



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Emotion Regulation and Stress Coping Strategies among Santri at an Islamic Boarding School in Bandung

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## Abstract

This study examined the associations between emotion regulation strategies and coping strategy dimensions among Islamic boarding school students (*santri*) using a multidimensional approach. Although previous studies have reported relationships between emotion regulation and coping, limited attention has been given to the specific dimensions of both constructs within the pesantren context. A quantitative cross-sectional correlational design was employed involving 87 santri drawn from one Islamic boarding school in Bandung, Indonesia. Data were collected using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) and Brief COPE Inventory, and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that cognitive reappraisal was significantly and positively associated with emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping, but not with activity-focused coping. Expressive suppression did not show significant associations with any coping dimension in the tested model. The model showed moderate explanatory power for emotion-focused and problem-focused coping, but weak explanatory power for activity-focused coping. These findings suggest that cognitive reappraisal is more closely related to adaptive coping dimensions among santri, whereas expressive suppression may have a limited or context-dependent relationship with coping. Given the cross-sectional design and single-site sample, the findings should be interpreted as associative and context-specific rather than causal.

**Keywords:** cognitive reappraisal; coping strategies; emotion regulation; expressive suppression; islamic boarding school; santri

## INTRODUCTION

Pesantren are Islamic boarding schools that play an important role in Indonesian Muslim education by integrating religious learning, character formation, and communal life (Azra, 2019; Dhofier, 2011; Nata, 2012). In contemporary settings, pesantren are also inhabited by santri aged 18–25 years, many of whom are emerging adults and university students. This group is developmentally positioned in a period of identity exploration, increasing autonomy, academic demands, and preparation for future roles, while at the same time living in an Islamic boarding school environment that requires adjustment to collective routines, communal rules, and disciplinary expectations (Santrock, 2013).

The daily life of santri is highly structured and intensive, involving congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, kitab kuning studies, tahfidz activities, formal academic learning, communal responsibilities, and

supervised interactions (Isdiyati & Bisri, 2020; Jahidin, 2023). Although these activities are intended to strengthen religious character and self-discipline, they may also generate psychological pressure. Santri are required to manage multiple demands, including academic obligations, dense pesantren routines, limited privacy, separation from family, and strict institutional rules. Therefore, the pesantren context is important to examine not only as a religious educational setting, but also as a psychosocial environment that may shape stress, emotion regulation, and coping among emerging adult santri.

The psychological stress experienced by santri should be understood as multidimensional rather than as a single form of pressure. At least three sources can be distinguished. The first is academic stress, which involves learning demands, examinations, academic performance, and progression through formal educational levels. Nasution et al. (2025) found that santri at higher educational levels, particularly the aliyah level, reported significantly higher depression, anxiety, and stress, indicating that academic demands may contribute to psychological strain. The second is pesantren life stress, which refers to stressors embedded in the residential and communal structure of pesantren life, including highly scheduled routines, separation from family, limited privacy, collective living, and adjustment to institutional norms. These pressures may be intensified by modernization, lack of professional counseling services,

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and tensions between traditional pesantren expectations and social media exposure (Nasution et al., 2025). The third is disciplinary pressure, which stems from strict rules, sanctions, and demands for obedience. Physical punishments, such as push-ups, squat-jumps, or cleaning tasks, may increase psychological distress or trauma when experienced as coercive or uncomfortable (Jahidin, 2023). Moreover, discipline without dialogical space may lead to pressure, apathy, excessive fear, and reduced learning motivation (Zaenurrosyid & Sholihah, 2025), while stricter disciplinary systems in traditional pesantren have been associated with higher anxiety scores than semi-modern institutions (Nasution et al., 2025). Thus, santri's psychological burden emerges from the interaction between academic demands, boarding-school life, and disciplinary regulation.

According to Folkman's transactional model of stress, stress emerges when individuals appraise environmental demands as exceeding their available resources. Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioral efforts used to manage external and internal demands that are perceived as taxing or exceeding one's resources (Folkman et al., 1986). Coping strategies are commonly differentiated into problem-focused coping, which aims to address the source of stress; emotion-focused coping, which aims to regulate emotional distress; and activity-focused coping, which involves redirecting attention or energy toward other activities (Carver et al., 1989). Adaptive coping may protect individuals from the negative psychological effects of stress (Compas et al., 2017), while flexibility in selecting coping strategies according to situational demands contributes to healthier adjustment (Kato, 2012). Therefore, coping strategies are particularly relevant for santri because they must continuously adjust to academic obligations, pesantren routines, and disciplinary expectations.

Coping strategies are particularly relevant for santri because they must continuously adjust to academic obligations, pesantren routines, and disciplinary expectations. In this study, coping is examined through three dimensions derived from the coping measure used: problem-focused, emotion-focused, and activity-focused coping (Carver et al., 1989). Problem-focused coping refers to efforts to manage or resolve the source of stress through active coping, planning, and seeking instrumental support. Emotion-focused coping aims to regulate emotional responses to stress through emotional support, acceptance, positive reframing, or religious practices; in the pesantren context, practices such as congregational prayer and regular dzikir may provide emotional calm and reduce depressive symptoms among santri (Nasution et al., 2025). However, this dimension may also include less adaptive responses such as denial (Carver et al., 1989). Activity-focused coping refers to responses that redirect attention or energy toward other activities rather than directly addressing the stressor, including venting, behavioral disengagement, self-distraction, substance use, humor, and self-blame. Although such responses may temporarily reduce emotional tension, they may also interfere with more active coping when used excessively (Carver et al., 1989). Therefore, activity-focused coping is treated in this study as an instrument-based dimension rather than as a general classification within Folkman's transactional theory of stress and coping.

Not all coping strategies yield positive outcomes. Broadly, coping responses may be considered adaptive or maladaptive depending on their effectiveness in managing stress, resolving problems, and maintaining psychological well-being. Adaptive coping, including problem-focused coping and well-directed emotion-focused coping, has

been shown to reduce psychopathological symptoms and enhance psychosocial functioning (Compas et al., 2017). Flexibility in selecting coping strategies according to situational demands also contributes to healthier psychological adjustment (Kato, 2012). In contrast, maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance, denial, disengagement, excessive self-blame, or passive resignation, may exacerbate stress, anxiety, and depression (Kato, 2012).

Within pesantren life, this distinction is particularly important. Some coping responses may support adjustment, such as seeking advice from teachers or peers, planning how to manage academic and religious obligations, accepting difficult circumstances, and engaging in religious practices such as prayer and dzikir (Nasution et al., 2025). However, under increasing pressures from academic demands, strict routines, modernization, prolonged separation from family, and disciplinary expectations, some santri may develop less adaptive responses, such as apathy, helplessness, passive resignation, or rule violations as a form of disengagement from institutional pressure (Zaenurrosyid & Sholihah, 2025). These findings suggest that coping strategies are essential competencies for santri, particularly in fostering adaptive coping while minimizing maladaptive patterns in response to the complex demands of pesantren life.

In the context of santri facing multiple academic, social, and disciplinary demands, stress is often accompanied by specific emotional responses such as anxiety, fear, frustration, or sadness. Before individuals select particular coping strategies, they may first need to regulate these emotional responses. Therefore, differences in coping effectiveness can partly be understood through individuals' capacity for emotion regulation. Emotion regulation refers to the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when these emotions occur, and how they are experienced and expressed (Gross, 1998). Within the process model of emotion regulation, cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression differ in their timing and function. Cognitive reappraisal is an antecedent-focused strategy that works earlier in the emotion-generative process by changing the meaning or interpretation of a situation before the full emotional response develops. In contrast, expressive suppression is a response-focused strategy that works after emotions have already arisen by inhibiting their outward expression (Gross & John, 2003). This distinction is important because reappraisal may support more adaptive coping by helping individuals reinterpret stressful situations, regulate emotional distress, and engage in planning or problem solving. Suppression, however, primarily controls emotional expression rather than changing the meaning of the emotional experience, and therefore may be less directly involved in coping strategies that require emotional processing, active reinterpretation, planning, or problem solving. In the pesantren context, santri who are able to reinterpret academic pressure, strict routines, and disciplinary expectations more constructively may be better able to select adaptive coping responses, whereas those who mainly suppress emotional expression may experience unresolved distress that does not necessarily translate into effective coping.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated a significant relationship between emotion regulation and coping strategies. Positive emotion regulation is associated with the use of adaptive coping mechanisms, where individuals capable of effectively managing their emotions are more likely to employ problem solving strategies (Rumampuk & Kundra, 2017). This relationship is further

reinforced by the role of emotion regulation as a key mediator between stress and psychological outcomes, with dysfunction in emotion regulation exacerbating psychosomatic symptoms and reducing coping effectiveness (Monteiro et al., 2014; Teixeira et al., 2022). Additionally, this relationship is dynamic and influenced by developmental factors, as increased age maturity is associated with greater use of problem focused coping and improved emotion regulation (Monteiro et al., 2014). In intervention contexts, programs aimed at enhancing emotion regulation, such as personality development and religious based guidance, have been shown to promote emotional stability and foster more adaptive coping mechanisms among individuals experiencing stress (Seno & Rahayu, 2024).

Although prior research generally indicates a relationship between emotion regulation and stress coping strategies, most studies have treated these constructs as unidimensional variables or have combined their multiple dimensions into composite scores. Such approaches risk oversimplifying what is inherently a complex relationship, as each dimension of emotion regulation, such as cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, operates through distinct psychological mechanisms. Similarly, coping strategies encompass multiple orientations, including problem focused, emotion focused, and activity focused coping. Consequently, the specific relationships between these dimensions remain insufficiently explored. Moreover, research within the pesantren context remains limited, despite its unique psychosocial stressors. Therefore, further research is needed to examine the multidimensional relationship between emotion regulation and coping strategies in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological dynamics experienced by santri.

Based on this rationale, the present study aims to examine the specific associations between the dimensions of emotion regulation and the dimensions of coping strategies among santri. Rather than treating emotion regulation and coping as general composite constructs, this study investigates whether cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression are differentially associated with problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and activity-focused coping. Accordingly, the research question guiding this study is: how are cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression associated with each dimension of coping strategy among santri? Based on the theoretical distinction between reappraisal and suppression, this study proposes six hypotheses: cognitive reappraisal is significantly associated with activity-focused coping (H1), emotion-focused coping (H2), and problem-focused coping (H3); and expressive suppression is significantly associated with activity-focused coping (H4), emotion-focused coping (H5), and problem-focused coping (H6).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional correlational design to examine the predictive relationships between emotion regulation strategies and coping strategy dimensions among santri residing in Islamic Boarding School X in Bandung, Indonesia. Emotion regulation was represented by two dimensions, namely cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, whereas coping strategies were represented by problem-focused

coping, emotion-focused coping, and activity-focused coping. This study did not directly measure stress levels; instead, it focused on coping strategies as psychological responses to academic, residential, and disciplinary demands within the pesantren context. Data were collected through a survey method using standardized questionnaires administered at a single point in time. Because the study was non-experimental and did not involve manipulation of variables, the findings should be interpreted as predictive associations rather than definitive causal effects.

### Participants

Participants were 87 santri aged 18–25 years residing in Islamic Boarding School X in Bandung, Indonesia. All participants were university students living in the pesantren and actively involved in its religious, academic, and communal activities; thus, they represented emerging adults facing simultaneous demands of academic adjustment, residential life, and pesantren discipline. The inclusion criteria were being an active santri residing in the pesantren, aged 18–25 years, enrolled as a university student, and willing to participate voluntarily. Participants were excluded if they were outside the age range, were not currently residing in the pesantren, did not provide informed consent, or submitted incomplete, duplicate, or careless responses. Convenience sampling was used because access to santri in a residential pesantren context is institutionally restricted and depends on permission from pesantren administrators. The final sample consisted of 50 males (57.5%) and 37 females (42.5%), with a mean age of 19.78 years ( $SD = 1.20$ ). The sample size was justified based on PLS-SEM recommendations and statistical power analysis, with the maximum number of predictors directed at an endogenous construct being two, namely cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Assuming a medium effect size ( $f^2 = 0.15$ ),  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and power = 0.80, the recommended minimum sample size ranged from 55 to 77 respondents (Kock & Hadaya, 2018); therefore, the final sample of 87 exceeded the minimum requirement. However, because participants were recruited from a single Islamic boarding school using convenience sampling, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific and should not be generalized to all santri or pesantren populations in Indonesia.

### Research Procedure

Data were collected between October and November 2025 using an online questionnaire administered through Google Form. Prior to data collection, the researchers visited Islamic Boarding School X and obtained permission from the pesantren management. After permission was granted, eligible santri were approached directly within the pesantren environment and invited to complete the questionnaire. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed that their decision to participate or decline would not affect their academic standing, pesantren status, relationship with pesantren authorities, or access to pesantren activities. The pesantren management only provided institutional permission and did not supervise, monitor, or evaluate individual participation. The first page of the Google Form contained an informed consent statement explaining the study purpose, eligibility criteria, voluntary participation, confidentiality of responses, and the right to withdraw before submission. Participants could proceed only after indicating their consent. No personally identifying

information was collected, responses were analyzed in aggregate form, and the data were stored securely and used only for research purposes.

### Research Instruments

Emotion regulation was measured using the Indonesian version of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) developed by Gross and John (2003) and adapted by Radde et al. (2021). The instrument consists of 10 items assessing cognitive reappraisal (6 items) and expressive suppression (4 items). The Indonesian ERQ used in this study employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; thus, the scale format was not modified specifically for the present study. Previous validation showed that all items were valid ( $t > 1.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .951 for cognitive reappraisal and .790 for expressive suppression. All items were scored in the same direction, with higher scores indicating greater use of the respective emotion regulation strategy.

Coping strategies were measured using the Indonesian adaptation of the Brief COPE Inventory developed by Carver (1997) and adapted by Salsabila (2024). The adapted scale was based on the theoretical structure of the original Brief COPE and grouped into three broader dimensions: problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and activity-focused coping. The initial adapted version consisted of 22 items, but two items from the emotion-focused coping dimension, item 9 and item 10, were removed after CFA because their factor loadings were below .40, with values of  $-.05$  and  $-.14$ , respectively. The final version therefore consisted of 20 items: 6 items for problem-focused coping, 8 items for emotion-focused coping, and 6 items for activity-focused coping. Responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. All items were scored in the same direction, with higher scores reflecting greater use of the corresponding coping strategy.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS version 3. PLS-SEM was selected because this study aimed to examine a prediction-oriented model involving multiple latent constructs with a relatively small sample size and without requiring strict multivariate normality assumptions (Hair et al., 2019). All constructs were specified as reflective constructs because the indicators were assumed to reflect their respective latent variables. The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated by examining indicator loadings, Average Variance Extracted ( $AVE > .50$ ), Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability ( $CR > .70$ ), and discriminant validity using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio ( $HTMT < .90$ ). Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Second, the structural model was evaluated by examining path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, 95% confidence intervals, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), and effect size ( $f^2$ ). The significance of the structural paths was tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples at a significance level of  $p < .05$ .

### RESULTS OF STUDY

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all constructs examined in this study. Cognitive reappraisal had a mean score of 30.2 ( $SD = 6.48$ ), while expressive suppression had a mean score of 18.5 ( $SD = 4.53$ ). Among the coping dimensions, emotion-focused coping showed the highest mean score ( $M = 30.5$ ,  $SD = 5.53$ ), followed by problem-focused coping ( $M = 18.4$ ,  $SD = 3.89$ ) and activity-focused coping ( $M = 13.3$ ,  $SD = 4.35$ ). These findings indicate that, descriptively, participants reported relatively higher use of emotion-focused coping compared to the other coping dimensions.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics

| Construct               | Mean | Median | SD   | Minimum | Maximum |
|-------------------------|------|--------|------|---------|---------|
| Cognitive Reappraisal   | 30.2 | 30     | 6.48 | 11      | 42      |
| Expressive Suppression  | 18.5 | 18     | 4.53 | 7       | 28      |
| Emotion-focused coping  | 30.5 | 31     | 5.53 | 14      | 40      |
| Activity-focused coping | 13.3 | 13     | 4.35 | 6       | 24      |
| Problem-focused coping  | 18.4 | 19     | 3.89 | 6       | 24      |

**Table 2.** Outer Model Evaluation Results

| Construct              | Loading       | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | CR    | AVE   |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Cognitive Reappraisal  | 0.673 - 0.817 | 0.847               | 0.886 | 0.566 |
| Expressive Suppression | 0.711 - 0.768 | 0.728               | 0.827 | 0.545 |
| Problem-Focused        | 0.674 - 0.870 | 0.876               | 0.905 | 0.617 |
| Emotion-Focused        | 0.576 - 0.791 | 0.889               | 0.907 | 0.522 |
| Activity-Focused       | 0.618 - 0.867 | 0.808               | 0.852 | 0.539 |

Table 2 presents the evaluation of the reflective measurement model. The retained indicator loadings ranged from 0.576 to 0.870, indicating that all indicators

met the minimum acceptable loading criterion. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.522 to 0.617, exceeding the recommended threshold of

0.50 and supporting convergent validity. In terms of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.728 to 0.889, while Composite Reliability (CR) values

ranged from 0.827 to 0.907. These results indicate that all constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability and convergent validity.

**Table 3.** Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio)

| Construct                   | AF    | CR    | EF    | ES    | PF |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|
| Activity-Focused (AF)       |       |       |       |       |    |
| Cognitive Reappraisal (CR)  | 0.183 |       |       |       |    |
| Emotion-Focused (EF)        | 0.046 | 0.555 |       |       |    |
| Expressive Suppression (ES) | 0.132 | 0.501 | 0.424 |       |    |
| Problem-Focused (PF)        | 0.014 | 0.549 | 0.761 | 0.366 | -  |

**Table 4.** Coefficient of Determination Values for the Dependent Variable

| Variable          | R2    | R2 Adjusted | Interpretation |
|-------------------|-------|-------------|----------------|
| Activity Focused  | 0.036 | 0.013       | Weak           |
| Emotional Focused | 0.336 | 0.320       | Moderate       |
| Problem Focused   | 0.312 | 0.296       | Moderate       |

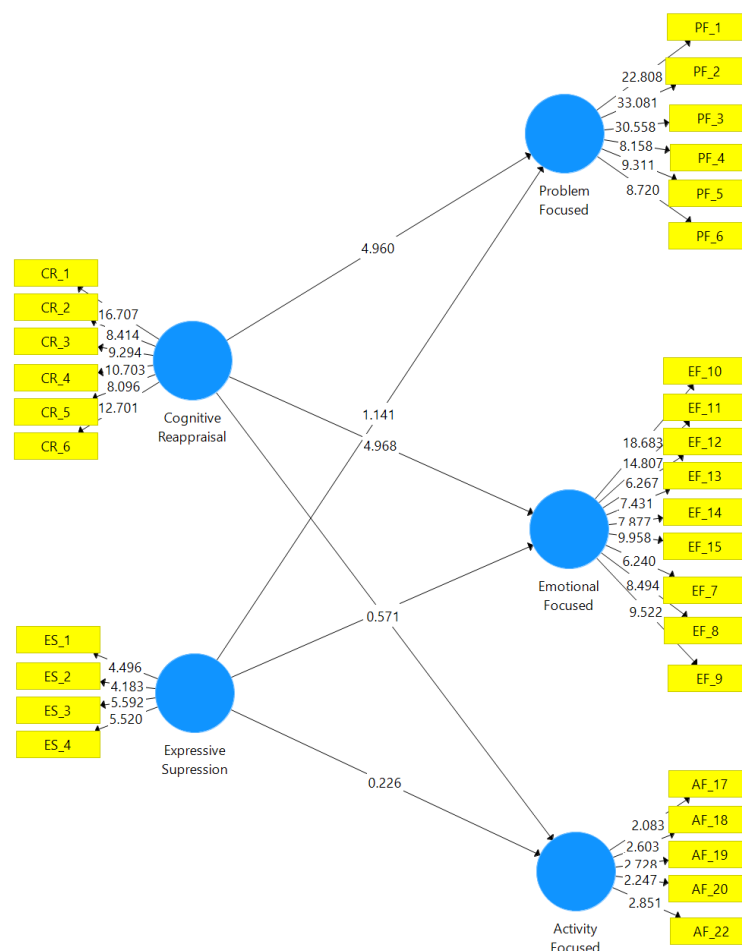


**Figure 1.** Results of the Structural Model Analysis

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), as shown in Table 3. All HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.90, with the highest value observed between problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (HTMT =

0.761). These findings indicate that the constructs in the model were empirically distinct and that discriminant validity was established.

Table 4 presents the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) values for the endogenous variables. The model explained

33.6% of the variance in emotion-focused coping ( $R^2 = 0.336$ ) and 31.2% of the variance in problem-focused coping ( $R^2 = 0.312$ ), indicating moderate predictive power.

In contrast, the model explained only 3.6% of the variance in activity-focused coping ( $R^2 = 0.036$ ), indicating weak predictive power for this coping dimension.

**Table 5.** Path Analysis

| Hypothesis | Path                  | $\beta$ | t     | p    | 95% CI          | VIF   | $f^2$ | Decision      |
|------------|-----------------------|---------|-------|------|-----------------|-------|-------|---------------|
| H1         | CR → Activity-focused | -0.156  | 0.579 | .563 | [-0.461, 0.501] | 1.335 | .019  | Not supported |
| H2         | CR → Emotion-focused  | 0.456   | 5.118 | .001 | [0.279, 0.639]  | 1.335 | .235  | Supported     |
| H3         | CR → Problem-focused  | 0.488   | 5.242 | .001 | [0.281, 0.674]  | 1.335 | .259  | Supported     |
| H4         | ES → Activity-focused | -0.054  | 0.222 | .825 | [-0.471, 0.362] | 1.335 | .002  | Not supported |
| H5         | ES → Emotion-focused  | 0.196   | 1.885 | .060 | [-0.006, 0.409] | 1.335 | .043  | Not supported |
| H6         | ES → Problem-focused  | 0.122   | 1.116 | .265 | [-0.073, 0.352] | 1.335 | .016  | Not supported |

Note. CR=Cognitive Reappraisal, ES=Expressive Suppression

The hypothesis testing results based on the bootstrapping procedure are presented in Table 5. The inner VIF values for all structural paths were 1.335, below the recommended threshold of 5.00, indicating that multicollinearity was not a critical issue in the structural model. Cognitive reappraisal did not significantly predict activity-focused coping ( $\beta = -0.156$ ,  $t = 0.579$ ,  $p = .563$ , 95% CI [-0.461, 0.501]); therefore, H1 was not supported. However, cognitive reappraisal significantly and positively predicted emotion-focused coping ( $\beta = 0.456$ ,  $t = 5.118$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI [0.279, 0.639]) and problem-focused coping ( $\beta = 0.488$ ,  $t = 5.242$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI [0.281, 0.674]); therefore, H2 and H3 were supported. Expressive suppression did not significantly predict activity-focused coping ( $\beta = -0.054$ ,  $t = 0.222$ ,  $p = .825$ , 95% CI [-0.471, 0.362]), emotion-focused coping ( $\beta = 0.196$ ,  $t = 1.885$ ,  $p = .060$ , 95% CI [-0.006, 0.409]), or problem-focused coping ( $\beta = 0.122$ ,  $t = 1.116$ ,  $p = .265$ , 95% CI [-0.073, 0.352]); therefore, H4, H5, and H6 were not supported.

## DISCUSSION

This study examined the predictive relationships between emotion regulation strategies and coping strategy dimensions among santri residing in an Islamic boarding school. The findings showed that cognitive reappraisal significantly and positively predicted emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping, whereas it did not significantly predict activity-focused coping. Expressive suppression did not significantly predict any of the coping dimensions. These findings suggest that different emotion regulation strategies may have distinct relationships with coping among santri, particularly within a pesantren context characterized by academic demands, residential routines, communal life, and disciplinary expectations.

The significant relationships between cognitive reappraisal and both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping can be understood through the process model of emotion regulation. Cognitive reappraisal operates early in the emotion-generative process by changing how individuals interpret a potentially stressful situation (Gross, 1998). For santri, this strategy may help transform pesantren-related pressures, such as strict routines, academic demands, separation from family, and disciplinary expectations, into more meaningful and manageable experiences (Musafiri, 2021; Wang & Yin, 2023). When santri are able to reinterpret pressure as part of self-development, religious learning, or character formation, they may be more likely to regulate emotional distress and engage in constructive efforts to manage the

situation (Dolcos et al., 2021). This may explain why cognitive reappraisal was associated with both emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping.

These findings are also consistent with Folkman et al. (1986) stress and coping theory, which emphasizes that coping responses depend on how individuals appraise stressful demands and their perceived resources. Cognitive reappraisal may support more adaptive coping because it modifies the appraisal process itself, allowing santri to evaluate stressful events in a less threatening and more controllable way. In this sense, reappraisal may facilitate emotion-focused coping by reducing negative emotional intensity and may facilitate problem-focused coping by enabling more organized and goal-directed responses (Rumampuk & Kundre, 2017; Teixeira et al., 2022). Thus, the role of cognitive reappraisal in this study should not be understood merely as a general emotion regulation skill, but as a cognitive mechanism that may shape how santri interpret and respond to pesantren-related demands.

In contrast, expressive suppression did not significantly predict activity-focused, emotion-focused, or problem-focused coping. This finding should be interpreted cautiously. The absence of significant paths does not necessarily indicate that expressive suppression is ineffective or maladaptive in all contexts. Rather, it suggests that expressive suppression was not significantly associated with the coping dimensions measured in this sample. In the pesantren context, expressive suppression may have complex cultural, religious, and social meanings (Ford & Mauss, 2015). Restraining emotional expression may reflect self-control, politeness, respect for authority, patience, or efforts to maintain social harmony within a communal religious environment. Therefore, suppression may not always function as emotional avoidance; in some situations, it may be socially valued as part of moral discipline and relational adjustment (Zheng et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, expressive suppression primarily regulates the outward expression of emotion rather than changing the meaning of the emotional experience (Gross & John, 2003). As a result, it may not directly support coping strategies that require active reinterpretation, emotional processing, planning, or problem solving (Cao et al., 2026). This may explain why expressive suppression did not significantly predict problem-focused or emotion-focused coping in the present study. The findings therefore suggest the need to distinguish between culturally appropriate emotional restraint and psychologically adaptive emotion regulation. Future studies should examine whether expressive suppression has different implications depending on context, motivation, perceived social expectations, and the availability of supportive relationships in pesantren settings.

Another important finding is that emotion regulation showed weak predictive power for activity-focused coping. The model explained only a small proportion of variance in activity-focused coping, suggesting that this coping dimension may be influenced by factors beyond individual emotion regulation. In a highly structured pesantren environment, opportunities to engage in alternative activities may be shaped by institutional rules, daily schedules, peer routines, access to facilities, and available free time (Zaenurrosyid & Sholihah, 2025). Therefore, activity-focused coping may depend more on environmental affordances and habitual behavioral patterns than on cognitive reappraisal or expressive suppression (Jahidin, 2023). This finding indicates that coping strategies involving activity redirection may require broader contextual explanations rather than being understood solely through individual emotion regulation processes.

These findings have potential practical implications for pesantren-based student support. Because cognitive reappraisal was associated with more adaptive coping dimensions, pesantren educators, counselors, and student mentors may consider incorporating cognitive reframing strategies into psychoeducational or guidance programs. Such programs could help santri reinterpret academic, residential, and disciplinary pressures in more constructive ways while still acknowledging their emotional experiences. However, these implications should be understood as preliminary recommendations rather than evidence of intervention effectiveness. Future intervention studies are needed to examine whether strengthening cognitive reappraisal can improve coping and psychological adjustment among santri.

This study has several limitations. First, stress was not directly measured; therefore, the findings should be interpreted as explaining coping strategy dimensions rather than the level of stress experienced by santri. Second, the cross-sectional design does not allow causal conclusions. Third, the relatively small sample size and convenience sampling from a single Islamic boarding school in Bandung limit the generalizability of the findings. Fourth, the use of self-report questionnaires may introduce response bias and common method variance. Finally, contextual variables such as length of stay in the pesantren were not collected, and demographic variables were not included as controls. Future studies should directly measure stress, involve larger and more diverse pesantren samples, apply longitudinal or mixed-method designs, and include strategies to assess and reduce common method bias.

## CONCLUSION

This study found that cognitive reappraisal was significantly and positively associated with emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping among santri, but not with activity-focused coping. Expressive suppression did not show significant associations with any coping dimension in the tested model. These findings indicate that specific emotion regulation strategies relate differently to coping dimensions within the pesantren context. Given the cross-sectional design and the absence of direct stress or psychological well-being measures, the findings should be interpreted as associative rather than causal.

## DECLARATION

### Ethics approval and consent to participate

All participants in this study took part voluntarily and provided written informed consent as an indication of their agreement. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were anonymized.

### Consent for publication

Written informed consent was obtained from the participants for publication of this study

### Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

### Conflicts of interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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### Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Technology

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT in order to improve the language and readability of the manuscript. After using this tool, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

### Authors' contributions.

E contributed to supervision, manuscript revision, and academic guidance throughout the study. MFP contributed to data analysis, interpretation of the results, and manuscript writing. AAM contributed to conceptualization, data collection, and manuscript writing. SRN contributed to conceptualization, data collection, and manuscript writing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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