JIPSI: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Sains Islam Interdisipiner
Vol. 5, No. 4, November 2026, pp. 3606-3622
http://journal.amorfati.id/index.php/jipsi || ISSN 2962-9187

Interdisciplinary Scope of Science and Education, Islamic Education and Science, Integration of Science and Islam, Islamic Thought and Philosophy, Integration of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Islamic Studies, Islamic Economics and Business Studies, and Islamic Ethics in Science and Technology

Religious Coping in Facing Existential Emptiness among Muslim Housewives: A Phenomenological Study

Avie Andriyani [a,1,*], Muhammad Zein Permana [b,2]

[*a] Department of Psychology International Open University (IOU), Gambia;
[b] Department of Educational Psychology Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Indonesia.
[1] avie.andriyani@student.iou.or.id; [2]zeinpermana@upi.edu

*Correspondent Author; avie.andriyani@student.iou.or.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received:
04-09-2026
Revised:
27-09-2026
Accepted:
16-10-2026

Keywords
Religious Coping, Existential Emptiness, Muslim Housewives, Phenomenology, Islamic Psychology

ABSTRACT

The experience of existential emptiness among Muslim housewives can be characterized by feelings of emptiness, a loss of direction, monotony, loneliness, and confusion regarding self-identity. In facing such conditions, religion can serve as a source of coping that helps individuals regain direction and meaning in life. This study aims to describe the religious coping experiences of Muslim housewives in dealing with existential emptiness. The study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive phenomenological method. Four Muslim housewives aged 40–48 years, married for 15–21 years, and having one to three children were selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analyzed using a descriptive phenomenological approach. The results indicate that religious coping is enacted through increasing closeness to Allah, strengthening the orientation of worship, prayer, self-introspection, acceptance of Allah's decrees, and deeply internalizing life roles and responsibilities. These religious practices and orientations help participants cope with feelings of emptiness, shift their perspectives on their experiences, and rebuild a sense of direction and meaning in life. Religious coping functions not only as a strategy for managing emotional distress but also as a process for realigning relationships with Allah, the self, and the life being lived. The findings demonstrate that religious coping acts as an adaptive resource in addressing existential emptiness among Muslim housewives. The novelty of this study lies in its phenomenological examination of how Muslim housewives experience and utilize religious coping when facing existential emptiness, highlighting the transformation of existential emptiness into a process of meaning reconstruction through self-reflection and strengthened orientation toward Allah.

This is an open-access article under the CC–BY-SA license.

Introduction

Marriage and the transition to becoming a housewife entail a process of forming a new identity. Relationships with a spouse and children bring about new experiences, responsibilities, and demands that can both expand and transform an individual's self-understanding (Permana, 2020). According to the National Labor Force Survey of August 2024, 35,669,843 women aged 15 and older were recorded as having household management as their primary activity (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). The size of this population highlights the importance of understanding the psychological experiences of women as they fulfill domestic roles. The shifts in responsibilities, priorities, relationships, and identity accompanying the role of a housewife can constitute a complex adjustment process that potentially gives rise to psychological stress (Mulawarman et al., 2024).

During this adjustment process, some women may experience feelings of emptiness, a loss of direction, burnout, or loneliness, or they may question the value of the lives they are leading. Such conditions are associated with "existential emptiness", a subjective experience characterized by a sense of lacking meaning, purpose, direction, or a reason for living. Frankl (2017) described this state of lost meaning as an "existential vacuum," marked by feelings of emptiness and aimlessness. Contemporary studies indicate that existential emptiness is linked to issues of meaning and psychological well-being, necessitating resources for individuals to confront and reinterpret these experiences (D'Agostino et al., 2020; Gawda & Korniluk, 2024; Herron & Sani, 2022). Consequently, when individuals encounter existential emptiness, the ability to cope with and derive meaning from their experiences becomes crucial.

One psychological resource individuals can utilize when facing high-pressure situations is coping. Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals employ to manage internal or external demands perceived as exceeding their available resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For individuals with strong religious ties, coping strategies may incorporate religious resources as part of the process of managing life stressors. This form of coping is known as "religious coping", the use of religious beliefs, practices, values, and resources to understand and navigate stressful life events (Pargament, 1997; Pargament et al., 2013).

Research involving Muslim women in Indonesia indicates that spirituality, religious commitment, and one's relationship with God are linked to a sense of meaning in life (Chodijah & Mahalle, 2023; Junaidin et al., 2022). Religious coping differs from general coping strategies because it involves an individual's relationship with something perceived as sacred. Within this process, individuals may employ prayer, acts of worship, the seeking of spiritual support, acceptance, surrender to God, or the reinterpretation of events through the lens of religious belief.

Pargament (1997) distinguishes between positive and negative religious coping. Positive religious coping encompasses efforts to cultivate a closer relationship with God, seek spiritual support, and interpret experiences as part of God's plan or will. Conversely, negative religious coping may be characterized by feelings of abandonment by God, anger toward God, or the interpretation of suffering as divine punishment. This distinction is significant because religion does not invariably yield the same psychological outcomes; the specific ways in which individuals utilize and interpret religion when facing stress determine the function of the religious coping employed (Pargament, 1997; Pargament et al., 2000).

Religious coping is also highly relevant in the context of existential experiences, as a crisis of meaning relates not only to emotional distress but also to how individuals perceive themselves, their lives, and their purpose. Studies demonstrate that positive religious coping is associated with the ability to find meaning in life, whereas negative religious coping is linked to difficulties in finding meaning and increased feelings of hopelessness. These findings underscore the vital role religious coping plays in navigating the loss of meaning (Wnuk, 2024). Thus, religious coping can serve not only to help manage psychological distress but also to assist individuals in maintaining or rebuilding a sense of meaning when facing experiences that shatter their understanding of life. Research on religion and coping indicates that positive religious coping, intrinsic religiousness, and belief in God are associated with more positive psychological outcomes, whereas negative religious coping is linked to poorer outcomes (Imran et al., 2022).

The relevance of religious coping is particularly significant for Muslim housewives, as their daily lives unfold within an Islamic framework that positions the relationship with Allah as a central element of their life orientation. From an Islamic perspective, practices such as supplication (*dua)*, ritual prayer (*salat)*, remembrance of God (*dhikr*), Quranic recitation, reliance on God (*tawakkul*), and other forms of worship serve as sources of tranquility and spiritual strength, as well as means to navigate life's challenges (Gondal et al., 2022; Saged et al., 2022). Research involving Muslim women further indicates that religious practices and the relationship with Allah provide support in coping with stress and contribute to psychological well-being. Within the context of Indonesian Muslim society, religion serves as a key resource for individuals addressing psychological issues and the challenges of daily life (Chodijah & Mahalle, 2023; Junaidin et al., 2022).

However, religious coping among Muslims cannot be understood merely in terms of the frequency of religious activities. It encompasses how individuals utilize their religious beliefs and practices to interpret, confront, and respond to difficult experiences. Studies on Indonesian Muslims demonstrate that religious coping is a form of coping behavior that emerges when facing psychological issues, with religious practices perceived as sources of calm and support during times of stress (Saito et al., 2025). This highlights the importance of a deeper understanding of religious coping based on individuals' subjective experiences, particularly when religion is employed to address existential concerns.

Although previous studies have established the relevance of existential meaning, religious coping, and spirituality to psychological well-being, several gaps remain. Research on existential emptiness has primarily examined the subjective experience of emptiness and its relationship with meaning, psychological well-being, and existential adjustment (D'Agostino et al., 2020; Herron & Sani, 2022; Gawda & Korniluk, 2024). These studies demonstrate that emptiness is closely associated with difficulties in experiencing meaning and direction in life, but they provide limited insight into how such experiences unfold within the specific social and religious context of Muslim women who primarily occupy domestic roles.

Research on religious coping further indicates that religious beliefs, practices, and relationships with God can function as psychological resources when individuals encounter stressful or disruptive life experiences (Pargament, 1997; Pargament et al., 2000; Imran et al., 2022). Positive religious coping has been associated with meaning-making and more adaptive psychological outcomes, whereas negative religious coping may be associated with hopelessness and difficulties in finding meaning (Wnuk, 2024). However,

much of this literature has examined religious coping in relation to general psychological distress, illness, trauma, or major life stressors rather than existential emptiness specifically.

Studies involving Muslim women in Indonesia have also demonstrated that spirituality, religious commitment, and attachment to God are associated with meaning in life (Chodijah & Mahalle, 2023; Junaidin et al., 2022). These findings indicate the importance of religious and spiritual resources in understanding women's experiences of meaning. Nevertheless, Muslim women are not a homogeneous group, and the existential experiences associated with occupying the specific role of a housewife remain insufficiently explored. The transition into marriage and motherhood involves changes in identity, autonomy, responsibilities, priorities, and opportunities for personal development, which may shape how existential emptiness is experienced and interpreted.

From an Islamic psychology perspective, this gap is particularly important because psychological experiences cannot be fully separated from the individual's relationship with Allah, religious values, and orientation toward the purpose of life. Existing Islamic psychology literature has discussed spirituality, meaning in life, and religious coping, but empirical phenomenological accounts of how Muslim housewives themselves experience existential emptiness and employ religious resources to reconstruct meaning remain limited. Moreover, previous research on religious coping has frequently emphasized relationships between variables, whereas less attention has been given to the lived experience and meaning-making process through which Muslim housewives use religious coping when confronting existential emptiness.

Therefore, the specific gap addressed by this study concerns the limited empirical understanding of how Muslim housewives experience existential emptiness and how they utilize religious coping to reinterpret this experience and reconstruct meaning in life within an Islamic psychological framework. To address this gap, the present study employs a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Muslim housewives facing existential emptiness, the forms of religious coping they employ, and the meanings they attribute to these coping processes. The study contributes to Islamic psychology by illustrating how religious coping may function not merely as a strategy for reducing psychological distress, but also as a process through which existential emptiness can become a point of reflection, meaning reconstruction, and renewed orientation toward Allah.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using the descriptive phenomenology method to describe the experiences of Muslim housewives facing existential emptiness, specifically focusing on how they utilize religious coping strategies in response to this experience. The descriptive phenomenology approach enables the researcher to depict subjective experiences as lived by the participants and to understand the meanings emerging from those experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2009). To maintain a focus on the participants' experiences, the researcher applied the principle of bracketing (*epoché*) by setting aside assumptions, personal experiences, and preconceptions during the data collection and analysis processes (Baklien et al., 2024).

Participants were selected via convenience sampling based on the following criteria: Muslim women serving as housewives who do not employ domestic helpers, do not work in the formal sector, are currently married (with a marriage duration of at least five years), and have at least one child. Four participants meeting these criteria took part in the study

and were willing to share their experiences openly and reflectively. Data collection was conducted online through individual interviews using WhatsApp voice calls. Participant identities were anonymized using codes (P1–P4) to ensure confidentiality.

Data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews using a guide developed around the research focus, which was applied flexibly during the sessions. Questions were designed to explore the experience of the housewife role, the experience of existential emptiness, and the nature and application of religious coping strategies in dealing with this condition. Interviews were recorded upon obtaining participant consent, then transcribed verbatim and supplemented with field notes. Data collection ceased when the information obtained reached sufficiency and no longer yielded new insights relevant to the research focus (Guest et al., 2006).

Data analysis followed the descriptive phenomenology principles outlined by Giorgi and Giorgi (2009). The analysis process involved repeatedly reading the transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding, identifying meaning units, transforming these units into psychological meanings, and grouping similar meanings to form themes that describe the structure of the experience. The analysis results were then cross-checked against the original transcripts to ensure the themes were grounded in the empirical data. Data trustworthiness was maintained through repeated readings of the transcripts, the use of verbatim transcripts and field notes, clarification during interviews, and the application of bracketing.

Prior to the interviews, each participant received an explanation regarding the research objectives and procedures, potential benefits and risks, and their right to decline answering specific questions or to withdraw from the study. All data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes.

Results and Discussion

Data collection was conducted via WhatsApp voice calls based on participant availability, yielding sufficient data to address the research focus. The following is a summary table outlining the participants' profiles:

Table 1. Participant Profiles

Participant	Age (years)	Duration of Marriage (years)	Number of children
P1	45	21	1
P2	40	20	3
P3	48	20	3
P4	41	15	3

The study involved four Muslim housewives aged 40–48, with marriage durations ranging from 15 to 21 years. All participants had children, with family sizes ranging from one to three children. Participant characteristics are presented in Table 1.

The presentation of results focuses on the participants' lived experiences in the role of housewife, their experiences of existential emptiness, and the various forms of religious coping employed to deal with these experiences. Each theme is presented using verbatim quotes to represent the participants' experiences, followed by a descriptive elaboration.

Based on the analysis of interview data, three main themes emerged: (1) the transition to the role of housewife, (2) existential emptiness, and (3) religious coping in the face of existential emptiness. These themes represent a synthesis of the participants' experiences, illustrating the dynamics of the emergence of this emptiness and the efforts made to cope with it.

Table 2. Theme and Theme Description

No	Theme	Theme Description
1	The Transition to the Role of Housewife	Changes in roles are accompanied by adjustments regarding domestic responsibilities, child-rearing, relationships with one's spouse, personal freedom, as well as identity and life purpose.
2	Existential Emptiness	A sense of emptiness arises when prior expectations, identities, or life goals do not align with the reality of being a housewife . This state is characterized by a loss of direction, confusion, a sense of stagnation, and questions regarding the meaning of self and life.
3	Religious Coping in Facing Existential Emptiness	Religious coping is practiced through prayer, acts of worship, reading the Quran, attending religious study sessions, self-reflection, and interpreting experiences in the context of one's relationship with God. This form of coping helps foster acceptance, inner peace, and a sense of direction in navigating life.

1. Transition to the Role of Housewife

a. Increased Responsibilities

Participants perceived marriage and the transition to becoming a housewife as a life phase that brings changes to responsibilities, priorities, freedom, relationships, identity, and psychological well-being. These changes necessitate adjustments to the roles of wife and mother, as well as to a new family life. P1 described the shift in responsibilities after marriage: "*It feels different. There is a sense of greater responsibility*" (P1). This change became even more pronounced after having children, as P1 noted: "*There is more to think about; it's not just about myself anymore, I have to consider my husband and child as well*" (P1).

Increased responsibilities are accompanied by changes in personal space and life priorities. P2 explained, "*After having a child, we have to adjust. It turns out we no longer fully belong to ourselves; we have to share, sharing our time, energy, and thoughts with our child and husband*" (P2). P2 also experienced limitations in pursuing personal desires: "*When we are young, we have many aspirations and wishes. So, realizing that we have to limit, or curb, those desires inevitably has a psychological impact*" (P2). Meanwhile, P4 described the change in decision-making freedom following marriage: "*The difference between being single and married lies in freedom. When single, I was freer to make decisions; once married, I have to get my husband's permission*" (P4).

Marriage brings about changes in an individual's roles and responsibilities within family life (Permana & Medynna, 2021). For housewife s, this transition involves a process of adjustment regarding the allocation of time, energy, and attention, as well as shifting

priorities following the arrival of a spouse and children. Upon marriage, individuals not only face a change in status but must also adapt to new relationship dynamics and family life. Adjusting relationship dynamics is an inherent part of married life, particularly when individuals face shifting family demands and circumstances (Permana & Aliyyatussa'adah, 2024). Research findings indicate that this process encompasses increased domestic and caregiving responsibilities, shifting priorities, limited opportunities for self-actualization, reliance on one's partner, identity adjustments, and psychological fatigue.

These escalating demands align with Role Theory, which posits that every social status entails a set of expectations and obligations (Biddle, 1986), and the concept of "role overload," wherein role demands exceed an individual's available time, energy, and psychological capacity (Creary & Gordon, 2016; Goode, 1960). Studies consistently show that women tend to shoulder a greater share of unpaid care work and the "mental load," thereby increasing the likelihood of role conflict and psychological strain (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Raudasoja et al., 2022; Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023). Consequently, the increased responsibilities faced by housewife s signify not only a rise in domestic labor but also a shift in the psychological demands associated with fulfilling family roles.

b. Limitations on Freedom and Shifts in Life Priorities

This transition also entails adjusting to new relationships and a new family environment. P3 describes this process as an experience requiring adaptation to the values and roles within her husband's family: *"Basically, early in the marriage, I had to synchronize things, find my place, and blend two sets of values, mine and my husband's. I had to figure out how to survive here. Plus, my roles and responsibilities increased"* (P3). Adjusting to the new environment was also experienced as a psychological burden, as P3 noted: *"In my case, especially since I was taken to a new place, my husband's home, immediately after the wedding, I needed to adjust. That adjustment period was likely where the psychological burden was felt"* (P3).

These changes also affected the scope for self-actualization and personal identity. Findings regarding limited freedom and the postponement of personal aspirations align with research showing that mothers may shift their achievement orientation from personal goals to successfully fulfilling their roles as wives and mothers (Christopher, 2012; Ladge et al., 2012; Raudasoja et al., 2022). However, limited space for self-actualization does not mean the need for personal growth disappears. Self-actualization can undergo changes in form and orientation in response to new roles and life contexts (Fahmi & Savira, 2023; Wills & Petrakis, 2019). This aligns with Identity Theory, which explains that changes in social roles can influence an individual's identity hierarchy (Stryker, 2000; Burke & Stets, 2009). In this context, the identities of wife and mother are negotiated alongside pre-existing personal identities; thus, becoming a housewife represents a process of forming a new identity rather than merely a change in status.

c. Emergence of Attachment and Dependency

Taking on the role of a housewife fosters attachment to and dependency on one's partner and family, in both economic and relational terms. Participant 1 (P1) experienced a strengthening bond with her husband alongside an economic dependency, as he was the sole breadwinner. She expressed, *"the sense of belonging, the bond with my husband is stronger"* (P1) and *"there is anxiety, especially since I don't work, you know; my husband is, so to speak, the only breadwinner"* (P1). This illustrates a dependency on the partner accompanied by concern regarding the family's economic stability.

The dependency on the partner observed in this study should also be understood within the context of a complementary relationship. Attachment Theory posits that a partner can serve as a "secure base" and "safe haven" when an individual faces life stressors and transitions (Bowlby, 1969; Collins & Feeney, 2000). Such dependency is not necessarily pathological; rather, it can manifest as a form of functional interdependence within the family (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). From an Islamic psychological perspective, this relationship can be understood through the concepts of *sakinah* (tranquility), *mawaddah* (affection), and *rahmah* (mercy), which position husband and wife in a mutually supportive and complementary relationship (Mujib & Mudzakir, 2001). At the same time, Islamic values allow space for women to continue developing their personal potential. Consequently, the shift in priorities following marriage is best understood as a transformation in the orientation of self-actualization while fulfilling the trust of family responsibilities, rather than as a loss of the woman's personal identity.

d. Psychological Adaptation in Assuming New Roles

Changes in roles and the demands of family life give rise to various psychological responses. P1 described growing anxiety about fulfilling the roles of wife and mother: "*And then, regarding the role of a mother... I have worries; sometimes it even leans towards overthinking*" (P1). Meanwhile, P2 experienced emotional distress upon entering the role of a mother: "*When the baby suddenly arrived, I experienced 'baby blues', suddenly crying, suddenly wondering why I couldn't achieve the dreams I once had*" (P3). P3, on the other hand, faced an internal conflict regarding the demands of motherhood: "*But as a mother, I felt guilty leaving my children when they were still so young. I would often tear up and cry repeatedly*" (P3).

Findings regarding psychological fatigue indicate that the process of adapting to a new role is not always free from pressure. Continuous domestic routines and caregiving duties can become sources of stress when the demands are perceived to exceed the individual's coping abilities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore, support from a partner and the social environment is crucial in helping mothers navigate the adaptation process. Research shows that support from partners, family, and the social environment plays a role in the adjustment to motherhood and the development of a maternal identity (Mathijssen et al., 2024).

From an Islamic psychological perspective, this adaptation process can be understood through the principle of *tawazun*, maintaining balance across various aspects of life, including psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions (Arroisi et al., 2024). Theoretically, these findings indicate that the transition to becoming a housewife is a multidimensional process encompassing changes in roles, identity, relationships, self-actualization, and psychological demands. Practically, these findings underscore the importance of psychological and social support in helping mothers strike a balance between roles and maintain space for personal growth without neglecting family responsibilities.

2. The Experience of Existential Emptiness Among Housewives

a. Feelings of Emptiness or Hollowness

The experience of existential emptiness arises when participants perceive a discrepancy between their expectations, personal needs, and the reality of life after marriage and while fulfilling the role of a housewife. This sense of emptiness does not always manifest as sadness; rather, it is frequently experienced as a sense that something is missing, lacking, or unfulfilled. Such experiences are reflected in feelings of emptiness, diminished self-worth, and confusion regarding life's direction and purpose.

P1 described this sense of emptiness during the early stages of marriage, stating, "*Feeling empty, feeling like something was missing in life, well, that was at the beginning of the marriage*" (P1). P2 had a similar experience during the role transition from wife to mother: "*I felt that emptiness when I gave birth to my first child, during that shift in roles from wife to mother*" (P2). This role transition was also linked to the emergence of negative self-perception. P2 revealed, "*Once I went from being a wife to a mother, having my first child, having a baby, and living on my own because my husband was busy with college and work to support us, that was when I felt like, 'Why have I become such a useless person? I can't do anything'*" (P2).

Research findings indicate that existential emptiness among housewives manifests as feelings of emptiness, a loss of life direction, boredom with routine, and a diminishing sense of self-worth when opportunities to develop one's potential are limited. These experiences arise primarily during the transition into the roles of wife and mother, a time when individuals must adjust their identities, relationships, responsibilities, and life priorities. This condition aligns with Frankl's (2017) view that existential emptiness occurs when an individual loses their orientation toward meaning, causing life to feel empty and purposeless, and leading to a mechanical existence. Role transitions that are not immediately accompanied by the formation of a new sense of meaning can leave individuals confused and struggling to understand the direction of their lives (Costin & Vignoles, 2020; Schnell, 2021). In the context of the transition to motherhood (matrescence), psychological, social, and identity changes also necessitate a complex process of adaptation (Mulawarman et al., 2024).

b. Loss of Direction in Life

Beyond feelings of emptiness and uselessness, some participants began to question their existence and life direction. P1 remarked, "*Sometimes I wonder, what is my purpose?*" (P1), and "*I feel like... what am I actually here for? What am I really doing? I'm still searching.*" (P1). These questions reveal confusion regarding self-worth and life purpose while navigating domestic roles. For P4, this confusion arose during the relatively rapid transition into the role of a mother: "*Then, when my first child was about nine months old, I was pregnant again, so the gap was short, and at first, I just felt confused.*" (P4).

This loss of direction can be exacerbated by a lack of fulfillment regarding psychological needs, particularly autonomy and competence. Self-Determination Theory posits that the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fundamental to individual well-being and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Repetitive domestic routines, limited scope for personal decision-making, and reduced opportunities to develop competence can lead to a perception that daily activities lack personal satisfaction. Under these conditions, routines that were originally part of family life may come to be perceived as merely mechanical activities if they are not linked to personally meaningful goals and values.

c. Doubts Regarding Self-Worth and Existence

Participants 1, 2, and 4 described the emergence of questions regarding self-worth, their contributions, and the meaning of their existence in daily life. Internal struggles gave rise to questions and confusion about the self, leading them to question their own existence and value. P1 described how, as domestic roles became a major part of her life, questions arose regarding her existence, utility, and the purpose of the life she was living. This experience was expressed through the statement, "*Sometimes I feel, what is my purpose?*" (P1).

This statement indicates that P1 began to question her value and existence amidst the changes in the roles she was fulfilling.

Meanwhile, P2 experienced feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness while performing the role of a housewife. This experience was expressed through the statement, "*Going from wife to mother, having the first child, having a baby, and living alone because my husband was busy with college and work to support me, that was when I felt like, 'Why have I become such a useless person? I can't do anything.'*" (P2). These feelings persisted, leading P2 to remark, "*Why do I feel this way? I feel like my life is completely useless.*" *(P2)*. These experiences demonstrate that role changes triggered negative self-appraisal and a sense of lost self-worth.

In contrast, P4 described beginning to feel a sense of self-worth and usefulness when she had the opportunity to work as a teacher. This experience was expressed through the statement, "*Yes, when I first started teaching at the kindergarten, I felt... Oh, it turns out I can be useful; I can be of benefit to others.*" (P4). This statement indicates that P4 began to rediscover a sense of usefulness and the ability to benefit others, after previously feeling that her life could not make a meaningful contribution.

This sense of emptiness is also reflected in a diminished sense of self-worth. Limited opportunities to contribute and develop one's potential can lead individuals to evaluate themselves based on the achievements or productivity that previously served as sources of self-worth. This situation can be understood through the concept of contingent self-worth, where self-esteem depends on success in specific domains (Crocker & Park, 2004), as well as Rogers' (1959) concept of incongruence, which refers to the gap between the ideal self and actual experience. Consistent with Erikson (1963), limited opportunities to contribute can be linked to stagnation, a sense of unproductiveness and a decline in meaningful experiences. Thus, the existential emptiness observed in this study relates not only to a loss of purpose but also to a shift in how individuals perceive their self-worth after assuming domestic roles.

Overall, the existential emptiness experienced by the participants is characterized by a sense of void, diminished self-worth, and confusion regarding their existence and life direction. This emptiness arises amidst role transitions and when lived experiences do not fully align with personal expectations or needs. Such experiences subsequently become part of the participants' process of reflecting on themselves, their roles, and their lives.

From an Islamic psychological perspective, this experience of emptiness highlights the importance of integrating self-meaning with a spiritual orientation. The roles of wife and mother are not merely social statuses but also a sacred trust (*amanah*) that can constitute an act of worship when performed with an orientation toward Allah (Mujib & Mudzakir, 2001; Haque, 2004). Consequently, the meaningfulness of life is determined not solely by personal achievements or contributions in the public sphere, but also by the ability to view life's activities as an act of devotion to Allah. This aligns with Surah Adh-Dhariyat (51:56) regarding the purpose of human creation, to worship Allah, and Surah Ar-Ra'd (13:28) regarding the tranquility of the heart found through the remembrance of Allah. This perspective establishes that emptiness need not be viewed as a permanent state; rather, it can serve as a point of reflection for realigning one's life orientation and cultivating a more transcendent source of meaning.

Theoretically, these findings demonstrate that existential emptiness among housewives is a multidimensional experience linked to role transitions, psychological needs, identity, and the orientation of meaning. Practically, the findings underscore the

importance of providing opportunities for housewives to develop competencies, maintain social relationships, engage in personal reflection, and strengthen their spiritual orientation. Such efforts can help mothers view their routines and domestic responsibilities not merely as limitations, but as a part of life to which meaning can be ascribed.

3. Religious Coping in Facing Existential Emptiness

a. Drawing Closer to Allah through Acts of Worship

When experiencing existential emptiness, all participants demonstrated the use of religious coping strategies to deal with feelings of emptiness, powerlessness, and the pressures of daily life. This coping was enacted through increased acts of worship, prayer, Quranic recitation, surrendering oneself to Allah, and reflecting on life experiences. P1 stated, "*Lately, I mostly pray. I pray for good things.*" (P1). Meanwhile, P2 turned to religious activities as a response when feelings of emptiness arose: "*I thought, 'I really need to attend religious study sessions so I don't feel empty.' So, whenever I had the chance, I would go to a study session.*" (P2). She also explained the benefits of reading the Quran when experiencing emptiness: "*Reading the Quran can reduce anxiety; it stops us from dwelling on random thoughts or overthinking. Whenever I feel sad or that emptiness sets in, I immediately pick up the Quran.*" (P2).

The research findings indicate that religious coping serves as a crucial mechanism helping housewives cope with existential emptiness and rebuild a sense of meaning in life. This coping manifests through increased acts of worship, *tawakal* (trusting in Allah), *muhasabah* (self-reflection), and viewing their roles as wives and mothers as a sacred trust (*amanah*) from Allah. These findings align with Pargament's (1997) theory of religious coping, which explains that religion can serve as a source of support and meaning, as well as a strategy for dealing with life's pressures. Thus, in this study, religion functions not merely as a belief system but also as a psychological and spiritual resource in the process of adapting to life changes. Acts of worship, such as prayer (*salat*), Quranic recitation, supplication (*dua*), and remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*), serve as means to attain tranquility, alleviate anxiety and overthinking, and strengthen one's relationship with Allah (Abu-Raiya & Ayten, 2020; Mukharom & Arroisi, 2021).

Importantly, the participants did not describe religious practices merely as activities that temporarily distracted them from feelings of emptiness. Rather, these practices changed the way they understood and responded to the emptiness itself. Prayer and Quranic recitation provided a space for participants to pause, redirect their attention, and reconnect their experiences with Allah. In this process, feelings of emptiness were gradually understood not only as evidence that something was missing in their lives, but also as an invitation to seek spiritual direction. Thus, religious practice functioned as a process of reinterpretation: the experience of emptiness became an opportunity to strengthen the relationship with Allah and reconsider the meaning of everyday life.

b. *Tawakal* (Reliance on God) and *Muhasabah* (Self-Reflection)

Religious coping also manifests as the acceptance of personal limitations and the act of surrendering to God. P1 stated, "*I cannot constantly supervise or watch over my child wherever they are. So, it is, how should I put it, a form of reliance on God*" (P1). This awareness evolved into reflection on life experiences, as P1 expressed: "*As I've grown older, especially given the many trials of life, I've come to deeply realize that there are things beyond our control*" (P1). P3 also demonstrated acceptance of their circumstances through a belief in God's will: "*But if we*

know that this is indeed God's will, intended for our salvation in the hereafter, and knowing there will be a reward and a reckoning, then that changes things" (P3).

Research has shown that *tawakal* helps individuals accept matters beyond their control after having made a sincere effort (*ikhtiar*), thereby reducing anxiety and helping to sustain hope (Rothman, 2021; Wong, 2023). In this context, *tawakal* is not a form of passivity, but rather a combination of effort and surrender to God. *Muhasabah* complements this process through reflection on the self, behavior, and life experiences, allowing difficulties to be understood as opportunities for learning, self-improvement, and the strengthening of faith (Haque, 2004; Rothman, 2021).

The findings suggest that tawakal and muhasabah enabled participants to reinterpret existential emptiness by changing the meaning they attached to difficult experiences. Instead of interpreting limitations, disappointments, or unmet expectations solely as signs of personal failure or a meaningless life, participants gradually viewed them within a broader framework of divine wisdom and personal growth. Muhasabah encouraged them to examine their own thoughts, expectations, and responses, while tawakal helped them accept aspects of life that were beyond their control after making the effort within their capacity. From an Islamic psychology perspective, this process reflects a shift from an exclusively self-focused evaluation of worth toward a more transcendent orientation in which life experiences are understood in relation to Allah, accountability, and the hereafter.

c. Spiritual Interpretation of Roles and Life Sacrifices

Beyond acts of worship and an attitude of surrender, participants viewed the experience of fulfilling their roles as wives and mothers through a religious lens. P1 stated, *"Marriage isn't like what you see in books that romanticize everything. Marriage is an act of worship, so naturally, there are consequences involved"* (P1). P3 also viewed sacrifices made in family life as holding spiritual value: *"Well, the hardships and sacrifices we endure today will eventually be recognized, recognized by Allah, meaning we will receive a reward from Him. That perspective makes the burden feel lighter, Insya Allah"* (P3).

Religious coping is also evident in the spiritual interpretation of roles and sacrifices. When the role of a housewife is understood as a sacred trust (*amanah*) and a form of worship, domestic demands are not viewed merely as burdens but as opportunities to earn spiritual rewards, cultivate patience, and draw closer to Allah (Mukharom & Arroisi, 2021; Windarti et al., 2021). This interpretation demonstrates that religion plays a role in transforming experiences, previously perceived as empty, into experiences imbued with value and purpose. Thus, religious coping not only helps alleviate psychological distress but also facilitates the processes of meaning-making and spiritual transformation.

Overall, the findings indicate that religious coping operated through a process of meaning reconstruction rather than merely through the reduction of emotional distress. Prayer, Quranic recitation, religious learning, muhasabah, tawakal, and the spiritual interpretation of family roles provided participants with ways to reconsider the meaning of their experiences. The process involved three interconnected shifts: from emotional emptiness toward reflection, from perceived limitation toward acceptance and trust in Allah, and from viewing domestic responsibilities as burdens toward recognizing them as an amanah and potential acts of worship. Through these shifts, existential emptiness was not necessarily eliminated immediately, but its meaning was transformed. The participants increasingly developed a sense of direction by relating their personal experiences, roles, and struggles to their relationship with Allah and their orientation toward the hereafter.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the view that religious coping can serve as a psychological resource for navigating life changes and stressors, particularly when individuals experience a loss of direction and meaning. In practical terms, strengthening acts of worship, engaging in self-reflection, practicing *tawakal* (trust in God) coupled with active effort (*ikhtiar*), and adopting a positive perspective on one's role can form part of an Islamic value-based psychological approach for housewives experiencing existential emptiness.

These findings indicate that the process of emerging from this emptiness, within the context of the study, is not merely a matter of psychological recovery but also a transformation of life orientation toward closeness to and servitude of Allah. The study's most significant finding reveals that existential emptiness among Muslim housewives is not simply an experience of losing life's meaning, but rather a turning point toward finding meaning in life. This process unfolds through self-reflection and the strengthening of one's relationship with Allah via religious coping mechanisms. Amidst a loss of direction, role-related pressures, and feelings of emptiness, acts of worship serve as a means to alleviate emotional burdens while simultaneously rebuilding a sense of purpose.

Thus, these findings suggest that the transformation from existential emptiness to finding meaning in life among Muslim housewives occurs through the integration of psychological and spiritual processes. The study broadens the understanding of the experience of emptiness among Muslim housewives, demonstrating that such emptiness does not inevitably lead to a negative outcome; instead, it can serve as a space for reflection that fosters the reconstruction of life's meaning and a stronger orientation toward Allah.

This spiritual interpretation represents an important process of meaning reconstruction. Experiences that were initially associated with limitation, sacrifice, or a reduced sense of personal contribution could be reinterpreted as meaningful when viewed as part of an amanah entrusted by Allah. In other words, the participants' perception of their roles shifted from evaluating their worth primarily through personal achievement or external contribution toward understanding their domestic responsibilities as potentially meaningful acts of worship. This reinterpretation does not eliminate the difficulties associated with the housewife role; rather, it provides a different framework through which those difficulties can be understood and endured. Within an Islamic psychology perspective, meaning is therefore not derived solely from what one achieves or contributes in the public sphere, but also from one's intention, relationship with Allah, and orientation toward worship.

Conclusion

This study explored how four Muslim housewives experienced existential emptiness and used religious coping to respond to it. The findings indicate that religious coping was experienced not only as a way of managing emotional distress, but also as a process of reconstructing meaning. Through prayer, self-reflection (muhasabah), tawakal, and a spiritual interpretation of their roles as wives and mothers, participants were able to reconsider experiences of emptiness, limitation, and sacrifice in relation to their relationship with Allah. In this process, domestic roles could be reinterpreted as an amanah and a potential form of worship, contributing to a renewed sense of direction and meaning.

The main contribution of this study is its phenomenological account of how religious coping may facilitate meaning reconstruction in the experience of existential emptiness

among Muslim housewives. From an Islamic psychology perspective, the findings highlight the importance of considering the individual's relationship with Allah and spiritual orientation when understanding existential experiences.

Practically, these findings suggest that Islamic counseling for housewives may incorporate religiously meaningful reflection, muhasabah, tawakal, and the exploration of personal meaning within family roles. Family support may also be strengthened by recognizing the psychological and spiritual needs of housewives, rather than viewing their domestic responsibilities solely in terms of practical duties. However, these implications should be interpreted cautiously, as the study involved only four participants and was intended to provide an in-depth understanding of their lived experiences rather than generalizable conclusions. Further research involving more diverse participants and settings is needed to explore these findings more broadly.

References

Abu-Raiya, H., & Ayten, A. (2020). Religious involvement, interpersonal forgiveness, and mental health and well-being among a multinational sample of Muslims. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 21*(8), 3051–3067. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00213-8

Arroisi, J., Arif, S., & Rahmadi, M. A. (2024). Ibn Sina's biopsychosocial balance: Insights for mental health preservation and Islamic psychology. *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 14*(2). https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.142.08

Badan Pusat Statistik. (2024). *Keadaan angkatan kerja di Indonesia Agustus 2024*. https://www.bps.go.id/id/publication/2024/12/09/6f1fd1036968c8a28e4cfe26/keadaan-angkatan-kerja-di-indonesia-agustus-2024.html

Baklien, B., Marthoenis, M., & Thurston, M. (2024). Existential well-being in nature: A cross-cultural and descriptive phenomenological approach. *Journal of Medical Humanities, 45*(3), 225–242. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10912-024-09846-0

Biddle, B. J. (1986). Recent developments in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 12*, 67–92. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.12.080186.000435

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. Basic Books.

Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2009). *Identity theory*. Oxford University Press.

Cerrato, J., & Cifre, E. (2018). Gender inequality in household chores and work-family conflict. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*, 1330. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01330

Chodijah, M., & Mahalle, S. (2023). The Muslim's meaning of life: How religious commitment and attachment to God influenced it? *Khazanah Theologia, 5*(1), 55–70. https://doi.org/10.15575/kt.v5i1.20747

Christopher, K. (2012). Extensive mothering: Employed mothers' constructions of the good mother. *Gender & Society, 26*(1), 73–96. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211427700

Costin, V., & Vignoles, V. L. (2020). Meaning under threat: The role of meaning in life during major life transitions. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 33*(4), 345–362.

Collins, N. L., & Feeney, B. C. (2000). A safe haven: An attachment theory perspective on support seeking and caregiving in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*(6), 1053–1073. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.6.1053

Creary, S. J., & Gordon, J. R. (2016). Role conflict, role overload, and role strain. In C. L. Shehan (Ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Family Studies*. Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119085621.wbefs012

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Crocker, J., & Park, L. E. (2004). The costly pursuit of self-esteem. *Psychological Bulletin, 130*(3), 392–414. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.130.3.392

D'Agostino, A., Pepi, R., Rossi Monti, M., & Starcevic, V. (2020). The feeling of emptiness: A review of a complex subjective experience. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry, 28*(5), 287–295. https://doi.org/10.1097/HRP.0000000000000269

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.). W. W. Norton & Company.

Fahmi, S. A. P., & Savira, S. I. (2023). Aktualisasi diri pada ibu rumah tangga. *Character: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi, 10*(2), 584–602. https://doi.org/10.26740/cjpp.v10i2.53914

Frankl, V. E. (2017). *Man's search for meaning* (H. Priyatna, Trans.). Noura Books. (Original work published 1946).

Gawda, B., & Korniluk, A. (2024). The protective role of curiosity behaviors in coping with existential vacuum. *Behavioral Sciences, 14*(5), 391. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14050391

Giorgi, A., & Giorgi, B. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Duquesne University Press.

Goode, W. J. (1960). *A theory of role strain*. *American Sociological Review, 25*(4), 483–496. https://doi.org/10.2307/2092933

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903

Haque, A. (2004). Psychology from Islamic perspective: Contributions of early Muslim scholars and challenges to contemporary Muslim psychologists. *Journal of Religion and Health, 43*(4), 357–377. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-004-4302-z

Herron, S. J., & Sani, F. (2022). Understanding the typical presentation of emptiness: A study of lived-experience. *Journal of Mental Health, 31*(2), 188–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2021.1922645

Imran, M. H., Zhai, Z., & Iqbal, M. (2022). The role of religious coping to overcome mental distress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic: An integrative review. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy, 22*(3), 817–835. https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12327

Junaidin, J., Latief, N. S. A., & Kahar, A. S. (2022). Dimensions of spirituality and meaning of life in Muslim women wearing hijab in Indonesia. *Psikis: Jurnal Psikologi Islami, 8*(2), 151–159. https://doi.org/10.19109/psikis.v8i2.9781

Kelley, H. H., & Thibaut, J. W. (1978). *Interpersonal relations: A theory of interdependence*. Wiley.

Ladge, J. J., Clair, J. A., & Greenberg, D. (2012). Cross-domain identity transition during liminal periods: Constructing multiple selves as professional and mother during pregnancy. *Academy of Management Journal, 55*(6), 1449–1471. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.0538

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer.

Mathijssen, J. J. P., Dirks, E., & van Bakel, H. J. A. (2024). Transition to motherhood: Adverse childhood experiences, and support from partner, family and friends. *Maternal and Child Health Journal, 28*(7), 1242–1249. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-024-03922-6

Mujib, A., & Mudzakir, J. (2001). *Nuansa-Nuansa Psikologi Islam*. RajaGrafindo Persada.

Mukharom, R. A., & Arroisi, J. (2021). Makna hidup perspektif Victor Frankl: Kajian dimensi spiritual dalam logoterapi. *TAJDID: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin, 20*(1), 91–115. https://doi.org/10.30631/tjd.v20i1.139

Mulawarman, W. G., Rahmat, A., & Mirnawati, M. (2024). Re-orientation of women's career self-concept in the transition period of motherhood. *British Journal of Global Ecology and Sustainable Development, 24*, 27–37.

Pargament, K. I. (1997). *The psychology of religion and coping: Theory, research, practice*. Guilford Press.

Pargament, K. I. (2013). *Spiritually integrated psychotherapy: Understanding and addressing the sacred*. Guilford Press.

Pargament, K. I., & Mahoney, A. (2005). Sacred matters: Sanctification as a vital topic for the psychology of religion. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 15*(3), 179–198. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327582ijpr1503_1

Park, C. L. (2010). Making sense of the meaning literature: An integrative review of meaning making and its effects on adjustment to stressful life events. *Psychological Bulletin, 136*(2), 257–301. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018301

Permana, M. Z. (2020). Pengembangan identitas baru: Konsep perluasan diri dalam relasi interpersonal. In A. F. Helmi, C. L. Rembulan, & A. Reginasari (Eds.), *Psikologi untuk Indonesia: Isu-isu terkini relasi sosial dari intrapersonal hingga interorganisasi* (pp. 43–60). Gadjah Mada University Press.

Permana, M. Z., & Medynna, A. D. N. (2021). Ribet!: Persepsi menikah pada *emerging adulthood*. *Psikostudia: Jurnal Psikologi, 10*(3), 248–257. https://doi.org/10.30872/psikostudia.v10i3.5509

Permana, M. Z., & Aliyyatussa'adah, I. (2024). Eksplorasi psikologis relasi pasangan menikah yang tinggal bersama orang tua/mertua di Indonesia. *Empowerment Jurnal Mahasiswa Psikologi Universitas Buana Perjuangan Karawang, 4*(2), 35–40. https://doi.org/10.36805/empowerment.v4i2.1176

Raudasoja, M., Sorkkila, M., Laitila, A., & Aunola, K. (2022). *I feel many contradictory emotions*: Finnish mothers' discursive struggles with motherhood. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 84*(3), 752–772. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12828

Reich-Stiebert, N., Froehlich, L., & Voltmer, J.-B. (2023). Gendered mental labor: A systematic literature review on the cognitive dimension of unpaid work within the household and childcare. *Sex Roles, 88*(7–8), 475–494. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-023-01362-0

Rogers, C. R. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships as developed in the client-centered framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A study of a science* (Vol. 3, pp. 184–256). McGraw-Hill.

Rothman, A. (2021). Islamic psychology and psychotherapy: An Islamic model of the soul. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003044959

Rusbult, C. E., & Van Lange, P. A. M. (2003). Interdependence, interaction, and relationships. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, 351–375. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.54.101601.145059

Schnell, T. (2021). The psychology of meaning in life. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367855378

Stryker, S., & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present, and future of an identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 63*(4), 284–297. https://doi.org/10.2307/2695840

Vansteenkiste, M., Ryan, R. M., & Soenens, B. (2020). Basic psychological need theory: Advancements, critical themes, and future directions. *Motivation and Emotion, 44*(1), 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-019-09818-1

Wills, L. A., & Petrakis, M. (2019). The self in motherhood: A systematised review of relational self-construal and wellbeing in mothers. *Advances in Mental Health*, 17(1), 72–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/18387357.2018.1476066

Windarti, A. R., Hakim, M. Z., & Rasalwati, U. H. (2021). Kebermaknaan hidup ibu rumah tangga dengan HIV/AIDS di kelompok dukungan sebaya "Smile Plus" Temanggung. *REHSOS: Jurnal Ilmiah Rehabilitasi Sosial*, *03*(02), 189–205. https://doi.org/10.31595/rehsos.v3i02.448

Wnuk, M. (2024). The mechanisms underlying religious coping and hopelessness: Role of meaning in life and affectivity. *Pastoral Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-024-01181-4

Wong, P. T. P. (2012). Toward a dual-systems model of what makes life worth living. In P. T. P. Wong (Ed.), *The human quest for meaning: Theories, research, and applications* (2nd ed., pp. 3–22). Routledge.

Wong, P. T. P. (2023). The psychology of existential well-being and meaning. *International Journal of Existential Positive Psychology*, *12*(1).