

Spiritual Bypass in Parenting: Implications for *Silent Struggle* and Adolescent Emotional Regulation in the Perspective of Islamic Psychology

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ABSTRACT. This study aims examines the concept of spiritual bypass in parenting through the lens of Islamic psychology, along with its implications for adolescents' silent struggle and emotional regulation. The research employs a qualitative literature review using a conceptual-analytical approach, aimed at exploring contemporary and original references pertaining to spiritual bypass, silent suffering, adolescent mental health, emotion regulation, and Islamic parenting. Based on the findings, spiritual bypassing in parenting frequently manifests through the interpretation of grief as an indicator of insufficient faith, the substitution of emotional support with hasty moral judgments, and the premature termination of emotionally meaningful conversations. Adolescents who encounter such parenting patterns tend to feel insecure about expressing their inner feelings within the home environment, thereby becoming inclined to suppress emotions such as fear, anger, and grief. Over time, these tendencies risk giving rise to silent struggle, a condition characterized by unreported and untreated psychological distress. The study further reveals that when adolescents are repeatedly discouraged from openly expressing their emotions, their capacity for emotion regulation gradually deteriorates. In contrast, Islamic psychology offers a more balanced framework by integrating reason, heart, and inner equilibrium, which naturally fosters self-regulating qualities grounded in gentleness and compassion. This article contends that effective Islamic parenting ought to incorporate rahmah and communicative empathy in responding to children's emotions, rather than employing spirituality as a mechanism of avoidance, so that religious guidance may serve as a source of healing rather than a barrier to emotional expression. Toward the end of the article, a set of practical recommendations is presented for families, educators, and counselors who work directly with Muslim adolescents.

Keywords: Spiritual Bypass, Islamic Parenting, Silent Struggle, Emotion Regulation, Islamic Psychology

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is often referred to as a period of search for identity. But in reality, this phase is also quite tiring for many people. At almost the same time, teenagers have to face physical changes, changes in way of thinking, school demands, friendships, and expectations from the surrounding environment. At this point in their lives, many teens become aware of their image and social acceptance. This is a difficult phase and some people may seem to be going through it, and some people may seem fine, but may be suffering in silence. There are misconceptions surrounding the struggles that took place during this period. There is a large part of the social and psychological pressures placed on adolescents that are completely invisible. Some teens may remain very socially active, may still play, may do everything like a normal day and may hold back everything altogether. Acting like everything is fine may mask feelings of sadness, fear, and hopelessness, as well as being very mentally draining. Sometimes the reason they don't speak is not because they don't want to,

but because they don't know how. Sometimes the pressure to keep everything comes from the fear that they will be judged for showing their emotions and vulnerability. Silent struggle is the most common term to describe this condition, when there is great psychological distress and a complete lack of support (Al-Najdi et al., 2025; Vahidi et al., 2024). The situation can escalate further if the teenager doesn't even understand their own feelings. Not everyone has the ability to identify their own emotions. This often leaves some teens in a state of silence when they're sad or stressed, and they're just trying to get through their day. When not expressed, those emotions can grow and develop into emotional burdens that are difficult to manage. (Rossall & Arianti, 2025; Work, 2024). In such a situation, the family could really hold a lot of power. Home should be the first place for children to know that they are safe to feel vulnerable without being judged. A child should be able to feel accepted even when things are falling apart. In many Muslim families, the parenting patterns that are generally applied are also based on religious values. Religious teachings are introduced as a foundation in the formation of morals, life orientation, and how to respond to various problems faced. Basically, this is something of positive value, considering that spirituality is indeed able to help a person gain inner peace as well as become a handle in living life. However, on a practical level, not all forms of parenting with religious nuances have a constructive emotional impact on children's development. There are certain situations where religious advice is used to cut off children's emotional expressions too early, for example when the child is experiencing sadness, and then immediately gets a response such as "you have to be patient", "don't think too much", or "believers should not be weak". Sentences like this may sound good, but they often make your child feel like their emotions aren't really understood.

This phenomenon is related to spiritual bypass, which is a condition when spiritual values or narratives are used to avoid emotional problems that are actually unresolved. (Cashwell, Bentley, & Yarborough, 2007; Cashwell, Glosoff, & Hammond, 2010). In this kind of situation, emotions are treated as if something must be suppressed immediately. Even though sadness, anger, disappointment, or fear are normal parts of the human experience. If it continues to be considered a sign of lack of faith or lack of gratitude, children can grow up with the habit of hiding their own emotions to keep them looking "good" and religious. On the other hand, spirituality actually has great potential in building adolescent psychological resilience if applied in a healthy way. A number of studies show that positive spiritual parenting is able to form good character, improve the quality of parent-child relationships, and strengthen the ability to deal with life pressures (Ahmad, McLaughlin, & Weisman de Mamani, 2023). Problems arise when religious values are only used as a tool to control emotions without empathy. In such conditions, religion no longer feels like a calming place, but makes children feel that they must always hold back. Not a few teenagers end up choosing to keep their own problems because they feel that their emotional experiences are not really accepted at home. This is closely related to the regulation of emotions. Emotional regulation does not mean that one should not be sad or angry. Instead, the emotion remains, it's just that a person learns how to understand and manage it healthily (Agustini, 2025). This ability is important because it affects many things in adolescent life, from mental health, social relationships, to how to deal with daily stress. However, when children continue to be directed to cover their emotions in the name of religion without being given space to understand what they feel, what arises is not healthy emotional management, but a habit of suppression. In the long term, these conditions can trigger anxiety, mental fatigue, difficulty expressing feelings, and even problems in interpersonal relationships (Nadeem et al., 2024; Fox & Picciotto, 2019).

In Islamic psychology, human beings are understood as beings who have an interrelated body, intellect, heart, spirit, and nafs. Therefore, parenting in Islam actually speaks not only about ritual obedience, but also emotional and spiritual balance. Islam does not teach humans to reject their emotions. Instead, emotions are directed to be managed with self-awareness, patience, and a gracious approach. The value of grace is important because through affection and warm communication, children can grow up with a sense of emotional and spiritual security (Agustini, 2025; Juliana et al., 2025). So, healthy Islamic parenting should help children understand

themselves, not make children afraid to express their feelings. So far, discussions about spiritual bypass have more often appeared in counseling or mental health studies in general (Cashwell et al., 2007; Fox & Picciotto, 2019; Dorais et al., 2025). While research on silent struggle mostly addresses academic distress, trauma, or social pressure on certain groups (Lopes Cardozo et al., 2022; Fisher et al., 2025). Research that specifically looks at the relationship between spiritual bypass in Muslim family parenting patterns and the regulation of adolescent emotions is still not widely found. In fact, in daily life, the use of religious advice to limit children's emotional expressions is still quite frequent. Based on these conditions, this study was conducted to see how spiritual bypass appears in the upbringing of Muslim families and how it affects silent struggle and emotional regulation in adolescents. The phenomenon that prompted this study departed from the fact that quite a lot of teenagers look fine on the surface, are diligent in worship, polite, and are even considered "good children", but it turns out that they harbor emotional pressure that they never really talk about. In some conditions, the family's response to the child's emotional problems still tends to use a religious approach that directly advises without first understanding what the child is feeling. In fact, religious advice delivered without empathy can leave its own psychological burden. For that reason, this study is expected to provide an overview of the importance of Islamic parenting patterns that not only emphasize obedience, but also provide a space for dialogue, emotional acceptance, and a more humane approach to adolescents.

METHODS

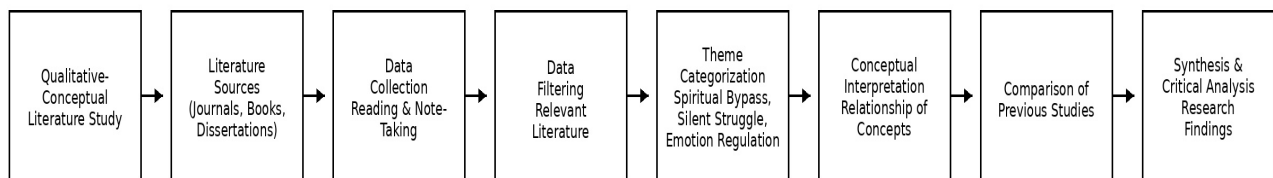


Figure 1. Methods

This study uses a literature study approach with qualitative-conceptual properties. All data was obtained through a literature review process, not through field observation or direct interviews. Therefore, the focus of research is more directed at exploring ideas, reading theories, and relationships between concepts from various pre-existing sources. The materials used in this article come from various literary sources, such as national and international scientific journals, dissertations, academic books, and other research papers related to spiritual bypass, silent struggle, adolescent emotional regulation, mental health, and Islamic parenting patterns. Literature was deliberately chosen based on the relevance of the theme and the strength of the discussion. The author does not limit sources to only the last few years, although newer publications are still prioritized so that the discussion is relevant to the latest developments in the study. Some old references are also still used because they are considered important in explaining the basics of the spiritual concept of Islamic psychology. In the process of collecting data, the author re-read a number of references to find interrelated discussion patterns. Some of the main ideas are then recorded and grouped so that the discussion does not stand alone. The analysis stages are carried out through several processes. First, the authors filtered the data by selecting the parts that were most relevant to the main theme of the study. Second, various related information is grouped into certain themes, for example about spiritual bypass in the family, silent struggle in adolescents, and emotional regulation from an Islamic perspective. After that, a conceptual interpretation is carried out to see the relationship between themes so that they can form a more complete argumentation flow. To maintain the strength of the analysis, the author also compares several different studies but are still in the same discussion space, such as studies on spirituality in counseling, studies on adolescent emotional distress, and studies on Islamic value-based parenting. The comparison process helps the author see similarities and differences in views between studies so that the

arguments built do not only rely on one source. Because this research is literature, the article does not involve participants, interviews, or direct field observations. The results presented are the results of synthesis and critical reading of the various literature that has been studied, not empirical data from field research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spiritual Bypass in Parenting as a Form of Emotional Avoidance Wrapped in Religious Language

In parenting practice, spiritual bypass can arise when religious values or advice are used to avoid emotional processes that actually need to be dealt with honestly. In many Muslim families, this often appears in the form of religious advice that sounds good, but actually stops the child's emotional space. When a child is sad, disappointed, or angry, the response that arises is not an empathetic listen, but rather a sentence like "just be patient," "don't think too much," or "if your faith is strong, it shouldn't be like that." The emotional conversation finally stops before the child really feels understood. At a certain point, religion no longer exists as a space for recovery, but instead turns into a tool to suppress emotions so that it is quickly completed. This situation is in line with the concept of *spiritual bypass* which is defined as the tendency to use spirituality as a means to avoid inner wounds, psychological conflicts, and emotional needs that have not been adequately resolved until now. Cashwell, Bentley, & Yarborough, 2007; Cashwell, Glosoff, & Hammond, 2010). A number of follow-up studies have also shown that spiritual bypass is not just a theoretical concept, but actually affects the way a person views himself and psychological help. Ahmad, McLaughlin, and Weisman de Mamani (2023), for example, found that spiritual bypass in Muslims is related to self-stigma and attitudes toward seeking psychological help. When emotional problems continue to be covered up in the name of spirituality, it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to admit that they are not okay. In families, this kind of pattern often arises from the good intentions of parents.

Many parents want their children to grow up to be strong, patient, and obedient. However, good intentions alone are not always enough if they are not accompanied by emotional awareness. Children who are injured are often directed to calm down immediately without being given the opportunity to understand what they really feel. In fact, before a person learns to control emotions, the emotions themselves need to be recognized and accepted first. Sadness, disappointment, and anger are normal parts of the human experience. When all negative emotions continue to be perceived as something wrong or lacking in faith, the child slowly learns to hide his or her own feelings. In a broader context, spiritual bypass in parenting also shows a misunderstanding of concepts such as patience, *tawakal*, and sincerity. These values are indeed important in Islam, but they become problematic when used to cut through the process of emotional communication. Dorais, Gutierrez, Jackson, and Burgin (2025) even mention that spiritual bypass needs to be "rerouted" so that it does not turn into a psychological defense mechanism that actually inhibits individual growth. That is, spirituality should be present as a companion to the emotional process, not a tool to avoid it. Parents can still teach patience and *tawakal*, but after the child feels heard and accepted emotionally.

Spiritual Bypass and the Emergence of Silent Struggle in Adolescents

In some families, a quiet child is often considered fine. Even though not necessarily. There are teenagers who stay in school, continue to talk as usual, and can even joke, but are actually keeping a lot of things to themselves. Not all pressure is immediately visible. Sometimes the ones who say "I'm sorry" are even the most emotionally tired. Situations like this are often called silent struggles. It is not just ordinary sadness, but a condition when a person endures inner pressure without actually talking about it to others. Similar phenomena have also emerged in several other studies, for example in health students, workers who experience social exclusion, and women leaders in post-conflict areas (Al-Najdi et al., 2025; Asmita et al., 2024; Lopes Cardozo et al., 2022).

Among Muslim teenagers, these problems are often mixed with concerns that they will be seen as unfavorable from a religious perspective. Some of them feel uncomfortable expressing their sadness, because they are afraid of being labeled as impatient or ungrateful. As a result, they are accustomed to bearing all the burdens of feelings independently first, and this habit gradually takes root in them. Outwardly they appear calm and their daily activities go on as usual, but inwardly their minds are filled with various pressures that never really have room to process and express. Sometimes they themselves are also confused about where to start the story. This situation is dangerous because the emotions that continue to be pent-up usually do not just disappear. These emotions can turn into mental exhaustion, embarrassment, withdrawal from social environments, and even despair. Juliana, Suherman, Sukarwati, Lestari, and Parhan (2025) emphasized the importance of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* in facing silent struggle, especially in the midst of increasing individualism tendencies. This means that adolescent psychological problems are not enough to be answered with normative advice alone, but require a warm and caring relationship.

Adolescents themselves are a group that is quite sensitive to the quality of emotional relationships at home. When they repeatedly receive a response that lacks empathy, they begin to believe that silence is safer than being honest about how they feel. Over a long period of time, this condition forms a pattern of *self-silencing*, which is a person's tendency to suppress and silence their own feelings in order to avoid conflict or rejection from the surrounding environment. Ortlieb (2019) emphasized that *silent struggle* does not simply mean silence or silence, but is a form of hiding inner wounds that never really get space to be expressed and voiced openly. Ironically, the condition of *silent struggle* is often only realized at a late stage, this is due to the fact that many teenagers still seem "mediocre" from the outside. They continue to carry out learning activities at school, are still able to joke with friends, and continue to go about their daily routines as they should. Fisher, Blau, and Gendler (2025) show that pent-up psychological distress can hide symptoms of trauma that are quite deep. The findings of Vahidi, Rahmani, Areshtanab, and Allahyari (2024) also show that barriers to speaking make many emotional well-being issues ultimately unaddressed. In the context of adolescence, this condition suggests that when the home fails to be a safe place to talk, emotional burdens will continue to build up without having a healthy release space.

The Impact of Spiritual Bypass on Adolescent Emotional Regulation

The ability to regulate emotions is one of the crucial components in the adolescent development process. In this age phase, the emotional turmoil that arises is generally much more intense than other stages of life. Adolescents are in a period of self-identity formation, facing increasingly complicated social relationship dynamics, while trying to understand their identity more deeply. Therefore, the way they recognize and manage emotions will have a very significant influence on their psychological state in the future. Agustini (2025) explained that emotion management does not occur instantly, but develops as a long process related to individual maturation. In this context, the integration between modern psychology and Islamic education is considered important so that emotional development can run in a more balanced manner from childhood to adulthood. The problem is, in the practice of spiritual bypass, emotions are often not actually processed. Emotions are diverted or suppressed too quickly using moral and religious language. Teenagers who are sad are immediately directed to be "more patient", anger is immediately considered less *istighfar*, while disappointment is often asked to be resolved with *tawakal* without enough room for reflection. From the outside, the teenager may appear calm and accepting of the situation. However, that calmness does not necessarily arise because emotions have been understood in a healthy way. In many cases, what happens is a slow suppression of emotions. The difference between healthy emotion regulation and emotion repression actually lies in the process. Emotion regulation occurs when a person is given the opportunity to recognize, accept, and then manage what they feel. On the other hand, emotional repression occurs when feelings are immediately suppressed before they can be understood. If this situation persists, the

teenager can grow up without really recognizing his or her own emotions. They have trouble explaining what they feel, are confused about distinguishing sadness from anger or fear, and easily lose their way when under emotional distress

Research by Fox and Picciotto (2019) shows that spiritual bypass is linked to depression, anxiety, and stress. This means that the use of spirituality as a way to avoid emotions does not automatically solve the psychological burden, even in some conditions it actually worsens it. Other findings from Nadeem, Aziz, Qureshi, and Farhan (2024) also show a link between spiritual bypass, burnout, and mental health disorders. In adolescent life, the impact can appear in the form of sudden emotional outbursts, overthinking, excessive guilt, difficulty sleeping, being mentally exhausted easily, or withdrawing from the social environment. Therefore, healthy emotion regulation must be taught through validation, meaning, and reflection exercises, not just through normative affirmation. Adolescents need to be helped to understand what they are feeling, to be validated, and to be invited to reflect on their emotions slowly. Without that process, they will get used to seeing emotions as something wrong. Many teenagers end up in a confusing position: on the one hand they want to be good, obedient, and obedient children; But on the other hand they are still human beings who have wounds, emotional needs, and certain limits of abilities. When these two things are not brought together in a healthy way, sadness or anger actually gives birth to guilt in themselves. At that point, what happens is no longer the management of emotions, but the secret self-punishment. Healthy psychological resilience is actually not born from the demand to always look strong. Resilience actually grows when a person is able to acknowledge their pain, understand their emotions, and then learn to get up slowly. Therefore, the avoidance of emotions in the name of spirituality can make adolescents appear calm on the surface, but fragile inwardly.

Islamic Psychology Perspective: Organizing Emotions without Getting Rid of Spirituality

Islamic psychology views humans as beings who have interrelated dimensions of intellect, heart, spirit, and nafs. In this view, emotions are not something that is contrary to faith. Emotions are part of human nature that need to be directed and managed wisely. Therefore, Islam does not teach people to reject sadness, anger, or disappointment, but teaches how to deal with them appropriately. Agustini (2025) emphasized that the combination of Islamic values with modern psychological approaches is actually necessary so that the process of managing emotions can develop throughout a person's life. This means that Islamic parenting should not silence children's emotions, but help children understand their emotions while still being directed to spiritual values. In many family traditions, patience and tawakal are often understood narrowly as the necessity to immediately be silent and accept the situation. In fact, from the perspective of Islamic psychology, patience does not mean killing feelings, but keeping oneself on the right path in the midst of pain. Tawakal is also not neglect of wounds, but surrender to Allah after humans have made the right efforts. Thus, healthy Islamic parenting is one that recognizes emotions as legitimate experiences, then directs them toward a more mature spiritual consciousness. This is the fundamental difference between healing spirituality and avoidant spiritual bypass.

Juliana et al. (2025) discuss the issue of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* as a form of closeness and concern for others. If you look at the family context, the concept is actually simple: children feel accepted without having to pretend to be strong. Interestingly, *rahmah* is not just gentle or affectionate in general. Sometimes the form of mercy can be seen from small things, not cutting the child's story, not directly blaming his emotions, or not rushing to say "you lack faith" when the child is in an emotional fall. Some parents may want to quickly calm things down, but for the child, a response that is too quick often feels like a rejection of his or her own feelings. Therefore, children's emotions should be understood as something natural, not a threat to parental authority. Parents who apply the *rahmah* approach usually do not immediately give a lecture when the child is sad or angry. They tend to try to understand what the child is really feeling before giving directions. Conversely, when religious counsel is used to immediately stop an emotional conversation, family relationships can slowly become distant. In this framework, spiritual bypass can be seen as a failure to understand the dimension of *rahmah* in Islamic education. When

religious counsel is used to stop emotional dialogue, what is lost is not only the warmth of the relationship, but also the opportunity to instill monotheism more deeply. Because healthy monotheism does not make children afraid of their own emotions; Tawhid actually helps children see that pain, limitations, and struggles in life can be brought back to Allah with hope. In other words, Islamic psychology does not command adolescents not to be sad, but teaches that sadness can also be a door closer to Allah if processed honestly and wisely.

Reconstruction of Islamic Parenting: From Judgment to Mentoring

The results of this discussion show that the pattern of Islamic parenting needs to be reconstructed so that it is not used as a spiritual bypassing practice. This reconstruction, instead of lowering religious values as a result of parenting, actually strengthens the resources to engage with and implement religious values. Adolescent parents need to move from a controlling and emotionally sarcophagical approach to a mentor, dialogical, and empathetic role. Children have been counseled and they are listened to in a mentoring model. Children are guided not only to obey, but also to understand their own feelings. They are not only meant to be strong, but they are also directed to become strong gradually. Lopes Cardozo et al. (2022) show that humanizing relationships are able to form agency and peacebuilding in the Islamic educational environment. Similar principles can actually be applied in the family. A healthy family is not a family without problems, but a family that is able to face problems without damaging the self-esteem of its members. For teenagers, a safe space like this is very important because they are building their identity and confidence. When their identity is constantly formed through the fear of being wrong, they will learn to hide themselves. But when they are raised in a safe environment, they will learn that faith and emotions can go hand in hand. Dorais et al. (2025) and Clarke, Giordano, Cashwell, and Lewis (2013) also affirm the importance of a more reflective approach to overcoming spiritual bypass, both through therapeutic approaches and through more conscious communication. In families, this principle means that parents need to practice the ability to delay judgment, restrain spontaneous comments, and first understand the emotional context of the child. This reconstruction will result in a parenting style that is not allergic to tears, is not afraid of complaints, and does not shorten the healing process. This is where religion really serves as a grace: not to cut off the inner process, but to guide that process in a healthier direction.

CONCLUSION

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that *spiritual bypass* in parenting occurs when religious language is used to cover up children's emotions prematurely, rather than accompanying the process of processing emotions. Furthermore, this pattern contributes to *the silent struggle* of adolescents because they learn to hide inner wounds, sadness, and anger instead of communicating them. In closing, when studied through the perspective of Islamic psychology, healthy parenting must actually be able to balance religious values, emotional validation, mercy, and moral development, so that religion can be present as a source of mental recovery, not as an instrument of avoidance of emotional problems. In its implementation, Muslim families need to build a more empathetic and open communication culture, while schools and counselors need to strengthen mental health literacy based on Islamic values. In addition, subsequent studies need to examine this theme empirically through field studies, both with qualitative and quantitative approaches, so that the understanding of spiritual bypass in the care of Muslim adolescents becomes more comprehensive and can be operationalized in a more concrete manner.

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