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RESEARCH ARTICLE

From Trauma to Self-Acceptance: A Phenomenological Study of the Spiritual Experiences of Landslide Survivors

Cintami Farmawati[1*)], Anizar Rahayu[2], Lily Mayawati[3]

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Abstract
Landslides cause multidimensional impacts, not only psychological but also social and spiritual. This study highlights the importance of understanding survivors' journeys toward self-acceptance, considering the limited research that emphasizes the role of spirituality in trauma recovery within the religious-cultural context of Indonesia. The study proposes to understand and describe the spiritual experiences of landslide survivors as they journey from trauma to self-acceptance. Using a phenomenological approach, data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with survivors who experienced significant trauma. Thematic analysis was employed to capture psychological, social, and spiritual dynamics in participants lived experiences. The findings reveal that the survivors' journey is transformative, characterized by phases of emotional turmoil, social disconnection, and eventually the search for new meaning through religious practices and spiritual coping. Spirituality emerged as the primary source of strength in fostering resilience and transforming suffering into post-traumatic growth. This study contributes theoretically by enriching disaster psychology literature with a focus on spirituality and meaning-making, methodologically by applying an in-depth phenomenological approach, and practically by providing a basis for developing locally grounded, spiritually oriented psychosocial interventions to support disaster survivors' recovery.

Keywords: Trauma; Self-Acceptance; Spiritual Experience; Religious Coping; Meaning Making

INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters, including landslides, not only leave material and physical losses but also significantly impact the psychological well-being of survivors. Previous studies have shown that disaster survivors often experience trauma, anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which impact their quality of life (Tang et al., 2018; Marthoenis et al., 2019; Sönmez & Hocaoglu, 2023). However, during the recovery process, survivors not only grapple with suffering but also demonstrate the capacity to recover through spiritual strength, meaning in life, and self-acceptance (Park, 2016). Spirituality is a crucial mechanism in navigating traumatic experiences toward a more adaptive state (Pargament & Park, 2019).

However, existing studies tend to focus more on the psychopathological impacts of post-disaster or clinical interventions focused on symptom reduction, while the spiritual dimension of survivors' experiences remains under-recognized (Trinidad & Protacio-De Castro, 2020). Pargament and Park (2019) explain that spirituality serves as a coping mechanism that enables individuals to interpret life experiences more meaningfully. In the Islamic context, spirituality encompasses belief in destiny, trust in God, prayer, dhikr, and the search for meaning through worship (Abdullah, 2019). Spirituality not only reduces stress symptoms but also strengthens psychological resilience and facilitates self-acceptance. Research in Indonesia, particularly that integrates Islamic spiritual perspectives to understand survivors' journeys from trauma to self-acceptance, is still relatively limited. Yet, in the cultural and religious context of Indonesian society, spiritual aspects are often a primary source of resilience and psychosocial strength (Abdullah, 2019). This research gap serves as the primary foundation for this study.

This study attempts to fill this gap by phenomenologically examining how the spiritual experiences of landslide survivors play a role in their transformation from trauma to self-acceptance. Psychological trauma refers to the emotional response that arises after an individual experiences a threatening event or disaster that causes feelings of helplessness, fear, and loss (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Survivors of disasters such as landslides are at risk of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and impaired social functioning (Tang et al., 2018; Marthoenis et al., 2019; Sönmez & Hocaoglu, 2023). However, not all individuals remain trapped in trauma. Some are able to recover by finding internal and external resources that lead to self-acceptance. Zhou and Xu (2019) state that self-

[1*)] Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

[2-3] Universitas Persada Indonesia YAI

*) *corresponding author*

Cintami Farmawati
Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan
Email: cintami@uingusdur.ac.id

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acceptance is a key dimension of psychological well-being. Individuals who are able to accept themselves, including accepting the wounds and limitations caused by disasters, tend to be more emotionally stable and more adaptive in life. In Islamic spirituality, self-acceptance is often associated with the concept of ridha (resignation) to God's destiny, which fosters inner peace (Sholichatun, 2023). Using a phenomenological approach, this study allows for the subjective voices and experiences of survivors, while capturing the deeper meaning of their encounters with suffering and spirituality.

The novelty of this research lies in three aspects. First, conceptually, it emphasizes Islamic spirituality as a key dimension in the interpretation of trauma and self-acceptance, differing from previous, more general or secular research. Second, contextually, it focuses on landslide survivors in Indonesia, a group often overlooked compared to earthquake or tsunami survivors. Third, methodologically, the use of a phenomenological approach allows for a more in-depth exploration of survivors' lived experiences, thus providing a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of trauma, meaning, and self-acceptance. This research not only contributes to the development of knowledge in the fields of disaster psychology and spiritual psychology but also has practical implications for designing psychosocial interventions based on local spiritual and cultural values. The aim of this study is to understand and describe the spiritual experiences of landslide survivors as they journey from trauma to self-acceptance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participant Characteristics and Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study was to explore the subjective meaning of the spiritual experiences of landslide survivors as they journey from trauma to self-acceptance. Phenomenology seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals as they experience, feel, and interpret them (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Phenomenology was chosen because of its ability to provide detailed explanations of social phenomena from an individual perspective, particularly in discussing the "why" and "how" of these events as experienced, processed, and interpreted by participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach is highly relevant when analyzing the social, emotional, and spiritual impacts of landslide survivors' spiritual experiences. The spiritual and religious characteristics of participants were also taken into account in this study as crucial components in describing spiritual experiences.

Participants in this study were selected according to the research needs and determined based on the following criteria: Minimum age of early adulthood (21 years and above), the age limit of early adulthood was chosen because it is an age when people are mature and start to think more deeply about life (Iswati, 2019); Male or female; Survivors of a landslide disaster at least 6 months after the disaster; Have experienced significant loss (family, property, home, or source of livelihood); Willing to share personal experiences related to trauma and spirituality.

Sampling Procedures

The researchers selected participants using a purposive sampling technique. They were selected considering diversity in age, gender, significant loss, and level of religious involvement in coping with post-landslide trauma. These participants were also selected and interviewed in their respective homes. Prior to the interview, participants were asked for permission to record the conversation using a voice recorder application. They were also informed that no monetary compensation would be given for their participation. A total of six participants in this study agreed to be interviewed and participate in the study. Nasir et al. (2023) stated that research subjects in the phenomenological approach do not emphasize quantity but rather the quality and richness of the information they possess. Nasir et al. (2023) added that the benchmark for research subjects in the phenomenological approach is, first, small in number, because with a small number of researchers will be able to collect in-depth data. Second, the number varies from one to 40, but because the emphasis is on rich and detailed information, a large number will result in less detailed information. Hadi (2021) added that in the phenomenological approach, the number of research subjects cannot be determined with certainty.

This study initially aimed to conduct semi-structured interviews with five to ten participants using purposive sampling. This target was successfully achieved, with a total of six participants interviewed. The recruitment process took place at the village head's home. All participants included in the study were five women and one man. The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researchers in accordance with the study's objectives. To ensure clarity and appropriateness, the interview guide was validated by psychology and spirituality experts. During data analysis, the researchers collaboratively reviewed emerging codes and themes before finalizing the results.

Table 1. Details of Sample Size and Reasons for Informant Selection

No.	Informant Code	Age	Role/ Background	Reason for Inclusion
1	P1	30	Housewife	Loss of Home
2	P2	38	Farmer	Loss of Property
3	P3	42	Trader	House Damage
4	P4	48	Housewife	Loss of Home
5	P5	53	Trader	Loss of Business
6	P6	40	Farmer	Loss of Property

Data Collection

Data were collected through three main techniques: (1) in-depth semi-structured interviews, (2) participant observation, and (3) document analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Daruhadi & Sopiati, 2024). The in-depth interviews consisted of 20 open-ended questions covering various trauma experiences, spiritual quests, religious practices, the process of finding meaning, and self-acceptance. Interviews lasted 60–90 minutes, were recorded (with the participants' permission), and transcribed verbatim. Examples of interview questions included: "Can you tell us about your experience when the landslide occurred?", "What role did your faith or beliefs play in coping with trauma?" and "Do you have any specific religious practices (e.g., prayer, dhikr, shalat, or other forms of worship) that helped you cope with pain and loss?". Participant observation was conducted in participants' homes to observe communal worship activities or community activities of landslide survivors after the

disaster. Field notes, photographs, and institutional records were collected to enrich contextual understanding (Goeke-Morey & Cummings, 2017).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) through several systematic steps (Kassai, 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). First, interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. Second, open coding was conducted to identify key statements and initial themes. Third, thematic categorization was conducted by linking emerging codes to theoretical constructs of trauma, spiritual experiences, meaning, and self-acceptance. According to Bandura (as cited in Fitri and Itryah, 2025), this iterative process includes reviewing transcripts, comparing themes across cases, and synthesizing findings into broader categories. To strengthen credibility, researcher triangulation (multiple researchers cross-checked data), source triangulation (data from family, neighbors, and village heads), and method triangulation (interviews, observations, and documentation) were used. To enhance the validity and credibility of the findings, member checking was conducted by sharing the synthesized themes and interpretations with participants for feedback and confirmation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Triangulation and peer debriefing support the rigor of data interpretation. Audit trails documenting analytical decisions further enhance transparency and reliability (Karya et al., 2024).

Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

Penelitian ini dilakukan sesuai dengan standar etika untuk studi yang melibatkan partisipan manusia. Persetujuan tertulis diperoleh dari semua partisipan, setelah penjelasan menyeluruh mengenai tujuan, metode, hak untuk mundur kapan saja dan langkah-langkah menjaga kerahasiaan studi dan identitas partisipan, serta memberikan dukungan emosional atau rujukan profesional jika wawancara menimbulkan distress. Studi ini telah disetujui oleh komite etik institusional Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Semua identitas partisipan dianonimkan, dan data disimpan dengan aman, hanya dapat diakses oleh tim peneliti. Partisipan tidak menerima insentif finansial apa pun atas keterlibatan mereka.

Aa This research was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for studies involving human participants. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, after a thorough explanation of the study's purpose, methods, the right to withdraw at any time, and measures to maintain confidentiality of the study and participant identity, as well as providing emotional support or professional referral if the interview caused distress. This study was approved by the institutional ethics committee of State Islamic University K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. All participant identities were anonymized, and data were stored securely, accessible only to the research team. Participants received no financial incentives for their participation.

RESULTS OF STUDY

This study uncovers several key themes related to the spiritual experiences of landslide survivors in Batang Regency, Central Java, as they journey from trauma to self-acceptance. The findings are organized thematically, each supported by an introductory narrative, representative quotes from various informants, and a synthesis of what these findings reveal about unique spiritual experiences.

Theme 1. The Impact of Trauma on Landslide Survivors

The trauma experienced by landslide survivors in Batang Regency not only impacted psychologically but also socially and spiritually. Many survivors expressed psychological symptoms such as fear, anxiety, nightmares, and feelings of insecurity. The trauma made it difficult for them to sleep, easily startled, and anxious during heavy rain. A participant (P3) explained: "*Every time it rains heavily, I feel panicked, afraid the land will slide again. I haven't slept well since that incident.*"

Trauma also impacted social relationships. Some felt a loss of support because family members were swept away by the floodwaters just meters from the scene, while others felt a new sense of solidarity within the community. Some survivors reported feeling isolated because they moved to evacuation centers far from their old homes. Some participants (P1, P4) expressed: "*My house is gone, my family is scattered. I feel alone in the evacuation center, even though there are many people, it feels very lonely.*" Participant (P5) also mentioned: "*People here are helping each other more often. Even though I lost a lot, a sense of togetherness has grown among us.*"

Many survivors interpreted the disaster as a test from Allah SWT. Trauma opened up space for spiritual reflection, with some reporting growing closer to religion, praying more often, attending religious studies, and surrendering their lives to the will of Allah SWT. However, others initially experienced spiritual disappointment before rediscovering the meaning of religion. A participant (P6) said: "*At first I was angry, wondering why God would give me such a big disaster. But over time I realized, maybe this was God's way of reminding me to draw closer.*" Another participant (P2) also said: "*Since that incident, I have never missed prayer again. I feel like only prayer can calm my heart.*"

These findings indicate that landslide trauma not only impacts individuals' psychological well-being but also damages or strengthens social bonds and fosters spiritual transformation. Therefore, recovery interventions for landslide survivors need to encompass psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions for a more comprehensive approach.

Theme 2. Spirituality Plays a Role as a Source of Strength in the Healing Process

Research findings indicate that spirituality is a crucial factor providing peace, hope, and inner strength to landslide survivors. Spirituality is not only present in the form of formal religious practices (such as prayer, dhikr, and worship), but also as a perspective for understanding disaster and finding meaning behind suffering. A participant (P5) stated: "*If I hadn' t drawn closer to God, I might have fallen ill from thinking about all the losses. Instead, by praying at night and praying, my heart feels calm. I believe there is wisdom in all this.*" Another participant (P3) also stated: "*When I first saw the destroyed house, it felt like life had no meaning. But when the religious teacher at the evacuation center invited us to dhikr together, I felt an inexplicable strength. I believe that God still loves me, despite the ordeal.*"

For most participants, faith in God and acceptance of fate were key pillars in coping with post-disaster trauma.

Spirituality served as a religious coping mechanism that reduced anxiety, fostered gratitude for loss, and strengthened the spirit to move forward. Furthermore, daily religious practices provided a space for reflection that helped participants transform pain into strength. Connecting with God (transcendence) was perceived as a primary support, providing a sense of security, renewed meaning in life, and the energy to move on. A participant (P4) noted: "*My house was swept away by floodwaters and landslides, and it was very difficult. But I learned to accept it. I believe this is what is best according to Allah. That belief is what makes me strong, even though I still cry often.*" Another participant (P2) also noted: "*I found new meaning, that life is temporary. This disaster brought me closer to religion, I went to the mosque more often, and it helped me rise from despair.*"

Spirituality serves as a coping mechanism in dealing with post-landslide trauma. Religious practices (prayer, dhikr, worship) serve to calm the heart and reduce anxiety. Spirituality gives new meaning to suffering and facilitates the process of self-acceptance. Spirituality strengthens survivors' resilience by fostering hope, gratitude, and faith in divine providence.

Theme 3. Religious Coping is the Dominant Strategy Used by Landslide Survivors

The majority of participants indicated that in dealing with trauma and uncertainty after the landslide, religious coping strategies were the dominant choice. This was evident in the forms of prayer, remembrance of God, recitation of the Quran, and belief in God's will. Religious practices were seen as a way to calm the heart, provide a sense of security, and strengthen hope amidst difficult circumstances. A participant (P2) revealed: "*At that time, I really felt like I had lost everything, but all I could do was pray and pray. It felt calmer, as if God was giving me the strength to endure.*" Another participant (P6) also revealed: "*When my mind is confused, I perform ablution and read the Quran. From there, I feel a sense of peace, as if the burden is lighter.*"

Religious coping involves more than just rituals, but also a process of meaning-making: understanding the landslide as a test, destiny, or warning. This spiritual reframing helps survivors accept the harsh reality with greater openness, while also fostering gratitude for their safety. A participant (P4) stated: "*I believe this is all God's will. Even though the house was swept away by the landslide, my family survived. That's enough to make me grateful.*"

In addition to individual coping, survivors also find strength through the support of their religious communities. Congregational activities, communal prayers, and sermons by religious teachers provide collective emotional support. The presence of religious figures provides spiritual validation and motivation to rise above. A participant (P3) said: "*We often gathered at the mosque after the incident, praying for each other. There was a sense of togetherness, so I didn't feel alone in facing this.*"

These findings confirm that religious coping is a dominant strategy for dealing with disaster trauma in religious communities, particularly among landslide survivors in Muslim communities. Prayer, worship, and religious meaning are not only spiritual tools but also serve as psychological mechanisms for reducing stress, building new meaning in life, and strengthening social resilience.

Theme 4. The Meaning-Making Process Mediates the Transition from Trauma to Self-Acceptance

Phenomenological analysis shows that meaning-making is a key cognitive-affective process that bridges the initial experience of trauma (fear, loss, confusion) with the achievement of self-acceptance (inner peace, acceptance, identity reconstruction). This process emerges as a series of themes: (1) Confrontation with reality; (2) Search for narrative/interpretation; (3) Spiritual and social reframing; (4) Integration of experiences that result in self-acceptance.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of the Meaning-Making Process as a Mediator of the Transition from Trauma to Self-Acceptance

Meaning Unit (Participant Quote)	Initial Code	Theme/Sub-Theme	Theoretical Meaning
"On the first night after the landslide, I kept asking, 'why was my house hit?' I couldn't sleep because that question kept bothering me." (P4)	Existential questions, Confusion	Confronting trauma	Trauma triggers a search for meaning
"I asked the religious teacher why this happened. He explained that this was a test and a call to get closer to God. This explanation helped me not only feel angry but also seek lessons to get closer to God." (P3)	Consultation with religious figures, Religious interpretation	Narrative Search / Religious Interpretation	Religious meaning systems facilitate coping
"At first I felt devastated. But over time I saw it as a reminder, I became more concerned about my neighbors, I prayed more often. Life felt simpler and more meaningful." (P2)	Reframing experiences, Prosocial orientation	Reframing	Reappraisal provides psychological and spiritual control
"Now when I look back, I am no longer trapped in constant regret. I accept and sincerely live life, continue to struggle, and feel calmer." (P5)	Sincerity, Inner peace	Integration and Self-Acceptance	Self-acceptance as an outcome

Thematic analysis identified several concrete mechanisms through which meaning-making connects trauma to self-acceptance: (1) Cognitive reinterpretation: changing the internal narrative from "why me" to "what can I learn/give" (cognitive reframing); (2) Affective regulation: Meaningful interpretations reduce the intensity of negative emotions (fear, anger), making room for a sense of calm; (3) Socio-religious support: Interactions with religious and community leaders provide a theological framework that accelerates meaning-making; (4) New significant behaviors: Meaning-making encourages actions (charity, religious study groups, mutual cooperation) that reinforce a new identity and a sense of control. All of these mechanisms are seen repeatedly in the transcripts and serve as mediating pathways between the experience of trauma and the outcome of self-acceptance.

Participants showed several signs when they had reached a level of self-acceptance: (1) Reduced intrusion of traumatic thoughts into daily life; (2) Inner peace and acceptance of loss; (3) Reorientation of priorities (more focus on relationships and worship); (4) Pro-social involvement (helping fellow survivors). One participant (P5) explained: "*I no longer hate the situation. I accept that there is wisdom and start to focus on helping neighbors who are younger than me.*" The findings indicate that meaning-making is not just an additional response, but rather the main pathway (mediator) that allows landslide survivors to transition from trauma to self-acceptance. This process takes the form of existential questions, the search for religious narratives, reframing and integration.

Theme 5. Self-Acceptance of Landslide Survivors is Influenced by Contextual Support

The research results show that contextual support from family, local communities, religious leaders, educational institutions, and government agencies is a crucial factor influencing landslide survivors' self-acceptance. This support helps survivors normalize their traumatic experiences, reframe their suffering as a test, and facilitate the psychological and spiritual adaptation process. Family support provides a sense of security and emotional space for survivors to express their pain and loss. A participant (P2) revealed: "*I probably wouldn't have been able to cope without my family. At the time, I felt sad, but my husband always said, 'You have to be strong, this is God's way.' From there, I gradually came to terms with the situation.*"

Community support provides solidarity, togetherness, and collective activities that reduce feelings of isolation. A participant (P1) said: "*If there wasn't help and volunteers coming, I might have felt abandoned. They help me not only with material things, but also listen to my story. That makes me feel valued and less alone.*"

The support of religious leaders conveys the religious meaning of disasters, enabling survivors to better accept the experience as part of destiny. A participant (P3) stated: "*The village religious study group helped me a lot. The religious teacher always reminded me that there's a lesson in this disaster. So, although I'm still worried, I've become more accepting and accepting.*"

Institutional/structural support (universities, local government, religious organizations, and volunteers) provides a sense of social support, preventing survivors from feeling abandoned. A participant (P4) explained: "*After receiving temporary housing assistance from the government, I felt like my burden was lighter. I could tell myself, 'Okay, this is the way it is. The important thing is that my family is safe.' That's what finally helped me accept the situation.*"

Table 3. Thematic Analysis of the Phenomenon from Trauma to Self-Acceptance as a Transformative Journey

Main Theme	Subtheme	Description Findings	Participant Quotes
Trauma and Loss Phase	Deep fear and anxiety	Survivors experience fear of rain, thunder, and a loss of security	"Every time it rains heavily, my heart pounds, afraid of another landslide." (P1)
	Deep loss and grief	The loss of possessions, homes, and livelihoods causes psychological trauma	"I not only lost my home, but I also lost my will to live." (P4)
The Search for Meaning and Spirituality Phase	Existential Questions	Survivors began to reflect on the meaning of suffering and the purpose of life after the disaster	"I asked myself, Why did I survive? There must be a purpose from God." (P5)
	Spirituality as an Answer	Worship, prayer, and religious values became new sources of meaning	"I returned to praying diligently, because that was the only thing that could calm my heart." (P3)
Religious Coping and Contextual Support Phase	Social and Community Support	Resident solidarity and community assistance strengthen the recovery process	"We help each other, strengthen each other, so we don't feel alone." (P6)
	Religious Coping Strategies	Prayer, dhikr, and belief in destiny are key strategies for coping with trauma	"When I'm anxious, I dhikr. It makes me feel stronger and more patient." (P2)
Self-Transformation Phase	Self-Acceptance	Survivors accept the harsh reality and find inner peace	"I accept it now. Maybe this is a test to make me more patient." (P4)
	Post-Traumatic Growth	Trauma gives rise to a new awareness, a greater appreciation for the value of life, and a stronger relationship with Allah SWT	"I've learned that life is temporary, and the important thing is to be close to God and do good." (P6)
Transformative Journey Phase	From suffering to wisdom	The journey isn't instantaneous, but gradual: trauma → meaning → acceptance → spiritual transformation	"I used to just cry, but now I feel wiser and stronger after going through all this." (P4)

This combination of contextual support facilitates the achievement of self-acceptance, where survivors can acknowledge reality, reduce emotional resistance, and begin to rebuild their lives. The patterns observed are: (1) Survivors who have greater access to contextual support demonstrate a faster process of self-acceptance; (2) Conversely, participants with minimal social support remain in the denial phase longer and have difficulty

integrating traumatic experiences; and (3) Contextual support serves as a "bridge" connecting the experience of loss with the individual's ability to internalize meaning, find hope, and accept the new reality.

Theme 6. The Phenomenon from Trauma to Self-Acceptance is a Transformative Journey

Data analysis shows that the experiences of landslide survivors do not stop at trauma and suffering, but rather develop into a process of inner transformation leading to self-acceptance. This transformation is not linear, but dynamic: falling, rising, experiencing loss, and then finding new meaning in life.

From table 3, it can be seen that this transition phenomenon contains three important elements: (1) Suffering → reflection → growth; (2) Trauma → spirituality → Acceptance, and (3) Loss → meaning → new identity. Thus, the trauma caused by the landslide became the starting point that triggered the process of spiritual search, which ultimately resulted in personal growth (post-traumatic growth) and self-acceptance.

DISCUSSION

This study offers important insights into the spiritual experiences of landslide survivors as they move from trauma to self-acceptance. The findings suggest that the trauma experienced by landslide survivors in Batang Regency impacts not only psychologically but also socially and spiritually. Psychological symptoms experienced by landslide survivors include fear, anxiety, nightmares, and feelings of insecurity. These findings align with research by Ma et al. (2021), which found that natural disaster survivors experience long-term post-traumatic stress symptoms, including anxiety (Aryuni, 2023), fear (Nole et al., 2025), nightmares, and feelings of insecurity (Rizky et al., 2025). In addition to psychological suffering, survivors also face social disruption in the form of loss of homes, possessions, businesses, and community ties. Some participants felt isolated due to the loss of their social environment, which had previously been a source of support. This is consistent with the findings of Cao et al. (2023), who showed that the trauma of natural disasters often undermines social cohesion, and community shifts affect the quality of long-term social support. Interestingly, the trauma experienced also affected the spiritual dimension. Some participants interpreted the landslide as a test or warning from God. Others admitted to questioning divine justice before ultimately finding new meaning in life. These findings support the research of Li et al. (2022), Syifa and Nurjannah (2024), and Sudirman (2024), which showed that natural disasters not only cause psychological suffering but also shake and strengthen individuals' spirituality.

The study results indicate that spirituality is a crucial factor providing peace, hope, and inner strength to landslide survivors. Spirituality, as a coping mechanism that aids recovery, is consistent with literature showing that positive religious coping (such as seeking support from God and benevolent reframing) is associated with more adaptive psychological outcomes and post-traumatic growth (PTG). Longitudinal and cross-trauma studies have shown a positive relationship between positive religious coping and post-traumatic growth and several indicators of medium-term well-being (Arkin et al., 2024; Park et al., 2017; Boals & Lancaster, 2018). Spirituality gives new meaning to suffering and facilitates self-acceptance. Rosmarin et al. (2021) emphasize that religion/spirituality provides a framework of meaning that helps individuals reconstruct traumatic experiences. The literature on meaning-making and spiritual coping demonstrates the process by which religious beliefs and practices help shift the interpretation of disasters from "punishment" or chaos to "tests" or sources of wisdom, which then supports acceptance and resilience (Park, 2016). Spirituality strengthens landslide survivors' resilience by fostering hope, gratitude, and faith in divine providence. Findings by Chan and Rhodes (2013) explain that Positive Religious Coping (PRC) in the landslide survivor community facilitates Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), such as belief in wisdom and increased religious practices, which can reduce emotional distress and increase self-acceptance.

This study found that religious coping was the dominant strategy used by landslide survivors. These results align with research by Mesidor and Sly (2019), who found that positive religious coping was a strong predictor of posttraumatic growth in a group of earthquake survivors. Religious strategies were used alongside other general strategies but showed a significant effect. Aydın et al. (2025) found that high levels of trauma were associated with increased positive religious coping. This means that when stress and trauma increase, religious coping becomes a dominant response. Zhang et al. (2021) found that during a major crisis (pandemic), individuals use religious/spiritual coping as a primary strategy to overcome anxiety and uncertainty.

The research also revealed that the meaning-making process plays a key mediator between post-landslide trauma and self-acceptance. This process involves several stages: initial confrontation with the traumatic experience, the search for religious and moral narratives, reframing the experience, and finally, the integration of these experiences, which allows for self-acceptance. These findings align with and complement previous research in the field of disaster psychology and religious coping (Agrawal & Dubey, 2025). Salawali et al. (2020) found two main themes: trauma as a foundation for realizing the meaning of life and a second chance to live better. The theme of "trauma as a foundation for realizing the meaning of life" closely parallels the meaning-making stage in the research findings, where survivors construct new meaning from the disaster experience. Vis and Boynton (2024) also showed that exposure to trauma encourages spiritual reflection, meaning-making, and ultimately spiritual growth when the supporting context provides a supportive spiritual space. This supports the finding that spiritual processes and meaning-making are not passive but actively mediate the healing process. ime (2024) reported that spirituality mediates the relationship between social support and resilience, which is conceptually similar to the meaning-making process in this study, which links trauma experiences with self-acceptance or psychological resilience (Farmawati et al., 2025). This is in line with Dumaris and Rahayu (2019), who stated that the higher self-acceptance and resilience, the greater the meaning of life.

Research findings indicate that landslide survivors' self-acceptance is strongly influenced by contextual support, including family support (emotional and instrumental), community support (solidarity, mutual cooperation), the role of religious leaders (religious interpretation, spiritual guidance), and institutional support (material assistance, temporary shelter, health/psychosocial services). This pattern is consistent with previous studies that emphasize that social support (Kaniasty, 2020; Pham et al., 2023) is an important protective factor against the psychological impact of disasters and facilitates the recovery process. A comprehensive study by Lai et al. (2018) demonstrated a

negative relationship between social support and symptoms of PTSD or post-disaster depression, indicating that the stronger the support, the lower the risk of psychological distress.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the experiences of landslide survivors do not stop at the stage of suffering, but rather develop into a transformative journey from trauma to self-acceptance. This process demonstrates complex psychological dynamics, which aligns with the Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) framework by Rhodes et al. (2024), which explains that individuals who experience traumatic events can experience growth in spirituality, interpersonal relationships, and appreciation for life. In the initial stages, survivors describe trauma symptoms such as flashbacks, loss, and feelings of helplessness. However, these traumatic experiences actually trigger deeper self-reflection. This is consistent with a recent study by Amiri et al. (2021), which found that trauma resulting from natural disasters can trigger existential reflection that leads to personal growth.

These findings also confirm that spirituality plays a central role in the transition from trauma to self-acceptance. Participants often described religious practices such as prayer, dhikr, and solat as a means of finding peace and new meaning. Research by Shaw et al. (2021) shows that spirituality can strengthen emotional regulation, increase resilience, and accelerate the psychological healing process in disaster survivors. The meaning-seeking phase experienced by survivors aligns with the concept of meaning-making (Park, 2016), which is a cognitive and emotional process of understanding traumatic events within a broader framework of life values. Research by Liu et al. (2022) on earthquake survivors in China also found that the search for meaning mediates the relationship between trauma and self-acceptance, so that trauma not only brings suffering but also opens up opportunities for growth. The self-reconstruction process demonstrated by survivors in this study illustrates a shift in identity: from "victim" to "resilient and meaningful individual." These findings align with Tedeschi et al. (2018), who emphasize that PTG is not merely about surviving trauma but also building a new, stronger identity. Furthermore, Jirek (2023) added that the transformative journey of disaster survivors often involves a shift in values, increased empathy, and more complete self-acceptance.

Different from previous research which focused more on the clinical aspects of post-disaster trauma, this study enriches the literature by showing how the trauma of a landslide disaster in the context of the Indonesian Muslim community became the starting point for a spiritual-transformative journey. The novelty lies in the emphasis that self-acceptance is not the end of suffering, but rather the result of a process of integration between trauma, spirituality, and the search for meaning within a specific cultural and religious framework

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the journey of landslide survivors from trauma to self-acceptance is a multidimensional, transformative process, encompassing psychological (fear, anxiety, insecurity), social (loss of shelter, possessions, and relationships), and spiritual (crisis and deepening of faith) aspects. This process is not linear, but rather involves complex emotional dynamics, ultimately mediated by the search for meaning (meaningmaking), social support, and spiritual strengthening. Key findings indicate that spiritual coping serves as a crucial mediator in transforming suffering into self-acceptance and fostering post-traumatic growth in landslide survivors.

This research contributes to three main areas: theoretical, methodological, and practical. The theoretical area can enrich the disaster psychology literature by emphasizing the role of spirituality and meaning-making processes within the context of Indonesian religious culture, a perspective that remains rarely explored. The methodological area of this research presents an in-depth phenomenological approach and provides a thick description of the subjective experiences of landslide survivors, thereby adding methodological variety to the study of disaster psychology in Indonesia. The practical area provides the basis for developing psychosocial interventions based on local spirituality to strengthen the resilience and recovery of landslide survivors

The limitations of this study lie in the limited number of participants and focus on the local context, so generalization of the findings should be done with caution. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across cultures and religions to explore variations in spiritual coping strategies, as well as longitudinal studies to understand the long-term dynamics of the journey from trauma to self-acceptance. For practitioners and humanitarian agencies, the results of this study emphasize the importance of integrating spiritual support (e.g., communal prayer, religious counseling, or local religious rituals) into disaster recovery programs. Meanwhile, for the government and policymakers, these findings provide a basis for designing post-disaster interventions that not only provide material support but also strengthen the social and spiritual networks of affected communities

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DECLARATION

Ethics approval and consent to participate

This research was conducted in accordance with applicable ethical standards for research involving human participants. Written informed consent was obtained from all individuals participating in the study. The research protocol was approved by the Institute for Research and Community Service (LP2M) UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.

Consent for publication

Not applicable. The manuscript does not contain any individual data in the form of images, videos, or other identifiable personal details.

Availability of Data and Material (ADM)

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during this study are not publicly available due to concerns about

participant confidentiality. However, they are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Competing interests

The authors have no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research article.

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Authors' contributions

Cintami Farmawati was responsible for the study design, interview implementation, data analysis, and manuscript preparation. Anizar Rahayu and Lily Mayawati contributed to methodological supervision, provided theoretical and editorial feedback, and revised the final version of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the research.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Cintami Farmawati is a psychology lecturer at the State Islamic University K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan with a research focus on mental health, Islamic psychology, social psychology and psychotherapy.

Anizar Rahayu is a psychology lecturer at the University of Persada Indonesia Y.A.I. with a specialization in developmental psychology and educational psychology.

Lily Mayawati is a psychology lecturer at the University of Persada Indonesia Y.A.I. with a specialization in developmental psychology and educational psychology.

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Correspondence All inquiries and requests for additional materials should be directed to the Corresponding Author.

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