

The Integration of Islamic Values in the Emotion Regulation Strategies of Early Childhood Education Teachers: A Study at KB Ahsanu 'Amala, Sidoarjo

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ABSTRACT

This study explores emotion regulation among Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers at KB Ahsanu 'Amala, Sidoarjo, with particular attention to the integration of Islamic values into teachers' everyday emotional experiences and practices. A descriptive qualitative approach with thematic analysis was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and non-participant observations involving seven female educational staff members selected through total sampling. The findings indicate that teachers experienced diverse emotional demands and employed various strategies to regulate their responses, including pausing, silence, breathing, temporary withdrawal, delayed responses, and restraint of emotional expression. Islamic values and practices further shaped how teachers interpreted and responded to emotionally demanding situations through ḥusnuz-ẓan, empathy, ṣabr, dhikr, istighfār, du'ā', muḥāsabah, amānah, 'ibādah, and tawakkul. Emotion regulation was also situated within professional responsibilities and social support from colleagues, school leadership, family, and parents. The findings are interpreted through Gross's Process Model of Emotion Regulation as a psychological analytical lens, while Islamic values provide moral, spiritual, and meaning-centered frameworks for emotional regulation. The study contributes contextual evidence on emotion regulation among educators in an Islamic ECE setting and illustrates the relationship between psychological regulatory processes and Islamic values.

Keywords: Emotion Regulation, Islamic Psychology, Islamic Education, Early Childhood Education

INTRODUCTION

Emotion regulation plays a critical role in psychological well-being and professional functioning, particularly for Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers who continuously navigate emotionally demanding classroom situations (Jeon & Ardeleanu, 2020; Stein et al., 2024). The emotional demands of early childhood education are closely related to teachers' ongoing interactions with young children, whose developmental characteristics and behavioral needs require teachers to remain responsive and emotionally available (Jeon et al., 2016; Wang & Burić, 2023).

Established psychological frameworks, such as Gross's (1998, 2002, 2015, 2019) Process Model of Emotion Regulation, provide a robust analytical lens for understanding how individuals

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regulate emotional responses through processes that occur before and during emotion-generative episodes. Rather than viewing emotion regulation solely as a matter of controlling emotional expression, the model provides a framework for examining how individuals respond to emotionally significant situations through different regulatory processes. However, in Islamic educational settings, teachers' emotional experiences and responses are also shaped by religious and spiritual values.

Islamic perspectives introduce orientations such as *ṣabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (reliance on God), and *muḥāsabah* (self-reflection), which shape how teachers interpret and respond to emotionally demanding situations (Hidayat et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2025). Thus, rather than treating Islamic values as direct equivalents of psychological emotion-regulation strategies, it is important to examine how psychological regulatory processes and Islamic moral and spiritual orientations interact within teachers' everyday practices.

Previous studies have documented emotion regulation and coping in educational settings, although research has largely examined broader psychological and professional contexts (Bailey-Lau, 2016; Buettner et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2025). Research on early childhood educators has demonstrated that teachers' emotion regulation is associated with their responses to classroom demands and interactions with children (Jeon et al., 2016; Jeon & Ardeleanu, 2020). Other research has also shown that teachers' interpretations of demanding situations may be relevant to their emotional responses and professional functioning (Zhang et al., 2025). At the same time, recent literature has increasingly acknowledged the relevance of spirituality and religiosity to emotional processes (Sari et al., 2025; Vishkin et al., 2019; Wijaya et al., 2025).

Islamic educational research has further indicated that religious practices and values can be relevant to emotional development and the cultivation of emotional intelligence (Alimni et al., 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2025). Nevertheless, empirical attention to how Islamic values are experienced and incorporated into everyday emotion regulation among ECE teachers remains limited. Preliminary observations at KB Ahsanu 'Amala, Sidoarjo, indicated that teachers described and practiced forms of emotion regulation alongside Islamic orientations, including *kazmu al-ghayz* (restraint of anger), *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), patience, and reflection. These practices provide a relevant context for examining how teachers understand and regulate emotionally demanding classroom experiences within an Islamic educational environment.

This issue is particularly salient given the emotional demands associated with teaching and the broader literature on teacher stress, coping, and well-being (Baldaçara et al., 2015; Nadtochii et al., 2023; Zainudin et al., 2019). Teachers may experience stress arising from workload, role

demands, administrative responsibilities, and limited professional resources (Gede Agung et al., 2024; Surjanti et al., 2018; Syah & Darmastuti, 2020). These challenges are particularly evident in early childhood education, where teachers must respond continuously to children's behavioral, developmental, physical, and emotional needs (Jeon & Ardeleanu, 2020; Stein et al., 2024).

Research on child-care settings has likewise indicated that classroom demands may be associated with teachers' emotion regulation and responsiveness to children (Jeon et al., 2016). In addition, teachers' emotion regulation has been examined in relation to challenging child behavior and preschool expulsion risk, highlighting the relevance of reappraisal and suppression in teachers' responses to difficult classroom situations (Loomis et al., 2023). These findings underscore the importance of understanding emotion regulation not only as an individual psychological process but also as part of teachers' everyday professional interactions.

Within Islamic educational contexts, religious values may provide additional orientations through which teachers interpret emotional experiences and professional responsibilities. Studies have examined patience and religiosity in relation to self-control and emotional processes (Hidayat et al., 2024; Kerasha et al., 2024), while research on *tawakkul* has considered its psychological and religious dimensions (Kandemir, 2022). Islamic educational practices have also been associated with the development of emotional intelligence and emotional capacities among learners (Alimni et al., 2022).

Research concerning the integration of religious concepts in education suggests that Islamic values may be relevant to emotion regulation, resilience, and problem-solving within educational contexts (Kurniawan et al., 2025). These studies provide an important background for examining Islamic values in relation to teachers' emotional experiences. However, they do not establish that particular Islamic values are equivalent to specific psychological regulation strategies. The present study, therefore, approaches the relationship as an empirical question concerning how teachers themselves describe and experience these values in their emotional and professional practices.

In light of these considerations, this study aims to explore emotion regulation among Early Childhood Education teachers at KB Ahsanu 'Amala, Sidoarjo, with particular attention to the integration of Islamic values into teachers' everyday emotional experiences and practices. Specifically, the study seeks to describe the emotional demands encountered by teachers, the forms of regulation they reported using, the ways Islamic values and practices informed their responses, and the contextual and professional factors associated with these experiences. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with thematic analysis, the study uses Gross's Process Model of

Emotion Regulation as an analytical lens while examining Islamic values as moral, spiritual, and meaning-oriented dimensions of teachers' emotional experiences.

Accordingly, this study contributes contextual empirical evidence on emotion regulation among educators in an Islamic ECE setting. Rather than proposing a new or universal emotion-regulation model, the study examines how psychological emotion-regulation processes can be interpreted alongside Islamic values and practices within the lived experiences of teachers at KB Ahsanu 'Amala. This perspective provides a solid basis for understanding the relationship between emotion regulation, Islamic orientations, and professional responsibilities in a specific educational context.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach utilizing thematic analysis. This design was selected to describe and interpret participants' experiences of emotion regulation within their natural educational context (Stanley, 2023). Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns across participants' accounts concerning emotional experiences, regulation practices, Islamic values, and the surrounding professional and contextual factors (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). The primary researcher is a Muslim scholar familiar with Islamic educational contexts, which facilitated contextual understanding and rapport with participants during the research process. This positionality was reflexively acknowledged throughout data collection and analysis to maintain transparency regarding the researcher's role in interpreting participants' religious expressions and lived experiences.

The seven participants ranged in age from 22 to 44 years and worked with children across different educational levels: Playgroup (ages 3–4), Kindergarten A (ages 4–5), and Kindergarten B (ages 5–6). Specifically, the participants were U-R (22 years), a Playgroup classroom teacher; U-F (34 years), a TK A1 classroom teacher; U-T (25 years), a TK A2 classroom teacher; U-D (27 years), a TK B1 classroom teacher; U-Fe (27 years), a TK B2 classroom teacher; U-A (44 years), the school principal who also served as a substitute teacher; and U-O (27 years), an administrative staff member who also served as a substitute teacher. The distinct organizational roles of the principal, classroom teachers, and administrative staff member were considered during data interpretation, as their institutional responsibilities and experiences differed.

Primary data were gathered through face-to-face, in-depth semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations, and supporting documentation (Creswell, 2007; Maher & Bedwei-Majdou, 2024; Nor et al., 2025). The interview guide was informed by Gross's (1998, 2002, 2015,

2019) Process Model of Emotion Regulation and Islamic psychological perspectives relevant to emotional conduct, self-reflection, patience, restraint, and religious meaning-making. The interview protocol was flexible and open-ended, allowing the researcher to explore participants' emotional experiences in depth (Buys et al., 2022; Oplatka, 2018). Interviews were conducted in Indonesian and, where appropriate, local Javanese to enable natural expression. Each session lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim in the original language. In reporting the findings, selected participant quotations were retained in their original Indonesian or Javanese phrasing alongside English translations to preserve cultural nuances and idiomatic meaning.

Non-participant observations were conducted during active classroom activities to gather contextual evidence regarding teacher–child interactions and observable behavioral responses (Minh, 2024). Observation served as a complementary data source rather than a means to infer participants' internal cognitive or spiritual states. Processes such as *husnuḥan*, *muḥāsabah*, *dhikr*, *du‘ā*, and subjective emotional interpretations are not directly observable. Consequently, claims regarding these internal processes rely primarily on participants' interview accounts, while observations provided contextual grounding for observable behaviors and environmental dynamics.

Data were analyzed using a hybrid deductive-inductive thematic analysis, following the framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). The initial analytical framework was deductively guided by Gross's Process Model of Emotion Regulation, specifically examining how participants described cognitive changes, situational responses, and the regulation of emotional expression. Concurrently, the analysis remained inductively open to emergent patterns concerning Islamic values, spiritual practices, professional responsibilities, and contextual influences. The resulting themes thus represent both theoretically informed analytical categories and empirical patterns grounded in the data. To enhance trustworthiness, member checking was conducted to confirm the accuracy of interpretations with participants, and peer debriefing was conducted with academic supervisors to refine the thematic organization and ensure interpretations remained faithful to the data (Morse, 2015).

The study adhered strictly to established qualitative research ethics. Ethical approval was granted by the International Open University Board of Research and Publications (IOUBRP) under reference number ETHIC 199/08-26 prior to data collection. Participants provided written informed consent, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout. Participants' rights and voluntary participation were safeguarded at every stage of data collection and reporting (Asrifan et al., 2025; Dahal et al., 2024; Fahrudin & Fitriyana, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis of data gathered from in-depth, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations involving all seven early childhood education (ECE) staff members at KB Ahsanu 'Amala yielded four interconnected analytical themes. These findings capture the experiences of all participants, consisting of five classroom teachers (U-R, U-F, U-T, U-D, and U-Fe), the school principal serving as a substitute teacher (U-A), and an administrative staff member also acting as a substitute teacher (U-O).

While participants described a shared institutional orientation toward Islamic values, the data revealed variations in how individuals navigated emotional demands. These demands included fatigue, initial reactive impulses, and the conscious effort required to align their emotional responses with professional and spiritual standards. Because not all subthemes were equally represented across participants, Table 1 identifies the specific informants whose accounts explicitly contributed to each thematic pattern.

To provide a systematic overview, Table 1 summarizes this thematic synthesis, mapping the operational emotion-regulation mechanisms alongside their integrated Islamic spiritual dimensions.

Table 1. Thematic Synthesis of Emotion Regulation Strategies and Islamic Integration

Main Analytical Themes	Core Subthemes and Findings	Representative Informants
Emotional Demands and Regulation Contexts	a. Positive emotional experiences: Feelings of happiness, satisfaction, gratitude, and warmth associated with children's progress, responsiveness, enthusiasm, character development, religious learning, and positive interactions with children.	U-R, U-F, U-T, U-D, U-Fe, U-A, U-O
	b. Challenging emotional experiences: Frustration, anger, sadness, fatigue, disappointment, and emotional tension associated with difficult-to-manage behavior, repeated misbehavior, competing classroom demands, and concerns regarding children's physical or emotional needs.	U-R, U-F, U-T, U-D, U-Fe, U-A, U-O
Operational Regulation of Emotional Responses	a. Situational and behavioral regulation: Pausing, remaining silent, regulating breathing, drinking water, washing the face or hands, resting, temporarily withdrawing from the classroom, and delaying an immediate response.	U-R, U-F, U-T, U-D, U-Fe, U-A, U-O
	b. Regulation of emotional expression: Restraining immediate anger, delaying reactive expression, and avoiding emotionally driven verbal responses, including the practice of <i>kazmu al-ghayz</i> .	U-R, U-D, U-Fe, U-A
	c. Deliberate separation of personal and professional concerns: Maintaining professional	U-T, U-D, U-F

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	responsibilities and focusing on children's needs despite experiencing personal emotional difficulties.	
Islamic Spiritual Integration in Emotion Regulation	a. Cognitive reinterpretation: Reconsidering children's behavior through <i>ḥusnuzan</i> , empathy, and <i>ṣabr</i> , including consideration of children's developmental stage, physical condition, emotional state, and needs.	U-R, U-T, U-D, U-Fe, U-A, U-O
	b. Attentional redirection: Using <i>dhikr</i> , <i>istighfār</i> , and <i>du'ā'</i> as reported internal spiritual practices during emotionally demanding situations.	U-R, U-F, U-T, U-D, U-Fe, U-A, U-O
	c. Retrospective self-reflection: Engaging in <i>muḥāsabah</i> to review emotional responses, recognize mistakes, evaluate conduct, and consider improvements in subsequent responses.	U-R, U-F, U-T, U-D, U-Fe, U-A, U-O
	d. Spiritual meaning and acceptance: Understanding teaching as <i>amānah</i> and <i>'ibādah</i> and drawing on <i>tawakkul</i> when accepting outcomes after making pedagogical efforts.	U-R, U-T, U-D, U-A, U-O
Contextual and Professional Implications of Regulation	a. Social support: Emotional and professional support obtained from colleagues, school leadership, family, and parents.	U-R, U-T, U-F, U-A
	b. Professional meaning: Understanding teaching as a responsibility toward children and sustaining commitment to the educational role.	U-R, U-T, U-D, U-A, U-O
	c. Perceived benefits: Participants' reported experiences of greater calmness, self-awareness, and more considered responses following emotion-regulation practices.	U-R, U-F, U-T, U-D, U-Fe, U-A, U-O

Note. Representative informants indicate participants whose accounts explicitly contributed to the respective thematic pattern in the thesis data. The distribution does not indicate frequency, prevalence, or uniform use of a particular strategy across participants. Because the study is qualitative, the informant distribution is intended to demonstrate the empirical traceability of each thematic pattern rather than to quantify the occurrence of each strategy.

The four themes are analytically interconnected. Emotional demands established the context in which regulation became necessary (Theme 1), while participants employed situational, behavioral, and expressive strategies to manage their immediate responses (Theme 2). Islamic values and practices provided an interpretive and spiritual framework through which participants understood, redirected, reflected upon, and accepted their emotional experiences (Theme 3). Finally, these processes were situated within interpersonal and professional contexts, particularly regarding social support and participants' understanding of their responsibilities as educators (Theme 4).

Notably, the findings do not indicate that every participant utilized every strategy uniformly or with equal frequency. Instead, individual accounts revealed variations in the specific regulatory forms emphasized. For instance, several participants explicitly described perspective-taking, whereas a different subset reported relying on physical or behavioral pauses. Similarly, the separation of personal and professional concerns was particularly evident in the accounts of U-T, U-D, and U-F. Thus, the data suggest a shared institutional orientation toward emotion regulation alongside variations in individual regulatory practices.

Illustrating the empirical basis of these themes, participants recounted specific instances of emotion regulation. U-R explained:

“Saya biasanya itu Umm, lihat anak-anak didik dulu, terus habis itu saya menarik nafas dulu perlahan-lahan, menenangkan diri saya sendiri dulu, lalu berusaha memahami penyebab perilaku anak, setelah itu saya menanggapi dengan suara lembut dan bahasa yang baik sesuai adab Islam.” (U-R).

This account illustrates how pausing, perspective-taking, and gentle responding occurred together within the participant's reported emotion-regulation process.

Similarly, U-D described delaying her responses when feeling that emotions might negatively influence her interactions with the children:

“Kadang saya diam dulu Umm. Takutnya nanti saya responnya itu tercampur sama emosi... Jadi ya mungkin saya diam dulu sambil istighfar, kalau sudah tenang, pikirannya sudah terang, itu baru bisa ke anak-anak.” (U-D).

Participants also integrated religious practices into their regulatory strategies. U-F stated: *“Banyak istighfar. Astaghfirullah... Berdoa Ustadzah dalam hati itu berdoa... Ya Allah Jenengan mudahkan po'o ya Allah.”* (U-F).

Regarding emotional restraint, U-A emphasized employing a temporary pause rather than immediately expressing anger:

“Jeda tadi Ustadzah, kita sering memberi jeda. Kalau kita emosi, kalau marah kan memang jangan diungkapkan... kadang sampai pengen nangis itu, keluar kelas itu nangis, Ustadzah.” (U-A).

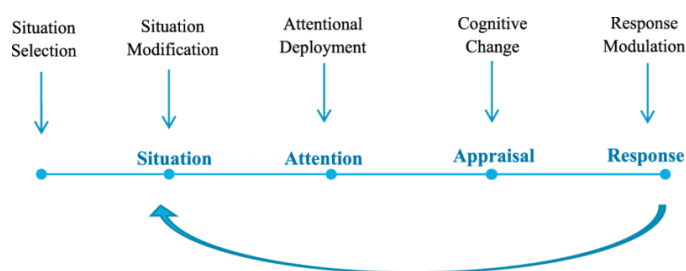
This account illustrates the use of a deliberate pause and temporary withdrawal when emotional intensity became difficult to manage. Rather than immediately expressing anger, the participant described creating distance from the situation before returning to the interaction.

These accounts provide empirical support for the thematic synthesis presented in Table 1. They also demonstrate that emotion regulation was not described as an automatic process; rather, participants reported experiencing emotional pressure and making conscious efforts to delay or modify their immediate responses. The accounts further show that regulation could involve several

practices simultaneously, including behavioral pauses, perspective-taking, religious remembrance, and restraint of emotional expression. The findings therefore emphasize the regulatory practices explicitly described by participants rather than assuming that all participants experienced or managed emotional situations in the same way.

DISCUSSION

Emotion regulation among Muslim Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers reflects an integration of psychological mechanisms and Islamic spiritual values. Conceptually, the psychological foundation of this process broadly aligns with the Process Model of Emotion Regulation (Gross, 1998, 2015). This model provides a systematic framework that differentiates regulatory strategies based on the temporal phases of emotion processing, ranging from antecedent-focused to response-focused strategies. Within this theoretical framework, Gross classifies five primary approaches to emotion management: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation.



Picture 1 Process Model of Emotion Regulation

In the context of Muslim educators, these psychological processes are interwoven with scriptural guidance from the Qur'an and Hadith, anchored in the principles of *tawhīd* (monotheism) and *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul) (al-Jawziyyah, 1998; Rassool & Keskin, 2025; Rassool & Luqman, 2023). Thus, emotion regulation is not understood solely as an instrumental process for modifying emotional responses, but also as part of moral and spiritual practice. Islamic ethical values such as *taqwā* (piety), self-control, and *ṣabr* (patience) provide an evaluative framework through which emotional responses are understood and acted upon. In this context, *ṣabr* is understood not merely as passive resignation, but as an active effort to regulate one's conduct in accordance with religious and moral obligations (Pavlova, 2023).

This orientation is also reflected in the prophetic tradition concerning the regulation of anger and the orientation of *khawf* (reverential fear) toward Allah as part of moral self-restraint (Hamdani et al., 2023). Within the Islamic psychological tradition, the works of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah

provide an important scholarly reference for understanding the relationship between spiritual practice, the self (*nafs*), thoughts, and conduct. Contemporary scholarship examining Ibn Qayyim's psychological thought highlights the importance of spiritual practices, including worship, *dhikr*, patience, and supplication, as well as the management of thoughts and inner states (Rassool & Luqman, 2023). In the present study, Ibn Qayyim's perspective is therefore used not as a direct equivalent of Gross's psychological categories, but as an Islamic ethical and spiritual framework that helps explain the meaning and orientation of teachers' emotion-regulation practices.

The empirical findings illustrate this integration at the level of teachers' everyday experiences. Teachers described understanding children's behavior through *husnu'zan*, empathy, and *ṣabr*, particularly by considering children's developmental stage, physical condition, emotional state, and needs. They also described restraining immediate anger through *kazmu al-ghayz*, engaging in *dhikr*, *istighfār*, and *du'ā'*, conducting *muḥāsabah* after emotionally demanding situations, and interpreting teaching as an *amānah* and *'ibādah*. These findings suggest that Islamic values did not operate as separate psychological techniques that could simply be equated one-to-one with Gross's categories. Rather, they provided moral, spiritual, and interpretive orientations through which teachers understood situations, evaluated their own responses, and decided how to act.

The integration of gratitude (*shukr*), *taqwā*, and *tazkiyah al-nafs* can similarly be understood as part of a broader Islamic framework for cultivating moral and spiritual well-being (Rassool & Luqman, 2023; Wahab, 2022; Wijaya et al., 2024). Within this framework, emotion regulation may be connected to the pursuit of *sa'ādah* (well-being or flourishing) through the cultivation of appropriate emotional conduct and spiritual orientation (Wahab, 2022). However, the present qualitative findings do not establish a direct causal relationship between emotion regulation and mental health, nor do they demonstrate that these practices necessarily produce particular psychological outcomes. Rather, participants' accounts indicate that emotion regulation was experienced as meaningful in relation to self-awareness, professional responsibility, religious commitment, and the cultivation of appropriate conduct in their interactions with children.

Empirical Analysis and Theoretical Integration

The empirical findings were interpreted by relating teachers' reported emotion-regulation practices to the Process Model of Emotion Regulation (Gross, 1998, 2015) while considering the Islamic ethical and spiritual framework articulated through the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic scholarship, particularly the psychological thoughts of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. This integration serves as an analytical framework rather than an assertion that Islamic concepts are direct functional equivalents of specific psychological strategies. In accordance with the conceptual framework of

this study, Gross's model helps describe the psychological processes involved in emotion regulation, whereas Islamic values provide moral, spiritual, and meaning-oriented dimensions through which teachers understand, evaluate, and direct those processes. Therefore, Table 2 maps the psychological processes, Islamic orientations, and empirical manifestations identified in the present study, alongside their corresponding interpretive implications.

Table 2. Analytical Mapping of Emotion-Regulation Processes, Islamic Values, and Empirical Findings

Psychological Process / Analytical Lens	Islamic Value or Orientation	Empirical Manifestation in the Present Study	Interpretive Implication
Cognitive change / reinterpretation	<i>Husnuẓan</i> , empathy, and <i>ṣabr</i>	Teachers reconsidered challenging children's behavior by taking into account developmental stage, physical condition, emotional state, and unmet needs.	The findings can be interpreted as involving cognitive reinterpretation, while <i>ḥusnuẓan</i> , empathy, and <i>ṣabr</i> provide the Islamic moral orientation through which the situation is interpreted. These concepts should not be treated as one-to-one equivalents of cognitive reappraisal.
Response modulation	<i>Kazmu al-ghayẓ</i> and prophetic gentleness	Teachers reported restraining immediate anger, remaining silent, delaying a response, and avoiding harsh verbal reactions.	These practices are consistent with response modulation at the level of observable emotional expression. However, the present qualitative data do not establish whether such restraint produces the same physiological or psychological consequences as expressive suppression identified in experimental research.
Attentional redirection	<i>Dhikr</i> , <i>istighfār</i> , and <i>du'ā'</i>	Some teachers reported directing attention toward divine remembrance, supplication, or religious reflection during emotionally demanding situations.	These practices may be understood as forms of attentional redirection within the broader emotion-regulation process. Because these practices are partly internal and were primarily identified through self-reports, their psychological effects cannot be independently inferred from the present data.

Retrospective self-reflection	<i>Muḥāsabah</i>	Teachers reviewed previous emotional responses, considered whether their reactions were appropriate, sought forgiveness, and reflected on how to respond differently in future situations.	<i>Muḥāsabah</i> extends beyond cognitive reappraisal because it includes moral self-evaluation, repentance, and spiritual accountability. It may facilitate learning and behavioral adjustment, but the present accounts also indicate the possibility of self-criticism or guilt.
Religious meaning-making and coping	<i>Tawakkul, amānah, and 'ibādah</i>	Teachers described making a strong effort in their professional responsibilities and subsequently entrusting outcomes to Allah, particularly when children's development or behavior remained outside their direct control.	Rather than being classified as a distinct Gross strategy (such as adaptive acceptance), <i>tawakkul</i> is better understood as a religious meaning-making and coping orientation concerning the limits of personal control and the moral meaning of professional effort.

Cognitive Reappraisal through Husnuẓan, Empathy, and Ṣabr

In the daily interactions at KB Ahsanu 'Amala, teachers described reconsidering challenging children's behavior before determining how to respond. Rather than immediately interpreting difficult behavior as intentional disobedience or misconduct, they considered the child's developmental stage, physical condition, emotional state, and immediate needs. Within Gross's (1998, 2015) Process Model of Emotion Regulation, this pattern can be analytically interpreted through cognitive change, while Islamic values of *ḥusnuẓ-ẓan* (positive assumption), empathy, and *ṣabr* (patience) provide the moral and spiritual direction of this reinterpretation process.

Field interviews illustrate how participants reconsidered children's behavior prior to formulating a response. U-D, for example, explained that challenging behavior should not immediately be interpreted as simple disobedience, as a child may be experiencing particular physical or emotional conditions:

“Jadi, kalau membersamai anak-anak itu memang harus banyak sabarnya, kenapa kok bisa sampai seperti ini? barangkali mungkin mengantuk atau lapar, karena pasti anak kan ada sebabnya, mereka kok bisa sampai, mungkin tidak patuh atau eeh, dia rewel tuh kenapa gitu, pasti ada ininya, sebabnya gitu.” (U-D).

This account illustrates the process of reconsidering the meaning of children's behavior before determining an appropriate response. Rather than viewing non-compliance solely as intentional

misbehavior, the teachers considered potential underlying causes, such as hunger, fatigue, developmental characteristics, or the suitability of their own pedagogical approaches. Six participants described engaging in this form of perspective-taking. Within Gross's (1998, 2015) Process Model of Emotion Regulation, this pattern can be conceptualized as cognitive change or cognitive reappraisal, as the teachers reconsidered their interpretation of an emotionally demanding situation prior to responding. However, the current findings do not suggest that participants consciously applied cognitive reappraisal as a formally defined psychological technique.

Within the Islamic context of this study, this process of reinterpretation was intertwined with *husnu'zan* (positive assumptions), empathy, and *ṣabr* (patience). The orientation toward *husnu'zan* was reflected in the participants' efforts to avoid prematurely attributing negative intentions to children, choosing instead to consider their developmental and situational contexts. Similarly, empathy was evident in the teachers' attempts to understand the underlying needs driving the children's emotional expressions. This perspective-taking aligns with the broader finding that teachers prioritized understanding the children before formulating a response.

This Islamic orientation toward avoiding unwarranted negative assumptions is also grounded in scriptural instruction:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ

"O you who have believed, avoid much negative suspicion; indeed, some suspicion is sin."
(QS. Al-Hujurat: 12).

In the context of the present study, this verse provides an ethical reference point for participants' accounts of avoiding negative assumptions about children. Thus, the empirical finding is not that the verse directly produces cognitive reappraisal, but rather that Islamic teachings provide a moral framework that guides how teachers understand and interpret children's behavior.

The value of *ṣabr* was similarly evident in the teachers' accounts of delaying immediate responses to first consider the specific characteristics of each child. U-T stated:

"Saya ini ya Umm, berusaha sabar dulu, eeh.. dilihat dulu karena kan setiap anak beda-beda ya Umm." (U-T).

This statement indicates that *ṣabr* was enacted not merely as passive endurance, but as a deliberate effort to pause, observe, and account for individual differences among children before responding.

Scriptural guidance similarly emphasizes patience as a valued response to hardship and distress:

وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

“And [they are] patient in poverty, hardship, and during times of distress. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.” (QS. Al-Baqarah: 177).

For the present findings, this scriptural reference helps explain the religious meaning participants attach to patience. It should not, however, be interpreted as evidence that *ṣabr* is intrinsically an independent psychological mechanism of cognitive restructuring. Rather, *ṣabr*—alongside *husnuzan* and empathy—represents an Islamic value that deeply informs how participants seek to regulate their responses when facing emotionally demanding situations.

Taken together, the findings suggest that teachers' cognitive reinterpretation of challenging child behavior is fundamentally guided by these Islamic orientations. Analytically, this process aligns with the cognitive change stage in Gross's model, wherein Islamic concepts provide the ethical and spiritual direction for the reframing process. Academic literature strongly corroborates this lived experience, indicating that religiosity enhances emotion regulation precisely by equipping individuals with a positive, meaning-making framework to interpret their surroundings (Alfaris & Firmansyah, 2026; Vishkin et al., 2019).

This distinction is important because the present qualitative study identifies participants' reported experiences and meaning-making processes rather than experimentally testing the psychological effects of particular Islamic practices. Therefore, the findings support a culturally contextualized interpretation of cognitive reappraisal among Muslim ECE educators, rather than a claim that *husnuzan*, empathy, and *ṣabr* constitute standalone psychological mechanisms or necessarily produce specific physiological outcomes.

Response Modulation and *Kazmu al-Ghayz*

When confronted with escalating negative emotions in the classroom, teachers at KB Ahsanu 'Amala described deliberate efforts to restrain their anger, control their verbal and behavioral responses, and maintain gentleness toward the children. Within Gross's (1998, 2015) Process Model of Emotion Regulation, these practices can be analytically interpreted as forms of response modulation, as they occur after an emotional response has been generated and involve attempts to influence how that response is expressed. In the present study, however, response modulation should not be treated as synonymous with expressive suppression. The empirical findings indicate that the teachers' restraint of anger was deeply embedded in moral and spiritual considerations, particularly the Islamic concept of *kazmu al-ghayz* (restraining anger), the Prophetic example of gentleness, and their perceived responsibility to respond appropriately to the children.

The field data illustrate several concrete forms of response modulation, including remaining silent, regulating one's breathing, drinking water, temporarily leaving the classroom, washing the face or hands, performing *wudu'* (ablution), and delaying a response until the teacher felt sufficiently prepared to interact with the child. While these practices varied across participants, they shared the core function of creating a pause between the emergence of emotional tension and the subsequent behavioral response. For example, U-T explained that she would remain silent, engage in *istighfār*, drink water, or briefly leave the classroom to regain her composure before returning to the children:

“Ee.. saya diam dulu, Umm. Biasanya sambil istighfar gitu. Terus kalau enggak, minum. Atau kalau enggak, ... saya titip dulu, saya izin cuci tangan atau kayak ambil wudhu gitu ... Jadi saya coba keluar sebentar, menenangkan diri sebentar aja, biasanya itu ngaruh kok, terus masuk lagi, insyaallah sudah.” (U-T).

This account supports the interpretation of response modulation at the level of observable behavior: teachers attempted to delay, modify, or restrain their immediate reactions before resuming interactions with the children. Concurrently, the practices described in the findings extend beyond mere expressive suppression, as they encompassed behavioral pauses and proactive efforts to regain emotional equilibrium prior to responding.

Within this context, *kazmu al-ghayz* provides a vital Islamic ethical orientation for anger regulation. The Qur'an explicitly describes the restraint of anger (*al-kāzīmīn al-ghayz*), alongside forgiveness, as a defining characteristic of the righteous:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“...who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship, who restrain anger, and who pardon people and Allah loves the doers of good.” (QS. Ali 'Imran: 134).

The principle is further reinforced by the Prophetic tradition concerning the control of anger:

لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرْعَةِ، إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ

“The strong person is not the one who can wrestle others down, but the strong person is the one who controls himself when he is angry.” (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 6114).

These religious sources provide the normative foundation for understanding why emotional restraint was meaningful to the participants. This connection to Prophetic gentleness is further reflected in the broader accounts of teachers who sought to maintain calm and gentle communication when navigating challenging classroom situations. Thus, *kazmu al-ghayz* in the present study represents more than a mechanical inhibition of anger; it functions as an Islamic moral orientation through which the teachers regulated their responses.

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This interpretation can be situated alongside existing literature on expressive suppression. Butler et al. (2003) demonstrated that, under experimental conditions, expressive suppression can disrupt communication, increase stress responses, reduce rapport, and inhibit relationship formation. Similarly, Loomis et al. (2023) examined suppression and reappraisal among preschool teachers, finding that the use of these strategies was associated with variations in the associations among child behavior, classroom disruption, and child-related stress. Taxer & Gross (2018) likewise found that teachers use multiple emotion regulation strategies in the classroom, frequently reporting the use of response modulation, particularly suppression. While these findings offer a relevant point of comparison, they do not establish that the culturally and spiritually embedded practices observed in the present study yield the same consequences as experimentally studied expressive suppression.

Crucially, because this qualitative study focused on participants' reported meaning-making, the current findings cannot determine whether the religious motivation underlying *kazmu al-ghayz* mitigates the negative consequences typically associated with expressive suppression, prevents burnout, or directly enhances classroom outcomes. Any claims regarding physiological down-regulation or stress reduction would therefore require direct empirical testing. Instead, the present study highlights that religious motivation and Islamic moral values provide a critical context for understanding how these teachers regulate their emotional responses. Whether such motivation alters the underlying psychological consequences of emotional restraint remains an empirical question for future research.

Attentional Deployment via Dzikir and Du'ā'

In the context of emotional challenges in the classroom, teachers at KB Ahsanu 'Amala described the use of *dhikr*, particularly *istighfār*, and *du'ā'* as spiritual practices that helped them redirect their attention and create a deliberate pause before responding to emotionally demanding situations. Within Gross's (1998, 2015) Process Model of Emotion Regulation, these practices can be analytically interpreted as forms of attentional deployment, as the teachers shifted their focus away from the immediate emotional stimuli and toward spiritual remembrance and supplication. In the present study, however, *dhikr* and *du'ā'* are not treated as direct equivalents of secular psychological attentional techniques; rather, they represent Islamic spiritual practices through which participants oriented their attention toward Allah while navigating emotional demands.

The field data illustrate this process through U-F's account of engaging in *istighfār* and internal supplication during moments of emotional tension:

"Banyak istighfar. astaghfirullah... Berdoa Ustadzah dalam hati itu berdoa... Ya Allah Jenengan mudahkan... ya Allah."(U-F).

This account demonstrates that these spiritual practices were utilized during emotionally demanding situations as an integral part of the teacher's broader effort to manage her responses. Similar experiences were reported by other participants, including the combined use of silence and *istighfār* before responding to the children. The findings consequently suggest that *dhikr* and *du'ā'* were embedded within a regulatory sequence of pausing, redirecting attention, and preparing for subsequent interactions. The religious foundation of these practices is underscored by the following Qur'anic verse:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Those who have believed and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.” (QS. Ar-Ra'd: 28).

From an analytical standpoint, the reported use of *dhikr* and *du'ā'* may be understood as a form of attentional redirection within the broader emotion-regulation process. Participants described turning their attention toward remembrance and supplication during emotionally demanding situations, creating a pause before continuing their interaction with the children. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of Alfaris & Maryono (2026) which highlight the role of Islamic spiritual practices within emotion-regulation processes. However, because these practices were internal and were identified primarily through self-reports, the present findings do not establish that they objectively reduced rumination, cognitive load, physiological stress, or burnout. Rather, the findings demonstrate how participants themselves understood religious remembrance and supplication as meaningful practices within their efforts to regulate emotional responses, while broader evidence suggests that the effectiveness of emotion-regulation strategies should not be inferred solely from their reported use or subjective experience (Rasskazova & Lyusin, 2024).

This finding aligns with broader research indicating that teachers utilize flexible, context-dependent strategies to manage classroom emotions. (Taxer & Gross, 2018) observed that teachers employ diverse regulatory strategies for both instrumental and hedonic purposes depending on situational demands. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2023) in a meta-analysis on teachers' emotion regulation, highlighted the complex relationships between regulatory practices and environmental, personal, instructional, and well-being factors. The present study contributes a culturally and religiously situated account to this literature, demonstrating how *dhikr* and *do'ā'* are incorporated into teachers' regulatory repertoires to provide spiritual grounding during high-stimulus classroom situations.

Importantly, because *dhikr* and *do‘ā*’ are inherently internal practices identified primarily through self-reports, caution is required when interpreting their psychological and physiological effects. These qualitative findings do not independently establish objective reductions in physiological stress, cognitive load, or rumination, nor do they prove that spiritual practices automatically induce *sakīnah* or prevent burnout. Rather, the contribution of the present study lies in showing how teachers subjectively experienced and understood *dhikr* and *do‘ā*’ as meaningful mechanisms for redirecting attention and preparing for considered responses. Within Gross’s (1998, 2015) Process Model, these practices can be analytically conceptualized as a spiritually embedded form of attentional deployment, illustrating how religious meaning shapes cognitive regulation in early childhood settings without assuming a one-to-one functional equivalence with secular psychological techniques.

Post-Event Reflection and Religious Meaning-Making: *Muḥāsabah* and *Tawakkul*

The findings indicate that the teachers' emotion regulation at KB Ahsanu 'Amala did not conclude once an emotionally demanding classroom episode had passed. Participants described subsequent reflection on their responses, recognition of mistakes, efforts to improve future interactions, and religious meaning-making concerning their responsibilities as educators. These practices are analytically related to, but do not constitute additional categories within, Gross's (1998, 2015) Process Model of Emotion Regulation. Rather, *muḥāsabah* can be understood as a post-event reflective practice through which teachers evaluate previous emotional and behavioral responses, whereas *tawakkul* is more appropriately interpreted as a form of religious meaning-making and coping concerning the limits of personal control over educational outcomes.

This distinction is crucial because the Process Model primarily explains when and how emotion regulation occurs during the immediate emotion-generative process. The retrospective evaluation identified in the present study extends the analysis beyond immediate regulation, demonstrating how teachers subsequently examine their responses and utilize these experiences to guide future conduct. The findings consequently suggest a temporal sequence wherein emotion regulation involves immediate regulation during classroom interactions, followed by reflection and adjustment after the event.

Post-Event Reflection through *Muḥāsabah*

In the present study, *muḥāsabah* involved reviewing previous emotional responses, evaluating whether one's conduct was appropriate, recognizing mistakes, seeking forgiveness, and identifying ways to improve subsequent interactions. The practice therefore extends beyond cognitive reappraisal in the narrow sense. It contains elements of self-evaluation and moral accountability

and, in some instances, involves feelings of regret or guilt. The empirical material consequently supports understanding *muḥāsabah* as a broader reflective process rather than treating it merely as a direct Islamic equivalent of cognitive reappraisal.

This process is clearly illustrated by U-R, who described evaluating her response according to Islamic ethical standards:

“Saya melakukan introspeksi diri, Umm. Bertanya apakah respon saya sudah sesuai adab Islam atau belum? ... mengambil pelajaran untuk perbaikan di hari berikut.” (U-R).

This account highlights three interconnected elements: reviewing the previous response, evaluating it against Islamic normative standards, and utilizing that evaluation to refine future conduct. Similarly, the study found that *muḥāsabah* involved reviewing emotional experiences, identifying areas needing improvement, and formulating alternative responses for future scenarios. U-T described *muḥāsabah* as a deliberate effort to identify daily inadequacies to improve upon them the following day, demonstrating that this reflection is directly tied to future behavioral adjustments rather than merely recalling the past.

The Islamic foundation of this reflective practice is rooted in the Qur'anic instruction:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“O you who have believed, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.” (QS. Al-Hashr: 18).

Within this study, *muḥāsabah* functioned as a retrospective process through which teachers evaluated their emotional and behavioral responses, recognized mistakes, sought forgiveness, and considered improvements for future interactions. This practice was understood through an Islamic framework of accountability and preparation for future action. Unlike Gross's (1998, 2015) cognitive reappraisal, which concerns changing the interpretation of an emotion-eliciting situation, *muḥāsabah* primarily occurred after the emotional episode and involved broader moral self-evaluation. Thus, it should not be treated as a direct equivalent of cognitive reappraisal, but rather as a complementary reflective process.

The findings also indicate that *muḥāsabah* was not exclusively intrapersonal. Teachers discussed classroom experiences with colleagues, exchanged perspectives, and identified lessons for subsequent practice. This collective dimension is consistent with research emphasizing the interpersonal and contextual nature of teachers' emotion regulation (; Williams et al., 2018). Although Nozaki & Kobayashi (2024) demonstrate that emotion regulation may involve interpersonal or extrinsic processes, the present data do not establish that collective *muḥāsabah*

produces specific quantitative effects on distress or empathy. Rather, peer interaction provided a supportive social context for reflection and professional learning.

Accordingly, *muhāsabah* is best understood as a retrospective, reflective, and moral-evaluative practice that connects emotional experience with accountability, error recognition, and future behavioral adjustment. Its relationship with Gross's framework is complementary: psychological emotion-regulation theory explains the cognitive regulatory process, while *muhāsabah* provides an Islamic moral and spiritual orientation for evaluating and improving one's response.

Tawakkul, Amānah, and Religious Meaning-Making around Limits of Control

A second dimension involves how teachers navigate the limits of their control over children's development and behavior. Participants framed teaching as an *amānah* (trust) and *'ibādah* (worship), while *tawakkul* emerged as the practice of maintaining pedagogical effort before entrusting the final outcomes to Allah. Rather than positioning *tawakkul* as a discrete category within Gross's Process Model or equating it directly with “adaptive acceptance,” it is more accurately interpreted as a form of religious meaning-making regarding professional responsibility, effort, and outcomes.

Teachers did not view *tawakkul* as an excuse to abandon pedagogical effort. Instead, they continued to guide and support students while acknowledging that developmental progress is ultimately beyond their absolute control. U-R articulated the professional responsibility of receiving children from their parents:

“Orang tua menitipkan anak kepada kita dengan baik-baik, kita juga harus menjaga dengan baik-baik.” (U-R).

This illustrates the link between *amānah* and professional duty: the teacher's role requires rigorous care and effort, even though the outcomes remain partially beyond their direct influence. By viewing teaching as *amānah* and *'ibādah*, teachers imbued their professional duties with profound religious significance.

The relevant Qur'anic foundation states:

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

“And whoever relies upon Allah then He is sufficient for him.” (QS. At-Talaq: 3)

This verse anchors the religious meaning of *tawakkul* for the participants. It does not serve as empirical evidence that *tawakkul* mechanistically reduces stress; rather, the interviews indicate that religious reliance helped teachers process situations where their maximum effort could not dictate a child's immediate behavior or development.

This aligns with existing Islamic psychological literature. Kandemir (2022) for instance, discusses *tawakkul* in terms of psychological functionality rather than passive resignation. Participants in this study described a continuous pedagogical effort paired with the recognition of their limited control over final outcomes. Thus, *tawakkul* functions as a religiously grounded orientation toward effort and reliance, not as a discrete psychological mechanism within Gross's model.

The distinction between effort and outcome is vital. *Tawakkul* was tied to fulfilling one's duties while accepting the limits of personal control. *Amānah* provides the responsibility, *'ibādah* supplies the religious meaning, and *tawakkul* offers a framework for releasing outcomes to Allah after the effort is expended. These concepts operate primarily as moral and religious orientations.

Importantly, these findings should not be interpreted as proof that *tawakkul* prevents burnout or eliminates occupational stress. The study acknowledges multiple factors influencing teachers' emotions, including classroom demands and social support (Wang et al., 2023). Religious meaning-making is just one dimension of coping and cannot substitute for adequate organizational support or fair working conditions. Additionally, there is insufficient evidence to suggest participants engaged in “spiritual bypassing”, using religious acceptance to avoid confronting structural workplace issues. Rather, these concepts served as meaningful frameworks for understanding professional duties and boundaries of control.

Social Support and Interpersonal Regulation in the School Context

The data further reveal that teachers' emotion regulation was deeply embedded within relationships with colleagues, school leadership, and parents. Social support acted as a critical contextual condition surrounding individual regulation, rather than functioning as a standalone Islamic emotion-regulation mechanism. Teachers shared experiences, received practical assistance, reinforced positive values, and communicated with parents to better grasp their students' circumstances.

U-T described the supportive function of her colleagues:

“Alhamdulillahnya kalau di sini rekan-rekannya semuanya supportif gitu, Umm. Jadi saling mendukung karena kan saling tahu, apalagi yang sesama wali kelas nggih, maksudnya saling memahami gitu, Umm... Jadi kita itu kalau misal ada kejadian di kelas gitu, saling cerita itu sudah hatinya sudah lega gitu.” (U-T).

This highlights how social support operated through emotional sharing and mutual understanding. Emotion regulation was not exclusively an internal, individualistic endeavor; collegial interactions offered perspective and relief, supporting literature that frames teacher

emotion regulation as an inherently social and organizational process (Wang et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2018).

Social support also included direct behavioral interventions. U-A reported:

“Terus akhirnya gitu, biasanya saya minta Ustadzah O untuk masuk sebentar, udah.. selesai.” (U-A).

This demonstrates that emotion regulation was occasionally achieved by modifying the immediate classroom environment—allowing another teacher to step in—which aligns with Gross's concept of *situation modification* rather than mere emotional reassurance (Gross, 1998, 2015).

Parent-teacher cooperation was another vital contextual resource. U-T explained:

“Kerja sama sama orang tuanya mungkin karena gitu kan enggak biasanya kan ada kaitannya sama yang di rumah kan. Jadi mungkin kerja sama-sama orang tuanya, dijelaskan anaknya seperti ini, eeh, di sekolah sudah diterapkan seperti ini, mungkin di rumah ada penerapan lain.” (U-T).

Communication with parents provided teachers with a holistic view of the child, aiding in the interpretation of behavior and the selection of appropriate responses. While the data do not prove that parental cooperation directly reduces teacher distress, it clearly acts as a contextual resource facilitating understanding and problem-solving.

These dynamics echo research on interpersonal emotion regulation, where social processes help individuals obtain support that shapes their emotional experiences (Williams et al., 2018). The Islamic dimension of this cooperation is anchored in the Qur'anic principle of mutual assistance:

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ

“And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.” (QS. Al-Ma'idah: 2).

Furthermore, this interconnected framework echoes the prophetic metaphor illustrating how believers strengthen and stabilize one another through shared purpose and mutual reliance:

الْمُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْبُنْيَانِ يَشُدُّ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا

“A believer to another believer is like a building, each part supporting the other.” (Al-Bukhari; Muslim).

For these participants, cooperation manifested as mutual support, shared classroom duties, and coordinated care for the children, translating Qur'anic principles into everyday institutional practice. Emotion regulation at KB Ahsanu 'Amala is therefore both intrapersonal and relational. Individual practices (*dhikr*, *muḥāsabah*) are nested within a supportive social environment that provides practical assistance and joint problem-solving.

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These findings further highlight the importance of collaboration within the educational environment. Mutual support among teachers, shared classroom responsibilities, and communication with parents provided opportunities to exchange information, coordinate responses, and address children's needs collectively. Such collaborative practices align with the broader emphasis on coordination and educational management in supporting the implementation of Islamic educational practices (Alfaris & Maryono, 2025). In this context, social support functioned as a contextual resource that complemented teachers' individual emotion-regulation practices, rather than constituting a standalone Islamic emotion-regulation strategy.

A supportive and interconnected school environment provided teachers with opportunities for mutual assistance, information sharing, and collaborative problem-solving. Such social support is directly relevant to teachers' occupational experiences and aligns with literature connecting the workplace social context to teacher well-being (Surjanti et al., 2018). From the perspective of interpersonal emotion regulation, interactions with colleagues provide relational support that shapes individual emotional experiences (Williams et al., 2018). In the present study, however, these dynamics are interpreted as contextual resources that facilitate teachers' emotion-regulation processes, rather than as evidence that collegial support directly prevents stress or burnout.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

The primary contribution of this study is the empirical contextualization of teacher emotion regulation, rather than the invention of a new psychological model. Gross's Process Model offers the analytical lens for interpreting processes like cognitive reinterpretation and response modulation, while Islamic concepts (*husnuẓan*, *ṣabr*, *kaẓmu al-ghayẓ*, *dhikr*, *muḥāsabah*, *amānah*, and *tawakkul*) provide the ethical, spiritual, and meaning-oriented frameworks through which participants understood their actions.

This relationship is not a dichotomy between secular psychology and Islamic psychology; they operate at complementary analytical levels. Gross's model explains the psychological mechanics, whereas Islamic concepts supply the ethical and meaning-oriented interpretations. This supports a contextual dialogue between psychological theory and Islamic values, rather than asserting the superiority of one over the other.

The findings also expand the focus from immediate in-the-moment regulation to broader temporal and social contexts. The identified sequence (emotional experience, immediate regulation, post-event reflection, professional meaning-making, and social support) highlights the extended processing of emotional events (via *muḥāsabah*) and the role of religious meaning-making (via *tawakkul*) in shaping perceptions of control.

Practically, these findings can inform culturally and religiously responsive professional development in Islamic educational institutions. While this qualitative study does not propose a prescriptive training program or guarantee that integrating practices like *dhikr* or *muḥāsabah* will eliminate burnout, it suggests that teacher support should incorporate peer reflection, practical classroom assistance, parent-school communication, and organizational backing alongside individual spiritual practices (Wang et al., 2023).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, as a single-site study involving seven personnel at an Islamic early childhood institution, the findings offer contextual insight rather than broad generalizability. The observed integration of psychological processes and Islamic values may be highly specific to KB Ahsanu 'Amala's unique organizational culture.

Second, practices like *dhikr*, *du'ā'*, and *muḥāsabah* were identified primarily via self-reporting. Because these are internal practices, they cannot be observed like behavioral pauses. Consequently, this study cannot empirically establish their physiological impacts or confirm whether they measurably reduce stress, rumination, or burnout.

Third, the qualitative design precludes causal conclusions. While participants found *tawakkul* meaningful, the data do not prove it protects against burnout or performance anxiety. Similarly, the quantitative effect of social support on teacher well-being remains unmeasured.

Fourth, these findings should not imply that spiritual practices can substitute for systemic improvements in working conditions. The broader study acknowledges that workload, administrative duties, and emotional demands are critical. Future research must examine how religious meaning-making interacts with organizational constraints, taking care to investigate whether religious acceptance potentially obscures the need for structural occupational improvements (spiritual bypassing).

Future research should utilize multi-site and longitudinal designs across various educational settings, combining quantitative measures of emotion regulation, religious coping, and occupational stress with interviews and classroom observations. This would help determine whether practices like *muḥāsabah* or *tawakkul* correlate with specific emotional outcomes while controlling for workload and school support.

Additionally, future studies should dissect the dimensions of *muḥāsabah* to determine when reflective self-evaluation fosters constructive learning and when it devolves into excessive self-criticism. Similarly, research on *tawakkul* could isolate whether it functions primarily as meaning-making, a responsibility orientation, or a perceived control mechanism.

Ultimately, this study advocates for a nuanced interpretation of Islamic integration in teacher emotion regulation. It demonstrates how standard psychological emotion-regulation processes operate alongside Islamic moral orientations in the lived realities of teachers, providing a robust foundation for future empirical work while maintaining clear distinctions between psychological mechanisms, institutional values, and participant-constructed meanings.

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that emotion regulation among Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers at KB Ahsanu 'Amala, Sidoarjo, involved immediate regulatory responses, Islamic moral and spiritual orientations, reflective practices, and interpersonal support. Teachers described reconsidering children's behavior, restraining immediate emotional expression, creating behavioral pauses, redirecting attention through *dhikr*, *istighfār*, and *du'ā'*, and reflecting on their responses after emotionally demanding situations. These processes can be analytically related to Gross's Process Model of Emotion Regulation, while Islamic values such as *husnuzan*, *ṣabr*, *kaḥmu al-ghayḥ*, *muḥāsabah*, *tawakkul*, *amānah*, and *'ibādah* provided moral, spiritual, and meaning-oriented frameworks through which participants understood and directed their responses.

Theoretically, the study contributes contextual evidence on how emotion regulation is experienced within an Islamic ECE setting. Gross's model provides an analytical framework for understanding reported regulatory processes, whereas Islamic teachings and scholarship, particularly the works of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, provide orientations concerning self-discipline, moral conduct, professional responsibility, and meaning. The findings therefore suggest a relationship of complementarity between psychological processes and Islamic values, rather than a one-to-one equivalence between them. Furthermore, the findings indicate that emotion regulation was deeply situated within social relationships, including collegial assistance, leadership support, and parent–teacher communication.

These findings should be interpreted within the qualitative and contextual boundaries of the study. Data were gathered from seven educational staff members at a single Islamic ECE institution, and internal practices such as *dhikr*, *du'ā'*, and *muḥāsabah* were identified primarily through self-reports. Consequently, the study does not establish causal effects of these practices on teacher well-being, burnout, or classroom outcomes. Future research involving multi-site contexts and longitudinal or mixed-methods designs may further examine the relationships among Islamic values, emotion regulation, religious coping, and teachers' occupational experiences while considering organizational and contextual factors.

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