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### **Religious Coping of Theology Students**

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University students may experience challenges and difficulties in their academic pursuits. Given the stressful situation, students need to find coping strategies. This qualitative study, using a purposive sampling technique, documents the strategies employed by university students to cope with life's issues. It was attended by 26 respondents from the School of Theology at a private university in West Indonesia. The respondents answered open-ended questions with exploratory descriptives. The study reveals the significance of coping through religious beliefs, faith, and trust in God. Further, it reveals that despite the issues with finances, fervent prayer and belief in God are the emerging themes as coping strategies. This study concludes that religious coping in difficult times assists in the survival of theology students by lessening their stress. Further study can be done on whether religious coping may also be applied to students from other departments.

**Keywords:** *religious coping, Theology students, strategies, Indonesia*

In general, early adulthood is a time when a person will face a period of adaptation to situations with different life patterns from adolescence. According to Putri (2018), everyone will experience a period where developmental tasks will start from childhood and end in old age. In the situation of early adulthood, this is the period when a person has completed his growth period and then prepares himself to accept his position in society along with other adults. In this period of development, there are developmental tasks that must be completed so that it will prepare for a happy life in the future. One of the developmental tasks that must be completed is adaptation to the many problems or obstacles encountered by using good coping.

This research will examine how students who have passed adolescence and are entering the early adulthood development period use coping skills to face life during college. According to the general definition, students are people who are pursuing higher education at a university. According to Republic of Indonesia government regulation number 30 of 1990, students who are registered and studying at certain universities. Likewise, according to Sarwono (1978), quoted by Kurniawati & Baroroh (2016), students are individuals who are studying and are officially registered at a tertiary institution where their age ranges from 18-30 years. In more detail, it is stated that students are individuals who will one day become educated graduate candidates and, in the future, are expected to become intellectual candidates who are useful for society. The term student refers to individuals who are currently undergoing higher education at certain universities. In this research, the students in question are people who are majoring in theology.

Theology students are individuals who are undergoing Christian education at a Christian college, in this case students who are studying at the Indonesian Adventist University. Students at the Faculty of Philosophy majoring in Theology are prepared to become dignified and moral evangelists

with high intellectual integrity. Therefore, students are equipped with an understanding of human development and growth, as well as the development of the church, so that it becomes an inseparable unit in the evangelization of the Christian religion. For this reason, students are educated in depth in order to gain knowledge and prepare themselves for the present and future (Simatupang, 2021).

In general, students majoring Theology theology have the motivation to study Theology in order to be able to carry out God's call to become pastors. But there are also some of them who are not called by God but rather because of other factors, for example: pressure from parents and family, invitations from friends and no interest in other majors. Ideally, before entering the department, students have God's calling and understand God's will to serve in evangelism. The student will truly understand what God wants in his life. If this is understood, then the student will be motivated and have high enthusiasm by prioritizing this calling. Lie Seng Cuan said that vocation must be a source of inspiration and the driving force of a dream. If every student majoring in theology has a special calling, then a special person will also be formed. Call, or in Greek, it is called *Ekkaleo*, is an action, an act in which God calls people in darkness to light. God makes His own people, who will then proclaim God's deeds (Ine Rahayu Purnamaningsih, 2021). Along with taking education, it is possible that in this process students will experience many problems in personal, social, and even spiritual life. This will affect academic achievement so that it can affect its services in the future. It takes good coping to be able to overcome it.

Students are one of the age groups who are vulnerable to experiencing stress and the effects of these conditions. Throughout the educational process at the university, students will encounter many lecture demands. One of the things that is a source of stress for students is the demand to complete their studies within the set time limit. The incidence rate for students who experience stress

during education globally in the world reaches 38-71%, in Asia, it is 39.6-61.3% and in Indonesia, it reaches 36.7-71.6%. Through human instincts, we can naturally deal with stress or other situations that can cause pressure in our lives. This is called coping. Coping is an effort to overcome, reduce, and tolerate pressure that can burden one's life. Meanwhile, stress management is a human coping mechanism for dealing with stress. Stress coping mechanisms are different for each individual. This ability is based on experience, personality, and the surrounding environmental conditions (Ayuwatini et al., 2018).

Nowadays, especially after going through the pandemic, students are faced with problems and are then required to face them toughly. Competition in achieving achievements, demands and course assignments, and adaptation to the social environment on campus are some of the problems that must be faced. Financial problems and being away from parents and family can be additional problems that must be faced. Rahmi said that the responsibilities that must be carried out as a student are stressful. Students who are expected to be useful for the nation and state in the future really need to have good mental health. The American Psychological Association (1992) has determined that mental health is viewed as "biopsychosocial-spiritual". This means that humans are seen as mentally healthy from a physical, psychological, social and spiritual perspective. For some students, it may not be easy to adapt to facing problems in their lives, which will cause stress (Rahmi, 2021).

According to Aisyah et al. (2020) when teenagers enter early adulthood, spiritual development will influence their attitudes and perspectives in facing problems. It is hoped that spiritual development leads to positive things so that it will form good values or attitudes as well. Based on this, it can be concluded that fulfilling spiritual needs and efforts to increase religious or spiritual coping have benefits for students in facing their life problems.

One form of coping in stress management is religious coping, where a person will use strategies based on belief, religion, faith, and power from God. Various studies have shown that religious coping has a positive effect on a person's physical and mental health, even when the individual is under stress. This is because individuals use their religious beliefs to face and solve the problems they face. It is at that time that the individual will feel his closeness to God. Pargament (1998), as the main researcher on religious coping, states that there are 3 forms of religious coping, namely: self-directing, deferring, and collaborative. A form of self-directing religious coping in which individuals are helped to solve their problems, thus they will perceive themselves as people who have been given the ability by God to solve their problems. For the defending strategy, the individual depends on God, where there will be a sign that tells the individual how to solve the problem. Collaborative strategies are referred to as psychoideas, where individuals and God jointly solve the problems they face (Supradewi, 2019).

The same opinion quoted from Ayuwatini et al. (2018) states that another form of coping strategy to reduce stress is through the religion one adheres to. Through a religion that is believed to be expected to provide guidance, direction, and even hope to adherents of that religion. Religion teaches good things, including worship and prayer. Through worship and prayer activities, it is hoped that the individual will be able to cope when facing problems in life that cause him to become stressed because of hope.

The curriculum applied to students of the Philosophy faculty majoring in Theology at the Adventist University of Indonesia. Apart from theory or face-to-face learning in class, these students are also required to take part in activities outside the classroom, namely externships or forms of service practice in churches, as well as several months of internship programs in the regions. where students will be guided to become future pastors. Before

students practice off campus, they are equipped with qualified theories. In general, students majoring in theology are students who are also studying while working, or are known as labor students. This research is intended for students majoring in theology. The aim of this research is to find out how religious coping is portrayed by students majoring in theology.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The method used in this research is qualitative. According to Sujarwedi, qualitative research is research that produces descriptive data from observations of the speech, writing and behavior of informants. The purpose of qualitative research is to produce in-depth descriptions of real social phenomena. Furthermore, descriptively, it will be described and concluded comprehensively as valid information (Sujarwani, 2020). This research uses a transcendent phenomenological approach, namely a descriptive approach that focuses on the general experience of informants, where the researcher must eliminate assumptions or personal perceptions. The concept of phenomenology is the root of qualitative research, which focuses on abstract and symbolic data from an event with the aim of understanding the symptoms that arise (Sari & Siswati, 2022).

### **Population and Sampling Technique**

The informants in this research were 26 students from the Faculty of Philosophy majoring in Theology, semester 4. The students involved in this research were aged between 18 and 24 years. According to Hurlock, a developmental psychologist named Hurlock (2001), as quoted by Hakim (2020), after adolescence, the next stage will be entering the early age of young adulthood, namely the age range of 18-24 years. Sampling in this study used a purposive sampling technique, which is a technique for taking a group of subjects based on certain characteristics or characteristics

that are seen as having a close relationship with the characteristics or characteristics of the previously known population.

### **Instrumentation**

The researchers used open-ended questions with exploratory descriptives, namely describing the religious coping strategies of Theologia students in dealing with stress in their lives while in college. From the questions asked, the researcher then conducted in-depth interviews with the aim of obtaining as much information as possible to enrich the data in draw research conclusions.

### **Analysis of Data**

The analytical method used in this research uses Colaizzi's 1978 theory methodology with the principle of processing and analyzing general data that has been transcribed into data that is more systematic, measurable and structured so that it then has a meaning that can be deduced from the complex to the simple. The stages are as follows: collecting data from in-depth interviews with informants, transcribing in transcript form, coding stage, grouping codes, concluding meaning in categories, validation stage, and final conclusions that form themes (Fiantika, F.R., 2022).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher asked permission from the Dean, and after obtaining permission, the researcher prepared a letter of approval to become a research informant. Researchers prepared informed consent signed by all informants. In the statement letter, the informant stated his willingness to participate as a respondent in the research conducted by the researcher.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Distribution of Participants**

The research was conducted on 26 students of the Faculty of Philosophy majoring in Theology. The distribution is presented as follows:

**Table 1**  
*Data of Informants*

No.	Informant Initials	Age	Gender	Informant Code
1.	AMS	20	Male	I.1
2.	APT	20	Male	I.2
3.	BG	24	Male	I.3
4.	CSJN	19	Male	I.4
5.	CS	18	Female	I.5
6.	WN	21	Male	I.6
7.	ESA	21	Male	I.7
8.	FAY	21	Male	I.8
9.	F	24	Male	I.9
10.	GATR	20	Male	I.10
11.	GOM	24	Male	I.11
12.	GAST	21	Male	I.12
13.	JB	21	Male	I.13
14.	JCG	22	Male	I.14
15.	JJE	19	Male	I.15
16.	JMH	21	Male	I.16
17.	LAM	21	Male	I.17
18.	MGCS	19	Male	I.18
19.	RP	24	Male	I.19
20.	MJM	22	Male	I.20
21.	NAH	19	Male	I.21
22.	NT	20	Male	I.22
23.	YB	22	Male	I.23
24.	RHS	21	Male	I.24
25.	YKR	21	Male	I.25
26.	RBF	22	Male	I.26
Total:			26	

From the frequency distribution of informants in table 1, it is evident that almost all of the informants are male (25 people) and 1 informant is female. All informants were coded from Informant 1 (I.1) to Informant 26 (I.26).

**Description of Religious Coping in Theology Major Students?**

The researcher conducted an exploration of the informant to get a descriptive picture of the difficult situation the informant was facing, which caused

the informant to become stressed and how the informant was coping religiously.

**Exploration of Difficult Situations Facing Informants and Causing Informants to Experience Stress**

Based on thematic analysis of 26 informants on the question “What difficult situations make you uncomfortable and even feel stressed?”, 36 codings were obtained that had the same keywords. Codes that have the same keywords are then grouped into categories. Of the 36 codes obtained at the keyword coding stage, there are 12 coding categories with similar meanings. The next stage is to group categories that have similar meanings. From the 12 categories, 4 themes of difficult situations faced by students can be obtained. The four themes are: 1) Problems of life on campus, 7 responses (19.4%); 2) Difficulty in learning, 8 responses (22.7%); 3) Financial problems, 19 responses (47.2%); and 4) Hours Work Demands on the Ground, 4 responses (11.2%). The results of the thematic analysis can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Thematic Analysis of Difficult Situations Causes of Stress*

Theme	n (%)
1. Problems of Life on Campus:	7 (19.4%)
-Difficulty making close friends	2
-Limited social time	3
-Disappointed in other people	1
-Dispute	1
2. Difficulty in Learning:	8 (22.2%)
-Difficulty understanding lecture material	4
-Lots of assignments	3
-Less time to study	1
3. Financial Problems:	17 (47.2%)
-High tuition fees	6
-Not getting financial aid	4
-Difficulty meeting daily needs	5
-Working while studying	2
4. Demand for working hours on the Ground	4 (11.2%)

### Exploration of Religious Coping in Overcoming Problems

Based on the thematic analysis of 26 informants on the question "How to solve problems by using religious power", 45 codes were obtained that had the same keywords. Codings that have similar keywords are then grouped into categories. Of the 45 codes obtained at the keyword coding stage, there were 8 coding categories with similar meanings. The next stage is grouping categories that have similar meanings, from 8 categories, 2 religious coping themes can be obtained by students. The two themes are: 1) Belief in God, 31 responses (68.9%) and 2) Belief in religion, 14 responses (31.1%). The results of the thematic analysis can be seen in table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Thematic Analysis of Religious Coping*

Theme	n (%)
1. Belief in God	31 (68.9%)
-Pray more actively	10
-Fast	4
-Midnight meditation	2
-Surrender	6
-Reading the Bible	9
2. Belief in Religion	14 (31.1%)
-Participate in all convention events at campus	8
-Involved in ministry in the church (singing, Master Guide, Deacon)	4
-Reading the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy	2

In this study, the highest response was obtained for the most difficult situations that caused discomfort and even stress for informants coded in the statement, namely: high tuition fees, resulting in a theme, namely: financial problems. Meanwhile, the highest response for religious coping was coded in the statement: pray more actively, resulting in a theme, namely: belief in God.

In general, when a person faces a pressing problem or situation, he or she will practice religion. According to (Akbar, 2021) religious coping is an individual's strategy of using the beliefs they have to face problems in their life. This religious coping is very relevant for students. The results of research conducted by Utami, quoted by Akbar, stated that when students positively use religious coping, the students will have a positive outlook when facing very difficult problems in their lives. This is because the individual truly surrenders to God. Hoping with true faith that God will be involved to overcome difficult problems in his life.

Research conducted on adolescents who live in dormitories about how religious coping strategies are for coping with stress. Of the 180 respondents who were involved in this study, it was shown that the use of religious coping had a greater effect on stress. Stress coping variables have an effect on handling stress in adolescence (Alundari et al., 2023).

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The conclusion of this study is that informants, namely students majoring in Theology, use religious coping when facing difficult times in their lives, especially when studying at universities. The informants uses the power of religion and belief in God to overcome their problems. Expect God to play a role in solving the problem. Religious coping is the most commonly used strategy, in which informants pray to seek help from God through the religion they believe in.

The advice that can be given is that informants should be able to maintain and improve their religious coping in order to reduce the stress they experience. Suggestions for future researchers to be able to research more about religious coping by using religious coping measuring tools that are in accordance with the principles of recognized religions.

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