



THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN SHAPING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING THROUGH PEOPLE-PLEASING MANAGEMENT AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRAK

Perilaku *people-pleasing* merupakan kecenderungan individu untuk mendahulukan kebutuhan dan harapan orang lain secara berlebihan hingga mengabaikan kebutuhan dirinya sendiri. Fenomena ini banyak dijumpai pada mahasiswa yang berada pada fase dewasa awal dan berpotensi memengaruhi kesejahteraan emosional. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan perilaku *people-pleasing*, faktor-faktor yang melatarbelakanginya, dampaknya terhadap kesejahteraan emosional, serta peran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam membantu mahasiswa mengelola kecenderungan perilaku tersebut di Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif. Informan penelitian terdiri atas lima mahasiswa semester lima yang dipilih secara purposive berdasarkan kriteria kecenderungan *people-pleasing*. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perilaku *people-pleasing* pada mahasiswa tidak hanya muncul sebagai sikap membantu orang lain, tetapi berkembang menjadi pola relasi interpersonal yang didorong oleh kebutuhan akan penerimaan sosial dan kekhawatiran terhadap penolakan. Pola tersebut terbentuk melalui interaksi antara faktor internal, seperti rendahnya harga diri dan lemahnya regulasi emosi, dengan faktor eksternal berupa budaya sungkan dan ekspektasi gender yang menempatkan perempuan sebagai pihak yang diharapkan menjaga keharmonisan hubungan. Dalam jangka panjang, kecenderungan ini menyebabkan mahasiswa mengalami kelelahan emosional, stres, overthinking, penurunan kepercayaan diri, dan terganggunya konsentrasi akademik. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa Pendidikan Agama Islam berperan sebagai sumber nilai dan penguatan psikologis melalui pembentukan kesadaran diri, kemampuan menetapkan batasan diri (*personal boundaries*), pengendalian emosi, serta internalisasi nilai-nilai Islam seperti ikhlas, sabar, tawakal, dan 'izzah. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa integrasi nilai-nilai Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam pembinaan mahasiswa dapat menjadi pendekatan preventif dan pengembangan kesejahteraan emosional, khususnya bagi mahasiswa yang memiliki kecenderungan *people-pleasing*.

Kata Kunci: *People-pleasing, Pendidikan Islam, Kesejahteraan Emosional, Regulasi Emosi, Nilai-Nilai Islam.*

ABSTRACT

People-pleasing behavior is the tendency of individuals to prioritize the needs and expectations of others excessively, to the point of neglecting their own needs. This phenomenon is commonly found among female students in the early adulthood phase and has the potential to affect emotional well-being. This research aims to describe people-pleasing behavior, the factors underlying it, its impact on emotional well-being, and the role of Islamic Religious Education





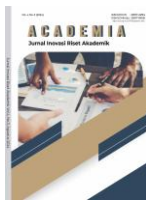
(PAI) in helping female students manage this behavioral tendency in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta. The research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The research informants consist of five fifth-semester female students who were purposively selected based on the criterion of a people-pleasing tendency. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using an interactive analysis model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research results show that people-pleasing behavior in female students does not only manifest as an attitude of helping others, but develops into an interpersonal relationship pattern driven by the need for social acceptance and fear of rejection. The pattern is formed through the interaction between internal factors, such as low self-esteem and weak emotional regulation, and external factors, such as a culture of reluctance and gender expectations that place women in the role of maintaining relationship harmony. In the long term, this tendency causes female students to experience emotional exhaustion, stress, overthinking, decreased self-confidence, and disrupted academic concentration. This research also found that Islamic Religious Education serves as a source of values and psychological reinforcement through the formation of self-awareness, the ability to set personal boundaries, emotional control, and the internalization of Islamic values such as sincerity, patience, trust in God, and dignity. These findings indicate that the integration of Islamic Religious Education values in student development can serve as a preventive approach and emotional well-being development, especially for female students who have a tendency toward people-pleasing

Keywords: *People-pleasing, Islamic Education, Emotional Well-being, Emotion Regulation, Islamic Values.*

INTRODUCTION

Student life in higher education is marked by various academic and social demands, as well as the process of adjusting to a new environment. Various demands can become a source of psychological pressure that affects the emotional well-being of students. Several studies show that female students tend to face more complex emotional pressures compared to male students, especially due to social expectations, interpersonal relationship demands, and gender norms that encourage them to be more responsive to the needs of others. In this context, female students of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program (PAI) become a relevant group to study because, in addition to facing academic demands, they are also prepared as prospective religious educators who are expected to reflect moral, religious, and social values in their daily lives. These various demands have the potential to encourage the emergence of people-pleasing behavior, which is the tendency to excessively prioritize the needs and expectations of others in order to gain social acceptance or avoid conflict, rejection, or damage to interpersonal relationships (Tanghana et al., 2025). People-pleasing behavior is commonly found among female students, especially in the early adulthood phase, which is a developmental period characterized by exploration, identity formation, and adjustment to various social and interpersonal demands (Sánchez-Queija et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of people-pleasing is not only found in Indonesia but has also become a concern in various countries. A YouGov survey of 1,000 adult respondents in the United States shows that women are more likely to identify as people pleasers compared to men, at 52% and 44%, respectively (Ballard, 2022). The findings indicate that the tendency to prioritize the needs of others over one's own needs is a relatively common phenomenon, especially among women.



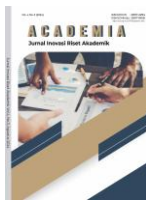
In the context of higher education, people-pleasing behavior is characterized by an individual's tendency to excessively prioritize the expectations and interests of others while neglecting their own needs and boundaries. This tendency is often found in students who are in the early adulthood phase, a developmental period characterized by the formation of self-identity, social adjustment, and an increasing need for acceptance from the environment. Research in Indonesia shows that people-pleasing behavior is related to the quality of peer attachment (Muhana, 2025). In addition, various social norms and gender expectations also encourage women to maintain harmony in interpersonal relationships, avoid conflicts, and be more sensitive to the needs of others. Various studies also show that the tendency to be a people-pleaser is potentially related to a decline in emotional well-being. Khan et al. (2025) reported that female students experience higher levels of psychological distress compared to male students as a consequence of various role demands they face. Meanwhile, Humaidah et al. (2024) found that academic stress, low emotional regulation, and lack of social support are factors contributing to the decline in students' emotional well-being.

Islamic Religious Education not only serves as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but also as a process of character formation through the internalization of moral, spiritual, and ethical values (Wisiyanti, 2024). Islamic values such as sincerity, patience, trust in God, dignity, and responsibility toward oneself and others are believed to serve as a foundation for students in managing social pressure, establishing personal boundaries, and maintaining emotional balance (Rohmah, 2024). The internalization of these values can therefore provide students with a framework for responding to social demands while maintaining consistency between religious principles and personal behavior.

In line with this, various studies show that the internalization of spiritual values in Islamic Religious Education contributes to the development of emotional intelligence, the ability to cope with life's pressures, and the strengthening of students' emotional resilience (Lubis, 2025; Susanti & Nukman, 2024). The findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education has the potential to support students in managing various psychological and social challenges faced during their academic life. This role is particularly relevant for university students who encounter diverse academic, interpersonal, and social demands during their transition into adulthood.

Previous research has extensively examined people-pleasing behavior from a psychological perspective. Additionally, Hayati & Haryadi (2024) as well as Maulan & Ru'iyah (2023) discuss the impact of people-pleasing behavior on emotional well-being and self-identity development. The results of the research indicate that people-pleasing is closely related to psychological factors, social relationships, and mental health. However, these studies have not examined how Islamic Religious Education can serve as a source of values, self-control, and behavioral guidelines in helping female students manage their tendency to people-please. Thus, there is still a gap in research on the integration aspect between people-pleasing behavior and the values of Islamic Religious Education, especially among female students in the early adulthood phase. This research aims to fill that gap by analyzing the role of Islamic Religious Education in helping female students understand, control, and respond to people-pleasing tendencies more proportionally in accordance with Islamic values.

Based on the description, this research aims to describe people-pleasing behavior among female students of the Islamic Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, identify the underlying factors, analyze its implications for emotional well-being, and describe the role of Islamic Education in helping female students manage their tendency to



please others. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of people-pleasing behavior studies with the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, which has mostly been examined from the standpoint of general psychology and mental health. This research not only focuses on the causes and impacts of people-pleasing but also analyzes how the values of Islamic Religious Education serve as a foundation for self-control, identity formation, and emotional well-being management among female students. In addition, this research specifically takes the context of female students in the Islamic Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, thereby providing a more contextual empirical picture of the relationship between the social experiences of female students and the internalization of Islamic values. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the body of knowledge in Islamic Religious Education, Islamic psychology, and gender studies, particularly regarding the contribution of Islamic values in supporting the emotional well-being of students.

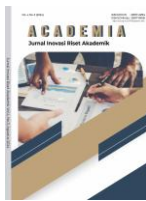
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of female students related to people-pleasing behavior, the factors underlying it, its impact on emotional well-being, and the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in helping female students manage these behavioral tendencies. Through a qualitative approach, the data obtained not only describes the phenomena that occur but also provides an understanding of the meanings constructed by the informants based on their experiences.

The research was conducted at Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, involving female students from the Islamic Education Study Program (PAI) as research subjects. The campus environment was chosen because it is a relevant social context for examining the dynamics of people-pleasing behavior among female students and its relation to the Islamic Religious Education learning process. The research subjects consisted of five fifth-semester female students who were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of informants based on specific criteria that align with the research objectives.

The selection of informants began with a preliminary screening process to identify female students who have a tendency toward people-pleasing behavior. Screening was conducted using an initial questionnaire prepared by the researcher based on indicators of people-pleasing behavior commonly found in psychological literature, including: (1) difficulty refusing others' requests, (2) a tendency to prioritize others' interests over one's own, (3) a high need for social acceptance, (4) fear of disappointing others, and (5) feelings of guilt or discomfort when saying "no." Female students who exhibited most of these indicators were selected as research informants.

Research data were collected through semi-structured interviews using flexible interview guidelines. This technique was chosen so that researchers can explore the informants' experiences and perspectives more deeply, while also allowing for the emergence of new information relevant to the research focus. The interview focused on several aspects, namely the informants' experiences related to people-pleasing behavior, the factors underlying the emergence of such behavior, its impact on emotional well-being, the informants' understanding of Islamic Religious Education values, and their perceptions of the role of Islamic Religious Education in helping manage people-pleasing tendencies. In addition, the researchers also collected demographic data from the informants to provide an overview of the characteristics of the research subjects.



Data analysis is conducted qualitatively by referring to the interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The interview data is transcribed, then coded and categorized into themes based on the research focus and findings that emerge in the field. These themes include the characteristics of people-pleasing behavior, the underlying factors, its impact on emotional well-being, the internalization of Islamic Religious Education values, and the role of Islamic Religious Education in helping female students manage the tendency toward people-pleasing behavior. Next, each theme is analyzed to identify patterns, relationships between themes, and meanings related to the research focus.

To ensure the validity of the data, this research applies the source triangulation technique by comparing information obtained from several informants with similar characteristics. In addition, the researcher conducted a re-check of the interview results (member checking) by reconfirming important information with the informants to ensure the alignment between the researcher's interpretation and the experiences intended by the informants. The credibility of the research is also strengthened through the direct involvement of the researchers during the data collection and analysis process, ensuring that the interpretations produced remain grounded in the empirical data obtained from the field.

Table 1. Categorization of Research Findings Themes

No	Theme	Indicator	Source
1	Tendency to be a People Pleaser	Hard to resist, overthinking	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5
2	Causing Factors	Fear of rejection, culture	S1, S2, S3, S5
3	Emotional Impact	Stress, emotional exhaustion	S1, S2, S4, S5
4	PAI Values	Sincerity, trust in God	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5
5	The role of PAI	Setting boundaries, regulating emotions	S2, S3, S4, S5

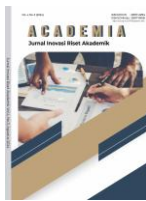
Based on Table 1, the findings of this study are grouped into five main themes. The first theme relates to the tendency to engage in people-pleasing behavior, particularly the difficulty in refusing others' requests and overthinking. The second theme pertains to the factors underlying this behavior, including fear of rejection and cultural influences. The third theme describes the emotional impact experienced by the informants, such as stress and emotional exhaustion. The fourth theme focuses on the values of Islamic Religious Education, particularly sincerity and trust in God, while the fifth theme describes the role of Islamic Religious Education in helping students set personal boundaries and manage their emotions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

People-Pleasing Behavior

The research results show that people-pleasing behavior is not just a minor situational habit, but has become a pattern in the social life of female students in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study program. This behavior is mainly reflected in the informants' difficulty in refusing requests or invitations from others, even when they have their own needs and responsibilities. The informants also tend to consider other people's feelings and judgments before making decisions, which makes it difficult for them to prioritize their own needs. These findings indicate that people-pleasing behavior is closely related to the informants' social relationships and their concern about how others perceive them.



This is evident from the statements of several informants who admitted to having difficulty when they had to refuse requests or invitations from others. Informant S1 revealed that she often feels uncomfortable when rejecting an invitation because she is worried about other people's judgments. This concern makes her consider the possible reactions of others before expressing her own decision. The finding shows that the difficulty in saying no is not only related to the request itself, but also to the informant's concern about maintaining good relationships with others.

One of the most dominant forms of people-pleasing behavior in the informants is the difficulty in refusing others' requests. Informant S1 stated that she often feels "uncomfortable" when she has to decline others' invitations because she is worried about social judgment (S1). These findings indicate that feelings of reluctance and the need to maintain social relationships are factors that drive informants to prioritize the comfort of others over expressing their personal desires.

A similar situation was observed with informant S5, who admitted, "I really thought about rejecting it" even though the situation was not that significant (S5). The statement indicates that rejection is not only viewed as an interpersonal act but also raises prolonged concerns about the possibility of negative responses from others. This concern shows that the informant tends to consider other people's reactions even when the situation does not require a significant response.

Overall, both informants indicated that people-pleasing behavior is not only characterized by the inability to say "no," but also by a tendency to overthink and a need for social acceptance. These concerns make it difficult for informants to prioritize their own needs when interacting with others. Thus, this analysis confirms that cognitive and emotional aspects play an important role in maintaining people-pleasing behavior among female students.

The statement indicates that the informant not only has difficulty refusing others' requests but also continues to think about the consequences of the refusal. This tendency makes the informant worry about others' responses or judgments, leading to overthinking behavior, which is one of the characteristics of people-pleasing behavior. This pattern suggests that the fear of negative social responses can influence the informant's decision-making when responding to other people's requests.

In addition to having difficulty saying no, the S2 informant also revealed that they often do things they actually do not want to do in order to please others. This behavior shows that the informant sometimes puts other people's needs and feelings before their own preferences. The informant's statement further illustrates how the tendency to please others can influence everyday decisions.

"Actually, in the context of being a people pleaser, I feel like I often do things I don't want to do with my friends, but I do it to make them happy. But not that often, because sometimes I choose to avoid it. If something harms me, I won't do it." (Interview with S2, 25 May 2026).

Factors causing people-pleaser behavior

The people-pleaser behavior found among students in the Islamic Religious Education Program (PAI) does not arise from a single factor. There are two layers of factors that interconnect and reinforce each other: factors that originate from within oneself (internal) and factors that come from the surrounding environment (external). The internal factors identified in this study include the need for social acceptance and fear of rejection, while the external



factors are related to social and cultural expectations. These factors were found to influence the informants' tendency to prioritize others' needs and maintain harmonious social relationships.

Internally, the tendency to become a people-pleaser is related to the need for social acceptance and fear of rejection by others. Several informants admitted that they had difficulty refusing others' requests because they were concerned that rejection might disrupt their social relationships. This concern was particularly associated with expectations of reciprocity, maintaining friendships, and avoiding negative perceptions from others. One informant stated:

"Afraid that someday I might need him, for example, if I reject him today, but I'm afraid that someday, when I need help, I won't feel comfortable asking. Or I'm afraid that I might become a useless friend later, because all my friends are good to me. So even tho I feel like I can't help, I will still try my best to repay their kindness." (Interview with S2, 25 May 2026).

A similar pattern was expressed by informant S1, who associated her tendency to consider others' feelings with the social and cultural values she had learned. Her statement illustrates how consideration for others can become a reason for feeling reluctant to reject an invitation. This response also shows that cultural expectations may interact with the informant's concern about how others would respond to her rejection.

"If that happens often, actually, it's because I'm Javanese, and Javanese people tend to be considerate. So actually, I often feel bad about rejecting someone's invitation because I'm afraid they might think about how I would feel if they rejected me." (Interview with S1, 25 May 2026).

Another statement was made by informant S3, who admitted that she tends to please others to remain accepted within social circles. Her response indicates that social adjustment is considered necessary to maintain comfort and acceptance within a particular group. The need to adjust may become more pronounced when the informant perceives differences in ability or status among members of the social group.

"Yeah, because we have to balance him out, so that they can also feel comfortable with us. If we don't make them comfortable, they probably won't want to, especially the smart people; we have to keep up with them too." (Interview with S3, 25 May 2026).

The statement indicates a need to gain social acceptance and maintain relationships with the surrounding environment. Informants tend to feel the need to adjust to the expectations of others in order to remain accepted in their social group. Another informant also admitted that they often think about the social impact of a rejection.

"Often, it seems like always, because I'm the type of person who really thinks a lot when I refuse. For example, if a friend keeps inviting me and I keep declining, it still crosses my mind. Even tho the problem is not that big, it is still always on my mind." (Interview with S4, 25 May 2026).

Impact on emotional well-being

People-pleasing behavior has a significant impact on the emotional well-being of female students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program (PAI). Based on the interview



results, most informants admitted to experiencing stress, emotional exhaustion, overthinking, and disruptions in academic activities due to the habit of prioritizing the needs and feelings of others over their own. Informant S1 revealed that such behavior can cause quite a heavy psychological burden.

"The first one might reach the stage of stress, because earlier, by prioritizing others, we end up getting overwhelmed ourselves. We actually have tasks, but because my friend asked for help, I ended up helping my friend and neglecting my own tasks, so it feels like a heavy burden on my mind." (Interview with S1, 25 May 2026).

Similar experiences were reported by informant S5, who described stress and fatigue as consequences of repeatedly thinking about social relationships. Her statement shows that the emotional impact was not necessarily associated with a severe psychological condition but was experienced through persistent thoughts and mental fatigue. This finding indicates that overthinking about interpersonal situations can become an emotional burden for informants.

"If it's stress, yes, I already said it's stress, but if it leads to illness, no, it's just stress, like thinking about it, maybe until tired." (Interview with S5, 25 May 2026).

Informant S4 also described emotional exhaustion resulting from the difficulty of refusing other people's requests. Her experience suggests that continuously considering other people's feelings can create discomfort and consume emotional energy. The finding further illustrates that people-pleasing behavior may place informants in situations where maintaining social relationships is accompanied by emotional strain.

"If it goes like that, it will feel like we're just exhausting ourselves, emotionally exhausted, because we can't refuse, the exhaustion is more about that and the uncomfortable feeling, the discomfort of thinking about that person." (Interview with S4, 25 May 2026).

The impact of people-pleasing behavior was also evident in the informants' self-confidence. One informant reported that the habit of prioritizing others made her feel less confident. This experience shows that the tendency to prioritize others can affect how informants view and value themselves.

"Maybe, if confidence could be like that, because being a people pleasing makes me less confident, maybe because I often give in to others, it feels like, 'It's okay, I'll just be the last one, what's important is others first.'" (Interview with S1, 25 May 2026).

Additionally, informant S4 stated that emotional exhaustion caused by people-pleasing behavior affected her daily life as a student. She explained that the difficulty in refusing others' requests made her feel emotionally exhausted and uncomfortable. This condition also affected her ability to carry out academic activities, particularly when completing assignments that required a good emotional state.

"Yes, of course, because I couldn't refuse earlier, in the end, it leads to emotional exhaustion, so it will disrupt daily life as a student, and to do assignments, you need a good mood." (Interview with S4, 25 May 2026).





Values - Values of Islamic Religious Education

Based on the interview results, all informants demonstrated an understanding of several important values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), such as sincerity, patience, trust in God, and dignity (izzah). These values are understood as guidelines in daily life and in facing various social pressures that arise in social interactions. The following findings explain the values emphasized by each informant based on their experiences. Informant S1 stated that the most meaningful value for her is sincerity in accepting every decree of Allah and taking wisdom from every experience she has gone through.

"Maybe it's about sincerity, sincerity in accepting everything that happens. In difficult times, we must remain positive. Whatever happens to us, whether good or bad, we must take the lesson from it. Maybe when there is a problem, from that problem there is something good that Allah gives us, so we shouldn't think negatively about Allah's plan." (Interview with S1, 25 May 2026).

In line with this view, informant S2 revealed that the value of tawakkul helps her become calmer when facing various life situations. She connected tawakkul with the ability to accept that the final outcome of an effort is determined by Allah. This value was also related to her tendency toward perfectionism, as surrendering the outcome to Allah helped her feel more at ease.

"Put your trust in God, because we are entrusting everything to Allah. Well, sometimes people like me are too perfectionistic. By being resigned to fate, I become more at ease because in the end, it is Allah who determines the outcome." (Interview with S2, 25 May 2026).

Meanwhile, informant S3 emphasized the importance of patience and helping others in daily life. According to her, these values should be practiced through everyday behavior rather than understood only as theoretical concepts. Her statement indicates that religious values are perceived as practical guidelines that can shape how a person responds to difficulties and interacts with others.

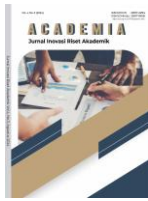
"Keep being patient and helping others. Patience means facing something with patience. If you are not patient, negative things will arise and cause disturbances. Sincerity must also be practiced in daily life, not just understood as a concept." (Interview with S3, 25 May 2026).

Informant S5 also mentioned patience, empathy, and concern for others as among the Islamic teachings that were most memorable to her. Her response demonstrates that religious values were closely associated with sensitivity toward other people and the willingness to understand their circumstances. At the same time, these values provide a basis for understanding how care for others can be practiced in social relationships.

"More about being patient, continuing to empathize and care. In my opinion, that is the most memorable because it is also taught in religion to be sensitive to others." (Interview with S5, 25 May 2026).

The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Overcoming People-Pleasing Behavior

Based on the interview results, the informants acknowledged that Islamic Religious Education plays a role in helping them understand personal boundaries, manage social



relationships, and develop better social attitudes. Informant S4 views Islamic teachings as a guide or limitation in behavior. She explained that Islamic teachings provide boundaries in daily behavior.

"The wall serves as our boundary; by entering PAI or following the teachings of Islam, we have these boundaries, behavioral boundaries, or whatever it is, there are boundaries." (Interview with S4, 25 May 2026).

A similar view was expressed by informant S3, who stated that PAI learning helped her understand how to behave better in daily life. Her response suggests that religious learning contributes to the process of moving from a lack of understanding toward greater awareness of appropriate behavior. In this context, PAI learning is perceived as providing knowledge that can be applied to social interactions and personal conduct.

"Very helpful because from learning religion, we go from not knowing to knowing." (Interview with S3, 25 May 2026).

Informant S4 further explained that the values learned through PAI helped her become more aware of the need to establish personal boundaries. This awareness was related to her effort to avoid continuously accepting invitations or requests when doing so could lead to emotional exhaustion. Her statement illustrates how religious values can be connected to the practical management of social relationships and personal well-being.

"Yes, because earlier to avoid getting tired of my own mental state, so as much as possible I don't have to say yes to invitations." (Interview with S4, 25 May 2026).

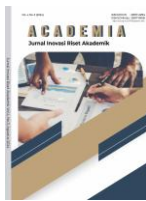
Discussion

Characteristics of People Pleasing Behavior in PAI Female Students

Research findings indicate that people-pleasing behavior among PAI female students is characterized by difficulty in refusing others' requests, a tendency to prioritize others' interests, and concern over social judgment. This finding is in line with Tanghana et al. (2025), who explain that people-pleasing behavior is characterized by an excessive desire to please others in order to avoid conflict and rejection. The finding is also consistent with Kuang et al. (2025), who describe people-pleasing behavior through thoughts, feelings, and actions, including concern about others' judgments, feelings of guilt, and difficulty prioritizing one's own needs. In the context of Indonesian culture, this finding is further supported by Hanif et al. (2025), who found that the culture of reluctance can encourage individuals to say "yes" in order to maintain social harmony.

Internal and External Factors that Influence People Pleasing

Research findings indicate that people-pleasing behavior among PAI female students is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors are related to individual characteristics, such as low self-esteem, the need for social acceptance, fear of rejection, and difficulties in emotional regulation. Meanwhile, external factors are related to social and cultural influences that shape how individuals respond to the expectations of others.



These factors may interact and contribute to the development of people-pleasing behavior among the informants.

Low self-esteem makes individuals more in need of external validation and more vulnerable to social pressure (Merino et al., 2024). The need for social acceptance and fear of rejection are also related to anxious attachment styles, which drive individuals to maintain relationships by pleasing others (Finzi-Dottan & Abadi, 2024; Hayati & Haryadi, 2024). Additionally, weak emotional regulation causes individuals to easily say "yes" before considering their own capacity (Dasi, 2025). These findings suggest that internal factors can influence individuals to prioritize the needs and expectations of others over their own needs.

From an external perspective, the culture of *ewuh pakewuh* and gender expectations that position women as guardians of relationship harmony can also reinforce the tendency to engage in people-pleasing behavior (Hanif et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2025). These social and cultural expectations may encourage individuals to avoid refusing others in order to maintain harmonious relationships. In this context, people-pleasing behavior is not only influenced by individual factors but also by the social environment in which the individual interacts.

Implications for Emotional Well-being

The findings of this study show that people-pleasing behavior affects several aspects of the informants' emotional well-being and academic life. The impacts include stress, overthinking, feelings of guilt, emotional exhaustion, decreased self-confidence, and disruption of academic activities. These findings indicate that people-pleasing behavior can affect not only the emotional condition of the informants but also their daily activities as students.

These findings are in line with Kuang et al. (2025), who found that a higher tendency toward people-pleasing is associated with lower levels of mental well-being, higher anxiety, and greater emotional exhaustion. The similarity lies particularly in the emotional exhaustion experienced by the informants in this study, which is also identified as one of the psychological impacts of people-pleasing behavior in Kuang et al. (2025). The findings are also consistent with Humaidah et al. (2024), who identified stress and poor emotional regulation as important factors affecting students' psychological well-being. This finding suggests that the emotional difficulties experienced by the informants are consistent with the factors associated with students' psychological well-being in previous research.

The long-term impact that is even more serious is the potential for this condition to develop into a more severe mental health issue. Previous research by Arlenia and Farid (2025) found that assertiveness training through group counseling can reduce people-pleasing behavior among students. Moreover, the loss of self-identity, which is a long-term consequence of people-pleasing behavior, can also affect the overall quality of female students' interpersonal relationships. They may find it more difficult to build authentic and equal relationships because some of the connections they form may be influenced by fear of rejection rather than mutual respect and sincere understanding.

Nevertheless, the research findings also indicate that the understanding of Islamic Religious Education values has not yet been fully followed by the ability to apply them in real social situations. Some informants are able to explain the concepts of *ikhlas*, *sabar*, *tawakal*, and *'izzah* well, but still have difficulty when it comes to refusing others' requests or setting personal boundaries. This condition indicates a gap between cognitive understanding of religious teachings and practical internalization in daily behavior. Cultural pressure to avoid embarrassment, the need for social acceptance, and the fear of rejection seem to be more



dominant in interpersonal decision-making compared to the PAI values that have been learned. Thus, PAI learning is not sufficient to only emphasize religious knowledge aspects, but it also needs to be integrated with strengthening emotional regulation skills, assertive communication, and the formation of personal boundaries so that Islamic values can function more effectively as protective factors against people-pleasing tendencies.

Internalization of PAI Values in Managing Social Pressure

The findings indicate that PAI values are not only understood as theoretical religious knowledge but also serve as a guide for students in dealing with various social pressures related to people-pleasing behavior. The value of sincerity helps individuals accept situations more positively, while patience helps them regulate their emotions. Trust in God provides a sense of tranquility because individuals believe that the final outcome is determined by Allah. In addition, the concept of izzah or self-respect helps individuals maintain their self-esteem without having to sacrifice their personal interests to gain social acceptance from others.

This finding is in line with Rohmah (2024), who explains that spiritual values in Islamic Religious Education play a role in strengthening emotional regulation and helping individuals face social pressures more adaptively. The values of sincerity, patience, and trust in God can also function as spiritual coping mechanisms that help individuals manage life pressures and strengthen psychological resilience (Najamudin et al., 2026; Zalika & Nisa, 2024). Additionally, Hidayah et al. (2023) found that the value of sincerity can reduce the need for excessive external validation, which is relevant to the tendency of people-pleasing behavior found in this study. Istiqamah (2025) also shows that students who internalize Islamic values in their daily lives have better abilities to maintain mental health and cope with social pressures.

This finding is also supported by Firdaus's (2023) research, which shows that religiosity has a positive relationship with mental health. Involvement in religious activities and appreciation of spiritual values can help individuals cope with emotional stress and reduce tendencies toward social anxiety. This finding is consistent with Fitrianti et al. (2025), who explain that religiosity is related to improved psychological well-being, particularly in terms of self-acceptance, the quality of social relationships, and clarity of life goals. Taken together, these findings support the role of internalized Islamic values in helping students manage emotional and social pressures.

The Strategic Role of Islamic Religious Education in Overcoming People Pleasing

Islamic Religious Education plays a role in helping students build self-boundaries, emotional regulation, and healthier assertive attitudes. This finding is in line with Lubis (2025), who stated that Islamic education contributes to the enhancement of emotional intelligence through the strengthening of spiritual values. Zalika and Nisa (2024) also emphasize the importance of healthy boundaries in reducing the tendency to engage in people-pleasing behavior.

The ability to be assertive helps individuals be more courageous in rejecting requests that do not align with their capacity (Jannah et al., 2025; Sholekah et al., 2025). Additionally, religiosity is related to the improvement of psychological well-being, self-acceptance, quality of social relationships, and clarity of life purpose (Fitrianti et al., 2025). Thus, Islamic Religious Education not only functions as a transmission of religious knowledge but also as a means of character formation, strengthening spiritual identity, and developing the ability to set healthy boundaries in the social life of students.



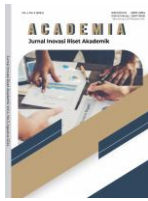
CONCLUSION

This study concludes that people-pleasing behavior among female students of the Islamic Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta is characterized by difficulty in refusing others' requests, a tendency to prioritize others' interests, and concern over social judgment. These behaviors are influenced by internal factors, including low self-esteem, the need for social acceptance, fear of rejection, and weak emotional regulation, as well as external factors, particularly the culture of reluctance and gender demands. These factors contribute to emotional well-being issues, such as stress, emotional exhaustion, overthinking, decreased self-confidence, and disrupted academic activities. This study also found that Islamic Religious Education plays a role in helping female students manage their tendency to people-please through increased self-awareness, emotional regulation, the ability to set personal boundaries, and the internalization of Islamic values such as sincerity, patience, trust in God, and dignity.

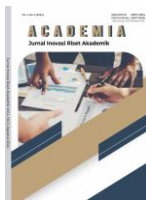
Research findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education needs to be strengthened not only through the delivery of religious knowledge but also through learning activities and mentoring that develop emotional regulation, assertive attitudes, self-esteem, and the ability to set healthy personal boundaries. Higher education institutions can apply these research findings in mentoring, counseling, and character-building programs to support students' emotional well-being. Further research is recommended to involve a more diverse range of participants from various study programs or universities and to use mixed methods to obtain broader evidence. Future research could also examine the effectiveness of interventions based on Islamic Religious Education, such as emotion regulation training, the development of personal boundary-setting skills, or Islamic counseling, in reducing people-pleasing tendencies and supporting students' emotional well-being.

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