



## The Pressure of Religious Idealism and Mental Health of Islamic Religious Education Students: A Phenomenological Study in the Social Media Era

<sup>1</sup>Adrian Sondak, <sup>2</sup>Mahsa Ramadhan Pratama, <sup>3</sup>Muhammad Khalilurrahman, <sup>4</sup>Surawan

<sup>1</sup>Islamic Religious Education Study Program, Islamic University of Palangka Raya, Indonesia

E-mail: [adriansondak604@gmail.com](mailto:adriansondak604@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Islamic Religious Education Study Program, Islamic University of Palangka Raya, Indonesia

E-mail: [mahsapratama90@gmail.com](mailto:mahsapratama90@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Islamic Religious Education Study Program, Islamic University of Palangka Raya, Indonesia

E-mail: [muhammadkhalilurrahman95@gmail.com](mailto:muhammadkhalilurrahman95@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> Islamic Religious Education Study Program, Islamic University of Palangka Raya, Indonesia

E-mail: [surawan@uin-palangkaraya.ac.id](mailto:surawan@uin-palangkaraya.ac.id)

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**Abstract.** *This study aims to explore the lived experiences of Islamic Religious Education students in dealing with religious idealism pressure in the era of social media. A qualitative approach was employed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences within digital social and cultural contexts. The participants consisted of five active students from the 2023 cohort, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, limited observation, and documentation. The findings revealed four superordinate themes: (1) the internalization of identity as a moral symbol, (2) the emergence of psychological tension and moral anxiety, (3) social media as a space of observation and social comparison, and (4) meaning-making and adaptive coping strategies. The study indicates that religious pressure is not solely derived from religious values themselves but is also shaped by socially constructed standards in digital environments, which influence how individuals understand and perform their religiosity. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of students' religiosity dynamics in the digital era, particularly in navigating the tension between formally learned religious values and socially constructed expectations on social media.*

**Keywords:** *Religiosity; Social Media; Social Pressure; Islamic Education Students; Phenomenology.*

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**Abstrak.** *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman mahasiswa Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam menghadapi tekanan idealitas religius di era media sosial. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) untuk memahami bagaimana individu memaknai pengalaman hidupnya dalam konteks sosial dan budaya digital. Partisipan penelitian terdiri dari lima mahasiswa aktif angkatan 2023 yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur, observasi terbatas, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan empat tema utama, yaitu: (1) internalisasi identitas sebagai simbol moral, (2) munculnya tekanan psikologis dan kecemasan moral, (3) media sosial sebagai ruang pengawasan dan perbandingan sosial, serta (4) proses pemaknaan dan strategi adaptif dalam menghadapi tekanan. Temuan ini mengungkap bahwa tekanan religius tidak hanya bersumber dari nilai agama itu sendiri, tetapi juga dari konstruksi sosial di media digital yang memengaruhi cara individu memahami dan menampilkan religiusitasnya. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dalam memahami dinamika religiusitas mahasiswa di era digital, khususnya dalam konteks ketegangan antara nilai religius yang dipelajari secara formal dan ekspektasi sosial yang terbentuk di media sosial.*

**Kata kunci:** *Religiusitas; Media Sosial; Tekanan Sosial; Mahasiswa PAI; Fenomenologi*

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education plays a fundamental role in shaping the character, morality, and identity of students in Indonesia, particularly within the dynamics of modern life. This perspective is supported by research indicating that religious education significantly contributes to the development of students character traits, including religiosity, discipline, responsibility, honesty, tolerance, and politeness (Kurniawan et al., 2025). Furthermore, religious education is not merely a medium for transferring theoretical knowledge but also contributes substantially to the psychological well-being of young individuals (Nimah, 2025). This is reflected in studies examining the role of Islamic Religious Education in promoting the mental health of Generation Z and modern adolescents through the integration of religious values into daily life (Nasution et al., 2024).

Analytically, these findings suggest that religious education functions not only as a tool for moral formation but also as a potential source of psychological support. Religious values can serve as a meaning framework that helps individuals manage stress, cope with life conflicts, and develop psychological resilience. However, the relationship between religiosity and mental health is not always linear. In certain contexts, the internalization of religious values without adaptive understanding may instead generate psychological pressure, particularly when individuals feel unable to meet perceived moral or spiritual standards. Thus, religious education holds a dual potential: it can enhance psychological well-being or become a source of distress when interpreted in rigid or overly normative ways.

In the era of digitalization, social media has become a primary space for social interaction among university students. This aligns with findings that students, as individuals raised in the digital era, tend to rely on digital platforms for communication, interaction, and daily activity management (Rahayu & Widiensyah, 2025). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook not only function as communication tools but also shape identity construction, standards of religiosity, and social pressure regarding ideal behaviors in academic life. Research highlights the phenomenon of simplified religious teachings in digital spaces, the dominance of popularity over scientific validity, and the emergence of religious anxiety and performative religiosity (Miftahul Jannah, 2025). Additionally, studies indicate a strong correlation between social media use and students mental health, particularly in relation to anxiety, social pressure, and other psychological disturbances (Nawafi et al., 2024).

From this perspective, social media functions not only as a communication medium but also as an arena for constructing social and religious identity. Students are not merely passive consumers of religious content; they are actively engaged in processes of social comparison. This phenomenon can create symbolic and performative standards of religiosity, where religious practices are no longer solely personal spiritual experiences but also representations of identity in digital public spaces. This creates a dilemma for students in the identity formation phase, as they must navigate between the authenticity of their spiritual experiences and socially constructed expectations shaped by digital narratives.

Moreover, social media often presents unrealistic standards of ideal religiosity, particularly through content that portrays seemingly perfect religious lives. Such conditions challenge spiritual authenticity and may lead to the reduction of religious meaning in highly aestheticized and popularity-driven digital environments (Hilalludin, 2025). As a result, students may experience pressure when comparing their personal religious experiences with normative and often unrealistic online narratives. This can trigger feelings of inadequacy, religious anxiety, and psychological stress (Ramadhan et al., 2025).

These conditions indicate that social media can amplify idealized religious standards. Viral religious content frequently showcases intense and symbolic practices, implicitly constructing new social norms about what constitutes "ideal religiosity." When students compare themselves to these standards, dissonance may arise between their lived religious realities and digitally constructed representations. This dissonance can lead to psychological distress related not only to spirituality but also to self-identity and social acceptance.

Mental health issues among university students have become a significant concern in contemporary Islamic education studies. Research shows that students face various internal and external stressors, including academic pressure, identity conflicts, and social demands exacerbated by high religious expectations (Shilbi et al., 2025). Additionally, a paradox has been identified in which higher levels of religiosity do not always correspond to better mental health, particularly when religiosity is accompanied by rigid moral standards or social pressure (Gumilar, 2025). This is further supported by findings on religious struggle, which demonstrate a positive correlation with increased levels of depression and anxiety among religious youth (Abu-Raiya, 2026). Similarly, spiritual struggle has been found to significantly relate to decreased psychological well-being, especially among individuals with high levels of self-criticism (Pargament & Exline, 2021). The concept of moral incongruence—defined as the discrepancy between actual behavior and internalized religious values—also contributes to psychological distress, particularly in digital contexts where social comparison intensifies feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety (Grubbs et al., 2020).

Despite these contributions, most previous studies have focused on the general relationship between religiosity and psychological well-being. They have not sufficiently explored how social media acts as a mediating factor in shaping or intensifying religious pressure among students. Existing research tends to treat religiosity as an individual variable without considering how its construction in digital spaces influences individuals' psychological experiences (Sa et al., 2023). Consequently, the subjective experiences of students facing religious ideality pressure on social media remain underexplored.

The phenomenon of religious ideality pressure in social media contexts is highly relevant to students' contemporary lives. Social media not only presents positive religious content but also promotes competitive narratives regarding who is more pious, more devoted, or more engaged in religious activities. These narratives may create unrealistic standards, particularly for students undergoing sensitive phases of identity and emotional development (Nawafi et al., 2024).

Previous research has shown that the relationship between religiosity and mental health is not consistent, but rather specific and tends to be inconsistent. In his study, *The Religiosity and Mental Health Paradox in Emerging Adults*, published in the journal *Contemporary Psychology*, Gumilar (2025) aimed to investigate the relationship between levels of religiosity and mental health in young adults using a quantitative survey method. The results of the study revealed that individuals with high levels of religiosity do not always have better mental health, particularly when such religiosity is accompanied by social pressure and rigid moral standards, leading to increased anxiety and psychological stress. This study did not address social media or subjective experiences, so further in-depth research on these aspects is necessary.

These findings align with Abu Raiya's (2026) research in the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, as presented in the study titled *Religious Struggle and Psychological Distress Among Religious Youth*. This study employed a quantitative approach using correlation analysis to identify the relationship between religious conflict and psychological well-being among religious youth. The research results indicate that the phenomenon of religious struggle or inner conflict related to religious standards is positively correlated with increased depression and anxiety, particularly when individuals feel they have failed to meet the religious demands they believe in and lack adaptive spiritual coping strategies. This study does not specifically address the contexts of students and digital media in its analysis; therefore, a study with a specific focus on these contexts is needed.

Furthermore, Pargament and Exline (2021), in their work *The Psychology of Spiritual Struggle* published by the John Templeton Foundation, provide a comprehensive examination of spiritual conflict through a meta-analytic approach. Research indicates that spiritual struggle is significantly associated with reduced mental well-being, particularly among individuals with high levels of self-criticism; however, under certain conditions, such conflict can also serve as an opportunity for psychological growth if managed adaptively. This study does not focus on the contexts of education and social media, so these aspects warrant further discussion.

Furthermore, Grubbs et al. (2020) in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, through their study *Moral Incongruence and Mental Health Outcomes*, developed the concept of moral incongruence—the mismatch between actual behavior and held religious values. Using a quantitative approach based on structural equation modeling, this study found that such conflict gives rise to negative emotions such as guilt, shame, and anxiety. In the context of the digital age, this phenomenon is further amplified by social comparison mechanisms on social media, which intensify psychological pressure on individuals. This research is limited to specific behaviors and does not sufficiently explore individual experiences in general.

In another study, research has shown different results. Ni'amah (2025), in *Religiosity as a Protective Factor for Mental Health*, found that religiosity actually serves as a protective factor that enhances psychological well-being by providing meaning in life and spiritual support. This study overlooks religious conflicts, focusing solely on their benefits in the context of its findings and discussion. The same finding was reported by Nasution et al. (2024) in their study *Religious Coping and Student Well-being*, which employed a mixed-methods approach; there, adaptive religious coping was shown to positively contribute to students' mental health. However, this study did not address the pressures of religious idealism and focused solely on its positive contributions.

Compared to this study, titled "The Pressure of Religious Ideals and the Mental Health of Islamic Religious Education Students: A Phenomenological Study in the Social Media Era," previous researchers tended to use quantitative approaches and did not specifically examine the subjective experiences of students particularly Islamic Religious Education students nor did they extensively integrate the influence of social media as a space where the pressure of religious ideals is formed.

The main gaps in previous research lie in the lack of a phenomenological approach capable of deeply exploring individual life experiences, limitations in exploring the digital context, and the failure to integrate the concept of religious idealism pressure with the dynamics of social comparison on social media. Therefore, this research is important because it seeks to fill the gaps and shortcomings in previous studies by presenting a more contextual, holistic analysis grounded in students' subjective experiences. This study is expected to contribute to enriching the field of the psychology of religion, particularly regarding how the pressure of religious idealism in the digital age affects mental health and how individuals adaptively interpret and manage such conflicts.

Therefore, this study is important as it seeks to address this gap through a phenomenological approach that emphasizes students lived experiences. By understanding how students interpret and respond to religious ideality pressure on social media, this research is expected to contribute theoretically to the fields of Islamic education and psychology of religion, while also providing a more comprehensive understanding of student mental health dynamics in the digital era.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative approach grounded in the philosophy of interpretivism. Specifically, it utilizes Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore how students navigate religious idealism pressure in the social media era. IPA is selected for its capacity to move beyond mere description, aiming to understand how individuals make sense of significant life experiences within their specific social and cultural contexts (Smith et al., 2021). This approach is particularly suited to the phenomenon of "ideal religiosity" on social media, which involves deep personal reflection, the interpretation of religious values, and the negotiation of identity in digital spaces.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select a homogenous group for whom the research phenomenon is particularly relevant. The participants consist of five (5) active students from the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) program, cohort of 2023. In accordance with the principles of IPA, this small sample size is intentional to facilitate an idiographic focus. IPA prioritizes a detailed and nuanced analysis of each individual case over broad generalization (Smith et al., 2021). For studies of this nature, a sample size of 3 to 6 participants is widely recommended to ensure a sufficient depth of interpretation while maintaining the granular detail of each lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The selection criteria include: (1) active students in the Islamic Religious Education program, cohort 2023; (2) aged 17–25 years (emerging adulthood); (3) active users of Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube; (4) exposure to social pressure regarding religious standards on social media; and (5) willingness to provide honest, in-depth responses. To ensure confidentiality, identities are anonymized using coded initials (R.S.A.F, N.H, D.M, M.F, and M.J).

Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews, which is the preferred method for IPA as it encourages participants to provide rich, detailed accounts of their experiences. The interviews explored perceptions of ideal religiosity, digital social pressure, and identity negotiation. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study utilized methodological triangulation, incorporating limited observation of participants' social media engagement and documentation (field notes and relevant digital content) to provide contextual depth to the interview data.

To ensure strict methodological consistency with the IPA framework, the data analysis follows the iterative stages proposed by Smith et al. (2021). The analysis involves a "double hermeneutic" process, where the researcher attempts to make sense of the participant making sense of their own world. The stages are as follows:

1. Reading and Re-reading: Full immersion in the data to ensure the participant's voice remains the focus of the analysis.
2. Initial Noting: Detailed line-by-line examination of the transcript to identify descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual insights.
3. Developing Emergent Themes: Identifying patterns and clusters of meaning from the initial notes.
4. Searching for Connections Across Emergent Themes: Mapping the relationships between themes to develop "Superordinate Themes" for each participant.
5. Moving to the Next Case: Repeating the process for each subsequent transcript to maintain an idiographic commitment.
6. Looking for Patterns Across Cases: Identifying shared themes across all five participants to capture the essence of the group's experience while acknowledging individual uniqueness.

Through this rigorous interpretative process, the study aims to uncover the subjective meanings constructed by students regarding the tension between formally learned religious values and the socially constructed "ideal religiosity" encountered in the digital age.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Based on the interpretative phenomenological analysis, this study identified four superordinate themes that reflect how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) students make sense of religious idealism pressure within the context of social media. The findings are presented as interpretative accounts, emphasizing how participants construct meaning from their lived experiences.

#### a. The Internalization of the "Moral Symbol" Identity

Participants did not merely perceive their status as PAI students as an academic role, but as a socially constructed identity that carries moral expectations. Through the interpretative lens, this identity is experienced as an internalized "moral label" that shapes how participants see themselves and how they believe they are seen by others.

For instance, R.S.A.F. interpreted being a PAI student as a continuous demand to embody ideal religious behavior, such as politeness, honesty, and moral consistency. This expectation is not only external but gradually becomes internalized, influencing self-perception and behavior regulation.

Similarly, N.H.'s experience of being judged for minor actions reflects how social labeling operates as a mechanism of control. The statement "you are a PAI student" is interpreted not simply as a comment, but as a form of symbolic pressure that restricts personal authenticity. In this sense, participants experience a tension between their human limitations and the expectation of moral perfection.

From an IPA perspective, this theme illustrates how identity is not passively received but actively interpreted, resulting in a sense of being positioned as a "moral symbol" in both social and academic contexts.

## **2. The Emergence of Psychological Tension and Moral Anxiety**

Participants described their experiences of pressure not only at the social level but also as internal psychological tension. This tension is interpreted as a form of moral anxiety arising from the perceived gap between personal reality and socially constructed religious ideals. D.M. expressed a persistent fear of making mistakes, which goes beyond religious awareness and enters the realm of social anxiety. The fear is not only about committing sin but also about being judged, criticized, or stigmatized by others.

M.F.'s narrative further reveals an internal conflict between his authentic self and the idealized image of a PAI student. This conflict manifests in overthinking and emotional exhaustion. From an interpretative standpoint, this reflects a struggle to reconcile lived experience with normative expectations, resulting in what can be understood as "*psychological dissonance*".

Thus, religious idealism is not always experienced as a source of comfort or guidance but can be interpreted as a psychological burden when it is heavily shaped by external expectations.

## **3. Social Media as a Space of Continuous Observation and Comparison**

In the digital context, participants interpreted social media as a space where religious identity is constantly observed, evaluated, and compared. This creates what can be understood as a sense of "being watched," influencing how participants present themselves online. R.S.A.F. described the need to carefully curate content to align with her religious identity. This reflects an awareness of audience perception, where self-expression is adjusted to avoid negative judgment. From an IPA perspective, this indicates that social media is not a neutral platform but a space where identity is negotiated under perceived surveillance.

M.F. and N.H. highlighted how feedback mechanisms such as comments and reactions significantly affect their self-evaluation. Positive responses reinforce confidence, while negative feedback triggers self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy. These experiences are interpreted as forms of social comparison that intensify the pressure to conform to idealized standards of religiosity. In this context, social media functions ambivalently: it provides religious inspiration while simultaneously amplifying pressure through comparison and public visibility.

## **4. Meaning-Making and the Development of Adaptive Strategies**

Despite experiencing pressure, participants also demonstrated the ability to reinterpret and negotiate these expectations in more adaptive ways. This theme highlights how individuals actively construct meaning and develop coping strategies in response to religious idealism pressure. M.J., for example, interpreted social expectations in a more flexible manner and chose not to fully conform to external representations of religiosity. This indicates a more autonomous meaning-making process, where religiosity is defined internally rather than externally imposed. Other participants, such as R.S.A.F. and M.F., described engaging in spiritual practices—such as prayer and reading the Qur'an—not as performative acts but as personal coping mechanisms. These practices are interpreted as efforts to restore balance between external demands and internal needs.

From an interpretative phenomenological perspective, resilience emerges when participants shift their understanding of religiosity from a social obligation to a personal meaning system. This reinterpretation allows them to maintain psychological stability while navigating social expectations.

## Discussion

In understanding the phenomenon of religious idealism pressure on Islamic Education students, a theoretical dialogue can be established that brings together the perspectives of the psychology of religion, normative ethics, and the social construction of religion. Conceptually, religious idealism pressure is not merely an individual experience, but also the result of the interaction between an individual's internal values and society's external expectations. From the perspective of religious orientation, Milevsky and Levitt (2004) distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. At this point, research findings indicate a dialectical tension between the two, wherein PAI students practice religion not only as a personal belief (intrinsic) but also as a response to social demands (extrinsic). When extrinsic orientation becomes more dominant due to social pressure, religiosity has the potential to shift toward the performative, which does not fully reflect the internalization of values but rather serves as a form of adaptation to environmental expectation.

This theoretical dialogue is further enriched through normative ethical approaches, particularly deontology and teleology. Within the framework of deontology (Ross, 1930 in Copp, 2021), Islamic Education students are situated within a structure of moral obligations that emphasizes the necessity of acting in accordance with ethical principles such as honesty, responsibility, and integrity. Meanwhile, the teleological perspective (Brooks & Dunn, 2011 in Puji, 2022) views religious actions as evaluated based on their purpose and benefits for both individual and social well-being. In the context of this study, these two approaches do not stand in isolation but are intertwined in shaping the ideal religious standards reproduced by society. PAI students are not only evaluated based on their adherence to norms (deontological), but also on the extent to which they are able to represent the value of social goodness (teleological). This, in turn, reinforces the construction of social expectations regarding their religious identity.

Furthermore, Burhanuddin Salam's concept of social morality provides a foundation for the idea that morality is a collective value system that governs how individuals should behave in society. When this value system is strongly attached to the identity of Islamic Education students, what emerges is what sociological studies refer to as "moral labeling" a process of social labeling that positions these students as symbols of collective morality. Research findings indicate that this labeling contributes to the emergence of psychosocial pressures, such as the feeling of having to be a role model, maintaining a religious image, and avoiding moral transgressions. Thus, the pressure of religious idealism does not stem solely from religious teachings themselves but also from social constructions that link academic identity to specific moral expectations.

In the context of psychology, this phenomenon can be summarized as a form of religious identity conflict specifically, the tension between personal identity and social identity. When Islamic Education students are confronted with high religious standards while simultaneously undergoing a dynamic process of self-development, the potential for psychological dissonance arises. Research findings indicating the presence of moral anxiety, overthinking, and mental fatigue suggest that this pressure has penetrated deeper psychological realms. This aligns with the research by Power & McKinney (2014) and Walker & Lang (2023), which confirms that religiosity more oriented toward social judgment tends to correlate with increased anxiety and psychological tension.

A conceptual synthesis of these findings indicates that the pressure of religious idealism on PAI students is a multidimensional phenomenon involving three main layers: (1) the structural-social dimension, consisting of societal expectations and stereotypes; (2) the normative dimension, involving the internalization of moral values and religious ethics; and (3) the psychological dimension, comprising individuals' subjective experiences in responding to such pressure. These three dimensions interact with one another and shape the dynamics of PAI students' religiosity, which is ambivalent: on the one hand, it can be a source of moral motivation and spiritual reinforcement, but on the other hand, it has the potential to cause psychological pressure if not balanced by the internalization of authentic values.

The researchers concluded that the pressure of religious idealism is not a singular phenomenon, but rather the result of a dialectical process between religion as a value system, society as a norm-shaper, and the individual as the subject who experiences and interprets that pressure. Therefore, an integrative conceptual approach is essential to understanding that the religiosity of PAI students is not only related to normative compliance but also to the balance between self-authenticity, social expectations, and psychological well-being within both academic and digital contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the pressure of religious ideality among Islamic Religious Education (PAI) students is a phenomenon shaped by the interaction between academic identity, social expectations, and individual religiosity dynamics. PAI students are not only viewed as learners of religious knowledge but also as moral representatives expected to embody Islamic values in daily life. Such social constructions generate various forms of pressure, including the demand to serve as religious role models, the obligation to maintain a religious image, and the concern over committing moral mistakes in social contexts. For some students, this pressure may elicit psychological responses such as moral anxiety, overthinking, religious identity conflicts, and mental fatigue (Supandi et al., 2025; Ramadhani et al., 2025).

However, the findings also indicate that religious ideality pressure does not necessarily lead to negative outcomes. When religiosity is understood intrinsically and internalized as a personal value, these demands can function as a source of moral motivation, meaning in life, and emotional regulation through spiritual practices such as prayer, supplication, and reading the Quran. These results emphasize that the psychological impact of religious pressure is strongly influenced by how individuals interpret the social expectations attached to their religious identity (Fitra, 2025; Ramadhani et al., 2025).

The study also highlights the significant role of social media in shaping the dynamics of religious ideality among PAI students in the digital era. Social media serves not only as a platform for disseminating religious knowledge and spiritual inspiration but also as a space for representing religious identity observable by the public. In this context, performative religiosity emerges, where religious expression is often displayed through symbolic digital content. This creates an ambivalent dynamic: on one hand, social media can reinforce religious motivation and literacy; on the other, it may promote social comparison, the need for validation, and pressure to maintain a specific religious image (Jannah, 2025; Haspiani, 2025).

Theoretically, this study contributes to the fields of religious psychology and Islamic education by demonstrating that religious ideality pressure among PAI students can be understood as the result of interactions between intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations, social moral constructions, and digital culture. The findings expand understanding of how students' religious identity is shaped not only by religious doctrine but also by social expectations and self-representation in public spaces, particularly on social media (Supandi et al., 2025; Kurnia et al., 2026).

Practically, the findings have several implications for higher education in Islamic studies. First, educational institutions should promote religious learning approaches that emphasize reflective and humanistic internalization of religious values, so that students' religiosity develops as personal awareness rather than merely social obligation. Second, campuses should provide safe spaces for dialogue about students' religious experiences, including access to counseling or psychological guidance sensitive to religiosity issues. Third, strengthening digital religious literacy is essential to enable students to express their religious identity authentically without succumbing to performative pressures on social media (Situmorang, 2024; Dwitami & Selian, 2025).

Despite providing insight into the dynamics of religious ideality pressure among PAI students, this study has limitations that open avenues for future research. Subsequent studies could broaden participant diversity by including students from various universities or academic programs to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, future research could employ quantitative or

mixed-method approaches to systematically examine the relationships between religious pressure, religious orientation, social media use, and students mental health. Research on religious coping strategies and the role of social support in managing religious pressure also represents a promising area for further investigation (Ramadhani et al., 2025; Fitra, 2025).

In conclusion, religious ideality pressure among PAI students is a complex and contextual phenomenon. It can serve as a source of moral and spiritual reinforcement when internalized authentically but may also lead to psychological strain when driven primarily by social expectations and the demands of public religious representation. Therefore, the development of Islamic education at the tertiary level must balance normative ideality with the understanding that students religiosity is a gradual, human, and evolving process (Ramadhani et al., 2025; Situmorang, 2024).

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