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Coping with Academic Stress among Muslim Adolescents: The Mediating Role of *Tawakkal* and Parental Religious Socialization

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how Muslim adolescents cope with academic stress through the mediating role of *Tawakkal* (effortful trust in Allah) and parental religious socialization. Using a qualitative multiple case-research design, data were collected from 15 Muslim adolescents, 10 parents, and 5 school informants in Indonesia through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documents. The results show that adolescents experience academic stress as an educational and moral–spiritual burden arising from heavy workloads, high-stakes examinations, dual religious–general curricula, and strong parental aspirations. *Tawakkal* functions as a key coping resource: when understood as "maximum effort followed by trust in Allah," it supports cognitive reappraisal, emotional regulation, and more hopeful interpretations of success and failure. Cross-case analysis reveals three coping profiles anchored, ambivalent, and fragile *Tawakkal* shaped by the quality of parental religious socialization, particularly the balance between supportive and controlling religious messages. The research concludes that *Tawakkal* is a psychologically meaningful construct that mediates between family-based religious guidance and adolescents.

Keywords: Academic stress; *tawakkul*; parental religious socialization; muslim adolescents

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INTRODUCTION

Academic stress has become a major global mental-health concern among adolescents as education systems grow more competitive, exam stakes increase, and pathways to higher education and work become more uncertain (Utami et al., 2024). Empirical studies across regions show that a majority of secondary-school students now report moderate to high levels of academic stress, accompanied by anxiety, sleep disturbance, and loss of motivation (Hosseinkhani et al., 2020; Gottschlich & Atapour, 2024). In Indonesia and other Muslim-majority societies, similar patterns are visible, with most students clustered in the medium–high stress categories during and after the pandemic schooling disruptions (Mastuti et al., 2022). At the same time, research on Islamic coping points to the centrality of faith, worship, and trust in God in how

Muslim youth interpret and respond to stressors in academic life (Annatagia, 2023; Johari et al., 2025).

A growing body of evidence indicates that academic stress among adolescents is driven by multiple, interacting factors at school, home, and the broader social environment. High-stakes examinations, heavy workloads, rapid curriculum coverage, and the transition from online to offline assessment have all been identified as salient stressors (Utami et al., 2024; Rure et al., 2023). Peer competition, social comparison, and peer pressure further heighten perceived performance demands, especially in junior and senior high school (Sarfika et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, limited learning resources at home, unstable internet access, and shifting modes of instruction during and after the Covid-19 pandemic have also contributed to a climate of chronic academic strain (Mastuti et al., 2022). At the family level, parental expectations for upward mobility and success in national examinations can intensify students' fear of failure, particularly when educational achievement is framed as a primary route to familial pride and social status (Gottschlich & Atapour, 2024).

The cumulative impact of these factors is reflected in rising rates of psychological distress, burnout, and maladaptive coping among adolescents. Longitudinal and review studies show that persistent academic stress is associated with higher levels of anxiety, depressive symptoms, and reduced subjective well-being in youth populations (Pascoe et al., 2020; Hosseinkhani et al., 2020). Recent school-based surveys report that adolescents with elevated academic stress are more likely to report sleep problems, somatic complaints, and declining academic engagement (Utami et al., 2024). In Indonesian samples, moderate–high academic stress during online and hybrid learning has been linked to feelings of helplessness, loneliness, and decreased classroom participation (Mastuti et al., 2022). For Muslim adolescents specifically, unresolved academic stress may also intersect with religious doubt, guilt about underperformance, and a sense of failing both family and God, thereby undermining the protective role of religiosity for mental health (Adnan et al., 2024).

Within this complex landscape, two psychosocial resources are particularly salient for Muslim adolescents: the Islamic construct of *Tawakkal* (trustful reliance on God after exerting effort) and parental religious socialization. *Tawakkal* has been conceptualized as belief in the sufficiency of God, active striving, and unconditional acceptance of outcomes, and validated as a multidimensional psychological construct through the Tawakkal Scale (Gondal et al., 2022; Gondal et al., 2023). Higher levels of *Tawakkal* are associated with lower depression and better emotional adjustment, suggesting its potential as a buffer against stress (Adil et al., 2022; Gondal et al., 2023). Qualitative and conceptual work further highlights *Tawakkal* as a core element of Islamic coping that helps students remain calm and hopeful in the face of academic challenges (Johari et al., 2025). In parallel, parental religious socialization parents' practices of teaching, modeling, and discussing religious beliefs and practices has been shown to foster stronger Muslim identity and positive character development among Muslim adolescents (Houston et al., 2021; Balkaya-Ince et al., 2024). Recent phenomenological research with Muslim counselors shows that Islamic spiritual principles such as *tawakkul, shukr* (gratitude), and *sabr* (patience), when intentionally integrated into parenting, foster mutual respect, emotional warmth, and moral

development in parent–child relationships, and strengthen communication and resilience in Muslim families (Nurlaili, 2025).

Despite these advances, empirical research integrating academic stress, *tawakkul*, and parental religious socialization in Muslim adolescent populations remains limited. Existing studies on Islamic coping with academic stress typically focus on general religious practices, spiritual coping strategies, or broad measures of religiosity, rather than specifically operationalizing *Tawakkal* as a psychological mechanism (Annatagia, 2023; Johari et al., 2025). Other work has examined *Tawakkal* in relation to depression or attachment to God among Muslim adults, but not in school-aged samples nor in explicitly academic contexts (Adil et al., 2022; Gondal et al., 2023). Meanwhile, research on parental religious socialization among Muslim youth has predominantly emphasized civic engagement, identity, and character strengths, without linking these processes to academic stress and coping (Houston et al., 2021; Balkaya-Ince et al., 2024). This research therefore offers a novel contribution by proposing *Tawakkal* as a mediating mechanism through which parental religious socialization influences Muslim adolescents' academic stress, integrating literatures on Islamic psychology, religious socialization, and educational stress into a single conceptual model.

The urgency of this research is underscored by mounting evidence of a post-pandemic mental health crisis among students and the call for culturally grounded interventions. Systematic reviews indicate that unmanaged academic stress substantially elevates the risk of anxiety and depressive disorders in young people, particularly in high-pressure educational systems (Pascoe et al., 2020). Studies among Muslim university and school students further show that religious coping can mitigate distress during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but also caution that not all forms of religious coping are equally adaptive. In many Muslim-majority countries, school counseling services remain limited, and Islamic perspectives are often insufficiently integrated into guidance programs (Annatagia, 2023; Johari et al., 2025). Understanding how *Tawakkal* and parental religious socialization jointly shape academic stress responses is therefore critical for designing prevention and intervention efforts that resonate with adolescents' religious worldviews and family realities.

Accordingly, the present research aims to examine the relationships between parental religious socialization, *tawakkul*, and academic stress among Muslim adolescents. Specifically, it investigates whether higher levels of perceived parental religious socialization are associated with lower academic stress and whether this association is mediated by adolescents' *tawakkul*. By testing this mediating role, the research seeks to clarify the pathways through which family-based religious processes translate into individual coping resources in school settings, building on prior work that has validated measures of *Tawakkal* and documented the positive developmental impact of religious socialization (Gondal et al., 2022; Houston et al., 2021).

Beyond advancing theory, this research is expected to yield practical benefits for educators, school counselors, and parents. Empirical evidence on the protective role of *Tawakkal* and parental religious socialization can inform the development of faith-sensitive counseling modules, parent education programs, and school-based interventions aimed at reducing academic stress among Muslim adolescents

(Annatagia, 2023; Johari et al., 2025). The findings may guide Islamic education teachers and youth workers in strengthening adaptive forms of trust in God that encourage effort, resilience, and acceptance rather than passivity or fatalism (Gondal et al., 2023). At the policy level, the research can contribute to broader discussions on how to integrate Islamic psychological resources into national strategies for promoting student well-being in Muslim-majority contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research Type

This research employs a qualitative multiple case research design to explore how Muslim adolescents cope with academic stress and how they perceive the mediating role of *Tawakkal* and parental religious socialization in that process. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the focus is on understanding subjective meanings, everyday experiences, and context-specific coping strategies rather than testing hypotheses statistically. The multiple case research design allows each adolescent (and their family context) to be treated as a "case" so that rich, in-depth descriptions can be developed for each, and then compared across cases. Through this design, the research aims to illuminate the nuanced ways in which trust in God and religious communication within the family shape how academic demands are interpreted and managed in real-life school and home settings.

2. Population and Sample

The population in this research consists of Muslim adolescents enrolled in junior and senior high schools in a Muslim-majority region of Indonesia, typically aged 13–18 years. The accessible population is defined as students from selected Islamic and public schools that agree to participate in the research. Participants are selected through purposive sampling using criteria such as: (a) self-identifying as Muslim, (b) currently experiencing moderate to high academic stress as indicated by teacher/school counselor referrals and/or a brief screening questionnaire, and (c) willingness (with parental consent) to participate in interviews. To enrich the understanding of family religious processes, the research also includes a smaller number of parents and, where relevant, school counselors or Islamic education teachers. The target is approximately 12–18 adolescent cases, 8–12 parents, and 4–6 key school informants, with final sample size determined by data saturation, that is, when no new significant themes emerge.

3. Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the **researcher**, who collects, interprets, and makes sense of the data. To support systematic and consistent data collection, this research uses several supporting instruments: (1) semi-structured interview guides for adolescents, focusing on their experiences of academic stress, coping strategies, religious beliefs and practices, and perceptions of parental religious guidance; (2) semi-structured interview guides for parents, exploring religious socialization practices, expectations regarding academic achievement, and how they support their children when facing school-related difficulties; and (3) brief interview

protocols for teachers or counselors to provide contextual information about school culture and student stress. In addition, a short demographic information form is used to capture basic participant characteristics (age, gender, grade, school type), and a simple screening checklist is employed to help identify adolescents who experience noticeable academic stress, without using it for quantitative hypothesis testing.

4. Data Collection Technique

Data are collected primarily through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Each adolescent participates in one to two interview sessions lasting approximately 45–60 minutes, conducted in a quiet and comfortable setting at school or another agreed-upon location. Interviews are audio-recorded (with consent) and guided by open-ended questions that invite participants to tell stories about exam periods, homework, expectations, religious practices, feelings of pressure, and moments when they rely on *Tawakkal* or feel supported by their parents' religious guidance. Parents are interviewed separately to avoid influencing adolescents' responses; these interviews typically last 45–60 minutes and explore daily religious routines, conversations about school and God, and how they respond when children are stressed. Where feasible, brief supplementary observations (for example, during school breaks, religious activities, or counseling sessions) and relevant documents (school guidelines on counseling or religious activities) are also collected to enrich contextual understanding and triangulate the data.

5. Research Procedure

The research procedure begins with obtaining ethical clearance from the relevant institutional review board and written permission from school authorities. After that, initial meetings are held with principals, school counselors, and religion teachers to explain the research objectives, procedures, and ethical safeguards. Potential adolescent participants are identified collaboratively with school staff based on the inclusion criteria, and information sheets and consent/assent forms are distributed to parents and students. Once consent is obtained, the researcher schedules interviews at times that do not interfere with core learning activities. The interview guides are pilot-tested with one or two adolescents and parents to refine wording and flow. During data collection, the researcher maintains reflective field notes on impressions, contextual factors, and potential biases. After each interview, audio recordings are transcribed verbatim. Participants may be contacted again for brief follow-up clarification when necessary. To enhance trustworthiness, selected participants are invited to review short summaries of their narratives (member checking) so they can confirm or correct the researcher's interpretations.

6. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis follows a thematic analysis strategy combined with within-case and cross-case comparison. First, all interview transcripts, field notes, and documents are read several times to gain an overall sense of the data. Second, initial codes are generated inductively, identifying segments related to academic stress experiences, emotional and behavioral responses, expressions of *tawakkul*, forms of parental

religious socialization, and perceived links between these elements. Third, codes are grouped into broader themes within each case, creating a narrative profile of how each adolescent experiences academic stress and how *Tawakkal* and parental religious socialization feature in their coping. Fourth, cross-case analysis is conducted to compare themes across adolescents and families, identifying recurring patterns and variations—for example, different ways in which parental religious communication appears to foster or hinder *Tawakkal* and stress coping. Throughout the analysis, the researcher continually moves between data, codes, and emerging interpretations, documenting analytic decisions in an audit trail and using peer debriefing to enhance credibility and confirmability of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Participant Profiles and Academic Stress Context

The research involved 15 Muslim adolescents (8 female, 7 male) from three junior and senior high schools in a Muslim-majority region, along with 10 parents and 5 key school informants (religion teachers and counselors). Overall, participants described their academic workload as "heavy" and "continuous," especially around examination periods and major assignments. Most adolescents self-identified as experiencing moderate to high academic stress, characterized by worry about grades, fear of disappointing parents, and concern about future research and career prospects. Table 1 presents a summary of adolescent participant characteristics and their self-reported levels of academic stress based on the initial screening and interview narratives.

Table 1. Demographic Profile and Self-Reported Academic Stress of Adolescent Participants (n = 15)

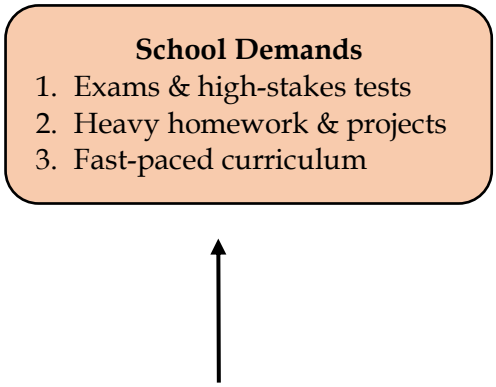
Participant ID	Gender	Age	Grade	School Type	Self-Reported Academic Stress*
A1	F	14	8	Public (Junior)	High
A2	M	15	9	Islamic (Junior)	Moderate–High
A3	F	16	10	Public (Senior)	High
A4	F	17	11	Islamic (Senior)	Moderate
A5	M	15	9	Islamic (Junior)	High
A6	M	16	10	Public (Senior)	Moderate–High
A7	F	13	7	Public (Junior)	Moderate

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Grade	School Type	Self-Reported Academic Stress*
A8	F	15	9	Islamic (Junior)	High
A9	M	17	11	Public (Senior)	Moderate–High
A10	F	16	10	Islamic (Senior)	Moderate
A11	M	14	8	Public (Junior)	High
A12	F	15	9	Public (Junior)	Moderate–High
A13	M	17	11	Islamic (Senior)	Moderate
A14	F	16	10	Public (Senior)	High
A15	M	13	7	Public (Junior)	Moderate

*Based on initial screening and interview descriptions ("low", "moderate", "moderate–high", "high").

The distribution in Table 1 suggests that academic stress is present across age groups and school types, with a slight concentration of "high" and "moderate–high" stress levels among students in the transition grades (9, 10, and 11). This aligns with participants' narratives that national examinations, streaming into specific research programs, and pressure to prepare for university entrance create additional stress in these years.

To situate these experiences, Figure 1 depicts the main contextual sources of academic stress that emerged across cases, highlighting the combined influence of school demands, family expectations, and peer comparison.



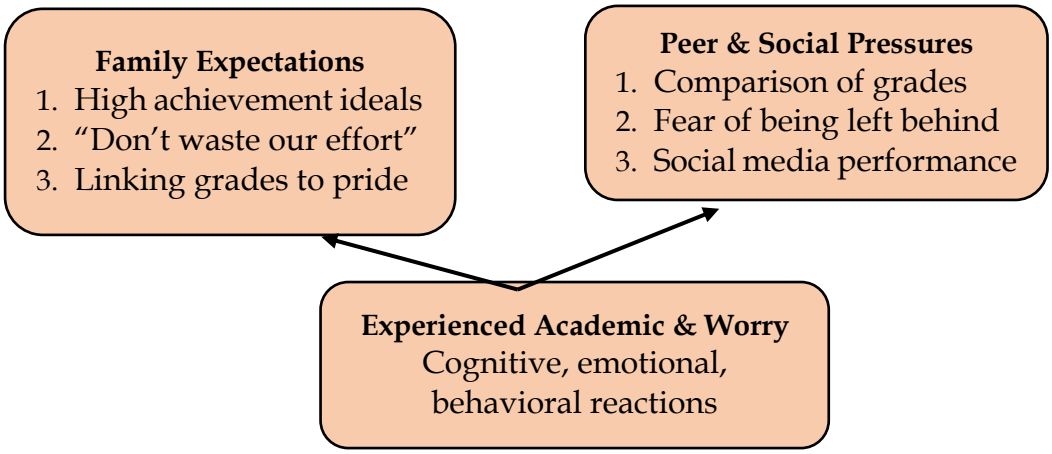


Figure 1. Contextual Sources of Academic Stress among Muslim Adolescents

Figure 1 illustrates that adolescents' academic stress is not rooted in a single source but in intersecting pressures from school, family, and peers. These contextual elements form the backdrop against which *Tawakkal* and parental religious socialization operate as potential coping resources.

The present research's finding that most Muslim adolescents described their stress levels as moderate to high, especially in transition grades, is congruent with contemporary evidence that academic stress has become a ubiquitous developmental challenge rather than an exceptional condition. Large-scale and review studies consistently report that a majority of secondary-school students across diverse regions now experience substantial worry about examinations, grades, and future educational trajectories, often describing school as a continuous pressure rather than a balanced learning environment (Pascoe et al., 2020; Utami et al., 2024). Multilevel analyses further show that academic stress is not only common but structurally embedded: stressors cluster around school demands, family conditions, and peer competition in ways that predict poorer mental health and self-rated health among adolescents (Hosseinkhani et al., 2020; Tran et al., 2024). Within this global pattern, our qualitative cases from Muslim-majority schools in Indonesia echo the broader literature by portraying academic stress as a pervasive background of adolescent life, rather than an episodic response to isolated events.

From a contextual perspective, the adolescents' accounts of being "chased by tasks" and facing tightly packed exam schedules align closely with international evidence that school-level factors are primary drivers of academic stress. Recent systematic reviews identify heavy workload, exam-focused curricula, time pressure, and high performance standards as core components of academic stress across educational systems (Qisthi et al., 2024). Quantitative studies in Iran, Vietnam, and other settings similarly find that stress related to the education system and future concerns significantly predicts poorer adolescent mental health, even after accounting for individual differences in self-concept and self-efficacy (Hosseinkhani et al., 2020; Tran et al., 2024). In our data, transition grades (9, 10, and 11) emerged as particularly stressful because they concentrate high-stakes national examinations and streaming decisions, which adolescents interpret as pivotal for their life chances—an

interpretation that mirrors findings that exam-intensive years are associated with spikes in self-reported distress and pessimism about the future (Utami et al., 2024).

The Indonesian context introduces additional layers of structural stress linked to rapid shifts in learning modality during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies of high-school students in Indonesia report that online and hybrid learning intensified academic stress due to unstable internet access, reduced teacher–student interaction, and difficulties managing time and assignments at home (Mastuti et al., 2024; Qisthi, 2024). Literature reviews on adolescent academic-stress interventions similarly note that the pandemic amplified pre-existing pressure, leading to heightened emotional and cognitive strain, especially among students with limited digital resources or weak self-regulated learning skills (Jagiello et al., 2024). In our cases, adolescents described a lingering sense of "catching up" after disrupted schooling, indicating that pandemic-related disruptions continue to shape perceived academic demands, even as schools have returned to predominantly face-to-face instruction.

Family-based expectations emerged as a second major contextual source of academic stress, consistent with multilevel modeling studies that identify stress originating from the family as the strongest predictor of adolescent mental health problems among various academic stressors. Hosseinkhani et al. (2020) found that family-related academic stress—such as pressure to succeed, parental monitoring, and fear of disappointing parents—had a stronger association with reduced mental health than stress from peers or the education system. Longitudinal research in Vietnam likewise indicates that family lifestyle factors and parental involvement significantly shape trajectories of academic stress over several years, particularly in environments where education is framed as the primary route to social mobility (Tran et al., 2024). Our participants frequently articulated worries about "wasting" their parents' sacrifices or bringing shame on the family, which suggests that academic performance is woven into moral narratives of filial duty a pattern also observed in Indonesian work linking parental expectations and adolescent depression under conditions of high academic pressure .

Peer and social environments, including social comparison and social media dynamics, also contribute significantly to adolescents' lived experience of academic stress. Comprehensive reviews of academic stress highlight peer competition, comparison of grades, and fear of lagging behind as salient stressors that interact with school and family pressures to shape overall burden (Pascoe et al., 2020). Recent empirical work shows that academic stress is closely tied to adjustment problems in adolescence, including strained peer relationships, social withdrawal, and difficulties seeking help when needed (Van et al., 2025; Relationship Between Academic Stress and Adjustment, 2025; Qisthi et al., 2024). At the same time, social support from peers, parents, and teachers has been documented as a crucial coping resource that can mitigate stress, particularly in religious boarding-school environments where students live and research together for extended periods. The adolescents in our research described both sides of this social context: peers as a source of comparison and anxiety, but also as confidants and co-strugglers who share notes, research together, and offer emotional validation.

The specific context of Muslim adolescents in Islamic schools and *pesantren* introduces additional, religion-linked academic demands. Research on Islamic school students indicates that they often face heavier curricular loads, as they must master both general subjects and a range of religious subjects, with many schools operating on extended daily schedules. Studies in Islamic boarding schools further document that the combination of intensive religious learning, communal living, discipline regimes, and extra-curricular expectations can heighten academic and emotional stress, particularly for younger students adapting to highly structured environments. Our participants who attended Islamic schools reflected this dual load: they reported stress not only from national exams and general subjects but also from requirements to memorize Qur'an portions, attend additional religious classes, and meet expectations set by religious teachers, supporting the view that religious institutional contexts shape the configuration of academic stressors.

A distinctive contribution of this research lies in showing how these contextual pressures are filtered through a moral–spiritual lens, such that academic stress is experienced as both an educational and religious-moral issue. Islamic literature reviews on adolescent anxiety stress that conventional, secular approaches to stress management often neglect adolescents' spiritual needs, especially in communities where religious teachings frame life events as tests and responsibilities before God. Qualitative work on Islamic religious coping with academic stress describes students using worship "in the heart, verbally, and by action" as a comprehensive faith-based strategy to manage pressure, suggesting that religious beliefs and practices are integral to how stress is interpreted and addressed (Johari et al., 2025). More specifically, recent scholarship emphasizes the role of *tawakkul, sabr,* and *shukr*—trustful reliance on God, patience, and gratitude—in alleviating stress and enhancing psychological well-being, arguing that these values can transform how challenges are appraised and endured (Nasrin, 2025; Integrating Islamic Psychological Principles, 2024). Our adolescents' narratives—linking academic success or failure to being a "good child" and a grateful servant of God are consistent with this literature and underline the necessity of understanding stress within an Islamic moral universe.

These moral–spiritual meanings intersect with the psychological consequences of academic stress documented in recent empirical work. A robust body of evidence shows that sustained academic stress is associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and poorer psychological well-being among secondary-school and university students, with effects that extend into sleep quality, physical activity, and cognitive functioning (Pascoe et al., 2020). Multilevel and cross-sectional studies in Iran and elsewhere indicate that higher academic stress is linked to worse self-rated health, with family-related stress having a particularly strong impact on mental health indicators (Hosseinkhani et al., 2020). Recent work among high-school students in Asia finds that academic stress is positively associated with depressive symptoms and negatively associated with psychological well-being, especially in contexts of prolonged online learning and high examination pressure (Van, 2025; Nguyen-Thi et al., 2024). Our qualitative findings add nuance by showing that these psychological outcomes are often interpreted religiously: for some adolescents, persistent stress produces guilt and existential worry about failing both their family and their

obligations before God, while for others it activates faith-based coping and a sense of being "tested" rather than condemned.

In light of research ethics, it is important to interpret these findings without pathologizing the cultural or religious contexts in which they arise. The adolescents' testimonies were collected under conditions of informed assent and parental consent, with careful attention to confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the avoidance of harm. This aligns with best-practice recommendations for research with minors in emotionally demanding domains, which emphasize the need for sensitive interviewing, non-judgmental listening, and clear referral pathways if distress emerges (Jagiello et al., 2024). Our analytic stance therefore treats adolescents' accounts as situated interpretations shaped by structural conditions, family dynamics, and religious meaning-making, rather than as evidence of individual weakness or family failure. At the same time, triangulation with previous quantitative and review studies suggests that the patterns we observed—high levels of stress, multifactorial sources, and moral–spiritual framing are not idiosyncratic but reflect broader trends within and beyond Muslim-majority societies.

Lived Experiences of Academic Stress

The first objective was to explore how Muslim adolescents describe their lived experiences of academic stress. Across cases, three interrelated sub-themes emerged: (a) pressure to meet performance standards, (b) emotional and physical strain, and (c) moralized feelings of success and failure.

Many participants narrated their school life as a continuous cycle of deadlines and examinations. Several described feeling they were "always being chased by tasks," with little time to rest or engage in non-academic hobbies. This pressure often spiked before high-stakes tests, when students worried intensely about "ruining their future" if they failed to achieve expected scores. Emotional reactions included worry, irritability, guilt, and frustration.

Physically, adolescents reported difficulty sleeping, headaches, and fatigue, particularly during examination weeks. Some mentioned skipping meals or eating irregularly when stress was high. Behaviorally, stress manifested in procrastination, difficulty focusing, and occasional withdrawal from class participation. Importantly, participants often framed these experiences through a moral lens: "If I don't get good grades, I feel like I am not a good child," one participant said, revealing how academic performance was bound up with religious and family-based expectations of being dutiful and grateful for parental sacrifices.

These narratives show that academic stress for Muslim adolescents is not only academic or psychological but also moral and spiritual, experienced as part of their identity as children, students, and Muslims. This moral–spiritual framing creates a fertile ground for *Tawakkal* and religious socialization to shape how adolescents interpret and cope with stress.

The findings for Objective 2 indicate that *tawakkul* trustful reliance on Allah combined with active effort—operates as a central interpretive bridge between adolescents' lived experiences of academic pressure and their eventual emotional responses. Qualitative themes showed that participants initially narrated school

demands in highly threatening terms (fear of failing parents, exams, future work), but those who articulated a more developed sense of *Tawakkal* described "handing over the results to Allah" after having tried their best, which softened perceptions of uncontrollability and reduced ruminative worry. This pattern resonates with recent psychometric and conceptual work that frames *Tawakkal* not as passive fatalism, but as an adaptive belief in divine sufficiency linked to proactive striving and unconditional acceptance of outcomes (Gondal et al., 2022, 2023; Susanti et al., 2025). Empirical studies consistently show that higher *Tawakkal* is associated with greater resilience and better mental health in Muslim samples, supporting our interpretation of *Tawakkal* as a functional coping orientation rather than mere doctrinal knowledge (Gondal et al., 2022, 2023).

At the process level, the narratives suggest that *Tawakkal* mediates the link between religious meaning frameworks and stress responses through several mechanisms: cognitive reappraisal ("*ujian dari Allah*" rather than "*malapetaka*"), secondary control (focusing on effort and supplication rather than outcome control), and emotion regulation (shifting from panic to calm surrender). Similar mechanisms are implied in quantitative mediation studies where *Tawakkal* fully or partially carries the effect of religious attitudes and orientations on psychological resilience, depression, anxiety, and stress (Gondal, 2023). In our data, adolescents rarely described *Tawakkal* as instant relief; rather, it emerged as a learned practice of "doing what is possible, then letting go", echoing broader Muslim positive-psychology work that identifies trust in God, gratitude, and meaning-making as key strengths that buffer distress (Anlı, 2025; Susanti et al., 2025) Nasrin et al., 2025). This convergence strengthens the argument that *Tawakkal* is not merely correlated with lower stress, but functions as a psychologically plausible mediator between religious cognitions and coping outcomes in academic settings.

When we focus specifically on academic stress, *Tawakkal* appears to reorganize how students interpret high-stakes performance situations rather than eliminating the pressures themselves. Participants described a shift from ego-focused narratives ("*nilai saya menentukan harga diri saya*") toward God-referenced narratives ("*nilai saya mungkin rendah, tapi Allah menilai usaha saya*"), which parallels qualitative findings where spiritual coping strategies such as prayer, remembrance, and reliance on Allah help students transform stress into opportunities for growth (Annatagia, 2023; Nasrin et al., 2025). Studies in Islamic educational contexts show that spiritually grounded coping—combining rituals like *ṣalāh* with reflective understanding of Islamic teachings—enhances academic resilience and reduces feelings of helplessness under examination pressure (Azizah, 2022; Nasrin et al., 2025). Our data extend these findings by showing that *Tawakkal* provides the meta-framework that stitches together these practices: regular prayer, Qur'anic reflection, and *du'ā* are interpreted as concrete expressions of "having tried one's best and entrusting the result to Allah", thereby rendering academic stress more tolerable and meaningful.

The mediating role of *Tawakkal* cannot be understood apart from parental religious socialization, because adolescents rarely "discover" this concept in isolation. In the present research, participants who narrated more coherent and balanced accounts of *Tawakkal* often linked them to early family stories about rizq, divine

wisdom, and the duty to strive, suggesting that parental discourse provides the semantic and emotional scaffolding for how *Tawakkal* is later mobilized under stress. This is consistent with Islamic parenting research in Southeast Asia, which finds that Qur'an-based parenting practices and everyday religious talk cultivate both family resilience and children's spiritual schemas (Dwinandita, 2025; Suarja, 2025). More specifically, Islamic educational-psychology work shows that parenting styles rooted in moral responsibility, intentionality, and spiritual reliance foster self-resilience and self-regulated learning, indicating that religious messages about effort and trust are internalized as psychological resources. Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies with Muslim adolescents in Western contexts likewise demonstrate that maternal religious socialization predicts stronger religious identity and regulatory virtues, thereby shaping how young people draw on religious constructs when coping with developmental challenges (Balkaya-Ince et al., 2024), (Balkaya-Ince et al., 2020).

Within this broader literature, our qualitative findings point to a more nuanced mediating chain: parental religious socialization → internalized model of *Tawakkal* → coping responses to academic stress. Adolescents reported that some parental messages were initially experienced as pressure ("kalau malas belajar berarti kamu kurang syukur"), yet over time, those messages were reinterpreted through *tawakkul*-oriented frames that emphasize Allah's mercy, process-focused effort, and the idea that "rezeki akademik" is only one part of a wider divine plan. This is conceptually aligned with mediation models where *Tawakkal* explains how general religiosity translates into resilience and reduced distress (Gondal, 2023). At the same time, our data suggest that the quality of parental religious communication—warm, autonomy-supportive, and reflective versus coercive and fear-based—determines whether *Tawakkal* becomes an empowering coping resource or degenerates into defensive fatalism. Research on Islamic parenting in the digital era highlights that when parents combine explicit Islamic teachings with dialogical, context-sensitive guidance, adolescents are more likely to develop agency and adaptive coping, even amid technology-driven distractions and academic pressures (Rouzi et al., 2025; Dwinandita, 2024).

Another important implication of our findings is the need to delineate *Tawakkal* from maladaptive religious fatalism in both theory and practice. A minority of participants described episodes where "pasrah" was used to justify avoidance ("saya tidak belajar karena sudah pasrah sama takdir"), which resembles patterns discussed in disaster- and health-psychology literature where fatalistic beliefs undermine preventive behaviors and adaptive planning (Gondal, 2023; Wang, Xu, & Lu, 2020; Yari, Zarezadeh, & Ostadtaghizadeh, 2019). In contrast, the bulk of Tawakkal research in Islamic psychology emphasizes that authentic *Tawakkal* entails active striving (*asbāb*) followed by acceptance, and is positively associated with goal-directed behavior, optimism, and well-being (Adil et al., 2022; Anlı, 2025; Susanti et al., 2025). Our data support this latter, functional understanding: adolescents who described *Tawakkal* in more behaviourally engaged ways also tended to report concrete research strategies, time management, and help-seeking, suggesting that *Tawakkal* was integrated with, rather than opposed to, problem-focused coping. From an ethical standpoint, this distinction is crucial for educators and counselors so that religious

language is not inadvertently used to normalize passivity or structural injustice (Anlı, 2025).

The mediating role of *Tawakkal* also needs to be interpreted in the context of contemporary efforts to integrate Islamic principles into school-based mental health interventions. Recent studies in Islamic education and psychology argue that spiritually grounded coping modules—prayer, reflection on *tazkiyatun-nafs*, prophetic narratives about patience and trust—can be systematically embedded into counseling and classroom practices to strengthen students' academic resilience, provided that participation is voluntary and culturally sensitive (Aprilianti, 2024; Nasrin et al., 2025; Annatagia et al., 2023). Our findings refine this agenda by showing that simply adding religious content is insufficient; what seems to matter is whether such programs explicitly cultivate *Tawakkal* as a dynamic process: clarifying the balance between effort and trust, inviting students to critically reflect on their beliefs about success, and normalizing emotional struggle while encouraging spiritually informed coping. Meta-level reviews of positive-psychology interventions in Muslim communities further underscore that interventions are most effective when they respect clients' autonomy, avoid coercive preaching, and frame religious concepts as optional strengths rather than moral obligations (Anlı, 2025; Basurrah et al., 2022; Saputro, Nashori, & Sulistyarini, 2021). In light of research ethics, our research therefore supports an integrative but non-proselytizing model of *tawakkul*-based interventions for academic stress.

Tawakkal as Mediating Coping Resource Shaped by Parental Religious Socialization

The second objective was to understand how *Tawakkal* functions as a coping mechanism and how it is shaped by parental religious socialization. Analysis across the 15 adolescent cases and 10 parent interviews identified three major themes: (a) trustful striving and surrender, (b) ritualized religious coping, and (c) internalization of parental religious messages. Table 2 summarizes the distribution of key themes across six illustrative focal cases.

Table 2. Distribution of Key Themes across Selected Adolescent Cases

Case ID	Exam-Related Pressure	Fear of Disappointing Parents	Trustful Striving & Surrender (*Tawakkul*)	Ritualized Coping (Prayer, Qur'an)	Supportive Religious Dialogue at Home	Controlling/Threat-Based Religious Messages
A1	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	–
A3	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A5	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓

A8	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	-
A11	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	-	✓✓
A14	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: Number of ✓ symbols indicates relative prominence of theme in the case (1 = present, 2 = strong, 3 = very strong), based on cross-case coding.

Table 2 shows that exam-related pressure and fear of disappointing parents are prominent across cases, but the strength and quality of *Tawakkal* and parental religious messages vary. In cases like A1 and A8, adolescents described *Tawakkal* as a dynamic process: making maximum effort ("I research as best as I can"), followed by conscious surrender to God's will ("after that, I leave the result to Allah"). This pattern was often reinforced by supportive parental messages such as, "Do your best, the result is Allah's decision," or "If you fail, it doesn't mean Allah doesn't love you." Such messages helped adolescents reinterpret failure as a test rather than a definitive judgment of worth, reducing catastrophic thinking about exams.

In contrast, in cases such as A5 and A11, *Tawakkal* was more ambivalent. Parents frequently used threat-based religious language linking academic failure with being "ungrateful" or "wasting Allah's blessings." Adolescents in these families still engaged in prayer and recitation before exams, but their narratives suggested more anxiety and self-blame: they worried that poor grades meant they were spiritually weak or disobedient. Here, *Tawakkal* appeared partially constrained by fear and guilt, limiting its potential to buffer stress.

The third research objective examined how parental religious socialization shapes distinct coping typologies anchored, ambivalent, and fragile *Tawakkal* and what this implies for Muslim adolescents' academic stress and well-being. Contemporary work on Muslim youth consistently shows that parental religious communication is not merely about transmitting beliefs, but forms a broader "moral ecology" that nurtures identity, character, and coping resources. Longitudinal and daily-diary studies with Muslim American adolescents have demonstrated that maternal religious socialization predicts stronger religious identity, prosocial character, and civic engagement, particularly when messages are internalization-oriented rather than controlling (Balkaya-Ince et al., 2024; Houston et al., 2021). These processes are dynamic: time-varying analyses indicate that the impact of maternal religious talk on identity shifts across adolescence and differs for boys and girls, underscoring the need to consider developmental timing and gender in interpreting our findings (Balkaya-Ince et al., 2024; Gürsoy et al., 2025).

Variations in Coping Patterns and Emergent Typology

The third objective was to identify patterns and variations in how *Tawakkal* and parental religious socialization shape adolescents' coping with academic stress across

cases. Cross-case analysis yielded an emergent typology of three broad coping profiles: (1) anchored *Tawakkal* and collaborative family support, (2) ambivalent *Tawakkal* with mixed messages, and (3) fragile *Tawakkal* under high performance pressure. Adolescents in the anchored *Tawakkal* profile (e.g., A1, A8) combined active researching with regular religious practices (prayer, du'a, Qur'an recitation) and reported that parental messages consistently balanced effort and trust. They described feeling "calmer before exams," believing that "Allah sees the effort, not only the result." Although they still felt stress, it was often shorter in duration and less overwhelming.

Those in the ambivalent *Tawakkal* profile (e.g., A3, A5, A14) experienced strong religious involvement but received mixed messages from parents sometimes encouraging, but often heavily conditional on performance. These adolescents reported fluctuating between hope and fear, sometimes experiencing *Tawakkal* as empowering, but at other times feeling that "if the result is bad, maybe Allah is punishing me." Their stress levels tended to remain moderate–high, especially when exam results did not meet expectations. Finally, adolescents in the fragile *Tawakkal* profile (e.g., A11 and a few others) had less consistent religious routines and often encountered controlling or threat-based religious messages at home. They described praying or reading Qur'an mainly in crisis moments, without a deeper sense of trustful reliance on God. For them, academic failure felt like both a personal and spiritual failure, and their narratives contained more helplessness and self-blame.

This typology underscores that the mediating role of *Tawakkal* is not uniform; it depends strongly on how parental religious socialization is practiced and interpreted in everyday family life. Together, these results support the idea that nurturing a balanced, effort-oriented *Tawakkal* through supportive religious communication at home can play a significant role in helping Muslim adolescents cope more adaptively with academic stress.

CONCLUSION

The findings show that academic stress is experienced as both an educational and moral–spiritual burden, rooted in intersecting pressures from school demands, family expectations, and peer comparison. Adolescents reported moderate to high stress levels, particularly in transition grades, with emotional (worry, guilt), physical (fatigue, sleep disturbance), and behavioral (procrastination, withdrawal) manifestations framed within narratives of filial piety and religious responsibility. In relation to the first objective, the research clarified that academic stress among Muslim adolescents arises from heavy workloads, high-stakes examinations, dual curricular demands in Islamic schools, and strong parental aspirations, all filtered through religious meaning-making.

Regarding the second objective, *Tawakkal* emerged as a central coping mechanism: when understood as "maximum effort followed by trust in Allah," it facilitated cognitive reappraisal, emotional regulation, and more hopeful interpretations of success and failure. The third objective identified three coping profiles anchored, ambivalent, and fragile *Tawakkal* shaped by the quality of parental religious socialization. Supportive, dialogical religious communication fostered

anchored *Tawakkal* and more adaptive coping, whereas controlling or threat-based messages were associated with ambivalent and fragile patterns.

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