

Navigating Emerging Adulthood: The Role of Religious Coping in Promoting Flourishing Among Indonesian University Students

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between positive and negative religious coping and flourishing, conceptualized through the PERMA model of subjective well-being, among Indonesian university students in emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood (ages 18–25) is a developmental stage marked by identity exploration and emotional transitions, making religious coping a potential protective factor for psychological flourishing. A total of 278 participants completed online questionnaires assessing religious coping and well-being. Data were analyzed using Spearman's rho and partial correlation controlling for age, gender, and education. Results showed a significant positive association between positive religious coping and well-being ($\rho = .284$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.16, 0.39]) and a weak negative association for negative religious coping ($\rho = -.101$, $p = .033$, 95% CI [-0.22, 0.02]). Effect sizes were small ($R^2 = .08$ and $R^2 = .01$), and post-hoc power analysis indicated adequate statistical power ($1-\beta = .99$). The strongest link was observed in the meaning dimension, underscoring spirituality's central role in constructing purpose and acceptance. Although the effects were modest, the findings highlight that positive religious coping contributes to flourishing within Indonesia's collectivist and religious culture, serving as a psychological resource that supports meaning-making and emotional well-being during the transition to adulthood.

Keywords: emerging adulthood, religious coping, subjective well being

INTRODUCTION

The transition from adolescence to adulthood, known as emerging adulthood, represents one of the most challenging phases of human development (Arnett, 2000). According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo, 2021), Indonesia's population is currently dominated by individuals aged 20–29, marking the nation's entry into a demographic bonus era (Aeni, 2022). While this demographic shift presents an opportunity for national productivity, it may also become a burden if individuals in this stage fail to adapt to life transitions and societal changes.

Emerging adulthood is characterized by identity exploration, independence, and socio-economic adjustment, often accompanied by existential uncertainty or the so-called quarter-life crisis (Rossi & Mebert, 2011). Arnett (2013) emphasized that individuals in this stage are

vulnerable to emotional fluctuations due to the search for identity and direction in life. Similarly, Luhmann (2017) found a decline in average life satisfaction during this developmental period.

To understand psychological well-being during this phase, subjective well-being (SWB) serves as an important indicator. Traditionally, SWB has been defined as the cognitive and affective evaluation of one's life, encompassing life satisfaction and the balance of positive and negative emotions (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2015). However, this hedonic perspective primarily focuses on happiness and satisfaction, while emerging adulthood often requires a deeper sense of meaning and self-actualization.

Therefore, the present study adopts Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, which conceptualizes well-being as flourishing—the optimal functioning of individuals emotionally, socially, and morally. The five dimensions of PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment) provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding psychological well-being, particularly within religious and collectivist cultures such as Indonesia. This model is especially suitable for capturing well-being that is rooted in meaning and relationships, two dimensions that are

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highly relevant in Indonesia's socially and spiritually oriented context.

In Indonesian society, religiosity plays a central role in shaping how individuals interpret and cope with life stressors. Religious values are often used as psychological resources for adaptation and resilience (Utami & Helmi, 2023). Religious coping, defined as the use of religious beliefs and practices to manage stress (Pargament et al., 2001), is generally classified into two forms: positive religious coping, which involves acceptance, prayer, and trust in divine will; and negative religious coping, which reflects doubt, anger, or feelings of abandonment by God (Pargament et al., 1998).

Previous studies have shown that positive religious coping is associated with greater subjective well-being and life satisfaction (Koenig, 2001; Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013), whereas negative religious coping tends to be related to higher stress and depressive symptoms (Hebert et al., 2009). However, inconsistent findings across populations (Dinah, 2020) suggest that the relationship between religious coping and well-being is highly contextual. In collectivist cultures such as Indonesia, individuals often interpret distress through religious meaning and communal support, rather than through individual control (Cucchi & Qoronfleh, 2025).

Beyond the direct relationship between religious coping and subjective well-being, this study also considers potential moderating or mediating variables that may influence the strength or direction of this association. Factors such as social support, religiosity level, and sense of meaning may serve as psychological mediators explaining how religious coping contributes to well-being. Meanwhile, demographic characteristics such as gender, educational status, and religious engagement may act as moderators shaping the relationship between variables. Identifying these factors is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of how religious coping operates within the psychological well-being of young adults in Indonesia.

This study aims to evaluate the role of positive and negative religious coping in predicting flourishing—conceptualized through the PERMA model of subjective well-being—among Indonesian university students in emerging adulthood. The findings are expected to contribute empirical evidence to the understanding of religiosity's role in the flourishing process of Indonesian youth and to inform the development of culturally and spiritually grounded psychological interventions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participant Characteristics and Research Design

Participants were Indonesian citizens aged 18–25 years, corresponding to the emerging adulthood stage (Arnett, 2013). Participation was voluntary, with respondents completing an online questionnaire after providing informed consent. Exclusion criteria included individuals outside the specified age range and those who did not complete the questionnaire. The sample consisted of 75.2% females, 90.6% Muslims, and 70.9% university students. This demographic composition indicates a sampling bias that may limit the generalizability of the findings. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2023), the demographic distribution of young adults in Indonesia is more balanced in terms of gender and

educational background. Therefore, these characteristics should be considered when interpreting the results.

Sampling Procedures

The sampling technique employed was non-probability convenience sampling. The questionnaire was distributed via Instagram, WhatsApp, and Line between April 17 and May 16, 2023. As a form of appreciation, ten participants randomly selected received electronic gift vouchers. Recruitment through social media may introduce selection bias, as it tends to reach individuals with higher digital access, educational attainment, and urban residence. The study obtained institutional ethical approval and ensured data confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Sample Size, Power, and Precision

A G*Power analysis (Faul et al., 2007) was conducted to determine the minimum required sample size. Using an effect size of 0.30, a statistical power of 0.80, and a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ (one-tailed), the minimum sample required was 64 participants. The actual sample size in this study consisted of 278 participants; therefore, a post-hoc power analysis was performed to ensure the adequacy of the sample size for detecting the observed effects.

Measures and Covariates

Subjective well-being was assessed using The PERMA Profiler, a multidimensional instrument developed by Butler and Kern (2016) based on Seligman's (2011) well-being theory. The Indonesian-adapted version by Elfida et al. (2021) was used, comprising 23 items with a Likert scale (0-10) to measure five dimensions: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.929$). Only 14 out of 15 PERMA-related items were analyzed due to one item's low reliability (Elfida et al., 2021).

Religious coping was measured using the Brief RCOPE (Pargament et al., 1998), adapted and translated by Elvina (2021) for the Indonesian population. This instrument comprises 14 items, divided into two subscales: positive religious coping (7 items) and negative religious coping (7 items), measured on a 4-point Likert scale. Reliability analysis showed that positive religious coping had $\alpha = 0.955$, while negative religious coping had $\alpha = 0.793$ (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2009). Validity testing indicated a strong correlation between items and their respective subscales (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The data collection process was carried out in three stages. The preparation stage included conducting a literature review, selecting measurement instruments, and obtaining ethical approval. The implementation stage involved distributing online questionnaires through social media platforms, with participants completing the survey within a specified timeframe. The data processing stage consisted of screening and cleaning the collected data, followed by statistical analyses using SPSS.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. Descriptive statistics were used to present participant characteristics, including age, educational level, and religious affiliation. Since the data did not follow a normal

distribution, Spearman's rho correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between religious coping and flourishing (subjective well-being based PERMA model).

Additionally, supplementary analyses were performed to enhance the accuracy of result interpretation. A post-hoc power analysis was conducted to assess the adequacy of the actual sample size for the observed effects, while partial correlation analyses were used to control for potential confounding variables such as age, gender, and educational status. Each correlation coefficient was reported with a 95% confidence interval (CI) to ensure precision and transparency. This approach provided a systematic understanding of how religious coping influences subjective well-being among emerging adults in Indonesia.

RESULTS OF STUDY

Participant Characteristics

A total of 278 valid participants took part in this study, consisting of 75.2% females and 24.8% males. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years ($M = 21.48$, $SD = 1.71$), all of whom were categorized as being in the emerging adulthood stage. The majority were university students (70.9%) with a high school education background (64.7%). Most participants identified as Muslim (90.6%), while the remaining 9.4% adhered to other religions, including Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others. This composition reflects a relatively homogeneous demographic and religious profile, which should be considered when interpreting the results, as it may influence variations in religious coping patterns and subjective well-being.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Religious Coping and Subjective Well-Being

Variable	n	Mean	Min	Max	SD
Positive Religious Coping	278	24.73	7	28	3.490
Negative Religious Coping	278	13.96	7	28	4.722
Subjective Well Being	278	96.30	41	134	18.014
Positive Emotion	278	20.24	5	29	4.497
Engagement	278	14.13	2	20	2.879
Relationship	278	20.07	2	30	4.939
Meaning	278	21.13	6	30	4.909
Accomplishment	278	20.73	6	29	4.433

Paired-sample t-tests indicated a significant difference between the two dimensions of religious coping ($t(278) = 30.7$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that participants predominantly used positive religious coping strategies. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicated non-normal distribution for subjective well-being ($p = .000$), positive religious coping ($p = .000$), and negative religious coping ($p = .000$).

Correlation Between Religious Coping and Subjective Well-Being

The Spearman's rho analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between positive religious coping and subjective well-being ($\rho = 0.284$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.16,

0.39]), and a weak negative relationship between negative religious coping and subjective well-being ($\rho = -0.101$, $p = .033$, 95% CI [-0.22, 0.02]). According to Cohen's (1988) convention, these correlations fall within the small-medium range for positive religious coping and the small range for negative religious coping, with corresponding effect sizes of $R^2 = 0.08$ and $R^2 = 0.01$. A post-hoc power analysis using Fisher's z transformation ($r = 0.284$, $N = 278$, $\alpha = 0.05$, one-tailed) yielded a power value of 0.99, indicating sufficient statistical power. Overall, these findings suggest that positive religious coping contributes to higher subjective well-being, whereas negative religious coping exerts a minimal practical impact.

Table 2 Spearman's rho Correlation Results

	r	p	95% CI	R ²	Effect (Cohen)
Positive Religious Coping	0.284**	0.000	[0.16, 0.39]	0.08	Small-Medium
Negative Religious Coping	-0.101*	0.033	[-0.22, 0.02]	0.01	Small

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (one-tailed)

Correlations Between Dimensions of Religious Coping and Subjective Well-Being

Table 2 shows that positive religious coping has a significant positive correlation with all dimensions of subjective well-being. The strongest association was observed with the meaning dimension ($r = .307$), followed by positive emotion, accomplishment, and relationship, while engagement showed the weakest correlation ($r =$

.124). This pattern indicates that positive religious coping is primarily associated with enhanced meaning in life, positive emotions, and personal achievement. Conversely, negative religious coping demonstrated weak negative correlations with relationship, positive emotion, and meaning, while its associations with engagement and accomplishment were not significant. These findings suggest that negative forms of religious coping tend to be related to lower emotional and relational well-being,

although their impact is limited. Within Indonesia's religious and collectivist cultural context, this may reflect prevailing social norms that emphasize acceptance of divine destiny, making expressions of spiritual conflict less likely to be openly disclosed.

Controlling for age, gender, and educational status

A partial correlation analysis was conducted to control for age, gender, and education level. The results showed that the relationship between positive religious coping and

subjective well-being remained significant after controlling for these demographic variables, partial $r = .267$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.14, .38]. In contrast, the relationship between negative religious coping and subjective well-being became nonsignificant after control, partial $r = -.085$, $p = .07$, 95% CI [-.20, .03]. These findings indicate that the effect of positive religious coping on subjective well-being is consistent, whereas the relationship between negative religious coping and well-being is relatively weak and may be influenced by demographic factors.

Table 3 Correlation Between Religious Coping Dimensions and Subjective Well-Being Dimensions

Variable	Positive Religious Coping	Negative Religious Coping
Positive Emotion	.235**	-.123*
Engagement	.124*	-.077
Relationship	.218**	-.137*
Meaning	.307**	-.107*
Accomplishment	.219**	-.025

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (one-tailed)

Table 4. Partial Correlations Between Religious Coping and Subjective Well-Being

	r parsial	p	95% CI
Positive Religious Coping	0.267**	0.000	[0.14, 0.38]
Negative Religious Coping	-0.085	0.072	[-0.20, 0.03]

Note: $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$ (one-tailed).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that positive religious coping is positively associated with flourishing, while negative religious coping shows a weak negative relationship (see Table 2). This suggests that positive religious coping strategies may contribute to students' flourishing during emerging adulthood, particularly by strengthening meaning in life, positive emotions, and personal accomplishment—three core components of optimal well-being in the PERMA model. These results are consistent with Pargament's (1997) theory of religious coping and prior studies demonstrating that positive religious coping enhances psychological adjustment and overall well-being (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Abu Raiy & Jamal, 2021; Larasati, 2017).

However, the effect sizes found in this study were small ($R^2 = .08$ for positive coping and $R^2 = .01$ for negative coping), suggesting that the practical impact of religious coping on flourishing is limited. While the correlation between negative religious coping and flourishing was statistically significant ($p = .033$), it explained only about 1% of the variance ($r = -.101$). This indicates that flourishing among Indonesian emerging adults is likely influenced by a broader combination of factors—such as social support, personality traits, and economic stability—beyond religious coping alone.

The religious and collectivist cultural context of Indonesia also plays an important role in interpreting these findings. Positive religious coping serves as both a psychological and social resource that helps individuals find meaning in adversity, cultivate acceptance, and

strengthen connections with family and religious communities. In this sense, religiosity functions not merely as an intrapersonal mechanism but as a shared value system that shapes how individuals interpret and manage life stressors. Although the effect size is small, the practical relevance remains important, as religion occupies a central moral and social role in everyday life across Indonesian culture.

Conversely, the relationship between negative religious coping and flourishing appeared weaker than expected and was not significant in several PERMA dimensions, such as Engagement and Accomplishment (see Table 3). This may be due to two factors. First, from a psychological perspective, negative coping responses—such as anger toward God or feelings of abandonment—may be transient and not directly disrupt meaning or achievement. Second, in Indonesia's highly religious and collectivist society, expressions of spiritual struggle are often considered taboo, as social norms emphasize piety, acceptance of divine will (qadr), and respect for spiritual values. These cultural expectations may suppress acknowledgment of spiritual conflict, leading participants to underreport such experiences.

This tendency is also reflected in the very high average score for positive religious coping ($M = 24.73$ out of 28; see Table 1), suggesting potential social desirability bias—a tendency to respond in ways that align with socially or religiously approved norms. This bias may have reduced data variability and weakened correlations, particularly for negative religious coping. Moreover, the use of online surveys distributed via social media may have amplified selection bias, as participants with strong symbolic

religiosity and higher education levels are more likely to engage in such research.

Another notable limitation involves the use of non-probability convenience sampling, which produced a highly homogeneous sample dominated by females (75.2%), university students (70.9%), and Muslims (90.6%). This demographic imbalance limits the generalizability of the findings. The overrepresentation of these groups is particularly relevant, as women and university students in Indonesian culture tend to express religiosity more openly and rely more on spiritual coping strategies compared to other groups.

The cross-sectional design further limits causal inference. Additionally, the study did not control for important confounding variables such as social support, socioeconomic status, or personality traits, which may influence the relationship between religious coping and flourishing. Future research should employ longitudinal designs and multivariate analyses to examine the unique contribution of religious coping after accounting for other variables. Qualitative or mixed-method approaches may also provide deeper insights into the subjective and cultural meanings behind religious coping that are difficult to capture through quantitative surveys.

Despite these limitations, this study offers valuable insights into how religiosity contributes to the flourishing of Indonesian emerging adults. The Meaning dimension of the PERMA model showed the strongest association with positive religious coping (see Table 3), underscoring the central role of spirituality in constructing purpose and acceptance in life. These findings highlight that religious-based psychological interventions may help strengthen individuals' capacity to find meaning, accept divine decrees, and build healthy spiritual connections—while remaining mindful of hidden spiritual struggles that may be socially suppressed.

Although the effects of religious coping on flourishing are relatively small, their significance remains meaningful in Indonesia's cultural and religious context. Positive religious coping appears to foster flourishing by deepening life meaning, enhancing positive emotions, and reinforcing social connectedness—key elements of the PERMA framework. These findings suggest that the role of religion in sustaining well-being among Indonesian emerging adults extends beyond emotional comfort to encompass a broader sense of purpose and communal belonging. Future research should include more demographically diverse participants, control for key confounders, and consider socio-cultural factors to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how religiosity supports flourishing during emerging adulthood.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found that positive religious coping was positively associated with flourishing, whereas negative religious coping showed a weak negative relationship. Although these relationships were statistically significant, the effect sizes were small, indicating that the practical impact on psychological well-being is limited. These findings suggest that religious coping contributes to the well-being of emerging adults but is not the sole determinant. Indonesia's religious and collectivist socio-cultural context also shapes how individuals interpret stress through spiritual values and social connectedness.

The finding that the meaning dimension of the PERMA model had the strongest association with positive religious

coping underscores that the search for life meaning and acceptance of divine destiny are central aspects of flourishing within a religious culture. However, the homogeneity of the sample (predominantly female, Muslim, and university students) and the potential for social desirability bias may limit the generalizability of the results and reduce response variability. Overall, this study highlights that positive religious coping serves as a psychological resource that supports flourishing among Indonesian university students navigating emerging adulthood. Despite its modest effects, its contribution remains meaningful within a religious and collectivist culture, particularly in strengthening life meaning and emotional well-being.

RECOMMENDATION

Future research is recommended to employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs to examine the causal relationship between religious coping and flourishing. Participants should represent more diverse religious, social, and regional backgrounds to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, factors such as social support, religiosity level, and personality traits should be considered as potential variables that may enrich the understanding of how religious coping contributes to individual well-being. Efforts to minimize social desirability bias, such as using more reflective or anonymous assessment methods, are also essential for future studies.

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DECLARATION

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection, and informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Consent for publication

All participants provided consent for the publication of data and findings derived from this study.

Availability of data and materials

Data are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Technology

We declare that no Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Technology was used in the preparation of this manuscript.

Authors' contributions.

First Author (A. Qonita): A. Qonita was responsible for designing the study, collecting and analyzing the data, and writing the manuscript.

Second Author (A.Y. Saleh): A.Y. Saleh supervised the research process and provided guidance and feedback throughout the study.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Aisyah Qonita holds a bachelor's degree in psychology. This study is part of her undergraduate thesis, through which she developed an interest in psychological well-being in adulthood and community mental health. She is currently exploring these topics further in both academic and applied settings.

Arin Yustikarini Saleh, M.Psi., Psikolog is a lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia. Her research interests include cognitive and emotional processes, teacher well-being, and psychological functioning in educational settings. She supervised the completion of this study.

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