



The role of *tawakkul* as a mediator in the relationship between personality traits and depression among Muslim students in Indonesia

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Abstract: Depression is a significant mental health issue among university students, which potentially leads to academic disruption and social isolation. This quantitative cross-sectional study aims to examine the mediating role of belief in the sufficiency of God accompanied by efforts to achieve goals (*tawakkul*) in the relationship between personality traits and depression among Indonesian Muslim students. A total of 324 participants were recruited through a purposive sampling technique. Depression was assessed using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale, while *tawakkul* was measured using the *Tawakkul* Scale for Muslim Adults. In addition, the Big Five Personality Inventory was used to assess personality traits. Mediation analysis was employed to establish the interaction between *tawakkul*, personality traits and depression. The results show that *tawakkul* mediated the effects of neuroticism ($\beta = .026, p = .046$), agreeableness ($\beta = -.031, p = .048$), and conscientiousness ($\beta = -.049, p = .009$) on depression. Furthermore, neuroticism directly increased depression ($\beta = .278, p < .001$), whereas conscientiousness and *tawakkul* reduced depression ($\beta = -.123$ and $-.075, p < .001$). The findings emphasize the protective role of *tawakkul* as a faith-based coping resource that mitigates depressive symptoms among Muslim students.

Keywords: agreeableness; conscientiousness; depression; Islamic psychology; neuroticism; *tawakkul*

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Introduction

Depression is recognized as one of the most severe and prevalent psychological disorders affecting both the general population and university students. According to experts, university students are among the most vulnerable groups to mental health problems due to the various academic, social, and developmental pressures faced (Auerbach et al., 2017; Cuijpers et al., 2019; Galán-Muros et al., 2024). The increasing prevalence of depression among this population has become a major issue, not only for mental health professionals, but also for educators and policymakers, who are concerned about its long-term effects on students' academic engagement, motivation, and quality of life (Catling et al., 2022; Tripathi et al., 2022). This emerging concern draws attention to the necessity of understanding depression not merely as an individual psychological condition, but as a multidimensional phenomenon that also reflects social and cultural dynamics.

Depression rates among student populations worldwide have demonstrated concerning trends. A study involving 570 Greek students showed that 28.2% of the respondents had experienced mild depressive symptoms, 32.3% moderate depressive symptoms, and 25.0% severe depressive symptoms (Konstantopoulou & Raikou, 2020). Another study conducted in Peru involving 300 students showed that 65.3% had experienced minimal depression, 18.4% mild depression, 11.2% moderate depression, and 5.1% severe depression (Parra, 2020). This global evidence on student depression provides a valuable context for understanding the situation among Indonesian university students.

In Indonesia, depression among university students is also a major concern. A study at Universitas Airlangga found that 37.2% of first-year medical students showed symptoms of depression, with 23.3% classified as mild, 10.5%

moderate, and 1.2% severe (Izzah et al., 2021). Similarly, a study of over 500 students at Universitas Indonesia reported that 22.2% experienced depressive symptoms, especially those with poor coping strategies and low resilience (Ramadiano et al., 2022). High levels of depression, anxiety, and stress were also found among students in remote campuses, especially those who felt isolated and lacked mental health support (Ekawati et al., 2025; Sholichatun et al., 2005). In addition, findings from a multicenter survey conducted between 2022 and 2023 at three Indonesian public universities indicated a high prevalence of mental health issues among undergraduates, highlighting significant gaps in campus-based mental health support (Ekawati et al., 2025). These studies show that many Indonesian students experience emotional distress due to academic pressure, lack of support and difficulties in managing stress, which can affect both their well-being and academic performance.

Depression is defined as an emotional disorder characterized by persistent sadness, hopelessness, guilt, and a sense of meaninglessness (Dirgayunita, 2016). It is considered not only a mood disturbance but also a condition that affects cognition and behavior, manifesting through lethargy, social withdrawal, apathy, lack of motivation, and a loss of interest or pleasure in everyday activities (Correll et al., 2022). Such symptoms often create a cycle of emotional disengagement that limits an individual's ability to function effectively in personal and academic domains. When untreated, such symptoms may worsen over time and lead to more severe psychological problems. In the Indonesian context, depression has been identified as one of the leading psychological factors contributing to suicidal behavior among students (Nashori et al., 2024). Given its wide-ranging symptoms and progressive nature, depression can have serious consequences for students' emotional well-being and academic functioning.

It is also recognized as a major contributing factor to suicidal behavior among university students in Indonesia. A study found that students with depressive symptoms were more than nine times more likely to experience suicidality than those without such symptoms (Fitriawan et al., 2023). It can lead to emotional states such as hopelessness, diminished self-esteem, and social withdrawal. When left untreated, these conditions may escalate into suicidal ideation and other forms of psychological deterioration (Muslimahayati & Rahmy, 2021; Subardjo et al., 2024). Furthermore, prolonged depression can negatively affect students' academic functioning by disrupting their focus, lowering productivity, and weakening the motivation to learn (Ardi et al., 2021). These impacts highlight the urgent need to address depression not only as a personal mental health issue, but also as a barrier to students' educational success.

Understanding the factors that contribute to depression among students and the general population is crucial for maintaining psychological well-being and academic productivity. Researchers generally classify these factors into four categories: biological, psychological, social (Dirgayunita, 2016), and spiritual (Nashori et al., 2024). These dimensions interact dynamically, shaping the emotional and cognitive states that may lead to depressive symptoms. In recent years, researchers have also emphasized that while biological and social influences are important, psychological and spiritual factors often play a more central role in determining how individuals perceive and respond to stress. This intersection between psychological dispositions and spiritual orientation provides a meaningful avenue for understanding depression within culturally and religiously grounded contexts such as Indonesia.

In Indonesia, the majority of university students identify as Muslim, and several studies indicate that religious and cultural dynamics

influence how mental health problems manifest in this group. Muslim students often face unique psychosocial challenges, such as balancing academic performance with spiritual commitments, experiencing moral pressure to appear emotionally strong, and navigating family expectations that emphasize obedience and modesty. Combined, these factors can increase vulnerability to stress and depression (Nashori et al., 2024; Sholichatun et al., 2005). However, Islamic teachings also provide coping resources, among which *tawakkul* has been associated with emotional stability and resilience. The inclusion of *tawakkul* as a mediating variable therefore offers a culturally relevant approach to understanding mental health among Muslim youth in Indonesia.

Various psychological and religious-spiritual factors have been shown to influence the development and severity of depression in individuals. Among the psychological variables identified are personality traits; the impact of intimate partner violence on depressive symptoms (Chen et al., 2024); forgiveness (Chung, 2016); hope (Rahmandani & Amaranggani, 2023); self-compassion (Luo et al., 2019); resilience and empathy (Mujahidah & Listiyandini, 2018); and emotional maturity and emotion-focused coping strategies (Tuasikal & Retnowati, 2019). In addition, religious and spiritual dimensions such as religiosity and gratitude (Vandeventer et al., 2024), together with trust in Allah or *tawakkul* (Adil et al., 2022), have also been associated with lower levels of depression. Considering the wide range of influencing factors, this study specifically focuses on two protective variables: personality traits (as conceptualized in the Big Five model) and *tawakkul*.

The relationship between personality traits and depression has been widely studied, although findings are not always consistent across cultural contexts. Zhou et al. (2021) found that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and

openness were negatively associated with depressive symptoms, whereas neuroticism was positively associated. Similarly, Nudelman et al. (2021), in a cross-cultural study involving samples from Germany, India and Israel, identified neuroticism as a positive predictor of depression, while conscientiousness was a negative predictor only in the German and Israeli samples. In another study based in China, Wu et al. (2024) conducted a longitudinal study among Chinese youth, and found that neuroticism was positively associated with both the initial levels and progression of depression, while extraversion predicted a lower baseline of depression and slower symptom increase. Other traits, such as openness, showed no significant influence. These findings suggest that neuroticism is a consistent risk factor for depression, while the influence of other traits may vary across different populations.

Additional evidence supports the consistent association between certain personality traits and depression. The research found that among the Big Five traits, conscientiousness, extraversion and neuroticism were significantly related to depressive symptoms (Abbasi et al., 2024; Strohmaier et al., 2024). Similarly, Chen et al. (2017), in a study involving Chinese participants, reported that four traits (agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion and neuroticism) were correlated with depression. Overall, neuroticism appears to be the most consistent positive predictor of depression, followed by conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness, with openness showing the lowest association across studies.

In addition to personality traits, *tawakkul* has also been identified as a potential protective factor against depression. Gondal et al. (2024) defined *tawakkul* as "the belief in the sufficiency of Allah (God) that invokes patience and efforts to achieve goals while accepting the outcomes unconditionally". Meanwhile, Nashori (2024) defines *tawakkul* as relying on all matters to Allah

(God) with true hope and confidence, making all forms of endeavor. As part of the religious and spiritual domain, it has been shown to have a significant negative relationship with depression. Several recent studies indicate that spirituality and faith-based coping are associated with reduced depressive symptoms (Adil et al., 2022; Gondal et al., 2024; Vandeventer et al., 2024). These findings highlight that *tawakkul* is not merely a form of passive surrender but also a source of optimism and psychological resilience in facing life's challenges.

Previous empirical research examining *tawakkul* within the Indonesian context is relatively scarce. Studies have predominantly focused on general religiosity or broad religious coping strategies, rather than conceptualizing *tawakkul* as a distinct psychological construct. In contrast, research has provided evidence that *tawakkul* functions as a significant mediating variable between personality traits, particularly neuroticism, and mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression (Adil et al., 2022; Gondal, Adil, & Ghayas, 2022). However, since these studies were conducted within a South Asian context, caution is needed when extending their implications to Indonesia. In the Indonesian context, *tawakkul*—often integrated with local cultural values—has been shown to play a role in fostering academic resilience among students by encouraging perseverance and adaptability (Kaloeti et al., 2024). It suggests that *tawakkul* may serve as a culturally embedded coping mechanism. In line with the research gap, this study seeks to advance understanding of the psychological significance of *tawakkul* among Indonesian university students within their unique sociocultural and religious background.

While previous research has primarily examined *tawakkul* in relation to neuroticism, this study extends this scope by exploring its potential mediating role across other personality traits,

including conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion and openness. Conscientiousness and agreeableness have been consistently linked to lower depressive symptoms, as they reflect emotional regulation, empathy and a sense of responsibility (Chen et al., 2024; Gong et al., 2019; Nudelman et al., 2021). These findings suggest that *tawakkul* may enhance the protective effects of traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness by reinforcing self-regulation and emotional composure through spiritual surrender. In contrast, the relationships between extraversion and openness with depression tend to be more inconsistent across studies, possibly due to heightened emotional reactivity or sensitivity among individuals in relation to these traits. For such individuals, *tawakkul* may serve as a moderating resource that helps regulate emotional fluctuations and supports psychological resilience. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of *tawakkul* as a mediating mechanism across multiple personality traits within an Indonesian Muslim student context.

In previous international research, several studies have examined *tawakkul* in Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan and Malaysia (Adil et al., 2022; Alhafiza et al., 2022; Gondal et al., 2024; Gondal, Adil, & Ghayas, 2022), whereas empirical work in the Indonesian context remains limited. The country's socioreligious landscape, characterized by its cultural diversity and integrative Islamic education system, may shape *tawakkul* differently from other Muslim populations. Therefore, this study provides a unique contribution by investigating *tawakkul* within the Indonesian academic environment, highlighting its role in mediating the relationship between personality traits and depression among Muslim university students.

The research is grounded in an integrative theoretical framework that combines the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality with the

religious coping theory of Pargament (Pargament, 2001). The FFM explains how personality traits influence affective stability and self-regulation, in which high neuroticism and low conscientiousness are consistent predictors of psychological distress and depression (Chien et al., 2017; Strohmaier et al., 2024). Pargament's theory posits religious coping as the use of faith to manage stress through meaning-making, perceived control, and spiritual connection (Gondal et al., 2024; Keefe et al., 2001; Xu, 2016). Within this perspective, *tawakkul* refers to trusting in God after exerting effort to achieve goals, which represents an active form of religious coping that supports self-regulation and emotional balance. It enables individuals to reinterpret stress as part of divine wisdom, helping reduce the impact of neuroticism and strengthen adaptive traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness. *Tawakkul* is believed to reduce negative effects and increase emotional stability, thereby lowering the risk of depression. Individuals with a high level of *tawakkul* tend to interpret life events as part of divine wisdom and focus on effort rather than outcomes, which helps them maintain their psychological balance (Abbasi et al., 2024; Vandeventer et al., 2024). Based on this framework, this study hypothesizes that *tawakkul* mediates the relationship between personality traits and depressive symptoms.

Although previous studies have examined *tawakkul* in relation to mental health in Muslim populations, most have focused on its direct effects or its association with well-being in specific cultural contexts such as Pakistan and Malaysia (Abbasi et al., 2024; Adil et al., 2022; Gondal et al., 2024; Gondal, Adil, & Ghayas, 2022; Gondal, Adil, Yasin, et al., 2022; Nasrin, 2025). Limited research has explored *tawakkul* as a mediating mechanism linking personality traits and depression (Gondal et al., 2024), particularly within the Indonesian context, which has distinct socioreligious characteristics. Furthermore, previous studies

have not consistently integrated personality frameworks with religious coping models to explain how individual differences shape spiritual coping processes. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by examining *tawakkul* as a mediating variable between personality traits and depression among Indonesian Muslim students, integrating the Five-Factor Model with religious coping theory to provide a more comprehensive psychological explanation.

Building on previous empirical and theoretical findings, this study proposes that both personality traits and *tawakkul* are important determinants of depression levels among Muslim students. Specifically, the research aims to investigate the mediating role of *tawakkul* in the relationship between personality traits and depression among Indonesian Muslim students. The hypotheses proposed are: 1) Personality traits and *tawakkul* play roles in relation to depression, and 2) *Tawakkul* mediates the relationship between personality traits and depression. Through this framework, the study seeks to provide integrated understanding of how psychological and spiritual dimensions interact to influence mental health outcomes in the Indonesian Muslim student population.

Methods

Research Approach

A quantitative cross-sectional survey approach was employed, designed to examine the relationships between personality traits, *tawakkul* and depression. The five personality traits, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness and extraversion, were treated as predictor variables, with depression as the outcome variable, and *tawakkul* as the mediating variable. All the variables were assessed using standardized self-report measures instruments with established reliability and validity. This approach allowed statistical testing of both the

direct and indirect relationships between the variables, providing empirical evidence for the mediating role of *tawakkul* within personality traits and depression.

Respondents

This study was conducted on Indonesian Muslim students studying in eleven cities in Indonesia. The selection of Indonesian Muslim students was based on the consideration that they were aware of and had implemented the Islamic concept of *tawakkul* in their lives. Moreover, they represent a population in which *tawakkul* is a culturally relevant construct associated with faith-based coping and mental health. The respondent selection criteria were that they were: (a) registered as active students at an Indonesian university, (b) Muslim, (c) male and female, (d) aged 17-25 years, and (e) living in Indonesia. Participants included were from 15 universities located in 11 cities across Indonesia. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who met the specific inclusion criteria. This method was chosen to ensure contextual relevance to the psychological construct of *tawakkul*, which is central to the study. A total of 324 students participated; their demographic data is shown in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of participants were women (75%). Most respondents were aged between 19 and 20 years (73.5%), which aligns with the typical age range of undergraduate students in the early years of their studies. In terms of geographic origin, nearly 90% of the participants came from Western Indonesia, particularly Sumatra, Java, and a large part of Borneo, while students from Central and Eastern Indonesia were represented in smaller proportions. Regarding institutional background, two-thirds of the respondents were from State Islamic Universities (UIN), followed by public and private universities with relatively balanced proportions. This distribution suggests that the

data captured a diverse yet predominantly Islamic higher education context, suitable for examining variables such as *tawakkul* and depression among Indonesian Muslim students.

Data Collection Method

Three standardized instruments were employed to collect data on the main variables. Each had been previously validated and adapted for use within the Indonesian context.

Depressive symptoms were measured using a standardized self-report instrument designed to assess negative emotional states. Although the full instrument (DASS-21/Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale-21) includes subscales for depression, anxiety, and stress, only the depression component was employed in the study. This subscale reflects key aspects of depression, such as sadness, lack of interest, hopelessness, and a generally negative perspective on life (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995a, 1995b). The Indonesian version used in this research consists of seven items rated on a four-point Likert scale (from 0 = never to 3 = almost always), and has demonstrated strong internal reliability, with $\alpha = .853$ (Hakim & Aristawati, 2023). Overall, the instrument

provides a valid and reliable means of assessing depressive symptoms in Indonesian populations.

Tawakkul was measured using a standardized instrument developed to assess the construct within a Muslim adult population. The scale is grounded in *Qur'anic* teachings and evaluates four key dimensions: belief in God's sufficiency, acceptance of divine will, personal effort, and surrender of one's own will. The Indonesian version used in the study was translated and refined through back-translation to ensure conceptual clarity and cultural relevance. Given that the scale has been published and is openly accessible, the study referenced the psychometric evidence established in the original publication (Gondal, Adil, Yasin, et al., 2022). The scale comprises 24 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and includes items such as "By relying on God, I am saved from difficulties" and "If I fall ill, I am not worried because everything comes from God." The internal consistency of the scale is high ($\alpha \geq .80$), indicating that the instrument is a reliable measure of *tawakkul* in the context of this study.

Table 1

Demographic Data of the Research Subjects (N = 324)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	243	75.0
	Male	81	25.0
Age	≤ 18	41	12.7
	19–20	238	73.5
	≥ 21	45	13.8
Region of Origin	Western Indonesia	291	89.8
	Central Indonesia	25	7.7
	Eastern Indonesia	8	2.5
Type of University	State Islamic University (UIN)	206	63.6
	Public University	57	17.6
	Private University	61	18.8

Note: Classification based on institutional status under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (UIN) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (public and private universities).

Personality traits were assessed using a standardized inventory that measures five core dimensions: agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and conscientiousness research (Akhtar & Azwar, 2019). Each dimension is represented by a set of statements describing common behaviors and tendencies, which respondents rate on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Indonesian version used in this study is based on the adaptation of the IPIP-BFM-50, a well-established Big Five instrument developed for cross-cultural research (Akhtar & Azwar, 2019). Example items include "*I am generally trustworthy*" (agreeableness), "*I am easily depressed*" (neuroticism), and "*I do the job until it is finished*" (conscientiousness). Each subscale captures distinct aspects of personality; for instance, neuroticism assesses emotional instability; openness reflects intellectual curiosity; and conscientiousness covers traits such as responsibility and perseverance. Internal consistency across the subscales was satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .74 to .79. The results support the scale's reliability in capturing personality traits among the Indonesian respondents.

Data Analysis Techniques

After data collection, raw responses were scored based on each measurement scale. Before testing the hypotheses, assumption checks were made to ensure data suitability. Normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis values, with scores between -1 and +1 indicating an acceptable distribution (Appelbaum et al., 2018; Mishra et al., 2019). Multicollinearity was also examined, confirming no high correlation among the independent variables through tolerance values above .10 and VIF values below 10 (P. Vatcheva & Lee, 2016). Once assumptions were met, descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations and frequency distributions were

calculated. To test the hypotheses, mediation analysis was conducted using Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) to estimate the direct and indirect effects of personality traits and *tawakkul* on depression, thereby determining whether *tawakkul* functions as a mediator in the relationship. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < .05$ with 95% confidence intervals.

Results

The results summarize the associations between personality traits, *tawakkul*, and depression. The findings serve as a foundation for further interpretation and theoretical analysis in the discussion section.

Descriptive statistics for all the variables are displayed in Table 2. Each variable was further classified into three categorical levels, as summarized in Table 3.

The categorical analysis in Table 3 reveals a general pattern of emotional stability and balanced personality among the Indonesian Muslim students. Most participants (95.1%) fall within the low category of depression, indicating minimal depressive symptoms. The majority also show moderate levels of *tawakkul* and personality traits, reflecting adaptive and non-extreme tendencies. The relatively smaller proportion of individuals with high *tawakkul* (18.2%) suggests varying expressions of spiritual trust within the group. Overall, the results describe a student population characterized by moderate religiosity, emotional steadiness, and balanced personality profiles.

Assumption Test Results

Based on the normality assumption test using skewness and kurtosis statistics, the results were agreeableness (skewness = -.732, kurtosis = 1.477); extraversion (skewness = .017, kurtosis = -.356); neuroticism (skewness = -.221, kurtosis = -.477); conscientiousness (skewness = -.172, kurtosis =

-.221); openness (skewness = -.020, kurtosis = -.134); *tawakkul* (skewness = -.283, kurtosis = -.086); and depression (skewness = .909, kurtosis = .616). The results of the normality test detailed above show that the data were normally distributed. Subsequently, based on the multicollinearity test using the tolerance and VIF methods, the results were agreeableness variable (tolerance = .665, VIF = 1.505); extraversion (tolerance = .599, VIF = 1.668); neuroticism (tolerance = .907, VIF = 1.103); conscientiousness (tolerance = .476, VIF = 2.100); openness (tolerance = .618, VIF = 1.617); *tawakkul* (tolerance = .801, VIF = 1.249). These results indicate that there was no measurement bias in the study.

Based on Table 4 in relation to the path coefficients in the mediation test, it was found that *tawakkul* negatively predicted depression ($B = -.075, p = <.001$). Agreeableness could not predict depression ($B = -.21, p = .713$), but agreeableness could positively predict *tawakkul* ($B = .419, p = .030$). Extraversion could not predict depression ($B = -.054, p = .301$), nor could it predict *tawakkul* ($B = .210, p = .242$). Neuroticism could positively predict depression ($B = .278, p = <.001$) and could negatively predict *tawakkul* ($B = -.352, p = .027$). Conscientiousness could negatively predict depression ($B = -.123, p = .042$), and could positively predict *tawakkul* ($B = .655, p = .002$). Openness could predict neither depression ($B = .082, p = .098$) nor *tawakkul* ($B = .213, p = .211$).

Table 2

Description of Research Variable Data (N = 324)

	Agr	Neu	Ext	Con	Ope	Taw	Dep
Mean	27.318	13.176	16.772	22.435	21.531	99.914	5.556
Std. Dev	3.695	3.817	4.198	4.035	4.340	11.743	3.509
Skewness	-.732	-.221	.017	-.172	-.020	-.283	.909
Kurtosis	1.477	-.477	-.0356	-.221	-.134	-.086	.616
Minimum	9	4	5.000	10	6.000	56	0
Maximum	35	20	25.000	30	30.000	120	17

Note: Agr = Agreeableness, Neu = Neuroticism, Ext = Extraversion, Con = Conscientiousness, Ope = Openness, Taw = *Tawakkul*, Dep = Depression

Table 3

Categorization of Research Variable Data (N = 324)

	Dep	Agr	Ext	Con	Neu	Ope	Taw
Low	309 (95.1%)	62 (19.1%)	45 (13.9%)	67 (20.7%)	53 (16.4%)	49 (15.1%)	52 (16.1%)
Moderate	15 (4.6%)	206 (63.6%)	216 (66.7%)	188 (58.1%)	206 (63.6%)	215 (66.4%)	213 (65.7%)
High	0 (0%)	56 (17.3%)	63 (19.4%)	69 (21.3%)	65 (20.1%)	60 (18.5%)	59 (18.2%)

Note: Dep = Depression, Agr = Agreeableness, Neu = Neurotic, Ext = Extraversion, Con = Conscientiousness, Ope = Openness, Taw = *Tawakkul*

Table 4*Direct Effects between Personality Traits, Tawakkul, and Depression*

Path	Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p
<i>Tawakkul</i> → Depression	-.075	.016	-4.678	<.001*
Agreeableness → Depression	-.021	.056	-.368	.713
Extraversion → Depression	-.054	.052	-1.035	.301
Neuroticism → Depression	.278	.046	6.003	<.001*
Conscientiousness → Depression	-.123	.060	-2.032	.042*
Openness → Depression	.082	.049	1.653	.098
Agreeableness → <i>Tawakkul</i>	.419	.192	2.176	.030*
Extraversion → <i>Tawakkul</i>	.210	.179	1.171	.242
Neuroticism → <i>Tawakkul</i>	-.352	.159	-2.208	.027*
Conscientiousness → <i>Tawakkul</i>	.655	.206	3.170	.002*
Openness → <i>Tawakkul</i>	.213	.171	1.250	.211

Note: *p < .05 indicates significant paths.

Table 5*Indirect effects between personality traits, tawakkul and depression*

	Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p
Agreeableness→ <i>Tawakkul</i> →Depression	-.031	.016	-1.973	.048*
Extraversion→ <i>Tawakkul</i> →Depression	-.016	.014	-1.136	.256
Neuroticism→ <i>Tawakkul</i> →Depression	.026	.013	1.997	.046*
Conscientiousness→ <i>Tawakkul</i> →Depression	-.049	.019	-2.624	.009*
Openness→ <i>Tawakkul</i> →Depression	-.002	.013	-1.208	.227

Note: *p < .05 indicates significant paths.

Based on Table 5 concerning the indirect effects of the mediation test, it was found that *tawakkul* could mediate agreeableness and depression ($B = -.031$, $p = .048$), but could not mediate extraversion or depression ($B = -.016$, $p = .256$). It could mediate neuroticism and depression ($B = .026$, $p = .046$) and conscientiousness and depression ($B = -.049$, $p = .009$). However, *tawakkul* could not mediate openness and depression ($B = -.016$, $p = .227$).

Figure 1 illustrates the mediating role of *tawakkul* between five personality traits and depression. The path from *tawakkul* to depression is negative, indicating that greater trust in God is linked to lower depressive symptoms. Neuroticism shows a negative association with *tawakkul* and a positive one with depression,

suggesting that emotionally unstable individuals tend to have weaker spiritual trust. In contrast, conscientiousness relates positively to *tawakkul* and negatively to depression, reflecting the protective role of discipline and responsibility. Other traits, such as agreeableness, extraversion and openness, show weak and insignificant effects. Overall, the model highlights *tawakkul* as a key spiritual mechanism linking personality dispositions to mental health, reducing vulnerability to depression.

Discussion

The study has explored the influence of personality traits on depression among Indonesian Muslim students, focusing on the mediating role of *tawakkul*. The discussion is

structured into three key areas. First, the findings demonstrate that among the Big Five traits, neuroticism and conscientiousness significantly predicted depressive symptoms. Second, *tawakkul* itself was found to be a significant negative predictor of depression, highlighting its role as a protective spiritual coping mechanism. Third, the mediation analysis revealed that *tawakkul* mediated the relationships between neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness with depression, offering new insights into how religious belief interacts with personality to influence mental health outcomes.

Personality Traits and Depression

Among the personality traits examined, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness emerged as significant predictors of depressive symptoms in the Indonesian Muslim students. It is revealed that both neuroticism and conscientiousness significantly predicted depression. Specifically, neuroticism was associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms, while conscientiousness showed a negative relationship with depression. These findings are consistent with previous research, such as studies conducted in Pakistan (Adil et al., 2022) and Germany (Schneider et al., 2021), which also found that neuroticism was a strong predictor of depression. Similar conclusions were drawn from multicultural samples involving participants from Germany, India and Israel (Nudelman et al., 2021). Valencia and Christian (2022) also confirmed the predictive role of neuroticism in depressive outcomes.

To better understand this association, it is important to consider the role of coping strategies in individuals with high neuroticism. Such individuals often rely on maladaptive emotion-focused coping mechanisms, including avoidance, rumination, and emotional venting (Agbaria & Mokh, 2022), rather than resolving underlying stressors. These maladaptive strategies tend to

intensify emotional distress, making individuals more vulnerable to depressive symptoms, particularly under chronic stress conditions (Delhom et al., 2021). Moreover, another study demonstrates that adaptive coping can mitigate, while maladaptive coping can increase, the negative impact of neuroticism on mental health (Wan et al., 2024). These findings collectively highlight ineffective coping as a central pathway through which neuroticism contributes to depressive symptoms.

In addition to coping mechanisms, emotional reactivity and regulation also play an important role in linking neuroticism to depression. Individuals high in neuroticism tend to be emotionally reactive, impulsive, and vulnerable to stress, all of which increase the likelihood of poor emotional regulation (Agbaria & Mokh, 2022). This pattern leads to heightened sensitivity to negative experiences and greater instability in mood. According to Golovey et al. (2019), emotional stability helps individuals better regulate their psychological responses to stress, thereby maintaining overall well-being and reducing susceptibility to depressive symptoms. Recent studies of university students have supported the role of emotional dysregulation as a mediator in the relationship between neuroticism and depression (Aguirre et al., 2024; Valencia & Christian, 2022), reinforcing its significance as both a vulnerability factor and a potential target for intervention.

While neuroticism has been shown to increase vulnerability to depression, conscientiousness appears to play a protective role. This study found that students with higher levels of conscientiousness reported fewer depressive symptoms, whereas those with lower levels were more prone to experiencing depression. This finding builds on previous research, which has often emphasized neuroticism as the primary predictor of depression. Furthermore, conscien-

tious individuals are typically characterized by discipline, organization, and goal-oriented behavior-traits that have been associated with lower levels of depression (Liu et al., 2024). Consistent with this, a recent study in China also confirmed the negative predictive relationship between conscientiousness and depressive symptoms (Chen et al., 2024). However, not all findings are uniform. For example, research by Gong et al. (2019) found a positive association between conscientiousness and depression, suggesting that the relationship may vary depending on context or culture.

The association between conscientiousness and lower depression may be explained by the trait's inherent link to self-regulation. Individuals who are conscientious tend to display behaviors such as planning, organizing, prioritizing tasks and delaying gratification. These abilities help them respond to challenges with structure and forethought. Other research has found that conscientiousness encompasses rule-following, grit, and persistence, all of which contribute to resilience in the face of adversity (Liu et al., 2024; Schmidt et al., 2018; Sesker et al., 2016). By managing their environment and internal responses effectively, conscientious individuals are better able to prevent cognitive and emotional disarray during stressful situations. This capacity for structured and goal-oriented behavior may explain why conscientiousness is associated with reduced vulnerability to depressive symptoms.

An important distinction between this study and that of Gondal et al. (2024) lies in the scope of personality traits found to predict depression. Whereas Gondal et al. (2024) identified neuroticism as the only significant predictor, this study found that conscientiousness also plays a meaningful role. This divergence may be attributable to differences in cultural, religious, or educational backgrounds between the Pakistani and Indonesian samples. In the Indonesian

context, the influence of conscientiousness may be strengthened by cultural values emphasizing harmony, moral responsibility, and self-restraint. The tendency to control impulses and fulfill social obligations aligns with collectivistic norms that discourage emotional expression and impulsive behavior. Therefore, conscientiousness operates not only as a personal trait, but also as culturally reinforced behavior that reduces vulnerability to depression. Conversely, individuals with higher neurotic tendencies may find it harder to conform to social expectations of emotional composure, leading to internal conflict and distress. This cultural perspective enriches the understanding of how personality functions within the socioreligious setting of Indonesian Muslim students.

Tawakkul and Depression

The study findings reveal that higher levels of *tawakkul*, the Islamic concept of placing trust in and having reliance on God, are significantly associated with lower levels of depression among Indonesian Muslim students. In other words, individuals who possess a stronger sense of *tawakkul* tend to report fewer depressive symptoms. These results are in line with earlier research conducted among adult Muslim populations in Pakistan, where *tawakkul* was negatively correlated with depression and identified as a protective factor against psychological distress (Adil et al., 2022; Gondal, Adil, & Ghayas, 2022). This consistent pattern highlights the importance of spiritual coping mechanisms in mental health frameworks, particularly within Islamic contexts where *tawakkul* plays a central role in navigating adversity.

Tawakkul functions not only as a theological principle, but also as a form of religious coping that enables individuals to transform emotional distress into acceptance and spiritual resilience. As noted by Nashori (2024), even the Prophet Ya'qub

turned to *tawakkul* during a period of profound sorrow, as recorded in the Qur'an: "*Indeed, I only complain of my troubles and sorrows to Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know*" (Surah Yusuf, 12:86). Empirical studies provide support for this viewpoint. For instance, Alhafiza et al. (2022) described it as a religious coping mechanism, which is capable of reducing psychological distress. These insights underscore the functional value of *tawakkul* in helping individuals to manage emotional challenges and find comfort in their faith.

Beyond its spiritual dimension, *tawakkul* has psychological mechanisms that explain its protective effects against depression. Individuals with higher levels of *tawakkul* tend to perceive stressors with less personal blame and reduced cognitive burden, as outcomes are entrusted to divine will. This belief fosters emotional balance and reduces the likelihood of chronic rumination. Recent studies have also shown that *tawakkul* mediates the relationship between personality traits and depression. Specifically, research by Gondal et al. (2024) demonstrated that it mitigates the negative impact of neuroticism on depression, functioning as a psychological buffer that reduces emotional vulnerability. These findings suggest that *tawakkul* may contribute to mental well-being not only through religious belief, but also through cognitive and emotional regulation processes.

In the specific context of Indonesian Muslim students, *tawakkul* also reflects a sociocultural construct shaped by communal values, family norms, and religious education. It is not merely an individual coping strategy, but is reinforced through social interactions and religious teachings that promote spiritual surrender accompanied by effort. Huda and Sabani (2018) described *tawakkul* as part of a broader system of religious self-regulation that strengthens internal moral values and spiritual responsibility. In such environments, it fosters a sense of hope and

control rooted in faith, allowing students to approach stress with trust and confidence rather than despair. This cultural integration of *tawakkul* reinforces its function as both a protective psychological factor and a social asset in mental health promotion within Muslim communities.

Tawakkul as a Mediator of Personality Traits and Depression

In this study, the mediating role of *tawakkul* was shown to be significant for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. These findings indicate that it does not uniformly mediate all personality traits, but specifically those associated with emotional control and interpersonal orientation. *Tawakkul's* role as a mediator between neuroticism and depression supports previous research, while its mediating role in the relationships between agreeableness and depression and between conscientiousness and depression is a novel finding of this study.

This study has identified *tawakkul* as a significant mediator in the relationship between neuroticism and depression. This finding aligns with prior research by Gondal et al. (2024), who found that individuals with high neuroticism experienced lower levels of depression when they possessed a strong sense of *tawakkul*. This suggests that *tawakkul* serves as a buffer against the emotional instability associated with neuroticism. Supporting this interpretation, Husnar et al. (2017) described *tawakkul* as a form of psychological strength derived from religious teachings, which helps individuals navigate stressful and threatening life circumstances. For Muslim students, relying on divine will may reduce anxiety and promote acceptance, thereby limiting the progression of negative emotional states into depressive symptoms.

A notable contribution of this study is the discovery that conscientiousness also predicts depression through the mediating role of *tawakkul*. It extends previous research showing that

conscientiousness supports perseverance and self-regulation in a general sense; however, when it comes to explaining perseverance and passion in the context of daily activities, grit (particularly consistency of interest) plays a more specific and influential role (Jiang et al., 2023). Agbaria and Mokh (2022) noted that trust in God complements personal effort, allowing individuals to balance striving with acceptance. Similarly, Tammar et al. (2023) argue that those who practice *tawakkul* after taking action are better equipped to cope emotionally. This integrative coping style, which blends both action and spiritual surrender, highlights the compatibility of conscientiousness with *tawakkul* as a pathway to psychological well-being.

Another new finding from this research is the mediating role of *tawakkul* in the relationship between agreeableness and depression. While agreeableness is often associated with traits such as kindness, humility, and a preference for harmony (Kallianou, 2024; Soomro et al., 2023), its connection to depression has received less attention. This study suggests that individuals with high levels of agreeableness may benefit from *tawakkul*, as it reinforces their sense of empathy and social connectedness. The empathic joy hypothesis posits that individuals will experience positive emotions when they help others and witness the impact of their kindness. These positive emotions counteract feelings of sadness, dissatisfaction, or hopelessness (Shaleh & Nuraini, 2021). Moreover, when combined with trust in divine providence, individuals may find deeper meaning in their actions and accept life events as part of a greater spiritual plan. Islamic teachings support this worldview, as illustrated in Surah al-Talaq (65:3), which states that whoever puts their trust in Allah will find sufficiency. This perspective is further reinforced by Nashori (2024), who noted that *tawakkul* promotes joy and psychological strength.

In contrast to these significant findings, *tawakkul* did not mediate the relationship

between extraversion or openness to experience and depression. Extraverted individuals tend to rely on external stimulation and social interaction to manage stress, which may limit their engagement with inward, spiritual forms of coping such as *tawakkul*. As James et al. (2023) note, extraversion aligns more with outward engagement and behavioral activation than with spiritual surrender. Similarly, individuals high in openness often seek novelty, creativity, and intellectual exploration. These traits do not inherently correspond with religious concepts such as submission and reliance on divine will. Moreover, previous research has shown that openness to experience is inconsistently related to psychological distress (Dong & Ni, 2020; Khoo & Simms, 2018), which may explain the absence of a mediating effect through *tawakkul*. These findings suggest that *tawakkul* is more functionally aligned with personality traits that emphasize emotional regulation, inner discipline, and acceptance, rather than with traits that prioritize novelty or social stimulation.

The findings have both theoretical and practical implications. In theoretical terms, the study contributes to the growing literature on religious coping by positioning *tawakkul* as a culturally and religiously grounded mediator between personality traits and depression. It extends the applicability of the Five-Factor Model by demonstrating how Islamic values can interact with personality to shape psychological outcomes. This integration supports an expanded framework that considers both dispositional and spiritual dimensions in mental health. Practically, the findings imply that mental health interventions for Indonesian Muslim students may be more effective when they incorporate spiritual elements such as *tawakkul*. Psychoeducational programs and therapeutic models that promote both personal responsibility and reliance on divine wisdom may be especially beneficial for individuals high in neuroticism or conscientious-

ness. By nurturing both internal discipline and spiritual surrender, such approaches can foster emotional resilience and reduce vulnerability to depression.

The findings also clearly show that the personality traits of neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness predict depression in Indonesian Muslim students, with *tawakkul* as a mediator. A novel finding of the study is that conscientiousness and agreeableness predict depression through the mediating role of *tawakkul*. In more detail, the results show that the trait of neuroticism directly predicts depression; the trait of conscientiousness directly predicts depression; and *tawakkul* predicts depression.

This research implies that *tawakkul* is a life value that is highly relevant to understanding and implementing in the daily lives of Indonesian Muslim students. With a well-developed sense of trust in God, students are better able to face various challenges and difficulties in life, making them less prone to depression. Emotional stability, along with conscientiousness and agreeableness, serves as a fundamental resource for preventing depressive tendencies. The presence of *tawakkul* increases the chance that depression can be minimized.

Several limitations to the study are recognized. The first concern regards the measurement instrument; the *tawakkul* scale is relatively new and requires further reliability testing across different cultural contexts. The second limitation concerns the sampling method, which used purposive sampling. This method was selected because the research targeted Indonesian Muslim students, a group considered to have sufficient

understanding of the concept of *tawakkul*. However, the use of purposive sampling limits the generalizability of the findings to a wider population. Future studies are advised to use probability sampling methods to increase representativeness and external validity. The third limitation relates to participant characteristics, as all respondents were Muslim. Although this focus provides cultural and spiritual depth, it restricts generalization to other faith groups. Future research could examine the mediating role of spiritual trust in non-Muslim and nonreligious populations to enhance cross-religious understanding of mental health dynamics.

Conclusion

This study has successfully answered its research objectives. It is evidenced by the finding that the personality traits of neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness significantly predict depression levels in Indonesian Muslim students, through the mediating role of *tawakkul*. Directly, high levels of neuroticism, as well as low levels of conscientiousness and *tawakkul*, are valid empirical predictors of depression vulnerability. Meanwhile, the novelty of this study confirmed the important theoretical contribution of *tawakkul*. This concept of religiosity serves as a full mediation pathway, bridging the positive influence of conscientiousness and agreeableness in reducing the risk of depression. The integration of these results confirmed that mental health interventions for Indonesian Muslim students need to consider not only personality dispositional factors but also strengthen spiritual aspects such as *tawakkul* as a protective coping strategy.[]

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Conflict of Interests

There was no conflict of interest.

Author Contribution Statement

Fuad Nashori: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Investigation; Methodology; Project Administration; Resources; Validation; Original Draft; Writing; Editing. **Raden Rachmy Diana:** Writing; Editing; Project Administration. **Sumedi P. Nugraha:** Writing; Editing. **Alfian Fajar Budi Nugroho:** Formal Analysis, Writing. **Winda Sri Harianti:** Writing; Proofreading. **Rahmat Aziz:** Writing; Editing; Supervision.

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