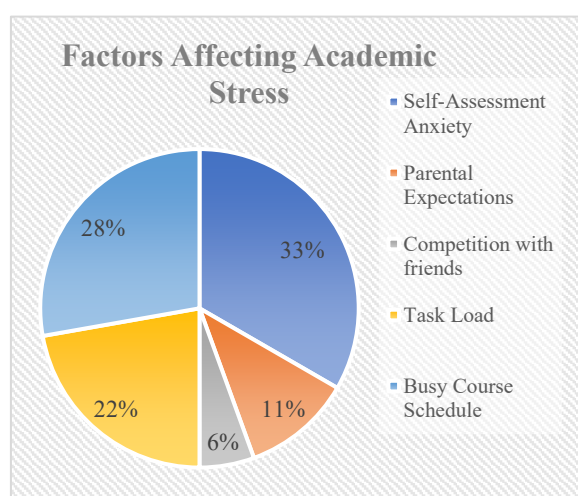| Factors	Subject						
	MU	FR	FS	AN	MY	MF	MZ
Self-Assessment Anxiety	√	√		√	√	√	√
Parental Expectations				√		√	
Competition with Peers					√		
Task Load	√	√	√		√		
Busy Course Schedule		√	√		√	√	√

Figure 1: Presentation Factors Affecting Academic Stress

Spiritual Coping Strategies used by PAI Students IAIN Palangka Raya

Spiritual coping is a person's effort in dealing with pressure or stress by involving aspects of religion, spirituality, or belief in God's intervention (Pargament, 2001; Szcześniak et al., 2020). Based on the concept proposed by Pargament, (2001), there are three forms of spiritual coping strategies, namely: self-directing (relying on oneself without involving God much), deferring (minimal effort and tend to surrender completely to God), and collaborative (combining personal effort with surrender to God).

1. Self-Directing

The self-directing coping strategy in Pargament, (2001) theoretical framework

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refers to an orientation in which individuals view themselves as the main agent in dealing with problems, while God is positioned as a giver of freedom and capacity, not as an active partner in decision-making. This pattern is reflected in the statement of FS, a 2021 PAI student, who stated:

> "I adjust my time because I work part-time, and still try my best to do my assignments. And in times of stress, I am able to control myself." (February 24, 2025).

From the results of the interview above, FS relies more on himself than God in doing assignments and overcoming his problems, so the spiritual coping strategy he uses is self-directing. Research by Pihkala, (2024) states that the self-directing approach can be beneficial in certain situations, but can also cause additional stress if a person feels burdened by the full responsibility of problem solving.

In the context of Islamic education, this strategy is interesting to study further. The PAI curriculum teaches the importance of *ikhtiar* (effort) and *tawakkal* (trust in God) (Fazillah, 2021). Coping strategies that rely too much on themselves, such as in FS, indicate that the value of ikhtiar has been sufficiently embedded, but it could be that the value of *tawakkal* has not been fully internalized in the practice of student life. This can be a reflection for educators to further emphasize the balance between personal effort and trust in God in the spiritual learning process.

Thus, self-directed strategies such as those demonstrated by FS are in line with Pargament, (2001) concept of self-directing coping. These strategies can be useful for building independence, but still need to be balanced with the spiritual dimension so as not to cause excessive stress.

2. Deferring

According to Pargament's theory (2001) In the delaying approach, a person leaves all matters to God and chooses to wait for His help without making much real effort from oneself. An example of this strategy can be seen in the statement of MU, a 2022 PAI student:

> "I often postpone assignments until the mood is good, sometimes the deadline is tight. When depressed, I pray a lot to feel calmer." (February 17, 2025).

Likewise, AN, a 2021 student, said:

> "I usually take it easy, sometimes I postpone and do my assignments close to the deadline. If I'm stressed, I pray, and if I don't understand the material, I look for info on the internet." (February 25, 2025).

From the results of the interviews above, MU and AN tend to be relaxed and resigned when facing pressure due to assignments so that the spiritual coping strategy used is deferring. Research by Surzykiewicz et al., (2022), found that the religious coping strategy of deferring can affect a person's mental well-being, depending on the context and the way it is applied. In addition, research by Trierweiler & Franklin, (2023) found that passive deferring strategies can be negatively related to well-being, especially if not balanced with active efforts in coping with academic stress.

In the context of Islamic education, this strategy shows an understanding of the importance of prayer, but it may not be accompanied by the value of *ikhtiar* (maximum effort) as taught in the PAI curriculum (Kamal et al., 2022). Therefore, this approach needs to be pedagogically criticized so that students' understanding of *tawakkal* does not stop at mere resignation, but rather develops into an awareness of the importance of the balance between effort and trust in God.

3. Collaborative

Different from the previous strategy, the collaborative strategy describes a more active form of coping. In Pargament, (2001) theory, this is referred to as collaborative religious coping, which is when a person tries to solve problems while maintaining a close and open relationship with God. This can be seen in the statement of FR, a student of PAI class of 2020:

> "I do the assignments as best I can or *tawakkal* is the language, if it is difficult to ask friends. If I'm stressed, I usually hang out with friends to get rid of boredom."

The same thing was also done by MY who stated:

> "Working on assignments is flexible, sometimes in installments, while relaxing, and if there are difficulties, I usually ask friends or lecturers for help." (February 26, 2025).

This was also the case with MF, a student of PAI class of 2020:

> "Tasks are done according to my understanding, if it is difficult, I discuss it with friends, and if I am still confused, I do it as much as I can and then *tawakkal*." (February 27, 2025).

In addition, MZ, a student of PAI class of 2021 stated:

> "Piling up tasks makes me more disciplined in dividing my time, doing as much as possible without having to be perfect, and overcoming pressure by relaxing and seeking help from friends or lecturers when difficult." (March 04, 2025).

From the results of the interviews above, FR, MY, MF, and MZ not only pray or surrender, but also actively seek solutions, both through personal efforts and social assistance, so the coping strategy used was collaborative.

Javaid et al.'s research (2024) states that someone who applies collaborative religious coping has lower stress levels and better mental well-being compared to those who use other coping strategies. Furthermore, research by Osman & Ahmed, (2021) found that the collaborative religious coping strategy acts as a protective factor against mental health problems, including suicidal behavior.

Collaborative coping strategies are the most common among PAI students because they are in line with Islamic teachings on the balance between effort and *tawakkal* (Mutaqin & Rosada, 2025). Indonesia's collectivistic culture that emphasizes cooperation also reinforces this tendency. In addition, the PAI curriculum also encourages active religious understanding, in line with Pargament, (2001) theory that collaborative coping is the most adaptive form.

Table 2. Spiritual Coping Strategies.

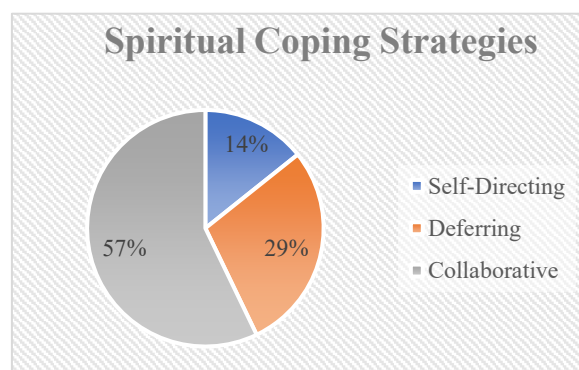| Spiritual Coping Strategies	Subject	Amount
Self-Directing	FS	1
Deferring	MU, AN	2
Collaborative	FR, MY, MF, MZ	4

Figure 2: Presentation Spiritual Coping Strategies.

Factors Determining the Success of Spiritual Coping Strategies

Everyone has a unique way of dealing with life's pressures, one of which is spiritual coping, which is managing stress through spiritual beliefs and values. This strategy can provide calmness, hope and psychological resilience, but its effectiveness is influenced

by internal factors such as education, experience and maturity of thinking (Pargament, 2001).

1. **Education**

Education, especially those related to religious values, forms the basis of a person's understanding of spirituality and how to deal with it in difficult situations (Torralba et al., 2021). As explained by MF, a student of PAI class of 2020:

> "From education, I learned from my parents and ustadz to calm my heart and spirit to face life's tests." (February 27, 2025).

In addition, FS, a student of PAI class of 2021, revealed:

> "There are things from education that help me overcome pressure, namely when the teacher provides solutions during PM 2." (February 24, 2025).

Furthermore, a statement from MY, a student of PAI class of 2021:

> "At that time, a lecturer reminded me of the importance of getting enough sleep, maintaining a diet, and doing assignments on time so as not to accumulate." (February 26, 2025).

Meanwhile, FR, AN, MU, and MZ stated that there was no support from educational factors in their spiritual coping strategies. Research by Widodo & Nusantara, (2020) and Katni et al., (2022) shows that non-formal education, especially from family and religious leaders, plays an important role in shaping mental resilience. In addition, research by Hoferichter et al., (2022) and Wuthrich et al., (2020) emphasized the importance of educator support in overcoming academic stress.

In Islamic education, spiritual values are not only conveyed cognitively, but also internalized through exemplary teachers, advice, and routine worship practices (Nurlela et al., 2025). Through guidance from parents, ustadz, and lecturers, students not only understand the concepts of patience and *tawakkal*, but also learn to apply them in real situations (Amalia & Saifuddin, 2022). Thus, Islamic education acts as an important medium in shaping spiritual coping strategies, both through formal learning and meaningful daily interactions (Elfattah, 2025).

2. **Experience**

Life experiences, such as facing failure or loss, can strengthen beliefs and make a person more dependent on spiritual aspects (Aggarwal et al., 2023). This is reflected in the statement of FR, a 2020 PAI student, who said that:

> "To overcome this, I learn more from personal experience because I have failed before." (February 22, 2025).

In addition, a statement from FS, a student of PAI class of 2021:

> "From personal experience, there is something like fishing that can relieve the pressure." (February 24, 2025).

Meanwhile, MU, AN, MF, MY and MZ did not reveal that life experience is one of the supporting factors for spiritual coping strategies. The above is in accordance with Rachmad's research, (2022) which revealed that life experience strengthens a person's capacity to manage academic stress.

In Islamic education, life experiences are seen as part of the spiritual learning process. When students experience failure or stress, values such as patience, sincerity, and *tawakkal* taught in the PAI curriculum provide a framework for understanding the experience spiritually (Sinta et al., 2024). Thus, the experience is not only a source of stress, but also a means of internalizing religious values and forming more mature and faith-oriented coping strategies.

3. **Maturity of Thinking**

Maturity of thinking allows a person to see problems more deeply and interpret them

as part of the life process, not just pressure (Goldman, 2022). This is reflected in the statement of MF, a PAI student class of 2020, who stated:

"Many of my friends have graduated, there I began to despair, but in the end, I thought maybe this was one of the tests Allah gave me." (February 27, 2025).

In addition, a statement from MU, a student of PAI class of 2022:

"My success in overcoming pressure was due to forcing myself to keep attending lectures." (February 17, 2025).

Furthermore, a statement from MZ, a student of PAI class of 2021

"I overcome the pressure with the power of my own mind and give self-reward after successfully passing it." (March 04, 2025).

In addition, FR, a PAI student class of 2020, stated:

"From the way I think it also helps in overcoming the pressure." (February 22, 2025).

The same thing was also expressed by FS and AN who stated that the way of thinking really helped overcome the pressure. Meanwhile, MY did not mention the role of thinking in overcoming pressure, so it is not included in the thinking maturity factor as a spiritual coping strategy.

This approach reflects cognitive maturity as described in Piaget's developmental theory. In the formal operational stage (around late adolescence to adulthood), individuals begin to be able to think abstractly, reflectively and consider various possibilities (Campos et al., 2023) . They can relate experiences to spiritual meanings, such as life trials, patience and perseverance. The ability to rationalize stress and see it as part of the growing process is also in line with the identity vs. role confusion stage in Erikson's theory, where individuals seek identity meaning and

stability, including in the spiritual dimension (Suhardono & Audifax, 2023).

The integration of Islamic values in education, which is adjusted to cognitive maturity, has a positive impact on moral and spiritual development, so that spiritual coping strategies are formed through the process of internalizing values such as patience and *tawakkal* (Nurjanah et al., 2024). Through the PAI curriculum that instills the values of patience, gratitude, and *tawakkal* reflectively, students learn to respond to stress with spiritual meaning, not just emotional reactions (Akip et al., 2024).

Table 3. Factors That Influencing Spiritual Coping Strategies

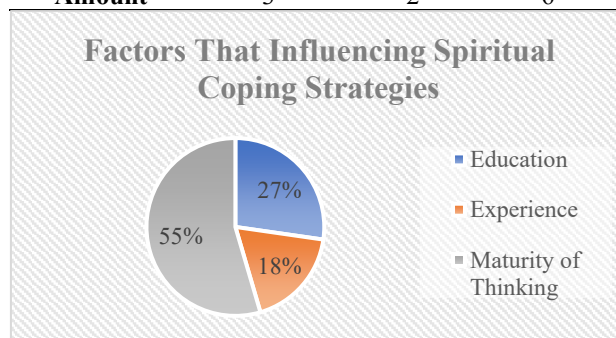| Subject	Factors		
	Education	Experience	Maturity of Thinking
MU			√
FR		√	√
FS	√	√	√
AN			√
MY	√		
MF	√		√
MZ			√
Amount	**3**	**2**	**6**

Figure 3: Presentation Factors That Influencing Spiritual Coping Strategies

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the main factors that influence academic stress experienced by PAI students at IAIN Palangka Raya include anxiety about their abilities, parental expectations, competition with friends, task load, and tight class schedules. Spiritual coping strategies used to overcome academic

stress are self-directing, deferring, and collaborative. Of the three, the collaborative strategy which combines active effort with surrender to God was the most widely used strategy in helping students manage academic stress. Meanwhile, the success of spiritual coping strategies is influenced by several important factors, such as education, life experience, and maturity of thinking.

This study confirms the important role of spiritual aspects in dealing with academic stress in Islamic educational settings. The findings not only add insight into coping strategies in students with religious backgrounds, but also provide a theoretical contribution in developing Pargament's religious coping model in the context of Muslim students. Practically, this can be applied through strengthening spirituality based character education, spiritual coping training, and providing counseling services that suit the needs of students. The limitation of this study lies in the limited scope of participants; therefore, future research is recommended to involve more participants from various backgrounds and institutions, as well as conduct comparative studies across gender and campus environments, to broaden the understanding of student coping with academic stress.

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