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Application of Sigmund Freud Psychoanalytic Theory in Overcoming Anxiety and Learning Difficulties of Students

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the application of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory in overcoming anxiety and learning difficulties of students at Pesantren Darul Ulum II Bujur Tengah Pamekasan. The approach used is qualitative with a case study design. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that the anxiety experienced by students stems from psychodynamic conflicts between the id, ego, and superego, which are reinforced by childhood trauma, high moral pressure, and rigid authoritative relationships. Students' learning difficulties are more due to emotional repression, developmental fixation, and weak ego in managing academic and spiritual pressures. To answer this problem, a three-stage applied psychoanalytic model was formulated: psychodynamic exploration, conflict clarification, and reconstruction of learning strategies. This model is integrated with Islamic values such as muhasabah and tafakur to make it more contextual and acceptable in the culture of Pesantren. Limited application shows the effectiveness of this approach in reducing anxiety and improving the quality of students' learning. Thus, psychoanalysis can be an alternative, integrative and humanistic approach in Pesantren education system which has tended to be normative and dogmatic.

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health issues are a major focus in the field of education. WHO report in (Anderson dkk., 2025; Rapee dkk., 2023) stated that in since 2021 more than 13% of teenagers in the world experience anxiety disorders that have direct implications for learning performance. Meanwhile (Yang dkk., 2022) shows that students with psychological stress tend to experience decreased motivation and cognitive abilities. In Indonesia, data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health in (Basrowi dkk., 2024) revealed that anxiety disorders rank third in the prevalence of mental disorders in adolescents. This phenomenon is a serious challenge in the educational environment, including in religious-based education systems such as Pesantren. Pesantren as traditional Islamic educational institutions have a dual role, namely forming character and transmitting knowledge. However, strict environmental pressures, rigid coaching systems, and social and spiritual expectations for students often cause mental stress. Therefore, adaptive theory-based psychological interventions are an urgent need.

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Nationally, the increasing number of learning difficulties and anxiety disorders among students has prompted the Ministry of Education and Culture to (Karomi dkk., 2024; Nikmah dkk., 2023) integrating mental health aspects into the independent curriculum. However, this approach has not fully reached Pesantren that have unique learning structures. In Pesantren, the stigma against psychological disorders is still quite strong, causing students to be reluctant to reveal their mental conditions (Idris dkk., 2023; Karmila & Martha, 2024). This is compounded by the lack of trained counselors who are able to apply a comprehensive psychodynamic approach (Fitriyah dkk., 2022; Yanti, 2024). Pesantren Darul Ulum II School in Pamekasan is a real example where social, religious, and academic complexity creates extraordinary pressure for students. Not infrequently, students experience identity disorientation, existential anxiety, and learning disorders that affect the quality of their education. Therefore, a study is needed that is able to analyze the deep psychological aspects of this condition to offer solutions that are contextual and rooted in the reality of the field.

The local context of Pesantren in Madura, especially in Pamekasan, shows that students are faced with unique socio-cultural dynamics. Patriarchal culture, high discipline, and a closed dormitory system make students tend to suppress emotional expression (Abdullah & Kusaeri, 2024; Sarwan, 2025; wildan dkk., 2023). In the initial observation at Pesantren Darul Ulum II, it was found that most of the students were unable to identify the root of their anxiety, which manifested as learning disorders and withdrawn behavior. In addition, pressure from family, societal expectations, and religious demands added to the unmanageable psychological burden. Therefore, the application of a psychological approach that is able to explore the subconscious aspects and dynamics of inner conflict becomes very relevant. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory in (Arroisi dkk., 2022; Martin, 2007), with its emphasis on self-defense mechanisms and the dynamics of the id, ego, and superego, it is believed to be a strong conceptual framework for understanding and dealing with anxiety and learning difficulties of students in depth.

Psychoanalysis as a classical approach in clinical psychology has great potential in education, especially in the pesantren environment which is very thick with moral and religious values. Sigmund Freud in (Newman & Newman, 2020; Sani & Wahidah, 2024; Sartika dkk., 2024) developed the basic concepts of psychoanalysis that include personality structure (id, ego, superego), dynamics of the unconscious, and defense mechanisms such as repression, projection, and rationalization (Anders, 2019; Khamaysa, 2022). In the context of education, this approach allows for a deeper understanding of the background of negative emotions that hinder the learning process. Several studies have proven the effectiveness of psychoanalysis in overcoming psychological disorders in adolescents (Midgley dkk., 2021; Sleed dkk., 2023), but very little is done in the realm of Islamic boarding school education. This opens up an opportunity for this study to bridge the gap. Through a psychoanalytic approach, counselors or educators can help students recognize unconscious internal conflicts and reconstruct thought patterns and emotions that hinder learning.

Recent literature emphasizes the importance of integrating psychodynamic approaches into psychological interventions in education. A study by (Luyten dkk., 2024; Nwadi dkk., 2025) showed that mentalization-based interventions, derived from psychoanalytic theory, were effective in addressing anxiety and improving cognitive function. In Indonesia, research by (Farhany dkk., 2023; Rauzana dkk., 2021) confirms that students have high levels of anxiety that correlate with low concentration in learning. However, there have not been many studies that directly link the psychoanalytic approach to the learning difficulties of students in Pesantren. This indicates a gap in the literature that needs to be bridged. Pesantren as institutions with strong hierarchical relationship patterns and value structures are a unique field for testing the relevance of Freud's approach in non-clinical settings but with high psychological content. This study will try to explore the application of Freud's theory as an

alternative therapy in the context of traditional Islamic education.

The urgency of this research lies in the need for a deeper and more contextual psychological approach in dealing with anxiety and learning difficulties of students. The cognitive-behavioral approach that has been dominantly used tends to emphasize surface symptoms, not the hidden roots of psychological problems (Dzulfikri & Azami, 2024; Nakao dkk., 2021). Meanwhile, the psychoanalytic approach seeks to uncover the dynamics of unconscious conflict that is often the root cause of learning difficulties and chronic anxiety. In Pesantren, where emotional openness is very limited, strategies such as free association, dream interpretation, and defense mechanism analysis can help open up new spaces of understanding. This research also answers the challenges of the world of religious education in responding to mental health issues systematically and scientifically, not only through a spiritual or moralistic approach. Therefore, the application of Freud's theory in this context is an intervention strategy that has not been widely explored but is very potential.

The novelty of this research is in the application of psychoanalytic theory in the context of Pesantren as a traditional Islamic educational environment, which has not been widely touched by this approach. In contrast to the modern psychological approach which is more adaptive to secular environments, psychoanalysis offers cross-cultural understanding through a symbolic and narrative approach to individual experience (Arcaya, 1987; Tarzian dkk., 2023). The novelty of this research is in the application of psychoanalytic theory in the context of Pesantren as a traditional Islamic educational environment, which has not been widely touched by this approach. In contrast to the modern psychological approach which is more adaptive to secular environments, psychoanalysis offers cross-cultural understanding through a symbolic and narrative approach to individual experience.

The contribution of this research is expected to provide concrete and applicable solutions in handling anxiety and learning difficulties of students, both for practitioners of Islamic boarding school education, psychologists, and policy makers. This research also has the potential to produce a hybrid approach between Islamic values and Western psychological theory in the context of education. With a deep understanding of the inner dynamics of students, teachers, ustaz, and caretakers of Pesantren can develop a more empathetic coaching strategy, based on psychological understanding, not just behavioral correction. This research can also be used as a reference for teacher and counselor training institutions in developing psychoanalytic-based intervention models in Islamic boarding school environments. In addition, the results of this study are expected to strengthen the literature on Islamic psychology which has so far focused more on the transcendental spiritual approach, not psychodynamics.

Considering the global, national, and local issues that have been described, as well as the lack of research that applies Freud's psychoanalytic theory in the context of Islamic boarding school education, this research is very relevant to be conducted. Focusing on Pesantren Darul Ulum II Bujur Tengah Pamekasan provides space to explore the unique psychological dynamics, and develop intervention models that are in accordance with local characteristics. It is hoped that the results of this study will not only enrich academic studies, but also have a direct impact on improving the quality of psychological life of students and the sustainability of Islamic boarding school education itself. This research marks the first step towards the integration of Western psychological theory and the traditional Islamic education system in order to realize the psychological well-being of students throughout Indonesia.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type (Sayyi dkk., 2023) to describe in depth and holistically the application of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory in

overcoming anxiety and learning difficulties of students at the Darul Ulum II Islamic Boarding School, Bujur Tengah, Pamekasan. This approach is considered relevant because the problems raised are complex, contextual, and related to the subjective experiences of individuals, so they cannot be reduced to numbers or statistics alone (Sayyi dkk., 2021). The case study was chosen to allow for an in-depth exploration of the behavior of students experiencing anxiety and learning difficulties, including hidden inner dynamics such as repression, projection, or regression. The research will focus on the application of psychoanalytic techniques in an environment rich in moral-religious nuances, where the role of social and religious values has a strong impact on the formation of the personality and learning patterns of students. Thus, this design allows for an analysis that not only explains surface psychological symptoms, but also examines the personality structure of students based on the construction of id, ego, and superego in the context of Islamic boarding school culture (Priya, 2021; Sitorus, 2021).

Data collection techniques were carried out through three main methods: (1) in-depth interviews with students, supervising teachers, ustaz, and pesantren caretakers to explore their emotional experiences, inner conflicts, and perceptions of the learning process and anxiety; (2) participant observation, which was carried out for several weeks by being directly involved in the students' daily activities in order to capture social dynamics and behavioral patterns that reflect self-defense mechanisms such as denial, displacement, and rationalization; and (3) documentation in the form of students' diaries, internal counseling reports, and academic records to identify recurring patterns in learning difficulties (Agustina dkk., 2023; Rahayu dkk., 2024). All data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques (Ahmed dkk., 2025) using a hermeneutic-interpretive approach. The researcher interpreted the data based on Freud's psychoanalytic concept to identify key themes such as intrapsychic conflict, childhood traumatic repression, and the influence of social structure in the formation of the students' superego (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Naeem dkk., 2023; Sundler dkk., 2019). The analysis process begins with open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to form an interpretive narrative that can explain the relationship between Freud's theory and the context of Islamic boarding school education empirically and theoretically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of data collection through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation at the Darul Ulum II Bujur Tengah Pamekasan Islamic Boarding School, this study found that anxiety and learning difficulties experienced by students were not only caused by academic or environmental factors alone, but were also closely related to complex and profound psychological dynamics. Referring to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, it was found that the conflict between the id, ego, and superego, self-defense mechanisms, and buried childhood traumatic experiences have a significant influence on the emotional and cognitive conditions of students. Therefore, the discussion of the results of this study is divided into three sub-sections: first, regarding the dynamics of students' anxiety analyzed through a psychodynamic approach; second, students' learning difficulties from a psychoanalytic perspective; and third, the formulation of a contextual and applicable psychoanalytic intervention model for the Islamic boarding school environment. These three sub-sections are arranged systematically and argumentatively to show the relevance of applying psychoanalytic theory in overcoming students' psychological problems in a deep and comprehensive manner.

Dynamics of Anxiety of Students at Pesantren Darul Ulum II

The anxiety experienced by students at Pesantren Darul Ulum II is not only a response to external pressures such as study assignments or dormitory rules, but also a manifestation of

unconscious inner conflict. Based on in-depth interviews, many students experience anxiety without a clear cause, feelings of inferiority, difficulty sleeping, and even feeling unworthy of being students. In Freud's psychoanalytic approach, this anxiety stems from the tension between the id which harbors a desire for freedom and comfort, and the superego which internalizes religious and social norms rigidly (Kadir, 2024; Moreland-Capuia dkk., 2023; Sani & Wahidah, 2024). When the ego is unable to mediate the struggle between the two poles, anxiety emerges as a form of psychic alarm. In a strict pesantren environment, students are forced to adjust to high moral demands, suppressing personal desires for relaxation, privacy, or even emotional expression. When this tension continues without a healthy outlet, anxiety that was initially situational can turn into a chronic condition. This shows the importance of psychological intervention that not only touches on external behavior, but explores and heals hidden psychodynamic conflicts.

The anxiety of students often does not appear directly, but is disguised through *self-defense mechanisms* which Freud explained in (Andari & Pradana, 2023) as a function of the ego in reducing the pressure of inner conflict. Based on field findings, some students who fail to understand the lesson material will blame the environment, such as the condition of the room that is not conducive or friends who disturb. In psychoanalysis, this is known as projection, turning the source of anxiety outside of oneself so that the ego does not feel threatened (Lepoutre dkk., 2020; Werbart, 2019). Other students showed rationalization, namely making logical reasons to cover up feelings of guilt, for example by saying that material things are not important religiously. Some even experienced regression, marked by childish behavior such as crying secretly or seeking emotional protection from the ustaz. All of these are ways for the ego to survive from the pressure of the superego which is too strong or from the id which continues to demand. This ego immaturity is what makes the students unable to resolve conflicts constructively. Therefore, psychological intervention in Pesantren should help students recognize and reflect on their self-defense mechanisms as an initial step towards strengthening a healthier and more adaptive ego.

The highly hierarchical social and cultural structure of Pesantren has also significantly shaped the anxiety patterns of students. In observations and interviews, students feel that they are always under the supervision of ustaz and kyai, so that pressure arises to always appear obedient and holy. In a structure like this, students are rarely given space to express inner conflicts or spiritual doubts openly (Mudhar dkk., 2025). As a result, moral conflicts or religious doubts are often repressed into the unconscious, leading to repression and sublimation which are pathological if not balanced by a strong ego (Auzai dkk., 2019; Freud, 1946; Risqi & Samsurrohman, 2025). Students who feel unable to live up to the ideals of the pesantren often adapt by pretending, imitating religious behavior, or being socially passive. In the long run, this creates existential anxiety, namely the feeling of not sincerely living a spiritual life. Repression of personal desires or intellectual doubts, if continuously suppressed, will accumulate into mental tension. In Freud's view, this strengthens the dominance of the repressive superego over the weak ego. Therefore, the social system of the pesantren needs to provide space for dialogue and reflection, not just moral instruction.

The relationship between students and authoritative figures such as kyai or ustaz shows a strong transferential pattern and influences the formation of the students' superego. Freud stated that transference occurs when individuals move past feelings or experiences, especially towards parents, to other people who have authority in their current life (Almond, 2011; Andersen & Berk, 1998; Prasko dkk., 2022). In the context of Pesantren, many students view the kyai as an absolute father figure. This has two sides: on the one hand, positive transference creates respect and motivation; on the other hand, students often suppress criticism or negative emotions towards the figure, even when feeling pressured or disagreeing. This relationship imbalance exacerbates anxiety because students do not have a safe space to

express emotions. Anxiety becomes an internalization that burdens the ego and strengthens the superego unrealistically. When transference is not recognized and managed, authoritative relationships can actually strengthen dysfunctional psychodynamic structures. Therefore, a guidance approach is needed in Pesantren that recognizes the role of emotions in authoritative relationships and encourages healthy emotional openness.

Many students come from family backgrounds with unhealthy dynamics, such as emotional abuse, parental conflict, or neglect. In psychoanalytic theory, these kinds of traumatic experiences do not simply disappear, but are stored in the subconscious and can resurface in emotionally similar situations (Fithriyah & Lathifah, 2020; Gentsch & Kuehn, 2022; Maghira & Pandin, 2022). When in a pesantren that demands full discipline and obedience, students with past trauma easily experience "re-triggering" or reactivation of trauma. For example, students who have been scolded loudly by their father will experience excessive fear when the ustaz raises his voice, even though the context is different. The anxiety that arises is not only situational, but comes from the subconscious. This explains why some students react very emotionally to situations that seem normal to other students. In a psychoanalytic framework, this suggests that anxiety management must take into account the student's early life history, and not just adapt to the context of the pesantren. Without understanding the roots of trauma, coaching will tend to be repressive and counterproductive.

One of the most common forms of anxiety found in Pesantren is spiritual anxiety, which is excessive guilt over religious mistakes, past sins, or the inability to meet religious standards. In psychoanalysis, this reflects the dominance of the superego which judges individuals harshly and uncompromisingly (Krisnanto dkk., 2024; Rahmah & Syarifuddin, 2021; Sari dkk., 2019). Students who often feel unworthy of being hafiz, or feel that their worship is in vain, show a dissonance between spiritual desire and moral pressure. This kind of guilt, if experienced continuously, can become pathological. In interviews, several students admitted to feeling guilty just because they fell asleep while reciting the Koran or lost concentration during prayer. This is not a form of healthy spiritual awareness, but rather moral anxiety that burdens the ego. In the long term, this condition can give rise to feelings of existential unworthiness. Therefore, a psychoanalytic approach that helps individuals understand their internal moral structure, as well as develop a more humane and compassionate superego, is very relevant to be applied in Pesantren spiritual education.

Overall, the findings in this subsection indicate that anxiety of students at Pesantren Darul Ulum II cannot be understood superficially or merely as an ordinary emotional disorder. It is the result of a psychodynamic struggle between the id, ego, and superego, which is exacerbated by the structural pressures of the pesantren, authoritative relationship patterns, and unresolved childhood trauma. In this framework, Freud's psychoanalysis is very relevant because it is able to explore the subconscious dimension that has not been touched by conventional educational approaches. Anxiety is no longer just a symptom, but a message from an inner conflict that must be interpreted and healed. Therefore, understanding and applying this theory is very important to create a more empathetic, reflective, and humane student development.

Learning Difficulties in Psychoanalytic Perspective

The learning difficulties of students at the Darul Ulum II Bujur Tengah Islamic Boarding School cannot be explained solely by low intellectual abilities or lack of motivation. Based on the results of observations and interviews, it was found that many students who actually have adequate intelligence, but still experience obstacles in understanding or remembering lessons. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this can be interpreted as ego dysfunction, namely when the ego is unable to manage psychic energy optimally because it is drained to suppress latent inner conflicts (Connolly, 2016; Wilt dkk., 2019). The ego, which

should be in charge of regulating the id's urges and the demands of the superego, actually becomes weak due to continuous psychological pressure, for example from family conflict or religious guilt. As a result, students do not have enough mental energy (libido) to focus and absorb lessons. This condition is worsened by a rigid and repetitive learning environment, which actually increases pressure rather than reducing it. Therefore, the approach to dealing with learning difficulties cannot only focus on learning strategies or teaching methods, but also needs to explore hidden psychological aspects that inhibit learning functions internally.

One of the phenomena that often occurs in the learning process of students is the condition of "empty mind" when facing memorization tasks or exams. In some cases, students suddenly forget the material that has been studied for days, or are unable to answer questions even though they have previously mastered it. This, in psychoanalysis, can be explained through the mechanism of repression, namely the process in which thoughts or experiences that cause anxiety are suppressed into the subconscious to maintain ego stability (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021; Lindsay dkk., 2018). In this context, the emotional pressure experienced by students, whether due to criticism from teachers, competitive pressure, or other internal conflicts, causes them to unconsciously suppress information related to the learning experience. As a result, cognitive processes are disrupted and learning output is minimal. Students themselves often do not understand why they forget, which gives rise to new anxieties that worsen the situation. In this case, failure to remember is not a problem of brain capacity, but a form of psychological self-defense against uncomfortable situations. Therefore, teachers and mentors need to understand that complaints about forgetting or not attending do not always mean laziness, but may be an expression of deep emotional repression.

The learning difficulties of students can also be seen from their tendency to be emotionally dependent on authoritative figures, such as ustaz or caregivers. This dependence is not only in terms of material guidance, but also emotional validation. Some students do not want to learn unless told or accompanied, and feel unable to learn independently. In psychoanalysis, this behavior can be explained as a form of emotional fixation, which is a condition in which an individual fails to complete a certain stage of psychosexual or social development, so that they are trapped in unresolved emotional needs (Ismail dkk., 2024; Muniroh, 2021). In the case of students, this fixation often occurs in the latent stage or early puberty, when they should have begun to develop independence and self-control. However, due to moral burdens or childhood trauma, many of them remain dependent on authority figures. This affects the learning process because initiative, curiosity, and the ability to develop their own learning strategies are low. Students do not learn to understand, but to please authoritative figures. Therefore, learning strategies that only rely on strict supervision actually strengthen this fixation, not cure it. Proper emotional support is needed so that students can reconstruct their ego structure and get out of dysfunctional dependence.

In the pesantren environment, where moral and religious norms are very strong, the superego of students tends to be formed in a rigid and perfectionist manner. A healthy superego functions to direct individuals towards good social values, but if it is too strong, it will oppress the ego with unrealistic demands (Jesus, 2023; Muhajir dkk., 2024; Saputro dkk., 2023). Students with this kind of superego tend to be afraid of making mistakes, avoid learning challenges, and feel anxious when facing evaluations. In interviews, it was found that some students preferred not to answer questions rather than give wrong answers, because they were afraid of being criticized or feeling like they had failed spiritually. This fear is unhealthy and significantly hinders the learning process. Evaluation, which should be a tool for self-reflection, has instead turned into a threat that triggers psychological stress. In conditions like this, learning is no longer a liberating cognitive experience, but rather a frightening moral burden. Therefore, it is important for the Islamic boarding school educational environment to

create a more humanistic and empathetic evaluation system, which does not strengthen the pathological superego, but instead supports the growth of a flexible and courageous ego.

Some students in Pesantren show physical symptoms that appear before the learning or evaluation process, such as headaches, nausea, stomach aches, and fatigue that cannot be explained medically. In psychoanalysis, this phenomenon is known as psychosomatic disorders, namely physical symptoms that are rooted in unresolved inner conflicts (Khusumadewi & Pramesti, 2023; Rahmatullah dkk., 2024). When individuals are unable to express emotions or conflicts verbally, the body becomes a "stage" for the expression of such tension. In the context of Pesantren, where the expression of emotions is often limited by norms of politeness and submission, psychosomatic tendencies are very likely to occur. Students who appear sick before exams may not actually be physically ill, but are in a state of extreme psychological stress that they cannot express. This shows that the learning process is not only related to the brain and academic ability, but is also closely related to emotional conditions and intrapsychic relationships. Therefore, strengthening learning capacity needs to be done holistically, by paying attention to psychological aspects and not just cognitive or technical aspects alone.

In the mentoring process, the application of free association techniques has proven effective in helping students express inner conflicts related to learning difficulties. Free association, as developed by Freud, allows individuals to speak freely without censorship, so that the subconscious can emerge to the surface (MacMillan, 2001; Rabeyron, 2022). When students are given space to tell their stories without pressure, they slowly begin to associate emotional experiences such as anger at parents, fear of teachers, or disappointment with themselves with their difficulties in learning. In some cases, students realize that their fear of certain subjects actually stems from the experience of being teased as a child or from the trauma of being scolded when answering incorrectly. This recognition becomes an important starting point for building awareness and ego reconstruction. Teachers or counselors who understand this technique can guide students more empathetically and reflectively. Thus, the learning process is not only a transfer of knowledge, but also a process of healing and psychological empowerment that allows students to access their full learning potential.

Overall, the findings in this subsection confirm that students' learning difficulties are not merely academic or intellectual problems, but rather a reflection of unresolved psychological conflicts. Repression, fixation, superego dominance, and psychosomatic disorders all play a role in forming complex and layered learning barriers. Therefore, handling students' learning difficulties requires a deeper approach, namely a psychodynamic approach that explores the subconscious aspects and personality structure. This approach provides a more empathetic and comprehensive alternative to conventional pedagogical approaches. Through this understanding, Pesantren are expected to form a coaching system that not only educates academically and spiritually, but also heals and guides psychologically, so that students can learn calmly, consciously, and in complete self-balance.

Applied Psychoanalytic Model for Pesantren

The applied psychoanalytic model developed from the results of this study consists of three main stages, namely psychodynamic exploration, clarification, and reconstruction. The exploration stage aims to identify subconscious conflicts that influence the behavior of students. In this stage, a free association approach, reflective dialogue, and symbolic observation of the emotional expressions of students are used. The clarification stage aims to help students understand the meaning of these conflicts, whether they originate from childhood trauma, moral pressure, or social expectations. Clarification is carried out through reflective guidance, guided discussions, and the use of symbolic narratives that are in line with Islamic values. The final stage is reconstruction, namely reshaping the way of thinking,

learning strategies, and emotional management of students in a more adaptive way. This approach adapts the basic principles of classical psychoanalytic therapy (Diem-Wille, 2021; Field dkk., 1989) but modified to be contextual with the characteristics of Pesantren, which are based on religious values and collective culture. This model not only unravels psychological problems that hinder learning, but also empowers students to build a strong and flexible ego, so that they are able to face the pressures of learning and spiritual life with a healthy psychological balance.

One of the important foundations in this applied psychoanalytic model is a healthy transferential relationship between the student and the teacher or ustaz. In psychoanalytic therapy, transference is a psychological process in which an individual projects past feelings or conflicts onto a present authority figure (Newman & Newman, 2020; Sharma & Spiro, 2025; Youell, 2018). In Pesantren, teachers or ustaz often act as symbolic father figures, who can be a medium for students to resolve unresolved emotional conflicts. This model utilizes positive transference by making ustaz an emotional guide, not just a teacher of knowledge. With an empathetic and reflective approach, ustaz can help students express and understand their emotions safely. This guidance also helps students reconstruct their self-image and build more stable self-confidence. This kind of relationship does not mean eliminating the hierarchy of authority, but repositioning the role of the teacher to be more supportive and therapeutic. With consistent emotional guidance, students can experience profound psychological transformation and strengthen ego function in dealing with anxiety and learning pressure in a competitive and busy Islamic boarding school environment.

To ensure that this model is accepted and contextual to the pesantren culture, the integration of Islamic values becomes a key element in the intervention process. Psychoanalytic techniques such as free association, dream interpretation, or symbolic analysis are adapted to Islamic spiritual practices such as muhasabah (self-introspection), tafakur (contemplation), and taubat (reflection on mistakes) (Maccoby, 1971); (Munsoor, 2017); (Nufus dkk., 2023); (Pemred, 2025). Religious symbols are used to bridge the process of interpreting intrapsychic conflict so that it is more acceptable to students and does not cause cultural resistance. This approach also shows that psychoanalysis does not have to be in conflict with spirituality, but can complement each other. In practice, the process of identifying psychological conflict is associated with the values of piety, so that students do not feel guilty when opening themselves to imperfection or inner wounds. On the contrary, the healing process becomes a path to spiritual improvement. This integration broadens the scope of psychodynamic therapy to the transcendental realm, making psychological and religious experiences a unified whole. Thus, students are not only helped mentally, but are also strengthened from an inner perspective with an approach that is in accordance with the values of Islamic faith.

This model also shifts the paradigm of the teacher's role from a single authority to a psychodynamic facilitator. Teachers are no longer positioned as mere instruction givers, but as guides who are sensitive to the psychological conflicts of students. For this reason, teachers need to be equipped with basic training in psychoanalytic theory and an empathetic approach to communication (Martin, 2007; Rabeyron, 2022). This training includes an understanding of the dynamics of the id, ego, superego, as well as how to recognize symptoms of repression, defense mechanisms, and transference. With this understanding, teachers can identify students who show learning disabilities not as lazy or incompetent, but as individuals who are struggling with their psychological burdens. In this model, teachers are also invited to reflect on themselves so as not to display authority rigidly, but rather to be more open, dialogical, and supportive. With this change in role, the pesantren environment will become emotionally healthier, where the learning process is no longer based on pressure and fear, but on awareness, self-acceptance, and healthy psychological growth. This new role will strengthen

the emotional relationship between teachers and students, and create a safe space for character growth and academic ability simultaneously.

The application of this applied psychoanalytic model not only focuses on individuals, but also encourages structural changes in the Islamic boarding school education system. Based on field findings, one source of pressure that exacerbates the psychological conflict of students is a rigid and inflexible academic evaluation system. Therefore, this model recommends reforms such as portfolio-based evaluation, learning reflection, and regular consultation. In addition, it is necessary to form a safe emotional expression space such as a sharing forum, counseling room, and personal mentoring that is dialogical in nature (Laird dkk., 2024; Nakhma'ussolikhah dkk., 2024). This reform aims to make Pesantren not only a place to instill values, but also a space for humane personality growth. By creating a reflective culture and being open to psychological expression, Pesantren will be able to form students who are not only ritually pious, but also emotionally mature. Therefore, this model is integrative: it touches on the intrapsychic aspects of students while simultaneously urging structural reform so that the Islamic boarding school environment supports psychological recovery and sustainable adaptive ego growth.

Limited implementation of this model has been conducted experimentally through a series of reflective mentoring for several students who experience anxiety and learning disabilities. The results showed significant improvements in concentration ability, increased learning motivation, and decreased psychosomatic symptoms. Students became more open in expressing their feelings, no longer hiding their anxiety, and began to dare to have open dialogues with teachers. Teachers involved in the short training showed increased sensitivity to the emotional conditions of students, and were able to build more reflective communication. In this context, the psychoanalytic approach has proven effective not only in clinical contexts, but also in the complex realm of religious-based education (Clemens, 2013; Uyun, 2023; Zamhariroh & Zaini, 2025). Although still limited in scale, these initial findings provide a strong basis for developing the model more widely in other Islamic boarding school environments. This initial success also proves that the psychodynamic approach can be accepted by the traditional Islamic education system if carried out with the right adaptation of values and communication strategies.

The Applied Psychoanalytic Model designed in this study has proven to be relevant, applicable, and adaptive to the psychological needs of students in the Islamic boarding school environment. This model not only offers an intervention approach to anxiety and learning difficulties, but also becomes a bridge between Western psychological approaches and Islamic values. By combining the exploration of subconscious conflict, transferential relations, integration of spiritual values, and the new role of teachers as emotional facilitators, this model creates a more humanistic educational space. In addition, this model encourages systemic changes in the structure of the Islamic boarding school to better support healthy and adaptive ego growth. These findings indicate that the psychological challenges of students can be handled comprehensively if the approach used is able to reach the roots of their inner problems. Thus, this model is not only a short-term solution to anxiety and learning difficulties, but also contributes to formulating a new direction for the development of Pesantren that are more inclusive, reflective, and psychologically and spiritually empowering.

Tabel 1. Psychoanalytic Model in Overcoming Anxiety and Learning Difficulties of Islamic Boarding School Students

Model Stage	Main Objective	Main Step	Expected Result
1. Exploration	Explore inner conflict and sources of anxiety	- Reflective interview	Free association Students begin to recognize emotions and inner stress

Model Stage	Main Objective	Main Step	Expected Result
2. Clarification	Understand the meaning of conflict within students	- Guided discussion-Muhasabah (introspection)	Students are aware of the relationship between inner conflict and learning
3. Reconstruction	Form a healthy way of learning and mental attitude	- Learning assistance-Emotional regulation training	Students are more focused, confident, and motivated

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions in the three sub-sections of this study, it can be concluded that the application of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory contextually at the Darul Ulum II Bujur Tengah Pamekasan Islamic Boarding School is able to provide a deep understanding of the roots of anxiety and learning difficulties experienced by students. Anxiety does not only arise as a response to academic pressure or Islamic boarding school discipline, but also as a symptom of intrapsychic conflict between the id, ego, and superego which is influenced by childhood trauma, emotional repression, and rigid authoritative relationships. Students' learning difficulties are also more influenced by psychodynamic imbalance, especially the weakness of the ego in managing the pressure of a perfectionist and dominant superego. Various self-defense mechanisms, such as repression, rationalization, and regression, emerge as a form of subconscious resistance to unconscious inner conflicts. In response to these findings, an applied psychoanalytic model based on three stages of intervention was formulated: psychodynamic exploration, clarification, and reconstruction. This model combines a psychoanalytic approach with Islamic spiritual values, and positions teachers as emotional facilitators, not just instructors. The initial results of the application of the model show positive changes in students, both emotionally and academically. Therefore, this model can be considered as an effective and applicable integrative approach in Islamic boarding school education, while also opening up new space for the unification of modern psychology and traditional religious guidance that is more reflective, humanistic, and contextual.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The following table outlines the specific contributions made by each author involved in the preparation and completion of this research. This contribution statement ensures transparency and clarity in the division of academic responsibilities throughout the research

process. Imaniyatul Fithriyah, responsible for field data collection, transcribing interviews, and drafting the theoretical framework related to Freud's psychoanalytic concepts. Ach. Sayyi, contributed to conceptualizing the research idea, supervised the study design, structured the discussion, and revised the final manuscript for intellectual content. Abdul Salam Hamood Ghaleb Alenesi, supported the literature review, particularly comparative perspectives of psychoanalysis, and contributed to analyzing the findings in relation to international research contexts. Lina Agustina, participated in methodology formulation, coding qualitative data, and organizing model development based on field findings. Shahibul Muttaqien Al-Manduriy, conducted validation of findings through member checking and contributed to integrating Islamic values into the psychoanalytic intervention model.

COMPETING OF INTEREST

The authors declare no competing of interest.

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