Academic Resilience of Bullied Students: Role of Peer Attachment and Internal Locus of Control

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Article Info

Abstract

Bullying in Islamic boarding schools is a serious issue that negatively impacts students' psychological well-being and academic performance. Academic resilience plays a crucial role in helping students cope with the pressure caused by bullying. This study aims to examine the relationship between peer attachment and internal locus of control with academic resilience in students who have experienced bullying. This research employed a quantitative correlational method with 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The instruments used include a peer attachment scale, an internal locus of control scale, and an academic resilience scale developed by the researcher. Data analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between peer attachment and internal locus of control with academic resilience. These findings highlight the importance of supportive peer relationships and personal control in strengthening students' academic adaptability. The implications of this study suggest the need for interventions focusing on peer dynamics and personal empowerment within educational environments.

Keywords: Academic Resilience, Internal Locus, Peer Attachment

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental aspect in the development of human resources (Medina dkk., 2025; Rodríguez-Ruiz & Espejo-Siles, 2025). In the field of education, academic success is not solely determined by intellectual ability, but also by an individual's capacity to cope with

pressure, challenges, and complex social dynamics. One of the major challenges that often arises in educational environments, particularly in boarding-based institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), is the phenomenon of bullying.

Bullying in *pesantren* is a serious issue due to the hierarchical caregiving system and the age group homogeneity that coexists in a single living environment. Students who fall victim to bullying often experience emotional pressure, disruptions in the learning process, and even a loss of academic motivation (Corbella dkk., 2025; Palau & Scott, 2025). Adolescents tend to do various things to be accepted by their peer groups, including deviant behaviors such as bullying, due to the strong influence of peer conformity (Lin dkk., 2025; Rogers dkk., 2025). In the long run, such experiences may reduce self-confidence and even trigger serious psychological disorders. This condition creates the need for psychological capabilities to survive and carry out academic activities optimally, namely academic resilience.

Academic resilience is the ability of students to endure difficult conditions, recover from adversity, overcome challenges, and adapt positively to academic pressure and demands (Gkargkavouzi & Halkos, 2025; Northrope dkk., 2025). According to (Brännström dkk., 2025; Pia & Bezboruah, 2025) academic resilience involves the ability to persist in learning, seek help adaptively, and manage negative emotions arising from academic pressure. In the context of bullying victims in Islamic boarding schools, academic resilience becomes a key protective factor so that individuals do not give up on their situations and can still pursue academic achievement despite being in a socially challenging environment.

Factors that influence academic resilience can be divided into two: external and internal factors. One important external factor is peer attachment. Students who have positive, supportive, and trusting relationships with their peers tend to have someone to confide in, feel emotionally safe, and be able to express psychological pressure in a healthier way (Cersosimo, 2025; Cho & Kim, 2025). This attachment creates a strong sense of connectedness, thereby encouraging the development of adaptive coping strategies. In the study by (Egger dkk., 2025; Xing & Ge, 2025) bullying victims who received social support from peers showed higher levels of academic resilience, indicated by optimism, problem-solving skills, and stable self-esteem.

Findings by Prasetyana & Mariyati (2020) show that religiosity plays a role in enhancing students' self-regulation, which aligns with this research because self-regulation is closely related to internal locus of control as an important factor in shaping academic resilience among bullying victims. Internal factors such as internal locus of control also play a significant role in shaping academic resilience. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that success or failure in their lives depends on their own efforts, not on external factors such as fate or other people. In the context of bullying, students with an internal locus of control will perceive negative experiences as challenges that can be controlled through personal effort, not as fate that must simply be accepted (Wulansari et al., 2024 Research by (Mulvey & Li, 2025; Nivison dkk., 2025)even shows that internal locus of control has a strong positive correlation with psychological resilience in various stress-related contexts, including parental divorce and bullying.

However, although many studies have discussed the influence of social support or locus of control on individual resilience, there is still a lack of research that simultaneously explores the relationship between peer attachment and internal locus of control with academic resilience, especially in the population of bullying victims in Islamic boarding schools. In fact, the dynamics of *pesantren* life are very unique, with a dormitory system that demands intensive social interaction, a strong seniority structure, and a very diverse student background (Perazzini dkk., 2025; Wright, 2025). On the other hand, *pesantren* are also places for strong character and spiritual

development, making it important to identify psychological factors that can be maximized to support students' academic resilience.

This study was conducted to address that gap by focusing on how peer attachment and internal locus of control contribute to the development of academic resilience among students who experience bullying. The theoretical framework used is Bandura (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, which explains that individual behavior is the result of reciprocal interaction between personal factors (such as beliefs and self-perception), environmental factors (such as social support), and behavior itself. In this context, internal locus of control represents the personal factor, while peer attachment represents the environmental factor. These two factors are believed to synergistically shape individual resilience to pressure, including academic pressure caused by bullying (Jones dkk., 2025; Zhao dkk., 2025). This study is expected to contribute to the development of psychological interventions in *pesantren* education environments and serve as a foundation for more targeted and evidence-based strategies to enhance students' academic resilience.

Based on the background and theoretical foundation described, this study aims to examine the relationship between peer attachment and internal locus of control with academic resilience in students who are victims of bullying in Islamic boarding schools. Specifically, this research seeks to uncover the extent to which supportive social relationships and individual beliefs in self-control shape the ability to persevere and achieve academically despite facing social pressures such as bullying.

In line with this objective, the hypotheses proposed in this study are that there is a significant relationship between peer attachment and internal locus of control with academic resilience in bullying victims (Huang & Wu, 2025; Park dkk., 2025). More specifically, two minor hypotheses are proposed: first, there is a positive relationship between peer attachment and academic resilience, meaning that the stronger a student's attachment to peers, the higher their level of academic resilience. Second, there is a positive relationship between internal locus of control and academic resilience, indicating that the stronger the belief in one's own ability to control situations, the greater the academic resilience in facing challenges.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational method. This design was chosen because the main objective of the study was to examine the relationship between two independent variables peer attachment and internal locus of control and one dependent variable, namely academic resilience in students who were victims of bullying.

The participants in this study were students (*santri*) living in Islamic boarding schools located in Kudus, Central Java. The total number of participants was 100, consisting of 50 male and 50 female students, with an age range between 12 and 19 years. All participants were active students who had lived in the boarding school for at least one year and had experienced bullying, whether verbal, physical, or psychological. The types of bullying experienced by the participants included insults, ridicule, intimidation, social exclusion, physical pushing, and threats from fellow students.

Sampling in this study was conducted using purposive sampling, a non-probability method in which respondents are selected based on specific criteria (Sugiyono, 2013). The inclusion criteria were: (1) students aged at least 12 years, (2) having lived in the boarding school for a minimum of one year, and (3) having experienced bullying as verified through a preliminary screening process. To determine the minimum sample size required, the researcher used

Lemeshow's formula (1997), as the target population size was not precisely known. Assuming a 95% confidence level, a population proportion of 0.5, and a margin of error of 10%, the required minimum sample size was calculated to be 96 participants, which was rounded up to 100.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

Peer attachment was measured using a Peer Attachment Scale constructed by the researchers based on the theory of attachment by Armsden & Greenberg (1987) The scale was prepared using a 4-point Likert model with options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (agree), and 4 (strongly agree), and initially consisted of 42 items. After expert judgment and item analysis, 12 items were disqualified for not meeting validity requirements (Peng dkk., 2025; Zeedyk, 2025). The final version of the scale consisted of 30 valid items, with a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.817. This scale measures aspects such as trust, communication, and alienation in peer relationships.

Internal locus of control was measured using a scale developed by the researchers based on the theory by Rotter (1966) The original version contained 40 items in a 4-point Likert format. Based on expert validation and item selection, 10 items were removed, resulting in 30 valid items. This scale had a reliability value of 0.828. Items reflected the degree to which individuals believe they have control over events in their lives, such as "I succeed because of my own effort, not because of luck."

Academic resilience was measured using a scale based on the theoretical framework of Martin & Marsh (2003) also developed by the researchers. It was initially composed of 42 items, and through the validation process, 12 items were excluded. The final 30-item version used a 4-point Likert format and had a reliability coefficient of 0.735. This scale covers dimensions such as persistence, emotional regulation, and adaptive help-seeking behavior. An example of an item is "I keep trying even when I get poor academic results."

All instruments underwent content validation through expert judgment involving five raters consisting of psychology lecturers and psychological measurement practitioners. Using Aiken's V formula, only items with acceptable content validity were retained (Nabia dkk., 2025; Zeedyk, 2025). The final instruments used in the study consisted of 30 items each, all of which met the standards for reliability and validity.

Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique used in this study was the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to determine the relationship between peer attachment, internal locus of control, and academic resilience in students who had experienced bullying. The analysis was performed using SPSS.

Before conducting the main statistical analysis, the researcher first conducted assumption tests including normality and linearity tests. The results of the normality test showed that the data were normally distributed with a significance value greater than 0.05, fulfilling the assumption for parametric analysis (Attar-Schwartz dkk., 2025; Zeedyk, 2025). The linearity test indicated that the relationship between variables followed a linear pattern, as shown by the linearity significance values below 0.05.

The questionnaire data were collected directly from 100 students who met the established criteria. Each psychological scale (Peer Attachment, Internal Locus of Control, and Academic Resilience) consisted of 30 items that had previously passed reliability and validity testing through expert judgment and item analysis. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the three scales were 0.817, 0.828, and 0.735, respectively.

All participants filled out the questionnaire voluntarily after being informed about the study's objectives and ethical considerations. The informed consent process was carried out in person before data collection began.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

This study involved 100 students (*santri*), consisting of 50% male and 50% female participants, aged between 12 and 19 years, with the most frequent ages being 17 to 19. The majority of students had been staying in the boarding school for 1 to 3 years. All respondents reported having experienced bullying. The descriptive data are summarized in the table below:

Table 1. Table Demographic characteristics of the participants.

Variable	Dominant Category	Range/Distribution
Gender	–	50% Male, 50% Female
Age	17–19 years	12–19 years
Length of Stay	1–3 years	1–9 years

Note. Table 1 presents the participants' demographics, showing a balanced gender ratio, age range of 12–19 years, and most had stayed in the boarding school for 1 to 3 years.

Data collection in this study was carried out by distributing research instruments to 100 student participants. The instruments were administered directly to students who met the criteria as research subjects.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of research variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Category	Score Interval	Frequency	Percentage
Peer Attachment	75.96	9.566	Very High	$X \geq 90$	6	6%
			High	$81 \leq X < 90$	19	19%
			Moderate	$71 \leq X < 81$	49	49%
			Low	$62 \leq X < 71$	20	20%
			Very Low	$X < 62$	6	6%
Internal Locus of Control	79.10	9.731	Very High	$X \geq 94$	10	10%
			High	$84 \leq X < 94$	18	18%
			Moderate	$74 \leq X < 84$	46	46%
			Low	$65 \leq X < 74$	22	22%
Academic Resilience	83.21	8.012	Very High	$X \geq 95$	9	9%
			High	$87 \leq X < 95$	21	21%
			Moderate	$79 \leq X < 87$	36	36%
			Low	$71 \leq X < 79$	32	32%
			Very Low	$X < 71$	2	2%

Table 2 presents the categorization of the three research variables: peer attachment, internal locus of control, and academic resilience. For the peer attachment variable, the total scores ranged from very low to very high categories. The mean score obtained was 75.96, with a standard deviation of 9.566. Based on the categorization results, 6 students (6%) fell into the

very high category, 19 students (19%) into the high category, 49 students (49%) into the moderate category, 20 students (20%) into the low category, and 6 students (6%) into the very low category.

For the internal locus of control variable, the mean score was 79.10, with a standard deviation of 9.731. The categorization results showed that 10 students (10%) were in the very high category, 18 students (18%) in the high category, 46 students (46%) in the moderate category, 22 students (22%) in the low category, and 4 students (4%) in the very low category.

Meanwhile, for the academic resilience variable, the mean score obtained was 83.21, with a standard deviation of 8.012. A total of 9 students (9%) were categorized as very high, 21 students (21%) as high, 36 students (36%) as moderate, 32 students (32%) as low, and 2 students (2%) as very low.

Assumption Testing Results

Normality testing in this study was conducted by calculating the residuals using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The data are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. *Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test Results*

Variable	K-SZ	Significance (p)	Distribution
Peer Attachment	0.888	0.459	Normal
Internal Locus of Control	1.141	0.148	Normal
Academic Resilience	1.005	0.265	Normal

The normality test in this study used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method for each variable. The results showed that the Peer Attachment variable had a significance value of 0.459 with a K-SZ value of 0.888. The Internal Locus of Control variable had a significance value of 0.148 with a K-SZ value of 1.141, and the Academic Resilience variable had a significance value of 0.265 with a K-SZ value of 1.005. Since all significance values were greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the three variables in this study are normally distributed. Thus, the data meet the normality assumption.

Linearity testing in this study used the criterion of *Significance Linearity < 0.05* as the basis for interpretation. The results showed that the significance value for the linear relationship between peer attachment (X1) and academic resilience (Y) was 0.252, and between internal locus of control (X2) and academic resilience (Y) was 0.659. As both values were greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable is linear, thereby meeting the linearity assumption required for regression analysis.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Simple linear regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis and to determine whether peer attachment has an effect on academic resilience among students. This analysis was used to assess the extent to which the independent variable (peer attachment) could predict the dependent variable (academic resilience). The results of the simple linear regression analysis are presented in the table below.

Table 4. Summary of Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig. (p)
1 - Regression	0.660	0.435	0.424	6.083	37.365	0.000

Table 4 shows the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, which obtained a significance value (p) of 0.000 (p < 0.01) and an $rx_{12}y$ value of 0.660, indicating a highly significant relationship between peer attachment (X_1) and internal locus of control (X_2) with academic resilience (Y). Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. The effective contribution of both variables to academic resilience was 43.5%, while the remaining 56.5% is influenced by other factors outside this study.

The results of the Pearson Product Moment correlation test show that peer attachment (X_1) has a significant positive relationship with academic resilience (Y) with p = 0.000 and r = 0.389. This means the higher the peer attachment, the higher the academic resilience. Similarly, internal locus of control (X_2) has a significant positive relationship with academic resilience (Y), with p = 0.000 and r = 0.631. This implies that the higher the internal locus of control, the higher the academic resilience.

Thus, all three hypotheses proposed in this study are supported: both peer attachment and internal locus of control have significant relationships with academic resilience, both individually (partial) and simultaneously.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate a significant relationship between peer attachment and internal locus of control with academic resilience among students who have experienced bullying. These findings reinforce the idea that both social environmental factors (peer relationships) and personal factors (locus of control) play important roles in fostering academic resilience, particularly for individuals facing social pressure.

Peer attachment provides emotional support and a sense of connectedness that allows students to feel more accepted and valued. These positive relationships help students develop healthy coping strategies and maintain their motivation to learn in the face of bullying. Previous studies support this finding, such as the one by W. C. Putri & Nursanti (2020), which found that peer support significantly contributed to academic resilience in young migrant university students. Similarly, Tenri et al. (2022) stated that in the context of online learning, social support from peers enhances students' academic resilience.

Internal locus of control contributes to academic resilience by instilling the belief that academic success is within one's own control. Individuals with an internal locus of control tend to view difficulties as challenges that can be overcome, rather than as insurmountable obstacles. They are more proactive in developing learning strategies and take responsibility for their outcomes. This aligns with findings from Prawitasari & Antika (2022) and Wulansari et al. (2024) which consistently show a positive correlation between internal locus of control and academic resilience among students.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study support Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which posits that human behavior is influenced by the interaction of personal factors, social environment, and behavior itself. In this context, peer attachment serves as an environmental factor that strengthens emotional stability and motivation, while internal locus of control represents a personal factor that enables students to direct their behavior in an adaptive and productive manner. From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest that Islamic boarding schools and other educational institutions should develop programs that foster social relationships and psychological empowerment (Attar-Schwartz dkk., 2025; Liu & Li, 2025). Teachers and counselors in boarding schools can facilitate the formation of supportive learning communities and provide training to strengthen students' self-regulation when facing social and academic pressures.

Despite its valuable contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the correlational design does not allow for causal conclusions to be drawn. Second, the data were collected using self-report measures, which are prone to social desirability bias (Alaimo & Kelly, 2025; Filetti dkk., 2025; Guha & Beri, 2025). Third, the sample was limited to a single region, Kudus, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. For future research, it is recommended to employ a longitudinal approach to examine the dynamics of academic resilience over time. Additionally, expanding the geographical scope of the sample and incorporating qualitative methods will enrich the understanding of students' subjective experiences in coping with bullying and developing academic resilience.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the relationship between peer attachment and internal locus of control with academic resilience among students who have experienced bullying in Islamic boarding schools. The findings confirm that both variables significantly and positively contribute to the development of academic resilience. Peer attachment provides emotional safety and social support, while internal locus of control fosters personal responsibility and proactive coping. Synthesizing the data analysis and discussion, this study highlights how interpersonal relationships and internal belief systems interact to buffer the adverse effects of bullying on students' academic functioning. The novelty of this research lies in its contextual focus on pesantren students an underrepresented population in psychological resilience research and in its simultaneous exploration of social and personal factors influencing academic outcomes. This contributes to the scientific development of educational and developmental psychology by emphasizing the dual importance of supportive peer environments and internal agency in promoting student resilience in socially stressful educational contexts.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Look this example below:
Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Writing - editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation; Validation; Review

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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