

## **The Relationship Between Stress Levels And Adaptability In New Students At Integrated SMP Ar-Risalah Boarding School**

**Jhidan Ramadhan<sup>1</sup>, Rosmiati<sup>2\*</sup>, Diny Nur Fauziah<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3</sup>STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis, Indonesia

**Correspondence:** [rosmiatimalik86@gmail.com](mailto:rosmiatimalik86@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study aims to determine whether there is a relationship between stress levels and adaptability among new students at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah. **Methods:** This research employs a quantitative method with a cross-sectional approach. The sampling technique used in this study is random sampling, applying the Slovin formula. A total of 77 respondents were obtained after calculating the sample size using the Slovin formula. Data were analyzed using the chi-square statistical test. **Results:** The study findings indicate a relationship between stress levels and adaptability among new students at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah. The highest stress level category, classified as severe stress, was experienced by 34 respondents (44.2%), while the lowest stress level, categorized as mild stress, was observed in 10 respondents (13.0%). Additionally, the highest adaptability category was maladaptive, with 52 respondents (67.5%), whereas the lowest category, adaptive, was recorded in 25 students (32.5%). **Conclusion:** The analysis results show a significant relationship between stress levels and adaptability among new students at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah.

**Keywords:** Adaptability, new students, stress levels

## Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) are categorized as educational institutions regulated under the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 (Kementrian Kesehatan, 2003). Parents must make their best efforts to provide their children with the best education, as they play a crucial role in selecting the most suitable education for them. Before choosing the best education for their children, parents consider various factors, such as their aspirations, future prospects, and social status. Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) are one of the educational options chosen by parents (Supriatna, 2020).

Perceptions of parental expectations can lead to stress among new students. Stress is a state of tension that affects a person's emotions, thinking patterns, and overall condition. Excessive stress can threaten an individual's ability to adapt to their environment. Stress is defined as the inability to cope with perceived threats physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, which can ultimately impact physical health. If not managed properly, stress can negatively affect learning and memory. To prevent excessive anxiety, stress and emotions must be effectively managed. How new students cope with stress depends on their understanding of the situation and their ability to adapt (Sari dkk., 2020).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2023, 75% of adolescents aged 13–17 experienced school-related stress, marking a significant increase from 2018 data, which indicated that approximately 60% of adolescents faced similar stress. Additionally, the 2018 Riskesdas survey reported that Indonesia had the highest stress levels globally, with 81% of respondents experiencing stress. Stress is the most common factor contributing to emotional and mental disorders among adolescents in West Java (7.6%). Female adolescents in West Java experience higher stress levels compared to male adolescents (12.1% vs. 7.6%) (Riskesdas, 2018).

Each year, the stress levels experienced by students in Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) increase by 5–10%. This rise is attributed to difficulties in adaptation, such as the inability to keep up with lessons and challenges in living in dormitories due to being separated from their parents, which may lead to rule violations within the boarding school. Islamic boarding schools generally have regulations that differ significantly from those of regular schools. Students attending Islamic boarding schools come from diverse backgrounds, different from the environment where they lived with both parents. How teachers manage pressure will influence how students adapt to these challenges (Bau dkk., 2022).

Stress is triggered by stimuli perceived as a threat to an individual, leading to anxiety, which is a sign of physical, psychological, or spiritual health issues, as well as a specific way of coping with problems (Asmarani & Mayasari, 2023). For new students, academic activities can be a source of stress. The level of stress caused by academic demands is greatly influenced by their quantity. The resilience of new students is associated with their level of academic stress. The unique academic process within the boarding school environment affects how new students handle problems and seek solutions. Adaptability, including adapting to the surrounding environment, others, and oneself, is a prerequisite for problem-solving skills (Erindana dkk., 2021).

Facts show that stress is an inevitable issue experienced by everyone. It is particularly crucial for new students undergoing education in Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren). New students inevitably experience stress, which significantly impacts their character, behavior, and academic performance. Stress can also hinder them from fulfilling their responsibilities. Life inside an Islamic boarding school is vastly different from life outside. Before entering the boarding school, students had the freedom to engage in various activities due to a less demanding schedule, access to sufficient facilities at home, and parents who managed all their needs. However, upon entering the boarding school, they must develop the ability to become independent students and embrace the self-reliance required in the boarding

school environment. New students must acquire adaptability skills to balance the transition from their previous environment to their new life in the boarding school (Maulana dkk., 2022).

Several strategies to reduce stress among new students include enhancing social support. Parents can assist new students by providing emotional and practical support, which helps them cope with the negative effects of stress. Stress management is a crucial factor that can influence an individual's anxiety levels. Those who can effectively manage stress are better able to utilize resources to cope with mental, emotional, and unpredictable challenges. Group counseling, religious guidance—such as Quranic therapy—and relaxation techniques like Sufi meditation therapy are also considered effective in reducing stress among new students (Bau dkk., 2022).

Individual or group adjustment to norms or changes to align with established conditions is known as adaptation. Adaptability encompasses a person's behavior and mental responses to demands and their environment. The ability to adapt is crucial in linking students' religious beliefs with their happiness while living in the Islamic boarding school (pondok pesantren). Adjusting well, especially in a new environment, becomes easier with supportive peers and adequate social support (Mu'ti dkk., 2023).

The fulfillment of basic needs, habits, skills, and self-awareness are some factors that can contribute to difficulties in adaptation. An individual's ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses to take appropriate actions in response to internal and external needs is known as their identity. There are two types of factors influencing self-adaptation: external factors, which originate from society, family, and the school environment, and internal factors, which stem from physical conditions, personality, and learning processes. The results indicate that the type of self-adaptation occurring in Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) aligns with the general components influencing adaptation (Fauji, 2021).

Based on a preliminary study conducted on February 29, 2024, data from the past three years indicate that the number of new students enrolling and remaining at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah was 154 students in the 2021/2022 academic year, 110 students in 2022/2023, and 96 students in 2023/2024, with 8–12 students leaving the school over the past three years. The total population of seventh-grade students at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah is 96 students, and interviews were conducted with 9 students. The findings revealed that 7 students reported experiencing difficulties or requiring a long time to adapt to life in the boarding school, which they perceived as significantly different from their home environment. Before entering the boarding school, they were unable to live in dormitories due to their inability to be separated from their parents and the strict regulations of the boarding school. Additionally, they experienced stress due to unfamiliarity with their new environment. Meanwhile, 2 students who were forced to enroll by their parents, rather than by their own will, faced difficulties eating due to stress and struggled to adjust to the boarding school's environment and routines. They often cried, felt isolated, and preferred to be alone. This study is considered significant as it is expected to contribute to the development of scientific knowledge and provide a real depiction of the relationship between stress levels and adaptability among new students at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah. The research aims to examine the relationship between stress levels and adaptability in new students. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in investigating the correlation between stress levels and adaptability among new students at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah.

## Methods

This study employs a quantitative research method with a cross-sectional approach. The population in this study consists of new seventh-grade students at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah, totaling 96 students, including 55 female students and 41 male students. The sampling technique used in this study is random sampling, with the Slovin formula applied to determine a sample size of 77 respondents. Data were analyzed using the chi-square test for statistical analysis. The study was conducted on June 16, 2024, at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah.

## Result

**Tabel 4. 1 Characteristics of Respondents Based on Gender**

Gender	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )	Percentage (%)
Male	30	39.0%
Female	47	61.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Based on the results from Table 4.1, it shows that 47 respondents (61%) are female.

**Table 4.2**  
**Age Frequency Distribution**

Age	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )	Percentage (%)
13	64	83.1%
14	13	16.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Based on the results of Table 4.2, it shows that the majority of respondents were 13 years old, totaling 64 respondents (83.1%).

**Table 4.3**  
**Frequency Distribution of Stress Levels Among New Santri**

Stress Level	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )	Percentage (%)
Mild Stress	10	13.0%
Moderate Stress	33	42.9%
Severe Stress	34	44.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Based on the results of Table 4.3, the majority of new santri experienced a severe level of stress, with 34 respondents (44.2%), while the fewest experienced a mild level of stress, with 10 respondents (13.0%).

**Table 4.4 Frequency Distribution of Adaptation Ability Among New Santri**

Adaptation Ability	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Adaptive	25	32.5%
Maladaptive	52	67.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

According to Table 4.4, most new santri exhibited maladaptive behavior, with 52 respondents (67.5%), whereas only 25 respondents (32.5%) demonstrated adaptive behavior.

**Table 4.5**  
**Relationship Between Stress Levels and Adaptation Ability Among New Santri**

Stress Level	Adaptive		Maladaptive		Total		p-Value
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Mild	8	33.0	2	4.0	10	13.0	<b>0.000</b>
Moderate	16	67.0	17	32.0	33	42.9	
Severe	0	0.0	34	64.0	34	44.2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Based on the results from Table 4.5, it is shown that new students who were able to adapt (adaptive) with mild stress levels totaled 8 students (33.0%), while new students who were unable to adapt (maladaptive) with mild stress levels totaled 2 students (4.0%). Furthermore, new students who were able to adapt (adaptive) with moderate stress levels totaled 16 students (67.0%), while new students who were unable to adapt (maladaptive) with moderate stress levels totaled 17 students (32.0%). Additionally, there were no new students (0.0%) who were able to adapt (adaptive) with severe stress levels, whereas new students who were unable to adapt (maladaptive) with severe stress levels totaled 34 students (64.0%). Based on the chi-square test results, the obtained P-value was  $0.000 < \alpha 0.05$ , leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between stress levels and adaptability among new students at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah.

## Conclusion

The research findings indicate that the majority of respondents experienced severe stress levels, with 34 respondents (44.2%) reporting high stress. This is evidenced by the most frequently selected statement, which reflects psychological symptoms: *"I find myself in situations that make me feel extremely anxious, and I would feel a great sense of relief if all of this were over."* Academic pressure is one of the primary contributing factors to students' stress levels. Students facing high academic demands, such as a rigorous study schedule, school assignments, and memorization of religious texts, often experience severe stress. Additionally, the lack of close friends to share their experiences with further contributes to their high-stress levels.

Meanwhile, the least number of respondents (10 respondents or 13.0%) experienced mild stress levels. This is attributed to their ability to effectively manage stress, allowing them to experience only mild levels of stress. The researcher suggests that stress levels in this study vary between male and female students, with female students experiencing higher levels of stress than their male counterparts. This may be due to estrogen hormones, which make females more susceptible to stress than males, although there are many other contributing stress factors

(Ayu et al., 2024). According to research by Dewi et al. (2021), female students are more vulnerable to stress than male students. When faced with problems, females tend to rely on emotions, whereas males use logic. Female students often experience anxiety, excessive guilt, sleep disturbances, and eating problems. Several factors, including family, school environment, peer influence, and biological factors, can contribute to stress levels among new students. Some studies have found that gender plays a significant role in increasing stress levels among new students. Male students are generally better at managing stress and tend to view stress positively, whereas female students often perceive stress negatively and with heightened alertness (Saliano et al., 2020).

In Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren), educational activities vary by grade level. New students typically have numerous responsibilities, including examinations, assignments, and dormitory activities. This workload can lead to stress due to the overwhelming number of tasks, such as waking up earlier than their usual routine at home, extensive memorization, and strict expectations within the dormitory environment. Stress arises when an individual's interaction with their environment is perceived as overwhelming or exceeding their resources and well-being (Rahmah et al., 2023).

The ability to adapt among new students was predominantly maladaptive, with 52 new students (67.5%) struggling to adapt. This was evidenced by the most frequently selected statement: *"I feel nervous in the boarding school environment."* The difficulty in adapting to a new environment, unfamiliarity with the boarding school setting, being away from parents, and struggles in socializing or making close friends to share experiences contributed to their maladaptive adaptation. Meanwhile, the smallest number of students (25 students or 32.5%) were categorized as adaptive, as they had personalities that made it easier for them to adjust to a new environment, along with high motivation to learn and grow, which facilitated their ability to adapt. Adaptation encompasses an individual's behavioral and mental responses to environmental demands (Mu'ti et al., 2023). The ability to adapt is essential as a link between religiosity and happiness among students living in boarding schools. Forming friendships and receiving support helps students adjust well, especially in new environments (Siregar & Nur Aini, 2019).

According to research by Erindana et al. (2021), physical condition, development and self-adjustment, environment, culture, and religion are factors influencing adaptation. Previous studies suggest that male students adapt more easily to local culture than female students, who require more time to adjust (Ayu et al., 2024). However, the ability to cope with adaptation challenges depends on individual characteristics. Research by Asy'arie et al. (2023) states that if limitations are part of an individual's personality, they are considered to have good adaptability and have learned to interact with themselves and their environment in a mature, beneficial, and effective manner. Ineffective coping mechanisms can result in maladaptive responses, affecting an individual's behavior. Researchers assume that if students can adapt well to their environment, the learning process at both the boarding school and school will run smoothly. Conversely, the inability to adapt can negatively affect the learning process. Furthermore, difficulties in adaptation may lead to students violating school regulations.

The research results indicate that the majority of adaptive students (33.0%) experienced mild stress, as they were able to manage stress effectively, adjust to the new environment, and had a high motivation to learn and grow. Meanwhile, 34 students (64.0%) who were maladaptive experienced severe stress, primarily due to academic burdens, including a dense study schedule, assignments, and memorization of religious texts. Additionally, the absence of close friends to share their experiences with further contributed to their severe stress levels, making adaptation more difficult. The Chi-square test results showed  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  and  $\alpha = 0.05$ , indicating that  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted, confirming a significant relationship

between stress levels and adaptation ability among new students at SMP Terpadu Pondok Pesantren Ar-Risalah.

Previous research by Fitriani et al. (2020), *"The Relationship Between Adolescent Stress Levels and Adaptation Ability of Students in Islamic Boarding Schools in Tangerang City"*, found a significant correlation between student adaptation and adolescent stress levels at Pondok Pesantren An-Nuqthah, Tangerang City, with a p-value of 0.000 and an odds ratio of 272.0. This suggests that students with higher stress levels have a greater ability to adapt. Boarding schools enforce strict regulations, intensive learning schedules, and high expectations, which often cause stress and make students feel incapable. Another study by Bau et al. (2022), titled *"The Relationship Between Adolescent Stress Levels and Adaptation Ability of Students in the Dormitory of Sabrun Jamil Islamic Boarding School"*, also found a significant correlation between stress levels and adaptation ability, with a p-value of 0.000 and  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Adolescents in boarding schools frequently experience stress due to strict rules, memorization requirements, and intensive schedules. The study found that 30% of students with poor adaptation skills (maladaptive) had high stress levels.

Khotimah & Agrina, cited in Nurasla et al. (2022), stated that adolescents generally adjust to new environments over time. Self-adjustment involves continuous interaction between an individual, others, and the surrounding environment. It includes emotional regulation and behavioral adaptation to achieve socially acceptable and beneficial outcomes (Erindana et al., 2021). According to Schneider, several factors influence the adaptation process, including physical conditions, personality, learning processes, environment, religion, and culture. A supportive environment one that is friendly, calm, safe, accepting, and understanding can facilitate adaptation. One of the most significant environmental factors is peer relationships. Supportive peers provide a sense of security, comfort, and confidence, which helps students adapt (Islami et al., 2020). When experiencing stress, individuals tend to isolate themselves and engage less in social interactions. Adaptation is a continuous process of interaction between an individual, others, and their environment, involving emotional regulation and behavioral adjustments to align with their surroundings (Mu'ti et al., 2023).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results and discussion of the study on the relationship between stress levels and adaptability among new students at the Integrated Islamic Boarding School SMP Ar-Risalah, it can be concluded that the majority of new students experience severe stress, and most exhibit maladaptive adaptability. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between stress levels and adaptability, as indicated by a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ).

## **Recommendations**

This study provides useful information for several groups. For STIKES Muhammadiyah Ciamis, it can help improve nursing education and evaluation. Pondok Pesantren Ar-Risalah should continue religious activities and improve counseling to support new students in managing stress and adapting. New students are encouraged to learn how to handle stress and adapt better to their environment. Future researchers can use this study as a guide for their methods and research design. Finally, the nursing profession can use these findings to improve nursing care and knowledge.

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