

Musyrifah Strategies for Addressing Homesickness Among Female Students in An Indonesian Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

Homesickness is a common psychosocial challenge among students transitioning to residential education, potentially hindering emotional adjustment and social adaptation. Although previous studies have examined homesickness as an individual psychological condition, limited attention has been given to the role of resident mentors (*musyrifah*) in supporting students within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). This study explores the dynamics of homesickness and the mentoring strategies employed by *musyrifah* to facilitate students' adaptation. A qualitative case study was conducted at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School for Girls, Malang, Indonesia. Six participants, comprising three *musyrifah*, two newly admitted female students experiencing homesickness, and one guidance and counseling teacher, were purposively selected. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive thematic analysis. Homesickness was manifested through emotional longing, cognitive rumination, social withdrawal, and adaptation difficulties. The findings indicate that *musyrifah* supported students through continuous emotional monitoring, relational mentoring, intensive individual assistance, structured activity engagement, and collaboration with guidance and counseling teachers. These interconnected strategies fostered emotional security, strengthened social connectedness, and facilitated gradual adjustment to boarding school life. The findings highlight the central role of *musyrifah* as first-line emotional supporters in managing homesickness through sustained relational mentoring embedded in students' daily lives. This study contributes a contextual understanding of institution-based emotional support in Islamic boarding schools while underscoring the need for broader multi-site studies to examine the transferability of these findings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Homesickness is one of the most common psychological challenges experienced by students living in residential educational settings, including Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and other educational dormitories (Leng, L. L. & Dayimu, 2025; Zhong, Feng, Y., & Xu, 2024). A *pesantren* is a

traditional Islamic educational institution in which students (*santri*) live together while pursuing religious and formal education under the guidance of teachers (Islamic, Ishaq, & Dayati, 2024; Mujahid, 2021). Living away from home requires students to adapt emotionally, socially, and behaviorally, and difficulties during this transition may adversely affect their academic engagement and psychological well-being (Fan & Cui, 2025; Muhajir, 2022; Zhang, 2024). Data from 2025 indicated that approximately 34.9% of Indonesian adolescents experienced mental health problems during the transition phase (Arulsamy et al., 2025; Effendy, 2025). Given that most *santri* are adolescents, understanding emotional adjustment in residential educational settings is essential to supporting both their psychological well-being and their academic and spiritual development (Dwi Utari & Hamid, 2021).

The most common psychological challenge experienced by students in residential educational settings is homesickness, an emotional response to separation from home and attachment figures that is characterized by longing, anxiety, and emotional distress (Cassidy, Stern, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2025; Diamond & Keefe, 2024; Wersshffani, 2023). Homesickness also involves cognitive rumination, persistent thoughts about home, difficulty concentrating, and social withdrawal, all of which may interfere with students' adjustment to boarding school life (Nartova-Bochaver, Reznichenko, Ochoa, & Zulkarnain, 2024; Tabarani et al., 2025). If left unaddressed, prolonged homesickness may contribute to more serious psychological problems and reduced academic performance (Demetriou, Boulton, Bowden, M. R., Thapa, & Guastella, 2022; Urbańska-Grosz, Walkiewicz, M., & Sitek, 2024).

This study focuses on female students at the Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School for Girls in Malang because they reside in gender-segregated dormitories, where daily emotional support is primarily provided by female resident mentors (*musyrifah*). Among newly enrolled students, homesickness was reflected in emotional longing for home, social withdrawal, and a strong desire to return to their families. The transition from family life to the structured and disciplined environment of the *pesantren* requires substantial emotional and social adjustment. Without appropriate daily support, this transition may hinder students' adaptation and sense of belonging within the boarding school community.

Institutional social support is globally recognized as a key protective factor against the negative impacts of neighborhood transitions (Ball, Banerjee, M., Holliman, & Tyndall, 2024; Ball, Banerjee, Holliman, & Tyndall, 2025; Gugushvili & Otto, 2023; Surtiari, Wannewitz, Prasetyoputra, Hadumaon Siagian, & Garschagen, 2024). Supportive relationships with surrogate caregivers have been shown to reduce homesickness by providing emotional security and a sense of belonging (Yee, Fine, Lindsay, Laszlo, & Librach, 2023). Recent studies further emphasize the importance of empathetic mentoring rather than purely disciplinary supervision in supporting students' emotional adjustment (Bollen, 2024; Mikkelsen & Madsen, 2025). Accordingly, the effectiveness of institutional support depends not only on formal services but also on the quality of everyday relational support available within the dormitory environment (Manvelian, Boyd, O'Hara, Watters, C., Liu, & Sbarra, 2023).

However, the effectiveness of non-clinical mentors in supporting students' emotional well-being remains a matter of debate. Some researchers question whether individuals without formal clinical psychology training can adequately respond to students experiencing emotional distress (Liu, J. & Zhang, 2025). Conversely, other studies argue that familial, spiritual, and culturally embedded approaches may be more acceptable and meaningful for students living in Islamic boarding schools (Koenig, 2023; Rykkje et al., 2022). This debate highlights the need to better understand how resident mentors contribute to students' emotional adjustment within the *pesantren* context.

Although homesickness has been widely investigated, most previous studies have examined it primarily as an individual psychological condition (Rodríguez, González-Suárez, Vieites, Piñeiro, I., & Díaz-Freire, 2022). Relatively few studies have explored the role of resident mentors as intermediate caregivers in Islamic boarding schools. Moreover, limited research has explained how non-clinical mentors provide daily emotion regulation support for adolescent students experiencing homesickness (Chen, 2025; Hack-Polay, D. & Mahmoud, 2021; Tabarani et al., 2025). In Indonesian *pesantren*, this role is performed by *musyrifah*, who are senior female students officially appointed to supervise dormitory

life and support younger students' daily adjustment. Unlike the kyai or bu nyai, who serve as the principal religious leaders of the pesantren, musyrifah interact closely with students through everyday residential life, placing them in a unique position to provide continuous emotional support despite having no formal clinical training.

To address this research gap, the present study examines how *musyrifah* provide institution-based emotion-regulation mentoring to support female students experiencing homesickness during their transition to boarding school life. The analysis is informed by Gross's (1998, 2015) Process Model of Emotion Regulation, which provides the analytical framework for understanding how *musyrifah* facilitate students' emotional adjustment through continuous emotional monitoring, relational mentoring, structured activity engagement, and collaboration with guidance and counseling teachers. Rather than conceptualizing their role as a form of emotional control, this study views institution-based emotion-regulation mentoring as a relational support process that enables students to recognize, manage, and gradually regulate emotional responses arising from separation from home and adaptation to a new residential environment.

Within the context of Islamic boarding schools, institution-based emotion-regulation mentoring differs from other forms of student support. Unlike general mentoring, which primarily focuses on academic, religious, and daily boarding school guidance, emotion-regulation mentoring emphasizes students' emotional adaptation during the transition to residential life. It also differs from emotional support typically provided by peers, parents, or other caregivers, which mainly involves empathy, reassurance, and emotional comfort, and from broader social support that promotes connectedness and reduces feelings of isolation through peer relationships. Furthermore, although guidance and counseling teachers provide professional interventions for students experiencing persistent or severe psychological difficulties, *musyrifah* function as first-line mentors who offer continuous, everyday emotional assistance embedded in students' daily dormitory experiences. This distinctive position enables them to identify early signs of homesickness and provide timely relational support before more intensive counseling becomes necessary.

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are twofold: (1) to examine the dynamics of homesickness among newly admitted female students at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School for Girls in Malang, and (2) to analyze the strategies employed by *musyrifah* to facilitate students' emotional adjustment during the transition to boarding school life. The findings demonstrate that *musyrifah* play a central role as first-line emotional supporters through continuous relational mentoring, emotional monitoring, activity-based engagement, and collaboration with guidance and counseling teachers. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is constrained by structural challenges, particularly the disproportionate mentor-to-student ratio. By elucidating these institutionally embedded mentoring practices, this study contributes to the growing literature on student well-being in residential education and offers a contextual framework for strengthening emotion-regulation support within Islamic boarding schools.

2. METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative approach with a case study design to investigate the strategies employed by *musyrifah* (resident mentors) in managing student homesickness at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School (PPA Malang), located in Karangsono Village, Pagelaran District, Malang Regency, East Java, Indonesia. Established in 1963, the boarding school implements an integrated residential education system in which female students live under the daily supervision of *musyrifah*, who are responsible for providing academic, religious, disciplinary, and emotional guidance. The research site was selected because it provides a relevant context for examining the mentoring strategies used to support newly admitted female students experiencing homesickness. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the phenomenon under investigation. The participants comprised three *musyrifah* who had served as resident mentors for at least one year, were directly

responsible for supervising female dormitory students, and had experience assisting students experiencing homesickness, two newly admitted junior high school (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) students experiencing homesickness who had resided in the dormitory for less than six months and were identified through preliminary observation and recommendations from the Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher, and one Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher who was selected because of responsibility for providing counseling services and monitoring students' psychosocial adjustment.

Table 1. Participant Profile

Code	Role	n	Key Characteristics
M1–M3	<i>Musyrifah</i> (Resident mentors)	3	Resident mentors with at least one year of mentoring experience
S1–S2	Female students	2	Newly admitted female students experiencing homesickness.
BK1	Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher	1	Teacher responsible for providing counseling services.

Data collection was carried out from February 1 to April 30, 2026, utilizing semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. The interviews were conducted face-to-face using a semi-structured interview guide in the female administrative office, the Guidance and Counseling (BK) room, and the guest hall, depending on participants' convenience. Each interview lasted approximately 40–60 minutes, was audio-recorded with participants' consent, and was subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Non-participant observation was employed because the researcher did not reside in or actively participate in dormitory life. Instead, the researcher observed naturally occurring interactions between *musyrifah* and students, focusing on emotional support practices, communication patterns, and students' responses to homesickness within the dormitory environment. Documentation was used to complement the interview and observational data.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, executed through a systematic thematic analysis process. First, the coding phase began by manually transcribing all audio recordings verbatim into Microsoft Word, followed by multiple readings to achieve data immersion. The researcher conducted open coding by highlighting specific phrases related to emotional distress and coping efforts, assigning descriptive labels (e.g., "nighttime crying," "sibling-like comfort"). Second, the theme generation phase involved clustering these initial codes into broader categories based on semantic patterns, which were then conceptualized into main themes such as "Dynamics of Homesickness" and "Role of *Musyrifah*." Third, the conclusion drawing phase was executed by verifying these themes against field observation notes and implementing source triangulation across informants to ensure data validity and to enhance credibility and reduce researcher bias (Miles & Hubberman, 1994).

Data saturation in this study was achieved during the second round of deep interviews in mid-April 2026. The researcher determined that data collection had reached its saturation point based on two operational indicators: (1) informational redundancy, where further interviews with both the *musyrifah* and the homesick students yielded no new conceptual codes, strategies, or emotional dimensions, and (2) structural replication, where the descriptions of the *musyrifah*'s emotional controlling flow matched the independent observational notes and the institutional reports provided by the Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Dynamics of Homesickness in Female Students

The empirical findings indicate that homesickness among female students does not emerge as an isolated psychological phenomenon but develops within the mentoring structure provided by musyrifah (resident mentors). Based on interviews with the Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher, musyrifah, and newly admitted female students, homesickness was most frequently experienced during the initial stage of boarding school life. The participants described homesickness as feelings of longing for family, emotional sadness, persistent thoughts about home, and difficulty adapting to the new environment.

The findings further reveal that homesickness at Al-Khoirot Girls' Islamic Boarding School is continuously monitored by the musyrifah through daily observation of students' emotional and social behavior. Early signs of homesickness were identified through changes such as social withdrawal, reduced interaction with peers, frequent crying, and expressions of wanting to return home. Based on the thematic analysis of interview and observation data, the dynamics of homesickness were categorized into emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions, together with the role of the musyrifah, coping processes, and adaptation outcomes, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis of Homesickness Dynamics in the Context of *Musyrifah* Assistance

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Empirical Evidence (Interview Excerpt)
Dynamics of Homesickness	Emotional Response	Feelings of longing, sadness, desire to return home	<i>"Awal masuk itu rasanya berat sekali, terutama kalau malam... jadi ingin pulang."</i> (female Students)
	Cognitive Response	Persistent thoughts about home, difficulty focusing	The female students showed that their thoughts were constantly focused on home, especially during break time or at night.
	Social Withdrawal	Reduced interaction, passive behavior	<i>"Santri baru biasanya masih belum terbuka, lebih banyak diam."</i> (<i>Musyrifah</i> /Guidance and Counseling Teacher)
Role of <i>Musyrifah</i> in Dynamics	Early Emotional Monitoring	Identifying signs of homesickness through behavior	<i>Musyrifah</i> monitors female students who appear gloomy, withdrawn, or less interactive.
	Relational Support	Emotional closeness, personal attention	<i>"Yang paling membantu itu pendampingan dari musyrifah..."</i> (female Students)
	Intensive Assistance	Continuous daily mentoring (morning to night)	<i>"The students are accompanied from the moment they wake up until they go to bed, just like an older sister caring for her younger sibling."</i> (Guidance and Counseling Teacher)

Coping Process (Mediated by <i>Musyrifah</i>)	Activity-based Coping	Engagement in sports, scouting, arts	"Bisa berkurang karena ikut kegiatan seperti olahraga dan pramuka." (female Students)
	Social Support System	Support from peers and environment	The support of the <i>musyrifah</i> and friends is the main factor in adaptation.
Adaptation Outcome	Gradual Adjustment	Reduced intensity of homesickness over time	Female students are starting to get used to and become more involved in Islamic boarding school activities.

As presented in Table 2, homesickness among female students encompasses emotional, cognitive, and social responses. The findings also indicate that the *musyrifah* play an important role in identifying early symptoms, providing continuous emotional support, encouraging participation in daily activities, and facilitating students' gradual adjustment to boarding school life. In addition, support from peers and participation in structured activities contributed to reducing the intensity of homesickness and promoting adaptation during the transition period.

3.1.2 Musyrifah's Strategy in Dealing with Homesickness

The findings indicate that the *musyrifah* employed several complementary strategies to support female students experiencing homesickness during their transition to boarding school life. Based on interviews and non-participant observations, these strategies included emotional monitoring, relational mentoring, intensive individual assistance, activity-based engagement, and collaboration with Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers. The first strategy involved continuous emotional monitoring, particularly during the students' initial adaptation period. The *musyrifah* regularly observed students' emotional and behavioral conditions by identifying signs such as social withdrawal, reduced interaction with peers, crying, and expressions of wanting to return home. This monitoring enabled the *musyrifah* to recognize students who required additional emotional support and to determine appropriate follow-up assistance.

The findings further show that the *musyrifah* developed a relational mentoring approach through continuous interpersonal communication, individualized attention, and active involvement in students' daily activities. Many participants described the relationship with the *musyrifah* as similar to that of an older sister, creating feelings of comfort, trust, and emotional security throughout the adaptation process. For students experiencing more severe homesickness, the *musyrifah* provided intensive assistance by accompanying them more closely throughout daily activities, from morning until bedtime. This individualized support was adjusted according to each student's emotional condition to facilitate gradual emotional adjustment.

Another strategy identified in this study was activity-based engagement. The *musyrifah* encouraged students to participate in structured extracurricular activities, including sports, scouting, and religious arts. These activities increased students' interaction with peers and promoted greater involvement in boarding school life. Finally, the findings indicate that the *musyrifah* collaborated with Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers when students required additional emotional support. This collaboration ensured that students experiencing more complex adjustment difficulties received appropriate follow-up assistance. Overall, the findings demonstrate that homesickness management was implemented through a combination of continuous mentoring, structured activities, and institutional collaboration.

3.1.3 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Musyrifah's Strategy

The effectiveness of the musyrifah strategy in addressing homesickness in female students is influenced by the interaction between relational, structural, and individual factors within the Islamic boarding school environment. The strategies implemented are dynamic and contextual, depending on the conditions surrounding the emotional management process of the female students.

Supporting Factors

The primary supporting factor resides in the quality of interpersonal relationships established between the musyrifah (resident mentors) and the female students. The cultivation of familial, sibling-like bonds fosters a profound sense of psychological safety and mutual trust, which subsequently encourages emotional openness and streamlines both the monitoring and intervention phases. These field observations indicate that the effectiveness of mentoring is largely determined by the intensity and quality of interpersonal interactions built on a continuous basis. Furthermore, the structure of Islamic boarding school activities also contributes to supporting the adaptation process. Involvement in collective activities such as sports, scouting, and arts serves as a means of social integration and a distraction strategy for home-related ruminations. However, the effectiveness of these activities is not automatic; rather, it depends on the active role of the musyrifah in encouraging participation.

At the institutional level, structural collaboration between the musyrifah and the school's guidance counselors further reinforces the effectiveness of homesickness support. In practice, the musyrifah serve as first-line supporters by identifying early signs of homesickness and providing continuous daily assistance, while guidance counselors are responsible for addressing students who require specialized psychological support.

Inhibiting Factors

Conversely, several inhibiting factors constrain the optimization of the musyrifah's strategies. The acute imbalance in the mentor-to-student ratio emerges as a major structural barrier, drastically limiting the potential intensity of individualized mentoring. This quantitative constraint prevents support from being deployed equitably across the entire student population; consequently, interventions are disproportionately directed only toward students who exhibit overt, explicit behavioral disruptions. As a result, the system frequently fails to identify latent, internalized homesickness. This structural vulnerability is further compounded by the limited training of the musyrifah in specialized psychological care. Despite possessing organic emotional intelligence and strong relational ties, most musyrifah lack formal competencies in mental health triage, which restricts their capacity to manage deep-seated psychological trauma.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Dynamics of Homesickness in Female Students

The findings indicate that homesickness among newly admitted female students reflects a process of separation distress during the transition to boarding school life. This finding is consistent with the conceptualization of homesickness as an emotional response arising from separation from primary attachment figures (Cassidy et al., 2025; Diamond & Keefe, 2024). However, the present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that, within the pesantren context, homesickness is managed through an institutionalized mentoring system in which musyrifah function as surrogate attachment figures. Rather than diminishing naturally over time, students' emotional distress is addressed through continuous interpersonal support embedded in the daily life of the dormitory.

The findings further suggest that homesickness should not be viewed solely as an individual psychological problem but as a relational phenomenon influenced by the quality of students' interactions with their social environment. The active role of the *musyrifah* in identifying emotional changes, providing personal attention, and maintaining close relationships illustrates how emotional support is integrated into the boarding school environment. This relational approach supports the argument that emotional adjustment during educational transitions is facilitated not only by individual resilience but also by the availability of supportive interpersonal relationships.

From a psychosocial perspective, the mentoring practices observed in this study represent an application of social support that combines emotional monitoring, empathetic communication, and situational intervention to maintain students' psychological well-being (Ball et al., 2024; Yee et al., 2023). Within this study, these integrated practices are conceptualized as *musyrifah*-mediated emotion regulation support, referring to the coordinated efforts through which *musyrifah* monitor students' emotional conditions, provide relational guidance, encourage participation in daily activities, and collaborate with Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers to facilitate emotional adjustment during the transition to boarding school life.

The findings also reinforce social support theory, which emphasizes the protective role of supportive interpersonal relationships in reducing psychological distress (Ball et al., 2024; Gugushvili & Otto, 2023; Yee et al., 2023). Continuous mentoring enables students to gradually adapt to the routines and social environment of the *pesantren*, thereby reducing the emotional intensity of homesickness. Furthermore, participation in structured extracurricular activities, including sports, scouting, and religious arts, serves as a complementary coping mechanism by promoting social interaction and engagement within the boarding school community (Nartova-Bochaver et al., 2024). Overall, these findings suggest that the successful management of homesickness in the Islamic boarding school context depends not only on individual coping efforts but also on the presence of sustained relational support. The *musyrifah* play a central role in creating an emotionally supportive environment that facilitates students' gradual adaptation to boarding school life while strengthening their sense of belonging within the *pesantren* community.

3.2.2 *Musyrifah's Strategy in Dealing with Homesickness*

The findings demonstrate that the management of homesickness within the *pesantren* ecosystem reflects a holistic and integrated institutional support system rather than merely a set of isolated interventions. The *musyrifah* extend their responsibilities beyond behavioral supervision by combining emotional monitoring, relational mentoring, and institutional collaboration into a coherent process of emotional regulation. This integrated approach supports the concept of emotional controlling proposed in this study, in which continuous interpersonal support becomes the central mechanism for facilitating students' emotional adjustment.

The practice of emotional monitoring observed in this study also challenges the conventional distinction between formal institutional supervision and informal emotional support (Masa'Deh et al., 2025; Thoits, 1995). Rather than functioning as opposing approaches, institutional oversight and empathetic care operate simultaneously within the *musyrifah's* daily responsibilities. Consequently, the *pesantren* environment creates a hybrid support system that integrates discipline with emotional care, extending existing perspectives on social support within residential educational settings.

The relational mentoring developed by the *musyrifah* further illustrates the importance of interpersonal attachment during students' transition to boarding school life. By establishing relationships resembling those of older siblings, the *musyrifah* function as surrogate attachment figures who provide psychological safety and emotional reassurance. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing that supportive interpersonal relationships serve as protective factors against psychological distress (Acoba, 2024; Bekiros, Jahanshahi, & Munoz-Pacheco, 2022; Li, S. & Xu, 2022). The present study further suggests that the effectiveness of emotional support in the *pesantren* context depends largely on the continuity and quality of these interpersonal relationships.

The findings also indicate that activity-based engagement contributes to students' emotional adjustment by promoting social participation and reducing excessive rumination about home. Importantly, the present study suggests that these activities do not function as independent coping strategies. Instead, their effectiveness depends on the active involvement of the *musyrifah* in encouraging participation and maintaining students' engagement. Religious activities, including religious arts and other communal worship activities, appear to contribute primarily by providing daily structure, opportunities for social interaction, and a sense of belonging within the boarding school community rather than functioning as direct therapeutic interventions for homesickness. This finding extends previous discussions on activity-based coping in residential educational environments (Nartova-Bochaver et al., 2024). Finally, collaboration between the *musyrifah* and Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers demonstrates that homesickness management is embedded within a broader institutional support system. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that *musyrifah* are not professional counselors. Their role is to provide early emotional support, monitor students' adjustment, and facilitate referral when necessary. Students experiencing persistent or severe emotional distress may require more specialized intervention from Guidance and Counseling teachers or mental health professionals. Therefore, the emotional support provided by the *musyrifah* should be understood as a complementary component of student well-being rather than a substitute for professional mental health services.

3.2.3. Conceptual Model of Emotional Controlling

To clarify the integration between the multi-layered strategies implemented, the empirical findings of this study are synthesized into a comprehensive conceptual model as illustrated in Figure 1.

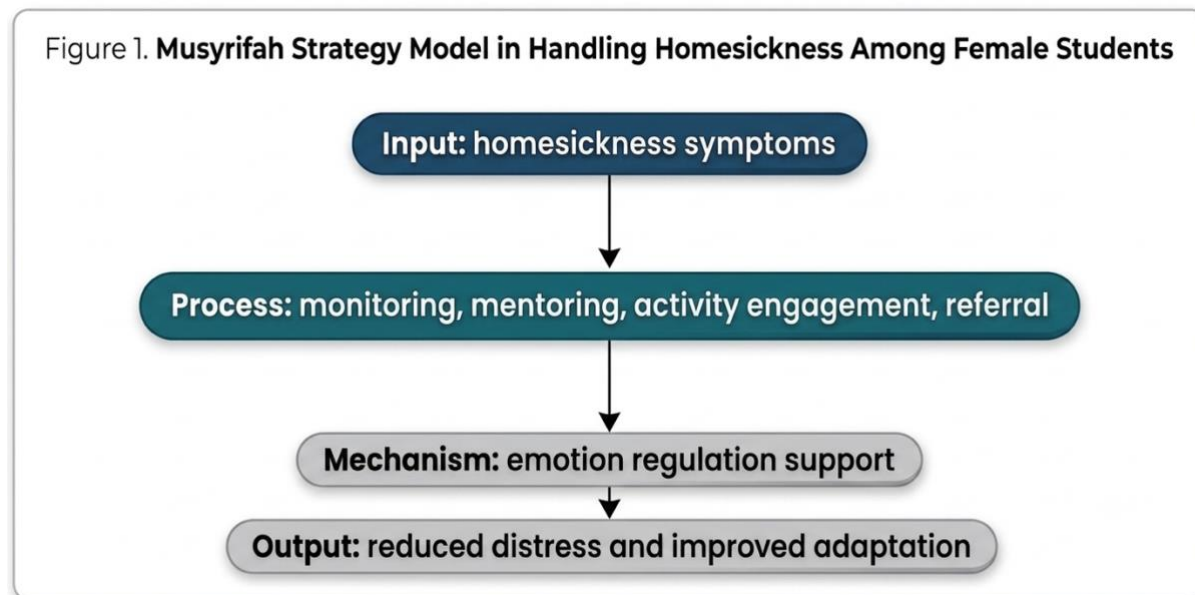


Figure 1. *Musyrifah* Strategy Model in Handling Homesickness Among Female Students

The proposed model follows an Input–Process–Output framework—integrated with a core underlying mechanism—to explain how daily dormitory mentoring supports students' adaptation to boarding school life. As illustrated in the structural sequence, the framework operates through four interconnected components:

1. Input (Homesickness Symptoms): The process is initiated by identifying the initial psychological and behavioral homesickness symptoms experienced by female students upon entering the dormitory environment.
2. Process (Monitoring, Mentoring, Activity Engagement, Referral): In response to these symptoms, the *musyirifah* deploys an integrated sequence of tactical interventions. This includes continuous monitoring, relational mentoring, structured activity engagement, and a formal referral system to guidance counselors when intensive institutional support is required.
3. Mechanism (Emotion Regulation Support): These structured processes activate a psychological mechanism centered on emotion regulation support, which helps students process their transitions and develop necessary coping strategies.
4. Output (Reduced Distress and Improved Adaptation): Ultimately, the alignment of these components leads to the desired outcomes, characterized by significantly reduced distress and improved socio-environmental adaptation among the students.

3.2.4 Theoretical Contextualization of Emotional Support

By contextualizing these components within social support theory, the relational proximity achieved in the Process stage functions as a critical protective buffer capable of mitigating the psychological distress triggered by separation from the primary family environment (Bekiros et al., 2022). This confirms that collective institutional activities serve as instruments for behavioral coping, which are heavily optimized through direct mentoring (Kiadarbandsari, 2025).

However, the discussion must highlight a critical vulnerability in this model. The system relies heavily on the idiosyncratic emotional capacities of individual mentors rather than standardized clinical competencies. When an inflated, high mentor-to-student ratio restricts intensive care, the system inadvertently risks pathologizing overt, disruptive homesickness while completely ignoring latent, internalized distress. This creates an unequal distribution of psychological safety within the dormitory environment, suggesting that the Mechanism (emotion regulation support) cannot operate perfectly without overcoming structural and training limitations.

3.2.5 Practical Implications and Research Limitations

Musyirifah plays a strategic role in assisting the emotional adaptation of female students experiencing homesickness in the Islamic boarding school environment. Therefore, Islamic boarding school administrators need to strengthen the dormitory support system through collaboration between *musyirifah* and guidance counselors, as well as provide basic training on empathetic communication and early management of emotional distress. However, this study is limited to a single Islamic boarding school context and focuses primarily on the perspectives of *musyirifah* and institutional stakeholders, so the results cannot be broadly generalized. Therefore, further research is recommended to broaden the research context and explore the subjective experiences of female students in more depth.

4. CONCLUSION

Homesickness among newly enrolled female students in Islamic boarding schools involved emotional longing for family, cognitive rumination, social withdrawal, and difficulties adapting to a new environment. These findings indicate that the transition to boarding school is a multidimensional adjustment process requiring continuous emotional and social support. The findings show that *Musyirifah* supported homesick students through emotional monitoring, relational mentoring, intensive accompaniment, activity engagement, and collaboration with guidance counselors. These strategies facilitated students' adjustment to boarding school life by fostering emotional security, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and encouraging active participation in daily activities.

The study suggests that *musyrifah* play an important first-line role in supporting homesick students through relational and daily-life mentoring. However, this support should be strengthened through basic psychological training, clearer referral mechanisms, and closer collaboration with professional counselors. Relational support is central in early-stage homesickness management, while professional counseling remains necessary for more severe or persistent distress. This study is limited by its focus on a single Islamic boarding school and a relatively small number of participants, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other pesantren contexts. Future research is recommended to examine the applicability of these findings across different boarding school settings, involve larger and more diverse participant groups, and integrate multidisciplinary perspectives to further develop evidence-based emotional support models for students experiencing homesickness..

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