

## **The Lived Meaning of Islamic Spirituality in Students' Emotional Recovery After Bullying: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

*This study explores the role of Islamic spirituality in the emotional recovery of students who experienced bullying in an Islamic educational setting. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis involving students at an Islamic junior secondary school (MTs) in Lamongan, Indonesia. The findings identify four interconnected themes: self-acceptance through prayer and dhikr; spiritual reflection (tafakkur) and sincere acceptance (ikhlas) in reinterpreting trauma; the role of the pesantren environment and religious teachers in rebuilding positive self-identity; and emotional transformation through sustained worship. These findings demonstrate that Islamic spirituality serves as a positive religious coping strategy, fostering emotional regulation, resilience, and meaning reconstruction. The study underscores the importance of integrating Islamic spirituality into holistic emotional recovery within Islamic educational contexts.*

**Keywords:** Islamic spirituality, emotional recovery, bullying, Islamic psychology, *tasawuf* education

## **Makna Spiritualitas Islami dalam Proses Pemulihan Emosi Siswa Pascaperundungan: Suatu Analisis Fenomenologi Interpretatif**

### **Abstrak**

*Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran spiritualitas Islam dalam pemulihan emosional siswa yang mengalami perundungan di lingkungan pendidikan Islam. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan siswa Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) di Lamongan, Indonesia. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi empat tema yang saling berkaitan, yaitu penerimaan diri melalui salat dan zikir; refleksi spiritual (tafakkur) dan keikhlasan (ikhlas) dalam memaknai kembali pengalaman traumatis; peran lingkungan pesantren dan guru agama dalam membangun kembali identitas diri yang positif; serta transformasi emosional melalui praktik ibadah yang berkelanjutan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa spiritualitas Islam berfungsi sebagai strategi koping religius yang positif, mendorong regulasi emosi, ketahanan psikologis, dan rekonstruksi makna. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi spiritualitas Islam sebagai sumber pemulihan emosional yang holistik dalam konteks pendidikan Islam.*

**Kata kunci:** Spiritualitas Islami, pemulihan emosi, perundungan, psikologi Islam, pendidikan tasawuf

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## A. Introduction

Bullying has become one of the most persistent challenges in educational settings worldwide, with serious consequences for students' psychological, social, and academic development. Although Islamic educational institutions, such as madrasahs and pesantrens, are founded upon religious teachings and moral values that emphasize compassion (*rahmah*), brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), and good character (*adab*), empirical evidence indicates that bullying continues to occur in these environments.<sup>1</sup> Students may experience verbal, physical, psychological, and social forms of bullying that negatively affect their emotional well-being, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and academic engagement <sup>2</sup>. Within Islamic educational settings, these experiences may further influence students' spiritual development by disrupting their relationship with faith, worship, and religious identity.<sup>3</sup> Reports issued by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI, 2023) further demonstrate that violence against children in school environments remains a significant concern in Indonesia, including within religious-based educational institutions.

The psychological consequences of bullying extend beyond immediate emotional distress. Victims frequently experience anxiety, depression, fear, loneliness, diminished self-worth, and prolonged emotional trauma that may continue into adulthood.<sup>4</sup> While numerous intervention programs have focused on counseling, peer support, and school-based anti-bullying policies <sup>5</sup>, these approaches primarily address psychological and social dimensions. In Islamic educational contexts, however, emotional recovery cannot be separated from students' spiritual worldview because religious values shape how suffering, forgiveness, hope, and personal growth are understood. Consequently, recovery

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<sup>1</sup> Baharun et al., "Optimizing the Quality of Anti-Bullying Education Services in Islamic Boarding Schools"; Ma'rufah and Pristiwiyanto, "Peran Sekolah Dalam Menanggulangi Perilaku Bullying."

<sup>2</sup> Arseneault, "Annual Research Review"; Moore et al., "Consequences of Bullying Victimization in Childhood and Adolescence."

<sup>3</sup> Abu-Raiya and Pargament, "Religious Coping among Diverse Religions"; Pargament, *Religion and Coping*.

<sup>4</sup> Arseneault, "Annual Research Review"; Coloroso, *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander*; Olweus, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*.

<sup>5</sup> Rigby, *Bullying Interventions in Schools*.

processes should also consider the role of Islamic spirituality as an integral component of emotional healing.

Within Islamic psychology, spirituality is increasingly recognized as a fundamental resource for promoting psychological well-being and facilitating recovery from adversity. Rather than being limited to ritual observance, Islamic spirituality encompasses the process of meaning-making, awareness of God's presence, purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), and the development of inner peace through faith-based practices.<sup>6</sup> Religious coping theory explains that individuals often reinterpret stressful experiences through spiritual beliefs, enabling them to find meaning, maintain hope, and strengthen resilience when confronting suffering.<sup>7</sup> Within Islamic tradition, practices such as prayer, dhikr, tawakkul, tafakkur, patience, and sincerity function not only as acts of worship but also as psychological resources that foster emotional regulation and inner stability. Classical Muslim scholars, particularly<sup>8</sup>, emphasized that tranquility of the heart is achieved through sincere devotion to Allah, continuous remembrance, and self-reflection, principles that remain relevant in contemporary Islamic psychology.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that bullying has detrimental effects on students' mental health and that social support, psychotherapy, and school-based interventions contribute to recovery<sup>9</sup>. Other studies have highlighted the positive contribution of religious coping and spirituality in reducing psychological distress and promoting resilience<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless, existing literature has primarily examined spirituality as a coping strategy or therapeutic intervention rather than as a lived experience through which students interpret and reconstruct the meaning of their suffering. Empirical studies specifically exploring how students in Islamic educational institutions experience, internalize, and construct the lived meaning of Islamic spirituality

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<sup>6</sup> Abu-Raiya and Pargament, "Religious Coping among Diverse Religions"; Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health"; Rusdi and Subandi, *PSIKOLOGI ISLAM: Kajian Teoritik Dan Penelitian Empirik*.

<sup>7</sup> Pargament, *Religion and Coping*.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Terjemahan Ihya' Ulum al-Din*.

<sup>9</sup> Arseneault, "Annual Research Review"; Olweus, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*; Rigby, *Bullying Interventions in Schools*.

<sup>10</sup> Abu-Raiya and Pargament, "Religious Coping among Diverse Religions"; Pargament, *Religion and Coping*.

during emotional recovery after bullying remain limited. This gap is particularly evident within madrasah settings, where religious practices constitute an inseparable part of students' everyday lives.

Addressing this gap requires an approach capable of uncovering the subjective meanings embedded in students' experiences. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is especially appropriate because it seeks to understand how individuals make sense of significant life experiences and how meaning is constructed through reflection on those experiences.<sup>11</sup> Rather than measuring the effectiveness of spiritual practices, IPA enables researchers to explore how students themselves interpret prayer, dhikr, tawakkul, and other forms of Islamic spirituality as sources of emotional recovery and resilience following bullying.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the lived meaning of Islamic spirituality in the emotional recovery of students who have experienced bullying in Islamic educational settings. By employing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, this study seeks to understand how students construct meaning from their spiritual experiences, how Islamic values shape their emotional healing, and how spirituality contributes to the reconstruction of hope, resilience, and positive self-identity after experiences of bullying. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on Islamic psychology and phenomenological research while providing a culturally and religiously relevant perspective for developing emotional recovery approaches within Islamic educational institutions.

## **B. Research Methods**

This study employed a qualitative research design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the lived meaning of Islamic spirituality in students' emotional recovery after experiences of bullying. IPA was selected because the study aimed to understand how participants interpreted and constructed meaning from their experiences within their personal, social, and religious contexts. Unlike descriptive phenomenology, which focuses on describing

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<sup>11</sup> Smith et al., *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*.

the essence of lived experience through phenomenological reduction, IPA emphasizes participants' meaning-making while recognizing the researcher's interpretative role through the principle of the double hermeneutic. Compared with Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology, IPA provides a more systematic and idiographic analytical framework for examining how students construct the lived meaning of Islamic spirituality during emotional recovery after bullying.<sup>12</sup>

The study was conducted at an Islamic junior secondary school (Madrasah Tsanawiyah [MTs]) in Lamongan Regency, East Java, Indonesia. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling based on three inclusion criteria: (1) having experienced verbal, physical, or psychological bullying at school; (2) demonstrating emotional recovery following the bullying experience; and (3) engaging in Islamic spiritual practices, including salat, dhikr, Qur'anic recitation, du'a, tawakkul, or tafakkur, as part of their coping process. Six participants were included, consistent with the idiographic orientation of IPA, which prioritizes in-depth exploration of individual lived experiences rather than large sample sizes.<sup>13</sup>

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews as the primary method, supported by non-participant observations and document analysis to enhance methodological triangulation. Interview questions explored participants' experiences of bullying, emotional responses, spiritual practices, meaning-making, and emotional recovery. Interviews were conducted individually in a private setting to encourage open reflection and ensure confidentiality. Observations focused on participants' interactions within the school environment and involvement in religious activities, while available reflective writings, spiritual journals, and school documents were examined to enrich contextual understanding.

Data analysis followed the six stages of IPA proposed by Smith et al. (2009): (1) reading and re-reading interview transcripts, (2) making initial descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual notes, (3) developing emergent themes, (4) identifying connections among themes within each case, (5) repeating the process for subsequent cases, and (6) examining patterns across cases to generate

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<sup>12</sup> Smith et al., *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*.

<sup>13</sup> Smith et al., *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*.

superordinate themes while preserving each participant's unique lived experience. Throughout the analysis, interpretation was guided by the principle of the double hermeneutic, whereby participants interpreted their own experiences and the researcher interpreted how those meanings were constructed within the context of Islamic spirituality.

Trustworthiness was established through source triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement with the data, an audit trail, and researcher reflexivity to enhance credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional authority, and informed consent was secured from all participants and their parents or legal guardians before data collection. To protect participants' confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout the study, and all research data were securely maintained.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

#### **Self-Acceptance through Prayer and Dhikr**

The first superordinate theme revealed that participants experienced prayer and dhikr as pathways toward self-acceptance following bullying. Rather than functioning merely as religious rituals, these practices became meaningful spiritual experiences through which participants expressed emotional pain, sought comfort from Allah, and gradually reinterpreted their suffering. Emotional recovery emerged not because painful memories disappeared, but because participants attached new spiritual meaning to those experiences.

Participant 1 described prayer as a safe space to release self-blame and accept life's difficulties:

*P1: "I used to blame myself for everything that had happened in my life. However, after making prayer and dhikr a regular part of my daily routine, I gradually found a sense of peace. Through prayer, I came to believe that every person has their own trials, and mine are part of Allah's plan. This helped me accept myself with all my strengths and weaknesses."*

Similarly, Participant 4 explained that dhikr helped reduce feelings of disappointment and inferiority by fostering gratitude and trust in Allah:

*P4: "Whenever I felt disappointed in myself, I turned to prayer and dhikr. Remembering Allah gave me comfort and eased the burden in my heart. Over time, I stopped comparing myself with others and became more grateful for*

*what I had. That experience taught me to accept myself and trust that Allah created me with purpose."*

Although both participants relied on prayer and dhikr, they constructed different meanings from these spiritual practices. Participant 1 experienced prayer as a process of releasing self-blame and accepting Allah's decree, whereas Participant 4 understood dhikr as a means of overcoming feelings of inadequacy through gratitude and trust in Allah's purpose. These accounts reflect the idiographic nature of IPA, demonstrating that self-acceptance was shaped by each participant's personal emotional journey and spiritual interpretation.

From an IPA perspective, emotional recovery was experienced as a transformation in the meaning of bullying rather than the disappearance of painful memories. Through prayer and dhikr, participants reconstructed their identities from victims of bullying into individuals who perceived their experiences as meaningful trials that strengthened their relationship with Allah. This process illustrates the double hermeneutic, in which participants interpreted their own experiences while the researcher interpreted how these meanings were constructed within the context of Islamic spirituality.

These findings support Pargament's (2007) theory of religious coping and Abu-Raiya and Pargament's (2015) work on Islamic spirituality by demonstrating that prayer and dhikr facilitate positive meaning-making and emotional resilience. Beyond serving as coping strategies, however, they were experienced as lived spiritual practices through which participants reconstructed self-identity and achieved emotional recovery after bullying. Therefore, the lived meaning of prayer and dhikr lies in transforming emotional suffering into a spiritually meaningful experience that strengthens self-acceptance, faith, and resilience.

### **The Meaning of Sincerity and Spiritual Reflection on Traumatic Events**

The second superordinate theme revealed that participants reconstructed the meaning of bullying through ikhlas (sincere acceptance) and tafakkur (spiritual reflection). Rather than eliminating painful memories, these spiritual processes enabled participants to reinterpret bullying as part of Allah's wisdom and as an opportunity for personal growth. Emotional recovery emerged through changes in

the meaning participants attached to their experiences rather than through the disappearance of emotional pain.

Participant 2 described how tafakkur gradually changed the way bullying was understood:

*P2: "At first, I was angry and kept asking why this happened to me. But through tafakkur, I started to see that this experience had a purpose. It brought me closer to Allah and taught me to be more patient and stronger."*

Similarly, Participant 5 explained that ikhlas was not about forgetting the painful experience but about entrusting it to Allah:

*P5: "Ikhlas didn't mean I forgot what happened. It meant accepting that it was part of Allah's plan. When I surrendered it to Allah, I felt more at peace and was able to move on without holding onto resentment."*

Although both participants reached emotional recovery through Islamic spirituality, they followed different interpretative pathways. Participant 2 experienced tafakkur as a process of discovering wisdom behind suffering, whereas Participant 5 understood ikhlas as releasing resentment through complete trust in Allah. These accounts illustrate the idiographic nature of lived experience emphasized in IPA, showing that each participant constructed a unique spiritual meaning from similar bullying experiences.

From an IPA perspective, the findings indicate that emotional recovery was experienced as a transformation in the meaning of the traumatic event rather than the disappearance of painful memories. Through tafakkur and ikhlas, participants reconstructed their identities from victims of bullying into individuals who viewed themselves as being tested and guided by Allah. This process reflects the principle of the double hermeneutic, in which participants interpreted their own experiences while the researcher interpreted how those meanings were constructed within the context of Islamic spirituality.

These findings support Pargament's (2007) theory of religious coping and the work of Abu-Raiya and Pargament (2015), which emphasize the role of spirituality in promoting resilience and positive meaning-making. However, this study further demonstrates that ikhlas and tafakkur functioned not merely as coping strategies but as lived spiritual experiences through which participants reconstructed self-identity and achieved emotional recovery after bullying.



Therefore, the lived meaning of ikhlas and tafakkur lies in transforming suffering into a spiritually meaningful experience that strengthens faith, resilience, and self-acceptance.

### **The Role of the Pesantren Environment and Religious Teachers**

The third superordinate theme revealed that the pesantren environment and religious teachers played an important role in participants' emotional recovery after bullying. Participants described that recovery was supported not only by personal spiritual practices but also by a religious environment that fostered guidance, acceptance, and a sense of belonging. Through interactions with religious teachers and participation in Islamic activities, participants gradually reinterpreted their bullying experiences within the framework of Islamic values.

One participant explained how guidance from a religious teacher helped restore emotional strength and confidence:

*P3: "My ustaz never judged me. He listened to what I was going through and reminded me to be patient and trust Allah. His advice helped me stay calm and not let the bullying define who I am."*

Another participant described how living in the pesantren created a supportive environment that encouraged emotional recovery:

*P6: "Living in the pesantren made me feel that I wasn't alone. Praying together, attending religious lessons, and being around people who reminded me of Allah gave me peace. Little by little, I felt stronger and started to heal."*

Although both participants viewed the pesantren as an important source of support, they attached different meanings to their experiences. Participant 3 experienced religious teachers as trusted mentors who helped reinterpret bullying through patience, faith, and trust in Allah. In contrast, Participant 6 understood the pesantren environment as a faith-based community that fostered emotional security, strengthened spiritual commitment, and restored a sense of belonging. These differences reflect the idiographic nature of IPA, demonstrating that participants constructed unique meanings from similar supportive experiences.

From an IPA perspective, emotional recovery was shaped not only by individual spirituality but also by meaningful relationships within the pesantren community. Through these relationships, participants reconstructed their identities from victims of bullying into individuals who perceived themselves as

valued members of a religious community guided by Islamic values. This process illustrates the double hermeneutic, in which participants interpreted the significance of their experiences while the researcher interpreted how those meanings contributed to emotional recovery.

These findings support previous studies highlighting the role of religious communities and spiritual mentoring in promoting resilience and psychological well-being (Koenig, 2012; Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). However, the present study further demonstrates that the pesantren environment and religious teachers functioned not merely as sources of social support but as lived spiritual contexts through which participants reconstructed self-identity and achieved emotional recovery after bullying. Therefore, the lived meaning of the pesantren environment lies in providing a faith-based community that nurtures resilience, strengthens spiritual identity, and supports emotional recovery.

### **Emotional Transformation through Worship**

The fourth superordinate theme revealed that worship (ibadah) played a central role in participants' emotional recovery after bullying. Rather than being performed merely as religious obligations, practices such as salat, Qur'anic recitation, du'a, and dhikr were experienced as meaningful ways of drawing closer to Allah, fostering inner peace, resilience, and hope.

One participant described how prayer gradually eased emotional distress:

P1: *"Whenever I felt overwhelmed after the bullying, I prayed. After every prayer, I felt calmer, and little by little, the pain wasn't as heavy as before."*

Another participant explained that worship strengthened hope and encouraged moving forward:

P4: *"Worship gave me hope. Reading the Qur'an and making du'a reminded me that Allah was always with me, and that gave me the strength to keep moving forward."*

Although both participants experienced worship as an important part of emotional recovery, they attached different meanings to these practices. One participant viewed worship as a source of emotional peace, whereas the other understood it as a source of hope and trust in Allah. These accounts reflect the idiographic nature of IPA, showing that emotional transformation emerged through each participant's unique process of spiritual meaning-making.

From an IPA perspective, worship was experienced as more than a religious routine; it became a lived spiritual experience through which participants reconstructed the meaning of bullying and developed a stronger relationship with Allah. This process illustrates the double hermeneutic, whereby participants interpreted their experiences while the researcher interpreted how those meanings contributed to emotional recovery.

These findings support Pargament's (2007) theory of religious coping and Koenig's (2012) work on spirituality and mental health. However, this study further shows that worship functioned not only as a coping strategy but also as a lived spiritual experience through which participants reconstructed self-identity and achieved emotional recovery after bullying.

## **Discussion**

This study explored the lived meaning of Islamic spirituality in students' emotional recovery following bullying within an Islamic boarding school context. The findings demonstrate that emotional recovery was not experienced as the disappearance of painful memories but as a gradual reconstruction of meaning through prayer, dhikr, ikhlas, tafakkur, worship, and support from the pesantren community. Across all four superordinate themes, participants consistently interpreted bullying as a spiritual trial that strengthened their relationship with Allah and reshaped their understanding of themselves. These findings suggest that Islamic spirituality functioned not merely as a coping strategy but as a meaning-making process through which emotional suffering was transformed into personal and spiritual growth. This interpretation extends previous bullying research, which has largely emphasized the psychological consequences of victimization rather than the processes through which victims reconstruct meaning after adversity.<sup>14</sup>

The first theme demonstrated that prayer and dhikr facilitated self-acceptance by helping participants release self-blame and reinterpret bullying within the framework of Allah's decree. Rather than simply reducing emotional distress, these practices enabled participants to reconstruct their identities from

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<sup>14</sup> Arseneault, "Annual Research Review"; Moore et al., "Consequences of Bullying Victimization in Childhood and Adolescence."

individuals who perceived themselves as victims into individuals who understood suffering as part of their spiritual journey. This finding supports the concept of positive religious coping, which emphasizes that religious practices help individuals interpret stressful experiences through sacred beliefs and values.<sup>15</sup> More importantly, the present findings indicate that prayer and dhikr were experienced as lived spiritual encounters rather than merely ritual activities. This interpretation is consistent with Koenig, who argues that religious practices promote psychological well-being by strengthening hope, emotional regulation, and spiritual connectedness.<sup>16</sup> From an IPA perspective, these experiences illustrate how participants actively reconstructed the meaning of bullying through their personal relationship with Allah, highlighting the central role of spirituality in emotional recovery.

The second theme revealed that ikhlas and tafakkur enabled participants to reinterpret bullying by accepting it as part of Allah's wisdom rather than as an event that permanently defined their identities. Participants consistently explained that emotional recovery did not occur because they forgot the painful experience but because they gradually assigned a different meaning to it. This finding closely reflects Park's meaning-making model, which proposes that psychological adjustment occurs when individuals reconcile stressful experiences with their broader systems of beliefs and values.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Al-Ghazali explains that sincere acceptance (*ikhlas*) and spiritual contemplation (*tafakkur*) cultivate inner tranquility by encouraging believers to surrender life's difficulties to Allah.<sup>18</sup> The findings also complement Rusdi and Subandi's discussion of Islamic psychology, which emphasizes that spiritual awareness enables Muslims to reinterpret adversity as an opportunity for moral and spiritual development.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the participants' emotional recovery was characterized by cognitive and spiritual transformation rather than by the elimination of emotional pain.

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<sup>15</sup> Abu-Raiya and Pargament, "Religious Coping among Diverse Religions"; Pargament, *Religion and Coping*.

<sup>16</sup> Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health."

<sup>17</sup> Park, "Meaning Making Following Trauma."

<sup>18</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Terjemahan Ihya' Ulum al-Din*.

<sup>19</sup> Rusdi and Subandi, *PSIKOLOGI ISLAM: Kajian Teoritik Dan Penelitian Empirik*; Paloutzian and Park, *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*.

The third theme highlighted the significant contribution of the pesantren environment and religious teachers in supporting emotional recovery. Participants described recovery as a process that occurred within relationships characterized by empathy, religious guidance, and collective worship rather than through individual efforts alone. These findings suggest that spirituality was experienced simultaneously as an individual and communal phenomenon. Religious teachers helped participants reinterpret bullying through Islamic values of patience, forgiveness, and trust in Allah, while peers within the pesantren created a sense of acceptance that reduced feelings of isolation. This finding is consistent with Koenig, who argues that religious communities contribute to psychological well-being by strengthening social support and resilience.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Baharun et al. emphasize that Islamic boarding schools can reduce the negative impact of bullying by fostering religious values and creating supportive educational environments.<sup>21</sup> Unlike previous studies focusing primarily on institutional strategies for bullying prevention, the present findings demonstrate how religious relationships themselves became meaningful experiences that facilitated emotional recovery.

The fourth theme demonstrated that emotional transformation emerged through consistent worship rather than through a single moment of healing. Participants described prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and supplication as continuous practices that strengthened hope, gratitude, and emotional stability despite the persistence of painful memories. Rather than eliminating emotional distress, worship enabled participants to reinterpret bullying as a spiritual journey that strengthened their relationship with Allah. This finding supports resilience theory, which views resilience as a dynamic process of positive adaptation following adversity.<sup>22</sup>

This interpretation is consistent with positive religious coping, which emphasizes that sustained religious practices help individuals regulate emotions

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<sup>20</sup> Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health."

<sup>21</sup> Baharun et al., "Optimizing the Quality of Anti-Bullying Education Services in Islamic Boarding Schools."

<sup>22</sup> Southwick et al., "Resilience Definitions, Theory, and Challenges."

and construct meaning through a secure relationship with God.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Koenig argues that religious practices promote psychological well-being by fostering hope and spiritual connectedness.<sup>24</sup> Recent evidence also shows that positive religious coping predicts greater posttraumatic growth and better long-term mental health following traumatic experiences.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, participants' narratives reflected posttraumatic growth through increased spiritual awareness and a renewed appreciation of life.<sup>26</sup> From an IPA perspective, this transformation represents a process of meaning reconstruction grounded in Islamic worship and lived religious experience.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, the findings extend bullying research<sup>28</sup> by demonstrating that emotional recovery among pesantren students is not only a psychological process but also a spiritual reconstruction of meaning through worship.

Taken together, the four superordinate themes illustrate that emotional recovery following bullying involved an ongoing process of reconstructing meaning rather than eliminating emotional distress. Participants gradually integrated painful experiences into an Islamic worldview emphasizing patience, gratitude, trust in Allah, and spiritual growth. This process reflects the idiographic and interpretative orientation of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, in which lived experience is understood through participants' own meaning-making while simultaneously interpreted by the researcher.<sup>29</sup> The study therefore contributes to the literature by demonstrating that Islamic spirituality is not only a protective factor against psychological distress but also a framework through which bullying survivors reconstruct identity, restore emotional balance, and experience spiritual transformation. These findings extend existing knowledge on

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<sup>23</sup> Abu-Raiya and Pargament, "Religious Coping among Diverse Religions"; Park, "Meaning Making Following Trauma."

<sup>24</sup> Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health."

<sup>25</sup> Arkin et al., "Associations between Religious Coping and Long-Term Mental Health in Survivors of Hurricane Katrina."

<sup>26</sup> Tedeschi, "The Post-traumatic Growth Approach to Psychological Trauma."

<sup>27</sup> Smith et al., "Religiousness and Depression."

<sup>28</sup> Arseneault, "Annual Research Review"; Gaffney et al., "Effectiveness of School-based Programs to Reduce Bullying Perpetration and Victimization."

<sup>29</sup> Smith et al., "Religiousness and Depression."

bullying recovery by highlighting the central role of Islamic meaning-making within the educational context of pesantren.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that students' emotional recovery following bullying is a process of spiritual meaning reconstruction rather than merely a reduction of psychological distress. Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, the findings reveal that participants reconstructed the meaning of bullying through Islamic spirituality, enabling them to strengthen their relationship with Allah, develop self-acceptance, and regain emotional well-being. These findings indicate that Islamic spirituality functions not only as a religious coping strategy but also as a lived meaning-making process that supports emotional recovery.

The study advances current knowledge by showing how lived spiritual experiences shape recovery from bullying within the context of Islamic boarding schools. While previous studies have primarily emphasized the psychological consequences of bullying or the protective role of religiosity, this study highlights the central role of Islamic spirituality in reconstructing identity and meaning after adversity.

Practically, the findings suggest that anti-bullying interventions in Islamic educational institutions should integrate psychological support with spiritual guidance and supportive school environments. Future research should examine whether similar meaning-making processes occur in different educational and cultural contexts and explore the long-term role of Islamic spirituality in emotional recovery.

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