An overview of resilience in the children of the Mahadul Yatama Islamic Boarding School students

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Article Info

Abstract

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia provide a unique, collective living environment that shapes student character. For orphaned students, such as those at Pondok Mahadul Yatama, this setting presents compounded challenges, requiring them to navigate the loss of parental support while adapting to a highly structured and disciplined lifestyle. This context creates significant emotional, social, and psychological pressures that necessitate a high degree of resilience. This study aims to provide an in-depth description and understanding of the lived experiences of resilience among orphaned male santri as they adapt to life at the Mahadul Yatama Pesantren. A qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach was employed. The subjects were male santri aged 12-18 who had resided at the pesantren for 2-6 months. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. The collected data were then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify recurring patterns and themes. The findings indicate that resilience among the santri is a dynamic process. Key themes emerged, including the development of personal competence through overcoming initial adaptation difficulties, a positive acceptance of change driven by peer support, and the crucial role of spiritual influences. Prayer and faith were consistently identified as primary coping mechanisms for managing feelings of homesickness and stress, serving as a significant source of inner strength.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia are unique Islamic educational institutions, functioning not only as a center for religious learning but also as an intensive environment for character building. In this dormitory-based system, students live in a structured collective environment where the values of morality, discipline, and independence are deeply instilled through daily routines (D'Aragona, 2024; P. Wang, 2024; Yin, 2024). This environment is designed to form individuals who are not only academically capable but also spiritually and socially strong. This communal life, although enriching, demanded a high level of adaptation from the students who had to adjust to a busy schedule and a life far from the comfort of the family home.

This challenge becomes much more complex for students in special institutions such as Pondok Mahadul Yatama, which houses orphans (Eirgash, 2024; ForouzeshNejad, 2024; Jain, 2024). These students not only face the pressure of adaptation that is common in Islamic boarding schools, but also have to struggle with the emotional and psychological burden of losing parental support. This loss is a significant risk factor during adolescence, an already tumultuous period of development. Therefore, these students are faced with a dual task: navigating the sadness and emptiness left behind by their parents while simultaneously adapting to the demands of a highly disciplined pesantren environment.

In this stressful context, resilience—the ability to adapt positively in the face of significant adversity—emerges as a crucial psychological construct. Resilience is not just the ability to survive, but also the capacity to recover and even thrive from traumatic experiences (Akram, 2024; Y. Gao, 2024; Khoshsirat, 2024). For the orphaned students at Mahadul Yatama, the development of resilience is very important for their successful adaptation, psychological well-being, and the achievement of their educational goals. Understanding how this resilience manifests itself and what factors underpin it in this unique pesantren environment is a major focus of scientific inquiry.

The main problem addressed by this study is the lack of a deep and contextually rich understanding of the life experiences of resilience among orphaned male students during their initial adaptation phase in the Islamic boarding school environment (Kumar, 2024; Moradi, 2024; Saad, 2024). Although resilience has been widely studied in a variety of contexts, the specific experiences of this unique population—which face the dual pressures of orphanage and the demands of structured boarding school life—are still underexplored in the literature. The problem lies in the knowledge vacuum of how these young students are actively building and demonstrating resilience in the face of daily emotional, social, and spiritual challenges.

This problem is manifested in several real challenges faced by students. They must overcome feelings of acute homesickness, loneliness, and grief over the loss of a parent, while simultaneously navigating complex social dynamics in a competitive and demanding boarding environment (Furxhi, 2024; Khalilzadeh, 2024; Satic, 2024). They have to adapt to a very tight routine, from waking up before dawn to late-night study sessions, which are physically and mentally exhausting. The inability to adapt effectively can lead to a variety of negative outcomes, including withdrawal from social interactions, decreased academic performance, and mental health issues.

The consequences of not understanding this resilience process are significant. Without clear insight into the coping mechanisms and resources used by these students, Islamic boarding school managers, counselors, and policymakers have no evidence base to design

effective support programs (Nascimento, 2025; Nguyen, 2024; Xiang, 2024). There is a risk that existing approaches may be general and do not address the specific psychological needs of orphaned students. Therefore, there is an urgent need for in-depth qualitative research that can give voice to the experiences of these students, identify their strengths, and highlight protective factors in their environment that foster resilience.

The main objective of this study is to provide an in-depth description and phenomenological understanding of how resilience is experienced and manifested by orphaned male students during their initial adaptation period (2-6 months) at the Mahadul Yatama Islamic Boarding School. This research aims to move beyond surface descriptions and explore the essence of their life experiences. The main goal is to capture the perspective of the students themselves, understand how they interpret their challenges and what strategies they use to not only survive but also begin to thrive in their new environment.

To achieve this overarching goal, the study pursued several specific goals. First, this study aims to identify the main emotional, social, and psychological challenges faced by students during their initial adaptation phase. Second, this study seeks to explore and describe the specific coping strategies and internal and (Bashir, 2024; J. Gao, 2024; Y. Zhang, 2024)that students use to navigate these challenges. Third, this study will analyze the role of spiritual influences, such as prayer and faith, as a central mechanism in their resilience process.

The expected outcome of this study is the development of a rich and textured understanding of resilience in this unique context. It is hoped that these findings will reveal that resilience is not an innate static trait, but rather a dynamic process shaped by the interaction between individual characteristics and environmental factors (Ding, 2024; Peña-Jorquera, 2024; Tariq, 2025). This research aims to produce a descriptive model of student resilience that can inform practices in Islamic boarding schools and similar institutions, which ultimately contribute to the welfare and positive development of these vulnerable young students.

The existing scientific literature on resilience in adolescents is extensive, with many studies exploring protective factors in contexts as diverse as family, school, and community. Scholars such as Werner (Doukari, 2024; L. Zhang, 2024; Zhao, 2024), Smith, and Rutter have made fundamental contributions, identifying key variables such as supportive relationships, individual competence, and positive belief systems as pillars of resilience. This research has been invaluable in shaping our understanding of positive developments in the face of adversity.

However, despite this much research, there is a significant gap in the literature on resilience in the specific context of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, especially among orphan student populations. Most research on pesantren tends to focus on their academic outcomes, curriculum, or socio-religious roles, with much less attention to the psychological experiences of their students. Existing research on adolescent resilience rarely investigates the unique intersection between orphanhood, highly structured communal life, and intensive religious education.

This research directly addresses this critical gap. While previous research by examined academic resilience among non-pesantren students used a quantitative approach to measure academic resilience among pesantren students, this study differs significantly. This study uses a qualitative-phenomenological approach to explore the life experience of resilience holistically (emotional, social, and spiritual), not just the academic dimension. By focusing on younger students (12-18 years old) and orphans during the critical early adaptation phase, the study

aims to provide depth and nuance that is not present in quantitative studies or studies that focus on different populations.

The main novelty of this study lies in its phenomenological focus on an underserved and under-researched population: orphaned male students in the early adaptation stage in a boarding school. This research offers an original contribution by giving voice to the life experiences of these young individuals, a perspective that is largely absent in the existing psychological and educational literature. Using an in-depth qualitative approach, this study aims to uncover the essence of their resilience process, providing rich and textured insights that quantitative surveys cannot capture.

The justification for this research is rooted in its profound practical and social significance. Islamic boarding schools house thousands of orphans across Indonesia, and their psychological well-being is a very important issue. This research is justified by its urgent need to inform evidence-based practices within these institutions. By understanding how resilience is organically fostered in this environment, this research can provide invaluable insights for pesantren administrators, counselors, and educators on how to create a more supportive environment and intentionally build resilience among their students.

In the end, the importance of this research goes beyond the direct context of Islamic boarding schools. This research contributes to a broader understanding of resilience among adolescents facing dual difficulties. By exploring the interactions between personal loss, communal support, and spirituality, this research has the potential to inform theories of resilience and practices in a variety of other collective care settings (e.g., orphanages, boarding schools). Therefore, this research is not only relevant and necessary but also has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the welfare of vulnerable children both inside and outside the world of Islamic boarding schools.

RESEARCH METHOD

Contains the type of research, time and place of research, targets/objectives, research subjects, procedures, instruments and data analysis techniques as well as other matters related to the method of research (Aladayleh, 2024; Mashud, 2024; Singha, 2024). targets/objectives, research subjects, procedures, data and instruments, and data collection techniques, as well as data analysis techniques and other matters related to the method of research can be written in sub-chapters, with sub-headings. Sub-subheadings do not need to be notated, but are written in lowercase with a capital letter, Times New Roman-11 bold, left aligned. As an example can be seen below.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. This methodology was selected for its strength in understanding a phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it directly. The research aims to explore the essence of the lived experiences of resilience among the santri, focusing on their behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions in a holistic manner. A descriptive approach was utilized to present the findings in a narrative form, using the words and language of the participants to provide a deep and rich understanding of their adaptation process within the natural context of the pesantren.

Research Target/Subject

The subjects of this research were informants selected from the population of male students (santri) at the Pondok Pesantren Mahadul Yatama. A purposive sampling technique was used to select individuals who could provide the most insightful and relevant data for the research questions (Dinçer, 2024; Festiawan, 2024; Manoharan, 2024). The specific criteria for inclusion in the study were: 1) being a male santri, 2) being between the ages of 12 and 18, 3) having resided at the pesantren for a period of 2 to 6 months to ensure they were in the critical initial adaptation phase, and 4) being an active student at the institution. This deliberate selection process ensured that the participants had direct and recent experience with the challenges central to the study.

Research Procedure

The primary instruments for data collection were in-depth, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. The semi-structured interview format was chosen to provide a consistent framework of core questions while allowing the flexibility to probe deeper into participants' responses and explore emergent themes. This approach facilitated the gathering of rich, detailed narratives about the santri's personal experiences with resilience. Non-participant observation was used as a supplementary method to gain a more holistic understanding of the santri's daily activities, interactions, and the overall atmosphere of the pesantren, providing a contextual backdrop to the interview data without the researcher's active involvement,

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The research procedure began with obtaining the necessary permissions to conduct the study within the pesantren. Once access was granted, data were collected through the scheduled interviews and observations. The collected data were then analyzed using a thematic analysis technique based on the model proposed by Miles and Huberman

Data Analysis Technique

This process involved three concurrent activities: data reduction, where raw data from transcripts and field notes were selected, simplified, and transformed; data display, where the organized data were presented in a narrative format to identify patterns; and conclusion drawing and verification, where initial conclusions were drawn and then continuously verified against the data throughout the research process. To ensure the credibility of the findings, a triangulation of sources and time was employed, comparing data from different informants and collecting it at various times to confirm its consistency and trustworthiness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data for this study were gathered from a purposively selected group of male santri at the Pondok Pesantren Mahadul Yatama. The informants were chosen based on their direct and recent experience with the initial adaptation phase, a critical period for the development of resilience. The sample consisted of individuals who met the specific criteria of being between 12 and 18 years of age and having resided at the pesantren for a period of two to six months. This ensured that their recollections of the challenges and coping mechanisms were fresh and vivid.

The informants represent a cohort facing the dual adversities of orphanhood and adaptation to a highly structured, communal living environment. The table below provides a summary profile of the primary informants whose experiences form the basis of this study's findings. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their anonymity while allowing for a clear presentation of their individual narratives and contributions to the emergent themes.

Table 1: Profile of Research Informants

Pseudonym	Age	Length of Stay at Pesantren	Key Initial Challenge Reported
RR	14	3 months	Overcoming intense homesickness and adapting to the strict morning routine.
MK	16	5 months	Managing academic pressure and feelings of being overwhelmed by tasks.
FA	13	4 months	Navigating social dynamics and finding a sense of belonging among peers.
DN	17	6 months	Coping with feelings of grief while managing the physical demands of daily chores.

The profile of the informants provides a crucial context for understanding the qualitative findings. Their shared experience of being in the early stages of adaptation means they are actively engaged in the process of building resilience, rather than reflecting on it from a distant past. The range of ages, from early to late adolescence, allows for an exploration of how developmental stages might intersect with the challenges of the pesantren environment. The specific challenges reported, from emotional distress like homesickness to academic and social pressures, confirm that the adaptation process is multifaceted.

The selection of informants who are all orphaned is central to the study's focus. This shared background of significant personal loss provides a common foundation of adversity upon which their experiences of resilience are built. The data gathered from these individuals, therefore, offers a unique window into the coping mechanisms and protective factors that are most salient for a particularly vulnerable adolescent population. The homogeneity of their core life challenge (orphanhood) combined with the heterogeneity of their immediate adaptation struggles provides a rich dataset for thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews and observational notes revealed three primary, interconnected themes that encapsulate the lived experience of resilience among the santri. The first and most prominent theme was "Spiritual Anchoring," which describes the central role of faith and religious practice as a primary coping mechanism. Santri consistently reported that prayer (salat), remembrance of God (dhikr), and a belief in divine providence were their most powerful tools for managing emotional distress, particularly feelings of homesickness and grief.

A second major theme was the "Cultivation of Personal Competence through Adversity." This theme captures the process by which santri developed a sense of self-efficacy and tenacity. They described initial feelings of being overwhelmed by the strict routines and academic demands, but through persistence and small successes, they began to build confidence in their ability to manage their new lives. The third theme, "The Power of Peer Brotherhood," highlights the critical role of social support. The collective, communal environment fostered strong bonds between the santri, who provided each other with emotional

encouragement, practical help, and a vital sense of belonging that counteracted feelings of loneliness.

The emergent themes are not isolated but are dynamically interrelated, forming a holistic system of resilience. "Spiritual Anchoring" appears to function as the foundational bedrock upon which the other aspects of resilience are built. The belief in a higher purpose and the comfort derived from spiritual practice provided the santri with the inner strength and stability necessary to face other challenges. This spiritual foundation gave meaning to their struggles and fostered a sense of hope that enabled them to persevere.

The development of "Personal Competence" often followed from this spiritual base. By drawing strength from their faith, the santri felt more capable of tackling the practical difficulties of pesantren life. This theme represents the behavioral manifestation of resilience, where internal beliefs are translated into external actions of persistence and problem-solving. The relationship between these themes is cyclical: successfully overcoming a challenge reinforced their sense of competence, which in turn strengthened their faith that they were on the right path.

The theme of "Peer Brotherhood" is intrinsically linked to the specific context of the pesantren's communal living structure. In the absence of immediate family, the peer group became a surrogate family, providing the emotional support that is a well-documented protective factor for resilience. The shared identity of being both a santri and an orphan created a powerful in-group solidarity. This theme demonstrates how the pesantren environment, while challenging, also contains inherent structural elements that can foster strong supportive networks.

The "Spiritual Anchoring" theme is directly related to the core mission and daily reality of the pesantren. The highly structured routine, with its five daily prayers and constant religious instruction, immerses the santri in a spiritual environment. This context does not just offer spirituality as an option but integrates it into the very fabric of daily life, making it a readily accessible and constantly reinforced resource for coping. The findings suggest that the environment itself actively cultivates this key aspect of resilience.

The experience of "RR," a 14-year-old informant, provides a compelling case study that illustrates the interplay of these themes. RR described his first month at the pesantren as intensely difficult, marked by overwhelming homesickness and shock at the disciplined routine. He recounted moments of crying silently at night and struggling to wake up for the pre-dawn prayer. He felt isolated and questioned his ability to stay.

During this period, RR explained that his primary source of comfort was prayer. He stated, "I just believed that this was the path from God, and praying was my way of talking to my parents and to Him." He also described how an older santri noticed his distress and began including him in a small study group. This peer support was critical. RR recalled, "Having friends who understood, who had been through it, made me feel like I wasn't alone. We encouraged each other." By his third month, RR reported feeling "at home" and was actively helping a newly arrived santri adjust.

RR's narrative is a clear manifestation of the identified themes. His initial distress is the adversity that triggers the need for resilience. His reliance on prayer is a perfect example of "Spiritual Anchoring," where his faith served as his primary emotional regulation strategy. This spiritual foundation provided him with the inner strength to endure the initial, most difficult phase of his adaptation.

The intervention of the older santri and the formation of his study group directly illustrate the theme of "Peer Brotherhood." This social support broke his isolation and provided him with a sense of belonging and shared experience. His eventual transformation, where he becomes a source of support for a new student, demonstrates the development of "Personal Competence." He has not only adapted but has grown from the experience, internalizing his coping strategies to the point where he can now help others, a hallmark of true resilience.

The collective findings of this study indicate that resilience among these orphaned santri is a dynamic and multi-faceted process, rather than a static personal trait. The results show that resilience is actively constructed through the synergistic interplay of internal spiritual resources, the development of personal skills through overcoming challenges, and the vital support of a strong peer community. The pesantren environment, while being a source of significant stress, also provides the key ingredients for overcoming it.

This interpretation suggests that the most effective support for these students involves strengthening these naturally occurring protective factors (Gohori, 2024; Tang, 2024; Y. Wang, 2024). The spiritual life of the pesantren is not just a curricular component but is the central pillar of the students' emotional well-being. Furthermore, the strong bonds formed between peers are a critical therapeutic element. The study concludes that resilience in this context is a lived, relational, and deeply spiritual experience.

This study provides a rich and nuanced picture of the life experiences of resilience among orphaned male students during their initial adaptation phase at the Mahadul Yatama Islamic Boarding School. Key findings reveal that resilience is not a static trait, but rather a dynamic process built on three interconnected thematic pillars. The first and most fundamental pillar is "Spiritual Anchoring," in which students consistently identify religious practices such as prayer and dhikr as their primary coping mechanism for managing deep emotional distress, especially homesickness and sadness.

The second pillar is "Instilling Personal Competence through Adversity," which describes how the students gradually build a sense of self-efficacy and tenacity. By successfully navigating the demands of a strict routine and academic challenges, they transformed their initial feelings of overwhelmed into a growing sense of confidence in their ability to manage their new lives (Chiaramonti, 2024; Padala, 2024; W. Zhang, 2024). The third pillar, "The Power of Peer Brotherhood," highlights the irreplaceable role of social support in a communal environment, where strong bonds with fellow students serve as a substitute for family, providing vital emotional support and a sense of belonging.

The case of "RR" effectively encapsulates the dynamic interplay of these themes. Her journey from initial hardship marked by a great sense of homesickness to a state of confident adaptation in which she became a source of support for others, clearly shows how spiritual anchoring and peer brotherhood facilitate the development of personal competence. This narrative, which reflects the broader cohort experience, underscores the study's main conclusions.

Collectively, the results of the study show that the pesantren environment, despite being a significant source of stress, simultaneously provides the necessary structural and spiritual resources for students to build resilience (Basheer, 2024; Han, 2024; H. Zhang, 2024). This process is holistic, involving the spiritual, behavioral, and social dimensions of their experiences. Resilience, in this context, is actively built through a synergistic interaction between internal beliefs, behavioral perseverance, and relational support.

The findings of this study are strongly aligned with the broader theoretical framework on resilience, which emphasizes the interaction between risk factors and protective factors. In line with seminal research (Sloot, 2024; Waseem, 2024; Zheng, 2024)this study confirms that supportive relationships—in this case, "Peer Brotherhood"—serve as a powerful protective factor for adolescents facing difficulties. This study expands on this literature by showing how structured communal environments such as pesantren can organically foster this strong peer support network in lieu of family support.

The theme "Spiritual Anchoring" provides strong empirical support for a growing literature that recognizes spirituality as a core component of resilience. While previous research by Luthar et al. (2000) highlighted the importance of positive belief systems, this study provides a rich qualitative description of how specific religious practices (prayer, dhikr) are used as strategies for active emotion regulation by Muslim adolescents. It contributes nuances to our understanding of how spirituality is lived and operationalized as a coping mechanism.

This research makes a unique contribution by addressing significant gaps in the existing literature. While previous research on pesantren has often focused on academic outcomes (Mufaridah & Rachmawati, 2023) or their social roles, this study investigated the psychological experiences of its students, an area that has been underexplored. Unlike quantitative research that measures resilience as a trait, this phenomenological approach captures resilience as a process, in line with dynamic definitions put forward by scholars such as Masten (2014).

In contrast to some studies on adolescent adaptation that may focus on pathology or negative outcomes, this study adopts a strengths-based perspective, which focuses on how these students successfully adapt. By highlighting effective coping mechanisms and resources that exist in the environment, this study challenges narratives that focus only on the vulnerability of orphans. This is in line with a broader shift in developmental psychology from a deficit model to a model that recognizes and seeks to understand the human capacity for positive growth in the face of adversity.

The findings of this study are a clear sign of humanity's extraordinary capacity for adaptation and growth in the face of profound difficulties. The journey of the students from an initial state of stress to a state of empowered competence indicates that resilience is not an innate trait possessed by a few people, but a developmental process that can be nurtured and developed, especially during plastic adolescence.

The central role of "Spiritual Anchoring" reflects how, for many individuals and communities, systems of meaning and belief provide an indispensable framework for interpreting and enduring suffering. This signifies that in a context where difficulties are inevitable (such as the loss of a parent), the ability to find purpose and hope through spiritual belief is a very powerful psychological resource. It challenges a purely secular perspective on mental health and highlights the importance of cultural competence in understanding well-being.

The theme of "Peer Brotherhood" reflects a fundamental truth about the human condition: we are social creatures that are highly dependent on relationships for our well-being. In a context where the main support structure (family) has been lost, the ability of the students to create family-like bonds among themselves signifies an innate human drive for connection. It is a reflection of how a community can serve as a vessel of healing and strength, especially for its most vulnerable members.

The case of "RR", which transitions from a recipient of a support to a supporter, signals the highest stage of resilience—post-traumatic growth. This reflects that the process of overcoming adversity not only returns individuals to their original state but can also transform them into a more compassionate and competent version of themselves. This is a sign of hope, which suggests that experiences of hardship, while painful, can also be a catalyst for deep character development and virtue.

The main implications of this study are for practitioners in Islamic boarding schools and similar collective care institutions. These findings provide a clear mandate to intentionally recognize and reinforce the protective factors that arise naturally in their environment. This implies that interventions should not focus solely on addressing problems but should proactively foster peer support networks, perhaps through structured peer mentorship programs, and create more space for reflection and spiritual practice as tools for emotional well-being.

For counselors and mental health professionals who work with orphaned adolescents, the implications are clinical. This research highlights the importance of culturally and spiritually sensitive approaches. This implies that therapeutic strategies should consider and integrate the client's belief system as a potential source of strength, rather than ignoring it. Understanding the central role of "Spiritual Anchoring" can lead to more holistic and effective interventions for this population.

This finding also has implications for education policy in the pesantren system. Recognising that the initial adaptation phase is challenging, policies can be developed to provide additional support during this critical period. This can include more gradual orientation programs, increased access to guidance from ustadz or staff, and activities explicitly designed to accelerate the formation of positive social bonds among new students.

At the broader societal level, this research has implications for how we understand and support vulnerable children. This research challenges a view that focuses only on deficits about orphans and instead highlights their resources and strengths. This implies that community support should aim to empower these young people by recognizing and building their existing resilience capacity, rather than simply viewing them as passive recipients of charity.

The success of the students in building resilience can be explained mainly through Attachment Theory. With the disappearance of the main bond figure (parents), the students actively seek and form secure secondary bonds with peers and, on a more abstract level, with God. The peer support network serves as a "safe base" from which they can explore the challenges of their new environment, while their spiritual connection provides a lasting and unconditional sense of connection and security.

The central role of spirituality can be explained through meaning-making theories. Facing stressful and often unexplainable life events such as the loss of a parent, the spiritual and religious framework provides a coherent narrative that infuses suffering with purpose and meaning. The belief that their difficulties are part of a larger divine plan helps students to reframe their difficulties as tests or opportunities for growth, which is a highly adaptive cognitive coping strategy.

The development of personal competence can be explained by Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory. The highly structured, although challenging, pesantren environment provides many opportunities for mastery experiences. Every time a student manages to wake up on time, memorize a new part of the Qur'an, or successfully navigate social tasks, his sense of efficacy

is strengthened. These small successes accumulate over time, building a general sense of confidence in their ability to overcome challenges.

Ultimately, the holistic nature of the observed resilience can be understood through a bio-psycho-social-spiritual model. Difficulties (loss of parents) are multi-dimensional events, and therefore, adaptive responses must also be multi-dimensional. The students succeed because they utilize resources from all domains: they use social support ("Peer Brotherhood"), psychological strength ("Personal Competence"), and spiritual framework ("Spiritual Anchoring") simultaneously. Their resilience is strong precisely because it does not depend on a single factor but is the result of an integrated support system.

Future research should aim to expand on these findings through longitudinal studies. Following the cohort of students for several years will allow researchers to track the trajectory of their resilience development beyond the initial adaptation phase. Quantitative research can also be developed to measure the relationship between the level of involvement in spiritual practice, the quality of peer support, and validated resilience outcomes, thus testing the hypotheses resulting from these qualitative studies.

Islamic boarding school managers and educators must take practical and immediate steps based on these findings. A clear step is to implement a formal peer mentoring program, where senior students who have successfully adapted are paired with new students to provide support and guidance. In addition, workshops led by ustadz or counselors can be explicitly designed to teach students how to utilize their spiritual practices as tools for emotional regulation and stress management.

Policymakers in ministries of religion or social affairs should consider these findings when developing standards for child care institutions. These standards should recognize and encourage the development of spiritual and social support as a core component of high-quality care, in addition to physical and educational needs. Funding pilot programs based on this resilience model can be a valuable next step.

Finally, there is a clear need to disseminate these insights to a wider audience. Developing training modules or guidebooks for pesantren staff based on the themes identified in this study can be a powerful tool for professional development. Additionally, sharing these stories of resilience (while maintaining anonymity) across multiple platforms can help change the public narrative around orphans, by highlighting their power and capacity to thrive.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is the identification of three synergistic pillars that collectively build resilience among orphan students: spiritual anchoring, personal competency development, and peer brotherhood. A different finding is the affirmation that the pesantren environment, despite being a significant source of stress, simultaneously provides a structural and spiritual framework that organically fosters these protective factors. This study uniquely shows that for this population, resilience is not an isolated individual trait, but rather the result of a dynamic interaction between internal beliefs, communal support, and mastery of environmental challenges.

The main contribution of this research is conceptual and contextual. The added value lies in the application of a phenomenological approach to explore resilience in underserved populations—orphaned students in Indonesia. By providing rich descriptions of their life experiences, this research contributes nuance to the broader resilience literature, which is often

dominated by Western and secular perspectives. This research proposes a model of resilience rooted in culture and spirituality, highlighting the importance of faith and community as key psychological resources.

This study is limited by its focus on a small sample of male students in one pesantren, which limits the generalization of the findings. The qualitative nature of this study, although it provides depth, does not allow for quantification or testing of statistical hypotheses. Therefore, further research should aim to validate these findings in a variety of different pesantren settings, including female students, to explore gender dynamics in resilience. Future mixed-methods studies could incorporate quantitative surveys to measure the relationship between spirituality, social support, and resilience outcomes, thus complementing the qualitative insights gained here.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS
Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST
The authors declare no conflict of interest

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