

The Role of Social Support in Building Resilience Among Santri in Pesantren

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Abstract. This study examines the role of social support in building resilience among santri in pesantren in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The objective of the research is to determine the impact of emotional, informational, and instrumental support on the resilience of santri, with a focus on the unique socio-cultural environment of pesantren. A quantitative approach using a correlational survey design was employed, involving 416 santri selected through multistage cluster random sampling. The study utilized two scales: the Social Support Scale and the Resilience Scale, both of which were tested for reliability and validity. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results show that social support has a significant positive effect on resilience, with a direct influence of 0.452 ($p < 0.001$). Descriptive statistics revealed moderate levels of both social support and resilience among the santri, with considerable variation in individual scores. The study concludes that social support, particularly emotional and informational support from peers, religious leaders, and the pesantren community, plays a crucial role in enhancing resilience. It is recommended that pesantren strengthen their social support systems to ensure more equitable support for all students, especially those who feel less supported.

Keywords: Social Support, Resilience, Pesantren, Santri

1. Introduction

Resilience is the ability to recover from adversity and adapt positively to challenging circumstances. This concept has been widely studied in the fields of psychology and social sciences, with research showing that resilience is not an inherent trait but a dynamic process influenced by various external factors (Acoba, 2024; Schwarzer, 2024). One key factor shaping resilience is social support, which encompasses emotional, informational, and instrumental aid. Social support is known to mitigate stress and enhance psychological well-being (Saud et al., 2021; Shin & Gyeong, 2023). While much is understood about the general relationship between social support and resilience, limited research has explored how these dynamics operate

within specific cultural and educational contexts, particularly in pesantren, or Islamic boarding schools, in Indonesia.

Pesantren are unique educational institutions combining religious education with communal living (Hidayah, 2021). Within this environment, students – referred to as santri – receive social support from peers, teachers, and religious leaders. However, there is a significant gap in understanding how the social support systems in pesantren contribute to resilience, particularly in overcoming challenges such as academic pressure, religious obligations, and the structured, disciplined lifestyle of these institutions (Budiharso et al., 2023; Sa'adah et al., 2025).

Previous studies have emphasized the role of social support in fostering resilience. Research indicates that individuals who receive strong emotional, informational, and instrumental support tend to exhibit higher levels of resilience (Acoba, 2024; Ruihua et al., 2025). However, much of this research has been conducted in Western contexts, where family and peer support are typically emphasized. In contrast, research in non-Western, religious educational settings – like pesantren – is limited. Arifin et al., (2025) and Syarifah, (2023) explored community-based mental health interventions in pesantren, but these studies did not specifically examine how different types of social support contribute to resilience..

While resilience research in Indonesia, particularly among adolescents, is growing, there remains a scarcity of studies focused on pesantren. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on how the social support systems within pesantren, particularly in Sulawesi Selatan, contribute to resilience (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022). The distinct socio-cultural environment of Sulawesi Selatan, where pesantren play a significant role in religious education, adds an important layer of complexity to this issue.

This study addresses a critical gap by investigating how social support within pesantren, specifically in South Sulawesi, contributes to building resilience among santri. This research is necessary to understand the unique forms of social support present in pesantren, which include emotional guidance, religious instruction, and peer support, and how these contribute to resilience in the face of academic, social, and religious pressures (Abubakar & Hemay, 2020). By focusing on Sulawesi Selatan, this study highlights the cultural and religious influences that shape social support systems within pesantren, which differ significantly from other regions in Indonesia.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on pesantren in Sulawesi Selatan, an underexplored region in resilience research, and its exploration of the nuanced role of social support in fostering resilience within this unique educational setting. This research extends existing theories of resilience and social support to a religious and communal context, offering valuable insights into the ways that pesantren contribute to the development of psychological strength and coping skills among santri.

The primary objective of this study is to examine how different types of social support – emotional, informational, and instrumental – contribute to the resilience of santri in pesantren, particularly in South Sulawesi. This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How does emotional support from peers and religious leaders in pesantren influence resilience among santri?
2. What role does informational support play in helping santri cope with academic and social challenges?
3. How does instrumental support in the pesantren setting contribute to building resilience in santri?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to provide insights into how social support systems within pesantren help santri navigate the unique challenges they face. The research hypothesizes that the complex, community-based social support system in pesantren plays a pivotal role in fostering resilience, helping santri develop the coping skills needed to overcome adversity.

While resilience has been studied extensively in various educational settings, the specific role of social support within pesantren remains largely unexplored. Existing literature on resilience tends to focus on Western contexts or general educational settings, where social support typically comes from family and peers (Özcan & Bulus, 2022; Yeung & Li, 2021). However, pesantren present a unique environment where social support is deeply influenced by religious teachings and communal living (Thoyib et al., 2024). The gap in the literature is especially evident in studies examining the interaction between social support and resilience in pesantren, particularly in regions such as Sulawesi Selatan. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring how different forms of social support within pesantren contribute to resilience, offering new insights into the role of communal and religious support structures in fostering psychological resilience.

This study will also contribute to the broader field of resilience research by extending existing theories to non-Western, religious educational settings, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of how social support operates in diverse cultural contexts (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022).

2. Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational survey design to examine the impact of social support on resilience among santri in pesantren in South Sulawesi. The population of the study consists of all high school students (santri) enrolled in pesantren, totaling 2,621 individuals. The sample of the study is determined to be 416 santri, selected through multistage cluster random sampling from 12 pesantren chosen proportionally. The research instruments consist of two psychological scales: the Social Support Scale, developed based on the Social Provision Scale (SPS) by Weiss and popularized by Cutrona & Russell, which consists of 23 valid items with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.826$, measuring six aspects: emotional attachment, social integration, reassurance of worth, guidance and advice, reliance on others, and opportunity for nurturance. The Resilience Scale, developed based on the Reivich and Shatté (2002) theory, consists of 25 valid items with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.79$, measuring seven aspects: emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, causal analysis, empathy, self-efficacy, and reaching out. The collected data will be analyzed using Structural Equation

Modeling (SEM) with the help of Mplus software to test the direct impact model of social support on resilience while considering the validity of the constructs and the reliability of the instruments used.

3. Results and Discussion

The following table presents descriptive statistics for the social support and resilience variables, including mean values, standard deviations, and score ranges for each scale:

Tabel 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variabel	Average (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Score Range
Resilience scale	72.38	7.65	43 - 97
Social Support Scale	69.06	8.50	32 - 114

From the table above, it can be seen that the average score for the resilience scale is 72.38 with a standard deviation of 7.65, indicating that most respondents have a moderate level of resilience. The score range for the resilience scale is between 43 to 97. As for the social support scale, the average score was 69.06 with a standard deviation of 8.50, indicating that respondents generally felt they were receiving social support at moderate to high levels, with a score range between 32 to 114.

Tabel 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

Scale	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Reliability Description
Resilience scale	0.917	0.89	0.049	0.062	0.832	Excellent
Social Support Scale	0.863	0.833	0.048	0.065	0.79	Acceptable

The Social Support Scale and the Resilience Scale both show good results in terms of validity and reliability. The Social Support Scale has a CFI of 0.917 and a TLI of 0.890, which indicates an excellent CFA model. RMSEA 0.049 and SRMR 0.062 indicate a good fit model. With Cronbach's Alpha of 0.832, this scale shows excellent reliability. The Resilience Scale also has a good CFA model, with a CFI of 0.863 and TLI of 0.833, as well as an RMSEA of 0.048 and an SRMR of 0.065, indicating an adequate model fit. Cronbach's Alpha 0.79 signifies acceptable reliability. Overall, both scales show good validity and reliability, with the Social Support Scale slightly superior in model consistency and suitability.

Tabel 3. Descriptive Statistics

Path	Estimate	Standard Error (S.E.)	z-value	p-value
Social Support → Resilience	0.452	0.035	12.914	< 0.001

The test results showed that the direct influence between social support and resilience was positive and significant, with a z-value greater than 1.96 ($z = 12,914$) and a p-value of less than 0.001, indicating a strong and significant relationship between social support and resilience.

The results of this study show that social support has a significant direct influence on student resilience, with an estimated influence of 0.452 and a z-value of 12,914 ($p < 0.001$). This shows that the higher the social support received by students, the higher the level of resilience. These findings support the theory that social support acts as a buffer against the negative impacts of stress and challenges faced by individuals (Bekiros et al., 2022; Szkody et al., 2021). In the context of pesantren, where students are faced with academic pressure, religious obligations, and social adaptation in a structured life, social support is an important factor that helps them overcome various difficulties (Hamka et al., 2025; Khamida et al., 2022).

On the other hand, descriptive statistics show that the average resilience score of the students is 72.38, with a standard deviation of 7.65, which indicates that most of the students are at a moderate level of resilience. This shows that most students have the capacity to overcome difficulties and stress, but there is still room for improvement. Meanwhile, the average social support score was 69.06 with a standard deviation of 8.50, which indicates that although most students feel that they have enough social support, there are also those who feel that they do not get enough support, which can affect their level of resilience.

The average scores obtained from these two variables showed that the social support and resilience of students were at a moderate level, with considerable variation among individuals. These findings indicate that although many students receive adequate social support from peers, religious leaders, and the pesantren community, not all students feel the same level of support (Khamida et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to ensure that the social support received by students is more evenly distributed, especially for those who feel less supported.

Overall, the results of this study underline the importance of the role of social support in increasing resilience among Islamic boarding school students (Bukhori et al., 2022; Khamida et al., 2022). Emotional support, spiritual guidance, and opportunities to share with peers in the pesantren community have a positive impact on their mental resilience (Attarwiyah et al., 2025; Febriantje & Amelasasih, 2025). These findings show that strengthening the social support system in Islamic boarding schools, both formally and informally, can be an important step in improving psychological well-being and increasing the capacity of students to overcome the challenges they face (Ahmed et al., 2023).

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that social support has a significant direct impact on resilience among santri in pesantren in South Sulawesi. The higher the social support received by santri, the higher their level of resilience. Although most santri feel they receive adequate social support from peers, religious leaders, and the pesantren

community, there is considerable variation among individuals. Some santri feel they lack sufficient support, which can affect their resilience. This highlights the importance of ensuring that social support is more evenly distributed across pesantren.

Emotional, informational, and instrumental support play a crucial role in strengthening resilience among santri. Therefore, pesantren administrators need to enhance the social support system, both formally and informally, to ensure that all santri receive adequate support, especially those who feel less supported. This study provides valuable insights for pesantren administrators in designing programs to improve the psychological well-being of santri, and future research could involve a larger sample to explore other factors influencing the relationship between social support and resilience.

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