

Ecological Construction of Religious Resilience among Islamic Education Students Facing Quarter-Life Crisis: A Comparative Case Study of Public and State Islamic Campus Ecologies

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (IRE/PAI) students are highly vulnerable to quarter-life crises amidst intense social expectations of piety. This study aims to analyze and compare the construction of PAI students' religious resilience in navigating this crisis at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) and UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. A qualitative comparative case study design was applied to eight purposively selected informants, four at each site, in their fifth and seventh semesters, through in-depth interviews, ecological observation, and document analysis, followed by intra- and cross-case analysis. Findings reveal that the heterogeneous general university ecology of UPI fosters flexible and independent resilience, supported by restorative physical spaces. Conversely, the religion-centred state Islamic university ecosystem of UIN offers strong structural support but carries risks of social-moral pressure due to standardized communal piety. This study concludes that religious resilience is not an innate attribute (given trait), but rather a systemic construction significantly shaped by the campus ecosystem (ecological construction of religious resilience).

Keywords: Religious Resilience; Campus Ecology; Quarter-Life Crisis; Religious Coping; PAI Students.

Abstrak

Mahasiswa Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) rentan mengalami quarter-life crisis di tengah tingginya ekspektasi kesalehan sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dan membandingkan konstruksi resiliensi beragama mahasiswa PAI dalam menghadapi krisis tersebut di Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) dan UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. Metode kualitatif studi kasus komparatif diterapkan pada delapan informan yang dipilih secara purposive, masing-masing empat informan di setiap lokasi, pada semester lima dan tujuh, melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi ekologis, dan studi dokumentasi, yang dilanjutkan dengan analisis intra-kasus dan lintas-kasus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan ekologi perguruan tinggi umum UPI yang heterogen menumbuhkan resiliensi fleksibel dan mandiri yang ditopang ruang fisik restoratif. Sebaliknya, ekosistem perguruan tinggi keagamaan Islam UIN yang berpusat pada agama (religion-centred) memberikan dukungan struktural kuat sekaligus risiko tekanan sosial-moral akibat standarisasi

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kesalehan komunal. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa resiliensi beragama bukanlah atribut bawaan (given trait), melainkan konstruksi sistemik yang dibentuk secara signifikan oleh ekosistem kampus (ecological construction of religious resilience).

Kata kunci : Resiliensi Beragama; Ekologi Kampus; Quarter-Life Crisis; Koping Beragama; Mahasiswa PAI.

I. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) students in the stage of emerging adulthood bear a complex, dual existential burden. On one hand, they must navigate acute psychological vulnerabilities associated with the Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) manifesting as anxiety about the future and emotional depression a phenomenon with a global prevalence of 40%–77% (Robinson et al., 2025), particularly among women and within cultures characterized by high uncertainty avoidance (Delvecchio et al., 2023; Lagares-Franco et al., 2026). On the other hand, they are constantly expected to embody an ideal persona amidst societal demands for symbolic piety and high moral standards (Nurholis, 2025). Caught in this dual pressure, religious resilience and spiritual maturity are essential, functioning as protective psychological resources that sustain both religious commitment and emotional stability over the long term.

Previous studies consistently position spirituality and religious coping as primary defense strategies for student well-being and academic resilience (Lehihi et al., 2025; Reyes-Perez et al., 2025; Sajodin et al., 2023). Physiologically, it acts as a physical buffer, mitigating cortisol spikes during acute academic stress (Haney & Lane, 2024), while faith maturity determines whether religious values healthily reduce psychological maladjustment instead of triggering negative coping conflicts (Knabb et al., 2017). This spiritual adaptation is highly context-dependent, as shown by the localized protective role of prayer and belief among youth in Indonesia (Najamuddin et al., 2025).

Research on religious coping in Indonesian higher education has tended to treat coping as an individual-level disposition (Rohma & Tondok, 2023; Sari & Haryati, 2023), giving limited attention to the institutional ecosystems in which coping is enacted. Conversely, sociological studies on campus religious-cultural climates remain predominantly descriptive, focusing either on character policies in general public universities (PTU) (Fadli et al., 2025; Nurjannah et al., 2023) or on the interaction between campus culture and Islamic values (Pratama et al., 2025) a focus supported by meta-analyses correlating religious environments with resilience (Schwalm et al., 2022). Other studies examine the resilience of students at State Islamic Higher Education institutions (PTKIN) facing final-year project stress (Mawaddah & Ahmadi, 2025; Silfiyah et al., 2022). However, a systematic search of Scopus, DOAJ, and SINTA-indexed journals published between 2015 and 2025 identified no empirical study directly comparing these two institutional types: the fluid, heterogeneous climate of public universities versus the religion-centred climate of PTKIN, characterized by strong communal social control, in shaping student spiritual resilience.

This gap is compounded by operationalizations of Pargament's framework that treat coping primarily as immediate crisis management (Giono & Surawan, 2025), leaving its environmental antecedents underexamined. To bridge this gap, this study integrates Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory with Pargament's Coping Theory to propose a new conceptual lens: the Ecological Construction of Religious Resilience. Through this integrative lens, religious resilience is viewed as a dynamic, systemically constructed process actively shaped by the higher education ecosystem in which the student resides. Cultivating a healthy campus ecosystem ensures that UPI's institutional vision of producing "religious" graduates established at the macro-policy level is effectively internalized as a protective psychospiritual capacity. This capacity instills a psychological state of deep inner tranquility, emotional serenity, and spiritual composure resulting from adaptive faith (Sinta et al., 2024; Yahya et al., 2026) in students during their daily microsystem interactions.

Drawing upon these theoretical arguments and empirical gaps, this qualitative comparative case study analyzes how Islamic Religious Education (IRE/PAI) students construct religious resilience while navigating the quarter-life crisis across two contrasting campus ecologies: Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), representing a general public university (PTU), and UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, representing a state Islamic university (PTKIN). Specifically, this study addresses three central research questions: (1) How do PAI students at each institution experience the quarter-life crisis and its associated social-moral identity burdens? (2) How do macro-, meso-, and microsystem features of each campus ecology shape students' religious coping? and (3) What typologies of religious resilience and spiritual tranquility (*thuma'ninah*) emerge across these two distinct institutional environments? By addressing these questions, this article aims to develop a conceptual account of the ecological construction of religious resilience, offering a novel integrative contribution to the sociology of Islamic education and the psychology of religion regarding the environmental grounding of faith-based adaptation.

II. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a Comparative Case Study design to investigate in depth the construction of religious resilience among Islamic Religious Education (IRE/PAI) students across two distinct higher education ecologies (Simister & Scholz, 2017). The research operates within an interpretive paradigm, seeking to understand the reality of resilience as a dynamic phenomenon actively constructed through students' subjective interpretations of their daily environments (Rahardjo, 2018). This ecological-comparative approach aims to unravel the dialectic between campus environmental structures and students' spiritual resilience capacities.

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique (Saleh, 2017) based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) active students in the PAI/IPAI study program; (2) at least in their fifth semester (to ensure sufficient depth of interaction with campus culture); and (3) currently or previously experiencing academic stress or future-oriented anxiety associated with the quarter-life crisis. A balanced design of four informants per site (eight primary informants in total) was adopted to enable symmetrical cross-case comparison, as detailed in Table 1. Data saturation was systematically monitored during the coding and analysis process; no new axial categories emerged after the seventh interview.

Fieldwork was conducted over a four-month period from February to May 2026 across both campus sites. Data collection comprised 12 semi-structured interview sessions (including four follow-up member-checking sessions), with each interview lasting between 45 and 75 minutes (average duration: 60 minutes). Additionally, eight structured ecological observation sessions were conducted across key microsystems including campus mosques, green open spaces (e.g., UPI's Sukun area and UIN's Campus 2 Lake), and student organization hubs following a biweekly observation schedule during both peak academic hours and late-afternoon leisure times.

Table 1. Profile of Key Research Informants.

No	Informant Code	Research Locus / University	Study Program	Semester	Age
1	YP	UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung	Islamic Religious Education	5th	20
2	S	UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung	Islamic Religious Education	7th	21
3	FA	UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung	Islamic Religious Education	5th	20
4	NA	UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung	Islamic Religious Education	5th	20
5	ZF	Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia	Islamic Religious Education	5th	20
6	DM	Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia	Islamic Religious Education	5th	20
7	MS	Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia	Islamic Religious Education	7th	21
8	WN	Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia	Islamic Religious Education	7th	21

Source: Research Field Interview Data, 2026

Data collection employed a multi-source approach to achieve methodological triangulation (Nurfajriani et al., 2024). First, semi-structured In-Depth Interviews explored informants' experiences regarding developmental crises, moral burdens, religious coping, and campus ecological support. Second, Ecological Observations recorded physical facilities and social interaction patterns at microsystem levels, including Al-Furqon Mosque (UPI), Campus 2 Mosque (UIN), the Sukun area, and Campus 2 Lake. Third, Documentation Studies of official policies (e.g., UPI's Tutorial program and UIN FTK's dress code) supplemented the macrosystem context.

The researcher acted as the primary instrument, utilizing three theoretically integrated guidelines to maintain analytical consistency and support the trustworthiness of interpretation. First, the Ecological Observation Guidelines mapped environmental factors across macrosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to analyze how institutional designs influence student comfort and sense of belonging (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). Second, the Religious Coping Dimension Interview Guidelines, derived from Pargament (1997), identified positive (e.g., tawakkal, meaning-making) and negative (e.g., spiritual conflict, abandonment) coping mechanisms (Pargament, 1997). Third, the Religious Intelligence Dimension Interview Guidelines, based on Rahmat (2026) and corroborated by Sinta et al. (2024), evaluated substantive religious values, jihad al-nafs (ego control), al-khudu' al-mutlaq (absolute obedience), and the attainment of inner tranquility (thuma'ninah) (Rahmat, 2026; Sinta et al., 2024). Additionally, field notes were utilized to record gestures, non-verbal emotional expressions, and unique contextual phenomena not captured by audio recordings.

Data analysis followed the cyclical, interactive model of Miles et al. (2014) through data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Operationally, a staged coding process was applied (Miles et al., 2014): (1) open coding to label transcript concepts (financial stress, attire, quiet spaces); (2) axial coding to categorize codes based on theoretical relationships (coping mechanisms, restorative ecology); and (3) selective coding to synthesize these into the "Ecological Determination of Religious Resilience" narrative. Intra-case and cross-case analyses were then performed to map institutional differences between PTU and PTKIN ecosystems.

Once the coding phase was complete, the data underwent further analysis using two specific techniques:

1. Intra-Case Analysis: Examining the ecosystems and dynamics of religious resilience at UPI and UIN Bandung independently to understand the unique characteristics of each site.
2. Cross-Case Analysis: Comparing data from both sites to map patterns of similarity and difference regarding the construction of student spiritual resilience under the influence of PTU and PTKIN institutional DNA.

Four analytical dimensions served as interpretive lenses for reading the data (Pargament, 1997; Rahmat, 2026; Sinta et al., 2024). They are treated as coexisting qualities rather than a developmental hierarchy, and are used to characterize narrative accounts rather than to evaluate informants' internal spiritual states:

1. Positive Religious Coping: The ability to transform developmental anxiety into mechanisms of patience (sabar), prayer (shalat), and striving combined with trust in God (ikhtiar-tawakal).

2. Substantive Religiosity: A shift in motivation from symbolic, formalistic piety (aimed at maintaining the public image of an Islamic Religious Education teacher) to genuine moral awareness.
3. Jihadun-nafs: The ability to control base desires, the worldly ego, and excessive ambition factors that lie at the root of the anxiety associated with developmental crises.
4. Nafs al-Mutma'inna (The Tranquil Soul): The attainment of a psychological state characterized by calmness, serenity, and freedom from profound distress, alongside a spiritual willingness to accept God's will.

Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation (comparing interviews, physical observations, and policy documents), member checks to validate transcript accuracy with informants, and peer debriefing (Nurfajriani et al., 2024; Saleh, 2017). Researcher reflexivity was maintained through daily field notes. Regarding ethics, the study implemented informed consent protocols via written consent forms, ensured anonymity by masking informant identities with initials, and upheld confidentiality to guarantee that all data would be used exclusively for academic purposes.

III. Result and Discussion

A. Research Findings

This section presents data derived from in-depth interviews, ecological observations, and document analysis involving eight student informants from the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study programs at the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) representing a General Public University (PTU) and UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung representing a State Islamic Religious University (PTKIN).

Aligned with the frameworks of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) and Pargament's Religious Coping Theory (1997), the presentation of research findings is structured into four primary dimensions: (1) Manifestations of Developmental Crises and Moral Identity Burdens among PAI Students; (2) Campus Microsystem Dynamics (Physical Ecology, Worship Facilities, and Restorative Spaces); (3) Campus Mesosystem and Macrosystem Interactions (Academic Atmosphere, Policies, Organizations, and Codes of Ethics); and (4) Typologies of Religious Coping and the Construction of Religious Resilience.

1. Manifestations of Developmental Crises and Moral Identify Burdens Among PAI Students

All informants (aged 20 to 21, in their fifth and seventh semesters) fall within emerging adulthood, a period identified as peak risk for quarter-life crisis episodes (Robinson et al., 2025). Field data reveal an intersection of future career anxiety, financial concerns, and societal moral expectations, as compared in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of Developmental Crises and Moral Identity Burden among PAI Students

Analytical Dimension	Empirical Findings at UPI (PTU / General University)	Empirical Findings at UIN Bandung (PTKIN / State Islamic University)	Grounded Evidence / Associated Informants
Future & Career Anxiety	- Concerns regarding financial welfare as future Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, who are perceived to face a long career path with low daily/basic salaries. - Optimism is managed through plans for further study (<i>Fast Track</i> BA-to-MA program) to expand academic career opportunities as a lecturer.	- Fear of high competition among <i>S.Pd.I</i> (Bachelor of Islamic Education) graduates oversaturating their home regions. - Anxiety over the inability to meet daily living costs amidst high inflation and expensive living standards. - Anxiety regarding teacher certification regulations (<i>PPG</i>) that must be completed before pursuing a master's degree.	UPI: ZF, DM, MS, WN UIN: YP, S, FA, NA
Identity Burden & Moral Expectations	- Being the sole representatives of an Islamic study program in a highly heterogeneous and pluralistic general campus. - Shouldering the moral burden to constantly exhibit noble character (<i>akhlaq</i>) in front of students from other secular study programs. - Automatically designated to lead prayers (<i>du'a</i>) in faculty/university-wide events.	- Shouldering a high moral burden in their home villages due to their status as PAI students at an Islamic university (UIN), who are heavily identified as future Islamic scholars/preachers (<i>ustadz</i>). - Social demands to maintain extreme behavioral standards to avoid damaging the institution's religious reputation.	UPI: ZF, DM, MS, WN UIN: YP, S, FA, NA
Emotional Response to Crisis	- Experiencing identity confusion and behavioral dissonance due to intensive social mixing with general students with liberal lifestyles. - Feelings of guilt if unable to substantively reflect Islamic values.	- Experiencing psychological distress due to standardized formal dress codes and rigid behavioral protocols within the faculty. - Feelings of isolation in student boarding houses (<i>kosan</i>), leading to existential questioning of their destiny in choosing the PAI major.	UPI: ZF, MS, WN UIN: YP, S, FA

Source: Research Field Interview Data, 2026

2. Campus Microsystem Dynamics (Physical Ecology, Places of Worship, and Restorative Spaces)

The microsystem analysis focuses on direct student interactions with the campus's physical and spatial layouts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Structured ecological observations conducted across both campuses revealed distinct physical attributes such

as vegetation density, canopy shading, ambient noise levels, seating accessibility, and spatial traffic that directly condition the restorative quality of these spaces (Asim et al., 2023; Bhattacharyya & Achari, 2025). Triangulating these physical observation field logs with student interview accounts demonstrates how spatial design choices either mitigate or exacerbate academic stress, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Integration of Ecological Observational Data and Informant Accounts on Campus Restorative Microsystems

Microsystem Aspect	Observed Physical & Environmental Attributes (Ecological Field Logs)	Empirical Findings at UPI (PTU / General University)	Empirical Findings at UIN Bandung (PTKIN / State Islamic University)	Grounded Evidence & Triangulated Data Source
Restorative Green Open Spaces (RTH)	• UPI: Dense Sukun tree canopy, shaded amphitheater seating under FPIPS, low ambient traffic noise, cool microclimate. • UIN: Central lake at Campus 2 with perimeter benches, fish ponds, open horizon view; Main campus lacks quiet shaded green areas due to high-density parking lots and concrete paving.	• Sukun Area (FPIPS): Primary spot to relieve cognitive fatigue from heavy course credit loads. • Isola Synthetic Lawn: Used for quiet self-reflection. • Rooftop Parking: Chosen for elevation and solitary decompression.	• Campus 2 Lake: Favorite therapeutic spot to watch water and feed fish with peers. • Main Campus: Lacks quiet green spaces, forcing students into crowded hallways during class breaks.	• UPI: Obs-UPI-01, Obs-UPI-02; Informants: DM, WN, ZF • UIN: Obs-UIN-01, Obs-UIN-03; Informant: S
Role & Spatial Utility of Campus Mosques	• Al-Furqon (UPI): Multi-story structure, expansive marble verandas, carpeted main hall, quiet acoustics, natural ventilation. • Campus 2 Mosque (UIN): Carpeted main prayer hall, adjacent shaded corridors, heavy foot traffic during peak hours, dual-use rest areas.	• Al-Furqon Mosque: Experienced as a quiet, cool sanctuary for <i>i'tikaf</i>, solitary prayer, and temporarily escaping academic stress. • Verandas serve as informal organizational meeting hubs aligning with prayer times.	• Campus 2 Mosque: A quiet sanctuary at night for screen-free contemplation and Qur'an recitation. • Serves as a primary resting/napping spot between classes due to limited public lounges.	• UPI: Obs-UPI-03, Obs-UPI-04; Informants: ZF, DM, MS, WN • UIN: Obs-UIN-02, Obs-UIN-04; Informants: YP, S, NA
Faculty Prayer Rooms (Musala)	• FPIPS Musala (UPI): Medium-sized, enclosed room within faculty building. • FTK Musala (UIN): Narrow footprint, high peak-hour	• Perceived as functional for quick obligatory daily prayers but lacking spatial capacity for extended contemplation or group discussions.	• Evaluated as overly crowded during peak hours, creating spatial congestion that limits its utility as a quiet mind-calming space.	• UPI: Obs-UPI-02; Informants: MS, WN • UIN: Obs-UIN-02; Informants: YP, NA, FA

Microsystem Aspect	Observed Physical & Environmental Attributes (Ecological Field Logs)	Empirical Findings at UPI (PTU / General University)	Empirical Findings at UIN Bandung (PTKIN / State Islamic University)	Grounded Evidence & Triangulated Data Source
	occupancy, limited ventilation during crowded intervals.			

Source: Research Field Interview Data, 2026

3. Interaction between the Campus Mesosystem and Macrosystem (Academic Atmosphere, Policies, Organization, and Code of Ethics)

The mesosystem level examines relationships between student organizations and academic policies, while the macrosystem encompasses institutional regulations, ideologies, and dominant cultures (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Table 4 compares how the contrasting regulatory DNAs of UPI (moderate-pluralistic PTU) and UIN Bandung (religious-centric PTKIN) influence students' psychological comfort.

Table 4. Influence of Campus Regulation and Culture at the Mesosystem and Macrosystem Levels

Ecosystem Aspect	Empirical Findings at UPI (PTU / General University)	Empirical Findings at UIN Bandung (PTKIN / State Islamic University)	Grounded Evidence / Associated Informants
Dress Code Regulation (Macrosystem)	• Clothing policies are highly fluid and heterogeneous. • PAI students have the freedom to express their daily wear (allowed to wear daily t-shirts and ripped jeans/Levis, as long as the top is a decent, neat collared shirt). • There are no formal social sanctions from the faculty bureaucracy regarding informal attire.	• Dress code rules at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FTK) are highly strict and formally binding. • Students are required to wear fabric trousers (slacks), neat collared shirts like professional teachers, maintain neat short hair, and are strictly prohibited from wearing jeans or daily t-shirts. • Student organization officers (HMJ) shoulder a double moral burden as role models to enforce this dress code.	• UPI: DM, MS, ZF • UIN: S, FA, NA
Religious Character Building Policy	• Implementation of a mandatory Religious Tutorial program (<i>Tutorial Keagamaan</i>) for one semester for general university students, where upper-semester PAI students are assigned as mandatory mentors for 2–3 semesters. • This program is perceived as a tangible platform for actualizing	• Implementation of a mandatory early-year <i>Ma'had</i> (Campus Dormitory) program. • The program is evaluated as having a deeply rich Islamic atmosphere, but is sometimes perceived by students as overly tight social control that potentially	• UPI: ZF, DM, WN • UIN: S, FA

Ecosystem Aspect	Empirical Findings at UPI (PTU / General University)	Empirical Findings at UIN Bandung (PTKIN / State Islamic University)	Grounded Evidence / Associated Informants
Atmosphere of Social Heterogeneity	Islamic propagation (<i>da'wah</i>) but consumes a significant portion of daily lecture time. • Massive social mixing with non-Muslim students and secular majors (e.g., tourism, arts, engineering). • Triggers initial culture shock but significantly strengthens students' capacity for empirical tolerance and religious moderation in real-world settings.	triggers psychological burnout. • The student population is highly homogeneous, with the vast majority being Muslim. • The Islamic atmosphere is highly pronounced, but sometimes generates pressure to constantly exhibit formal piety to avoid negative social stigma.	• UPI: ZF, DM, WN • UIN: YP, S, NA

Source: Research Field Interview Data, 2026

4. Typology of Religious Coping and the Construction of Religious Resilience

At the individual level, religious resilience manifests through coping mechanisms used to navigate the quarter-life crisis (Pargament, 1997). This coping is dynamically shaped by the campus ecosystem, yielding positive adaptive strategies (patience, prayer, *tawakkal*, meaning-making) or initial negative responses (spiritual conflict, abandonment) (Pham-Ngoc et al., 2026). The qualitative typology of religious coping and the resulting dimensions of spiritual maturity across both campus ecologies are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5. Typology of Religious Coping and Spiritual Maturity among PAI Students Across Campus Ecologies

Informant Code & Locus	Primary Stressor / Quarter-Life Crisis Context	Dynamic Process of Religious Coping (Negative to Positive)	Characterized Dimension of Spiritual Maturity	Illustrative Verbatim Evidence (Interview Accounts)
YP (UIN Bandung / PTKIN)	Failed national military selection (TNI) twice consecutively; financial anxiety regarding perceived low PAI teacher salaries.	• Initial: Experienced deep disappointment and spiritual struggle, questioning why intense worship (<i>tahajjud</i>, fasting) did not yield military selection success. • Final: Reconstructed failure through mentor guidance (<i>ustaz</i>), shifting toward total surrender (<i>tawakkal</i>) and lower worldly expectations.	Characterized by Substantive Religiosity and absolute willingness to accept divine decree (<i>Rida</i>).	" <i>Twice I entered the national selection board, twice I failed... At that time, I felt like... I had prayed, strived, and supplicated... but why did the ones who get drunk and cross the line pass instead? Now, I am simply convinced that whatever Allah decrees is the absolute best for me.</i> " (YP, 2026)
S (UIN Bandung / PTKIN)	Scheduling conflicts between organizational	• Positive Coping: Implemented strict daily prayer discipline by	Characterized by Morality and active Jihad al-	" <i>I always remind others when the adhan calls, okay, let's stop the</i>

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Informant Code & Locus	Primary Stressor / Quarter-Life Crisis Context	Dynamic Process of Religious Coping (Negative to Positive)	Characterized Dimension of Spiritual Maturity	Illustrative Verbatim Evidence (Interview Accounts)
	commitments (HMI/HMJ) and obligatory prayer times; strict dress code policies.	immediately pausing organizational discussions when the <i>adhan</i> sounded. • Utilized spiritual introspection, attributing current personal stress to past negligence in delaying prayers.	Nafs (struggling against inner negligence).	<i>discussion first... let's pray. Why am I facing these continuous personal obstacles? Perhaps the answer is because I used to neglect my 5 daily obligatory prayers." (S, 2026)</i>
FA (<i>UIN Bandung / PTKIN</i>)	Reduced self-confidence due to high volume of <i>S.Pd.I</i> graduates; daily financial difficulties in student boarding house.	• Positive Coping: Engaged in solitary contemplation inside boarding house; reframed being placed in PAI major as Allah's active intervention to rectify lacking religious knowledge.	Characterized by Spiritual Meaning-Making and Sabr (patience).	<i>"Why did I have to enter PAI?... Oh, perhaps my religious understanding was lacking... so Allah destined me to study in PAI to sharpen my religious knowledge and my worship." (FA, 2026)</i>
NA (<i>UIN Bandung / PTKIN</i>)	Cognitive gap between increasing academic workload in 5th semester and personal readiness; high societal moral expectations.	• Positive Coping: Utilized Campus 2 Mosque as a physical sanctuary to rest and gain daily spiritual rejuvenation. • Cultivated positive assumptions toward God (<i>Husnuzzan</i>) that divine wisdom underlies every setback.	Characterized by Sabr (patience) and Tawakkal (trust in God).	<i>"The mosque's influence is very, very immense... because where else can I hope?... Even when a destiny feels bad for me, I think that maybe behind it there is a wisdom that Allah, the All-Knowing, understands best." (NA, 2026)</i>
ZF (<i>UPI / PTU</i>)	Moral burden of leading prayers in university events; intensive social mixing with general students with liberal attire in FPIPS.	• Positive Coping: Maintained uncompromising commitment to 5 daily prayers amidst a highly heterogeneous social circle. • Actively repaired vertical connection with Allah when facing daily disappointments.	Characterized by Substantive Religiosity and autonomous moral commitment.	<i>"I once held an organizational meeting... on the veranda of Al-Furqon Mosque... when it was time for prayer and the adhan called, we immediately suspended it... if our relationship with the One Above is neglected, then we must repair it first." (ZF, 2026)</i>
DM (<i>UPI / PTU</i>)	Loss of credit-purchased motorcycle (involving <i>riba/usury</i>) four months prior; academic stress from heavy course credit load.	• Positive Coping: Reframed motorcycle loss as divine intervention saving him from usury. • Practiced active <i>tawakkal</i> for two months alongside specific spiritual litanies	Exemplified accounts strongly characterized by Nafs al-Mutma'innah (a tranquil, reassured soul).	<i>"I lost my new motorcycle just 4 months ago... that motorcycle was bought on credit, and I was studying in an environment that teaches the dangers of <i>riba</i>... Allah had prepared this event. I surrendered [tawakkal] for two</i>

Informant Code & Locus	Primary Stressor / Quarter-Life Crisis Context	Dynamic Process of Religious Coping (Negative to Positive)	Characterized Dimension of Spiritual Maturity	Illustrative Verbatim Evidence (Interview Accounts)
MS (UPI / PTU)	Inability to consistently represent HIMA IPAI's religious reputation; post-graduation civil servant selection anxiety.	(<i>wirid</i>), eventually receiving an unencumbered replacement. • Positive Coping: Performed ritual ablution (<i>wudu</i>) and <i>i'tikaf</i> at Al-Furqon Mosque to relieve cognitive fatigue. • Combined spiritual coping (<i>i'tikaf</i>) with natural/ecological coping (<i>hiking</i>) to release academic pressure.	Characterized by Hybrid Psychospiritual and Ecological Coping.	<i>months... and was given perhaps even more."</i> (DM, 2026) <i>"The academic tasks felt like they disappeared... when I contemplated in the mosque... if I don't do them, when will they be finished? I also like healing in the mountains so that I can feel the burdens I carry fade away."</i> (MS, 2026)
WN (UPI / PTU)	Deep concerns regarding low economic welfare of PAI teachers, triggered by field discussions during teaching practice.	• Positive Coping: Attended routine Thursday night <i>shalawat</i> assemblies to restore emotional tranquility. • Relinquished final career outcomes to Allah while praying for the best destiny.	Characterized by Aesthetic-Expressive Coping and Sabr.	<i>"Usually I would stop doing my assignments... rest for a bit, and usually, I look for the weekly Thursday night prophetic invocations [shalawat]... that brings me tranquility... I always think that Allah's plan must be the best."</i> (WN, 2026)

Source: Research Field Interview Data, 2026

In summary, the empirical findings reveal three core ecological dynamics: (1) Quarter-Life Crisis Manifestations: PAI students at UPI feel burdened as sole religious representatives in a highly heterogeneous environment, whereas UIN students face intense pressure from strict dress code policies and standardized communal piety expectations. (2) Physical Microsystem Functions: Green open spaces such as UPI's Sukun area and UIN's Campus 2 Lake serve as vital restorative environments that relieve cognitive fatigue and restore emotional balance beyond conventional ritual spaces. (3) Dynamic Religious Coping: Religious coping is not a static trait but a systemically constructed process; initial negative coping (e.g., spiritual disappointment or anger) can successfully transform into positive adaptive strategies (*sabr*, *tawakkal*, and *nafs al-mutma'innah*) through supportive campus spiritual interactions and restorative ecological reflection.

B. Discussion

This chapter interprets the empirical findings from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) and UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung through the lens of the "Ecological

Construction of Religious Resilience" framework. Rather than assuming a deterministic relationship, the discussion analyzes how contrasting campus ecologies dynamically shape how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) students construct faith-based adaptation while navigating the quarter-life crisis. To avoid a purely confirmatory analysis, this discussion explicitly addresses both theoretical alignments and unexpected empirical complexities. Most notably, the data challenge simplistic assumptions regarding campus environments: UIN's highly structured and religiously homogeneous ecology did not produce weaker or more fragile resilience outcomes than UPI's pluralistic model. Instead, both environments fostered robust yet structurally distinct forms of resilience: a communal-institutional capacity at UIN and an autonomous-adaptive capacity at UPI. The discussion is systematically structured around two analytical dimensions: explaining the contextual mechanisms underlying these adaptations "Why" and evaluating how these findings align with, extend, or complicate existing global literature "What Else".

1. Deconstructing the Reductionist Paradigm: Religious Resilience as a Systemic Dialectic

Empirical findings challenge conventional psychology of religion that views resilience merely as an innate, internal trait (Rohma & Tondok, 2023; Sari & Haryati, 2023). Instead, coping capacity and spiritual tranquility (*thuma'ninah*) emerge from a dynamic dialectic between individual spiritual potential and the campus ecological support system (Azim et al., 2025; Fuadi, 2021). Coping is heavily conditioned by daily environmental resources (Aysmontas & Odincova, 2018), as illustrated by informant DM, whose functional *tawakkal* after losing a motorcycle was bolstered by UPI's academic climate regarding the prohibition of *riba* (usury). Conversely, lacking microsystemic physical or social support is prone to fostering negative coping (*jaza'*) (Pham-Ngoc et al., 2026). These findings offer a qualitative elaboration of the Spirituality-Resilience-Happiness Triad (Reyes-Perez et al., 2025), suggesting that the wellbeing benefits of spirituality are experienced differently depending on institutional ecology.

2. Comparative Analysis of Campus Ecology: Characteristics of PTU vs. PTKIN in Shaping Religious Coping

The ecological contrast between the moderate-pluralistic UPI (a General Higher Education Institution/PTU) and the religiously centered UIN Bandung (an Islamic Higher Education Institution/PTKIN) has been empirically shown to produce vastly different patterns of spiritual adaptation and identity challenges among Islamic Religious Education (IRE) students.

a. General Higher Education Institution (PTU) Ecology The Case of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI)

In UPI's heterogeneous environment, PAI students undergo fluid identity negotiations (Nurjannah et al., 2023). As the sole religious major under FPIPS,

informants like ZF and WN initially faced culture shock when mingling with general peers with relaxed dress standards. Yet, this social heterogeneity is not purely negative; consistent with UK longitudinal findings (Aune et al., 2025), an inclusive, pluralistic campus provides a safe space for cultivating independent religious moderation. This is evident as DM reinterpreted the relaxed dress code not as a moral burden but as an opportunity for flexible outreach (*dakwah*). Consequently, general universities foster a substantive-adaptive resilience driven by internal moral awareness rather than rigid external rules.

b. The Ecology of State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) The Case of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung

Conversely, UIN Bandung features a heavily structured ecosystem with deep communal social controls (Rizkiyah & Husni, 2025). Strict policies like the FTK dress code prohibiting jeans and mandating professional attire as noted by informant S bolster professional identities but risk triggering psychological distress and cognitive dissonance without sufficient spiritual maturity. A structurally comparable dynamic has been reported among Christian students facing institutional religious expectations (Walker et al., 2023); although the theological content differs, the mechanism at issue is institutional rather than doctrinal, namely the psychological cost of externally enforced religious performance. This paradox is evident in informant S's accounts of postponing obligatory prayers for student organization (HMI/HMJ) bureaucratic meetings. Thus, PTKIN environments often generate a formal-compromise resilience, where Sharia adherence must constantly negotiate with rigid institutional demands.

c. Physical Ecology and Restorative Spaces (Built Environment) as Stress Buffers

Crucially, the physical built environment acts as a vital stress buffer. UPI informants consistently utilized the Sukun tree area under FPIPS and the parking rooftop (DM;WN) to restore academic focus, while S visited the UIN Campus 2 Lake to calm their mind. These findings support neuropsychological studies (Asim et al., 2023) and campus garden evaluations (Bhattacharyya & Achari, 2025), showing that Green Open Spaces clinically buffer mental fatigue and stabilize emotional regulation. Furthermore, campus mosques (Al-Furqon for UPI: ZF, MS; Campus 2 Mosque for UIN: YP, NA) expand beyond ritual worship, serving as safe spaces for digital-free contemplation and strategic organization hubs.

d. The Dialectics of Spiritual Coping: From Conflict to Spiritual Maturity (*Nafsu Muthmainnah*)

The dynamics of religious resilience at the individual level demonstrate that the use of religious coping is not static but rather unfolds through a complex, winding dialectical process. The dramatic experience of YP who endured deep spiritual conflict characterized by anger toward God and feelings of abandonment (negative religious coping) following two failed attempts to enlist in the army, despite having performed

Tahajud prayers and extreme fasting confirms the theory of coping ambivalence (Pargament, 1997) and findings regarding coping crises (Pham-Ngoc et al., 2026).

As an illustration of how mesosystem relationships can facilitate spiritual reappraisal, informant YP's account demonstrates how counsel from a campus *ustaz* regarding spiritual patience (*sabr*) enabled him to reconstruct the meaning of his failure. Through this relational support though resting on a single case account he shifted from initial negative coping (*jaza'*) toward positive coping, specifically total submission to divine decree (*al-khudu' al-mutlaq*), as conceptualized within models of religious intelligence (Rahmat, 2026; Sinta et al., 2024).

Similarly, informant DM managed the crisis of losing a credit-purchased motorcycle through *jihad al-nafs* (struggling against the worldly ego), coming to accept the loss as divine intervention to save him from usury (*riba*). Informant DM's account most closely approximates the analytical dimension of *nafs al-mutma'innah* (the tranquil soul) as conceptualized here, though this is an interpretive reading of his narrative rather than an assessment of his internal spiritual state (Rahmat, 2026; Sinta et al., 2024).

e. Theoretical Synthesis: Formulation of the "Ecological Determination of Religious Resilience" Model

Based on the comprehensive cross-case comparative analysis above, this study robustly validates the proposed theoretical model: the "Ecological Determination of Religious Resilience." This model asserts that the level of spiritual resilience and mental health among Islamic Religious Education (IRE) students is not determined solely by innate, internal religious capacity; rather, it is actively shaped by the design of the campus ecosystem across three systemic levels:

- 1) Macrosystem Level: Institutional ideology, the "Religious" vision-mission (at UPI) or formal Islamic values (at UIN), and dress code regulations that establish the boundaries of students' moral conduct.
- 2) Mesosystem Level: The climate of organizational freedom (e.g., HMJ, HMI, Gentrapala) that fosters alignment between achieving academic and social success and fulfilling the spiritual obligation of performing prayers on time.
- 3) Spatial Microsystem Level: The design of the built environment, specifically Green Open Spaces (such as the Sukun area and the Campus 2 Lake) and the campus mosque which serves as a restorative, safe space for daily spiritual solace.

This theoretical synthesis carries significant implications for the sociology of Islamic education and developmental psychology, highlighting that the engineering of a healthy campus ecosystem is essential for fostering student character that is resilient, adaptive, and spiritually mature in a substantive sense, particularly amidst the potential crises associated with early adulthood development.

IV. Conclusion

This study concludes that religious resilience among Islamic Religious Education (IRE/PAI) students navigating the quarter-life crisis is not an innate, static trait, but a dynamic systemic process shaped by higher education ecosystems. By addressing its central research questions, this study offers three primary conclusions:

First, regarding how students experience the quarter-life crisis and moral expectations (RQ1), PAI students across both institutional settings bear dual existential burdens, yet the nature of this pressure is ecologically conditioned. Students at general public universities (PTU like UPI) experience identity burdens as sole religious exemplars within heterogeneous spaces, whereas students at state Islamic universities (PTKIN like UIN Bandung) experience acute social-moral pressure stemming from standardized communal piety and strict behavioral regulations.

Second, regarding how campus ecological features shape religious coping (RQ2), macro-level policies, meso-level organizational climates, and physical microsystems interact dynamically to condition coping strategies. At UPI, fluid macrosystem policies combined with restorative physical microsystems (such as the Sukun area and Al-Furqon Mosque verandas) foster autonomous and flexible coping. At UIN Bandung, a highly structured, religion-centred ecosystem provides strong communal support, yet requires students to negotiate formal compliance with individual spiritual practice.

Third, regarding emerging typologies of resilience (RQ3), this study formulates the concept of the Ecological Construction of Religious Resilience. Contrasting campus ecologies do not deterministically dictate uniform outcomes, but rather cultivate distinct yet equally viable resilience typologies: an autonomous-adaptive resilience characterized by internalized moral awareness at PTU, and a structured-communal resilience characterized by formal-spiritual negotiation at PTKIN. Both pathways facilitate spiritual tranquility (*thuma'ninah*) when institutional environmental supports align with students' internal spiritual maturity.

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