

Religious coping of Malaysian Muslims with high Sensory-Processing Sensitivity in facing the loss of loved one(s)

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: sensory-processing sensitivity Islamic perspectives coping with loss COVID-19 pandemic Malaysian Muslim adults</p>	<p>Sensory-Processing Sensitivity (SPS) characterizes people's characteristic sensitivity to experience. SPS is a young field of research. There are limitations in the study of SPS and religiosity and spirituality. This study seeks to explore how Muslims with high SPS view the loss they have experienced and how they cope with the loss from an Islamic perspective. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used as the method of the study to allow for an in-depth exploration of how participants make sense of their loss experiences. The study recruited five high SPS Malaysian Muslims to explore the loss and coping experiences they had during the COVID-19 crisis and how they viewed the experiences in Islamic perspectives. The study found three themes in the application of Islamic perspectives in viewing the loss experienced by the participants and the way they coped with the loss. The Malaysian Muslim participants applied Islamic teachings as protective and therapeutic aspects to cope with the loss of loved ones, which is consistent with previous studies on Islamic religiosity. It is recommended that future SPS studies focus on exploring how individuals with different levels of SPS view religiosity and spirituality aspects of life events, especially within the Malaysian Muslim community.</p>

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Introduction

Sensory-Processing Sensitivity (SPS) is a temperament or personality trait that characterizes people based on how they process environmental information. Highly Sensitive People (HSP) are characterized by a deep and complex way of processing sensory and environmental information. Because of the way they process information, HSPs often experience easy overstimulation, strong emotional reactivity, high empathy, and great awareness (Greven et al., 2019), which causes them to easily experience overwhelm, leading to greater stress. To cope with the overwhelming experience, HSPs often need frequent breaks and more time to respond to the stressor (Aron & Aron, 1997; Bas et al., 2021; Black & Kern, 2020). High SPS is a risk factor for negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and stress (Ahadi & Basharpour, 2010; Bas et al., 2021; Greven et al., 2019). However, studies have also found that HSPs exhibit intense positive emotions and higher rates of positive change from psychological intervention programs (Bas et al., 2021; Greven et al., 2019; Kibe et al., 2020). They also have high Aesthetic Sensitivity (AES) and are more open to experiencing positive stimuli, show interest in art and music, have greater attention to detail, and have better communication skills that promote prosocial and helping behaviors (Costa-López et al., 2021; Greven et al., 2019; Grimen & Diseth, 2016; Sobocko & Zelenski, 2015; Elst et al., 2019).

In sociology, religion is defined as an integrated system of beliefs and practices that bind followers into a single moral community (Conerly et al., 2021). Islamic sociology originates from the Creator Allah SWT through the Al-Quran (Malik, 2014). The Al-Quran provides guidance and inspiration to the people who apply it in life (Dahlan et al., 2022), which becomes the

essence of norms and traditions within the Muslim community (Dahlan et al., 2022). In the Islamic concept of Ummah, the Muslim community represents a system of social relations focused on religiosity and spiritual essence as guided in the Al-Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Dahlan et al., 2022; Embong et al., 2017). According to the previous study on SPS, high SPS is associated with high religiosity and spirituality, with people who attended religious events at least once a week having higher sensitivity than people who attended the events less than once a week (Malinakova et al., 2021). Religious faith provides a way to cope with negative emotions. Islamic religious coping increases life satisfaction and moderates the relationship between stress and well-being (Adam & Ward, 2016). Belief in Allah becomes the primary approach among Muslims to achieve inner peace and control negative emotions (Kasim & Majid, 2020). Religiosity and spirituality help the bereaved to make sense of life and death (Khawaja & Khawaja, 2019). One study found that religion gives bereaved Muslim parents psychological comfort to go through the grieving process by providing a way to accept death as a part of life (Hussin et al., 2018). Believing that their loved ones have returned to God and are in a better place becomes a way to comfort Muslims grieving the loss, and thinking that the hardships they are experiencing are a form of test from Allah SWT brings them feelings of acceptance (*redha*; Basri et al., 2015; Khawaja & Khawaja, 2019). This is similar to the findings of previous SPS studies, which emphasized that HSPs' strategies to cope with life stress are mindfulness, acceptance and reflection, and positive thinking (Bas et al., 2021; Yano et al., 2021).

Previous studies of HSPs have reported a lack of literature in this area of study (Ahadi & Basharpour, 2010; Bas et al., 2021; Greven et al., 2019). It is unknown how HSP

experience the loss of a loved one and how they use religiosity to cope with the loss. The experience of losing a loved one is a significant experience that a person goes through in their life that greatly affects their emotions (Khawaja & Khawaja, 2019). In addition, there is limited research on SPS and religiosity or spirituality, especially in the context of Islam. A study was conducted to explore the experiences of individuals with high SPS in facing the loss of their loved ones during the COVID-19 crisis, and how they cope with the loss during the crisis. The study also aimed to explore how the high SPS individuals who were Malaysian Muslims applied Islamic teachings to cope with the loss. Therefore, this paper presents the views of Muslims with high SPS on the experience of losing a loved one(s) and how they apply Islamic teachings to cope with the loss of a loved one. This study aims to enhance the understanding of high SPS Muslim adults' views related to coping with loss from Islamic perspectives and contribute to the Islamic spiritual psychological framework.

Method

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used in this qualitative study to allow for an in-depth exploration of how participants make sense of their loss experiences. The researcher's interpretation was also included as it plays an important role in understanding the participants' interpretations of their world (double hermeneutic; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The study recruited five participants who met the inclusion criteria using purposive sampling to reach saturation point (no additional data can lead to new information). Due to the specific inclusion criteria of the study, purposive sampling was used to identify and recruit participants (Campbell et al., 2020). The inclusion criteria for the participants were: a) Malaysian

Muslim adults, b) have a high SPS score, c) have experienced the loss of their loved one(s) during the COVID-19 crisis. The participants' SPS level was measured using the HSP scale to classify high SPS based on the cut-off score of 4.66 (for high score) as proposed by Lionetti et al. (2018). Loss of loved one(s) includes close people such as spouse, family member(s), and/or close friend(s), whether due to COVID-19 or other causes.

An online form was distributed to recruit participants. Of the 34 responses received, eight individuals expressed interest in participating in the study. Of these, one did not meet the inclusion criteria (low level of SPS) and one did not respond to the contact. Six participants agreed and participated in the study: one participant agreed to participate in a physical interview, one participant preferred a video call, and three participants participated in a voice call interview. One participant who preferred a text message interview did not complete the interview. Therefore, the study analyzed responses from the interviews completed by a total of five participants.

Participants completed the demographic questions consisting of information about age, gender, ethnicity, religion, and whether the target participants experienced a loss during the COVID-19 crisis to confirm that the inclusion criteria were met. To assess the participants' level of SPS, the HSP scale (Aron & Aron, 1997) obtained from hsperson.com was used. It consists of questions that address common experiences related to sensitivity (e.g., "Do other people's moods affect you?", "Do you feel the need to withdraw during busy days?", "Do changes in your life upset you?"). According to Lionetti et al. (2018), the mean score for the low level of SPS is ≤ 3.71 , the medium level is between >3.71 and ≤ 4.66 , and the high level is >4.66 . The scale has a high internal consistency of 0.87 Cronbach alpha (Smolewska et al., 2006).

To collect the qualitative data, interview questions were designed based on the research questions of the main study, which were to explore the participants' inner experiences in dealing with the loss of loved one(s) during the COVID-19 crisis and to explore the way they cope with the loss. In addition, the interview questions were also designed to find out how the participants applied Islamic teachings to cope with the loss of loved one(s).

After obtaining ethical approval from the International Islamic University Malaysia Research Ethics Committee (IREC), participants who met the inclusion criteria of the study were recruited and contacted. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, consent forms and interview questions were presented to the participants prior to the interview. Participants were allowed to choose the interview method (physical meeting, video call, voice call, online chat) and were allowed to skip any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. The interview was recorded for transcription with the verbal consent of the participants. Participants' personal information was kept confidential and they were referred to by pseudonyms.

The participants were referred to by their pseudonyms: Fatimah, Aisyah, Sofia, Aminah, and Putri. All of the participants were female Malay Muslims with an average age of 25 years. All participants reported that they had received Islamic education

through school and/or family. Information about the participants that may help in the identification of the data is presented in Table 1.

An independent audit was conducted to ensure the validity of the IPA approach used in the study. The independent review included the research proposal, initial notes on research questions, interview details, original verbatim documents, annotated transcripts, tables of themes, draft reports, and the final report. To ensure internal validity, SPS experts were consulted during the process of developing the interview questions. The interview questions were revised based on the feedback provided. The analysis also went through member checking and was tested with the participants to establish the validity of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Nowell et al., 2017). It also continuously went through the process of checking and rechecking by the researcher and research supervisors and was recorded in audit trails to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings (Carcary, 2021). In addition, rich and thick descriptions were used as data verification procedures to ensure the quality of the data (Carcary, 2021; Lincoln & Guba, 1981, as cited in Morse et al., 2002).

Results and Discussion

The main study focused on exploring the experiences of Muslims with high SPS in facing the loss of loved ones during the

Table 1. Participants' information related to the study

Participant	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	HSP Score	Loss	Cause of Loss
1	Fatimah	26	Female	5.78	Mother	Long-term disease
2	Aisyah	26	Female	6.00	Mother, Father	Heart attack, COVID-19
3	Sofia	24	Female	5.30	Mother	COVID-19
4	Aminah	23	Female	5.37	Grandmother	COVID-19
5	Putri	26	Female	5.74	Grandfather	Heart attack

COVID-19 pandemic, and how they coped with the loss during the situations. However, Islam plays an important role in the daily lives of most Malaysians (Haque & Masuan, 2002, as cited in Hussin et al., 2018). According to Malinakova et al. (2021), there is a positive relationship between SPS and religiosity and spirituality. Spirituality is defined as understanding life in terms of its ultimate meaning and value (Mystakidou et al., 2007, cited in Basri et al., 2015). Meaning making is a coping strategy that defines the effort to see the positive and meaningful aspects of an event, while religious coping is also one of the general types of coping strategies (Aldwin & Yancura, 2004). This explains that religiosity and spirituality serve as a coping strategy for people to deal with a stressor in life. In Islam, the meanings of spirituality and religiosity are not distinguished. Religiosity and spirituality come together to make up all aspects of life (*shumul*). In addition, Basri et al. (2015) found that Islam as a religion serves as a protective and therapeutic effect for Muslims.

According to social scientists, religion is an organized and integrated set of beliefs, behaviors, and norms focused on basic social needs and values; a cultural universal in any social group (Conerly et al., 2021). Islamic sociology originates from the Creator Allah SWT through the Al-Quran (Malik, 2014). The Al-Quran provides guidance and inspiration to the people who apply it in their lives (Dahlan et al., 2022). The Muslim community applies the meaning and function of the Al-Quran, which becomes the essence of norms and traditions within the Muslim community, also called the “living Quran”; the phenomenon of the Al-Quran in everyday life (Dahlan et al., 2022). As the participants in the present study shared their experiences of loss, they spontaneously shared their Islamic views about the loss without being asked, indicating the deep-rooted values of Islam in their lives. Thus, three themes were

extracted from the participants’ responses, namely, “*Redha*,” “Islamic Practices,” and “The Importance of Islamic Teachings.”

Redha (total acceptance)

The participants mentioned their experience of accepting (*redha*) what Allah has written (*taqdir*). For example, when they shared the experience of caring for and protecting their loved ones from the spread of COVID-19, their loved ones were infected and they could only accept (*redha*) that Allah has a better plan for them. The experience of wholeheartedly accepting a calamity is a protective effect of Islamic religiosity against negative experiences (Basri et al., 2015). Believing that Allah has the best plan for them and having good expectations of Him become the source of positive thinking that Muslims engage in to cope with life stress and are nourished by active Islamic spiritual engagement (Achour et al., 2015). When Muslims practice Islamic positive thinking and patience, they are able to be at ease because they are aware of the benefits of tolerating difficulties (Zaman et al., 2022).

Aisyah shared her view about accepting what Allah has written (*taqdir*). Even if she had tried to protect her parents from being exposed to COVID-19, for example, by telling them not to go out and buying them meals and groceries herself, if it is written by Allah, it will happen.

“...I was that worried to the point I didn’t allow my parents to go out of the house, I was even willing to go back [makes gestures] during lunch break to buy them lunch ... to that point, because (I) wanted to protect (them), but, taqdir, they were infected...”

Aisyah, who wrote her thoughts during the period of loss to express her inner thoughts, shared one of her entries in the interview. In her writing, Aisyah saw the loss of her parents as a test from Allah,

noting that Allah does not test beyond what is possible. She also wrote that she and her siblings must accept and repay their parents' deeds by extending their parents' good deeds to contribute to their lives in the hereafter. Apart from this, Aisyah also shared that she began to feel accepting (*redha*) after learning about the good deeds her parents had secretly done, as quoted below:

"... but... while there was the sadness, there was also the feeling of... glad because there was... at the time, we just learned about [makes expression] the good deeds that our parents have done in secret... so it felt... [clicks tongue] "It's fine... (they are) in a better place", so it made us (I) felt a bit accepting (redha)..."

Meanwhile, Sofia saw that there was a reason (*hikmah*) for the loss she was experiencing. She perceived that even if her mother survived stage five of COVID-19, she might suffer from damaged internal organs. With this thought, Sofia was able to feel acceptance (*redha*). Sofia shared her perspective as follows:

"...I would say, "There's a reason ('hikmah')," ... So, one thing I, I would remind myself, "There's a reason behind this,". If... if... mother survived after the Stage Five of COVID, maybe her internal organ, um... (would be) damage, there would be some... difficulties, so... mother would suffer. So... there's [word stress] a reason behind it..."

Moreover, similar to Aisyah, Aminah shared her views about accepting what Allah has written (*taqdir*). Although she tried her best to protect her grandmother, if Allah wills it, it will happen. What was left for her was to accept (*redha*) the loss. Amina expressed her opinion as follows:

"...So, we too... were not sure of what... we... should have done because, like... (even if) we protect... we were being cautious (of it), if it's meant to happen, it will happen... we just have to

accept it and 'redha' no matter what, ... so, like, (I was) not sure how to feel about it [smiles] but, (I) just had to accept it."

Other than that, Aminah also shared her experience of applying self-talk to calm herself by convincing herself that the loss is a test from Allah. She said:

Aminah: "...at the time, I mostly, uh, isolate myself, so what I did, I talked to myself, I said, "Okay, it's okay, you can (do it) ... (it will) pass," and all... "This (experience) is..." ... "it's a test from Allah," ..."

Likewise, Putri experienced *redha* by reflecting on the moments with her grandfather. She shared her view that, as Muslims, people should believe that death is beyond anyone's control. As she reflected on the time she had spent with her grandfather, she felt the total acceptance towards the loss of her grandfather.

"... we as Muslims, we (know) we can't do much, it's already the time and then... we were also given the time (to) spend time together, and then... I had the time to treat (him) ... so like, it's okay ..."

As the participants shared their inner feelings and thoughts about the loss, they shared the view that they must wholeheartedly accept (*redha*) that the loss was part of Allah's plan. Although acceptance and *redha* are related, the concept of *redha* in Islam is often closely associated with feelings of sincerity (*ikhlas*) and patience (*sabr*; Izharuddin, 2021; Rusdi, 2016). People who perceive their struggle as a test from Allah embrace *redha* with *ikhlas* and *sabr* (Izharuddin, 2021), giving the experience of total acceptance. Perceiving the feelings of blessing and gratitude and accepting (*redha*) wholeheartedly that their struggle is a form of test from Allah and that Allah is behind everything that happens helps Muslims

to control their stress and cope with life's struggles (Basri et al., 2015; Kasim & Majid, 2020). The application of these Islamic concepts helps the bereaved Muslims give meaning to their loss and helps them cope with the loss (Khawaja & Khawaja, 2019). In addition, although the participants in the present study did not directly mention the experience of *sabr* to cope with the loss, they shared the experience of calming themselves from their intense experience of the loss. *Sabr* is an Arabic word that is related to other Islamic virtues such as endurance and patience (Haeri, 2017, as cited in Izharuddin, 2021), which were mentioned by the participants as they shared their experiences about the loss and how they coped with it.

Participants also mentioned the concept of *taqdir*. Even if they try to protect their loved ones from calamity, they cannot prevent it from happening. If death is written by Allah (*taqdir*), it will happen. One of the most important Quranic principles of death in Islam is that life has a time limit and the time of death is determined by Allah (Rasekh & Ayati, 2007). The Al Quran describes that death is in the will of Allah (Quran 3:145, Quran.com):

"No soul can ever die without Allah's Will at the destined time. Those who desire worldly gain, We will let them have it, and those who desire heavenly reward, We will grant it to them. And We will reward those who are grateful."

Another important Quranic principle about death in Islam is that death is part of a process of life (Rasekh & Ayati, 2007). The perception that every life in the world belongs to Allah enables one to accept a calamity with a whole heart (Basri et al., 2015). Muslims who are able to perceive that life's difficulties are temporary are able to recover quickly and have a high level of resilience (Salleh et al., 2020). This view was shared by the participants as they convinced

themselves that death is part of the process and not the end of a life. Death in Islam is not the final journey of life. The concept of death in Islam refers to the existence of another life (Rasekh & Ayati, 2007); the life of the hereafter, the concept of heaven and hell (Khalil, 2013, as cited in Khawaja & Khawaja, 2019). Belief in the life of the hereafter serves as a way to cope with loss, as Muslims are comforted by the thought that their loved ones will be granted a place in heaven (Khawaja & Khawaja, 2019). The experience of seeing death as not the end of a life and believing in the concept of the hereafter was mentioned by the participants. Putri, in particular, shared her view that she will be reunited with her grandfather in the hereafter and would like to increase her deeds for the reunion.

Islamic practices

During the period of loss, the participants had to cope with the experience of loss during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Due to the restriction of movement, they could not go outside to cope and heal from the loss. Therefore, they engaged in indoor activities to cope with the loss, including Islamic practices. When asked about the Islamic practices they performed to cope with the loss, the participants shared a few practices such as praying (*doa*) for their loved one(s), reciting the Al-Quran, and so on. They mentioned that they performed these practices more than usual during the period of loss, indicating the emergence of coping mechanisms from Islamic practices. According to Kasim and Majid (2020), spiritual and religious practices such as meditation, prayer, and recitation of the Al-Quran help Muslims to calm themselves from unpleasant and negative emotions (Kasim & Majid, 2020).

According to Fatimah, she performed practices such as reciting the Al-Quran

and Al-Mathurat (a collection of selected Quranic verses and Al-Hadith presented in the form of a litany) as part of the scheduled routine in the household. However, during the period of loss, there were moments when she would recite the Al-Quran outside of the schedule. Fatimah also shared that she recited the Qur'an more than usual during the period of loss. This experience was cited as follows:

"(I think), on other days... we did it because we had to, but at the time (period of loss), (I) randomly felt like... doing it ... reciting the Al-Quran. Even if not by reciting it (the original version of Al-Quran), occasionally, (I would) read... its translation."

Similarly, Aisyah also mentioned that she engaged in the activity of reciting the al-Quran. Other than that, she also mentioned the practices that her parents used to do, such as giving charity and practicing Zikr (a form of Islamic meditation) and reciting prayers (*doa*). Aisyah shared that she engaged in these practices to carry on what her parents did while they were alive. Other Islamic practices that Aisyah engaged in to continue her parents' deeds include giving charity (*sadaqah*), practicing zikr and prayers, and maintaining friendships with her parents' friends.

Meanwhile, Sofia shared that reciting the Al-Quran was one of her limited coping activities to deal with her loss during the pandemic lockdown. When she felt sad because of the loss, she would recite the Al-Quran to calm herself. Otherwise, Sofia also mentioned that she engaged in Islamic practices on behalf of her deceased mother to contribute to her mother's life in the Hereafter.

"It was as the [word stress] usual, pray (doa), recite (the Al-Quran), perform the prayers, hmm... do charity (sadaqah) ... on behalf of my late mom..."

In addition, Sofia shared that performing Islamic practices has always been a norm in her family. She emphasized that she performs Islamic practices every day, not just when she experiences difficult times. Thus, according to Sofia, the frequency of performing Islamic practices is always the same, whether before the loss of her mother or after the loss.

Similarly, Aminah mentioned that reciting the Qur'an helped her cope with her loss. When she remembered the loss of her grandmother, she recited the Qur'an to calm herself. Similar to other participants, Aminah engaged in this practice to offer the rewards of her grandmother's life in the hereafter. Aminah shared:

"... I would recite the Al-Quran... and reciting the Al-Quran, I would... talk to myself (pray)... um... "Ya Allah, I recite (the Al-Quran) and everything, please give, give all the reward to her..."

Other than that, Aminah shared that when she thinks about her grandmother's life in the Barzakh (the waiting period after death for all souls before the Day of Judgment), she will pray for her grandmother. Aminah shared:

"... (when) I think (wonder) about... how, how is, uh... her situation, condition, uh at the time, in, in there... I would say (pray)... "Ya Allah, please don't... don't torment her, I don't want her to be in pain," and all that..."

Meanwhile, Putri saw the activity of reciting the Al-Quran as helping her to distract herself from focusing on her feelings and thoughts about the loss. As Putri put it, "(By reciting the) Al-Quran, ... it brings calmness, like ... it distracts our mind...". Furthermore, Putri also shared her view of performing Islamic practices to offer it (*sadaqah*) to her grandfather. Apart from that, Putri also mentioned that she would personally browse

and listen to podcasts by religious teachers on how to deal with emotional friction from an Islamic perspective.

In particular, all the participants mentioned the practice of reciting the al-Quran to cope with the loss they experienced. Basri et al. (2015) found that a patient with a long-term illness expressed the healing “magic” of the Al-Quran, as she felt calmer from the pain after reciting the verses of the Al-Quran. In addition, studies have found that reading the Al-Quran, listening to the recitation of the Al-Quran, and the Al-Quran itself serve as mercy, blessing, and medicine, especially in reducing anxiety (Ghiasi & Keramat, 2018; Najam et al., 2019; Zaman et al., 2022). Furthermore, consistent with Putri’s assertion that reciting the al-Quran brings calmness that may distract her from thinking about the experience of loss, previous studies have found that Muslims perceive that the practice of reciting the al-Quran can clear their minds (Geels, 1996, as cited in Najam et al., 2019). These findings suggest that the act of reciting the Al-Quran serves as a coping strategy for Muslims to deal with the difficulties in their lives.

Separately, participants also mentioned prayer and supplication to Allah (*doa*) as another Islamic practice for coping with their experience of loss. Prayer represents a Muslim’s spiritual connection to Allah and serves as both protection and treatment for Muslims (Achour et al., 2015). It is an Islamic technique among others that can potentially reduce life stress, depression, and anxiety (Achour et al., 2015; Zaman et al., 2022).

Alternatively, the participants provided their views on the Islamic practices they engaged in during the period of loss. One of the participants, Aisyah, mentioned that she performed the practices to “continue the good deeds of her parents” and to repay what they had done for her and her siblings. Other participants also shared that they performed

the practices to offer the rewards to their loved ones, referring to it as an act of *sadaqah* (charity). The act of performing good deeds for the deceased loved one was mentioned in a hadith along with other practices that could help one’s life in the Hereafter after death (The Hadith, n.d.):

Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah’s Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: When a man dies, his acts come to an end, but three, recurring charity, or knowledge (by which people) benefit, or a pious son, who prays for him (for the deceased).

Religion promotes good behavior (Myers & Twenge, 2019). Participants shared that they engaged in charity (*sadaqah*) because they wanted the good deeds to contribute to their deceased loved one. In social psychology, social exchange theory discusses that helping behavior is motivated by the desire to maximize external and/or internal rewards (Myers & Twenge, 2019). In addition, Aisyah specifically shared that she wanted to extend her parents’ good deeds, such as helping her neighbors. She also wanted to repay her parents’ friends who had helped her and her siblings in the past. According to the reciprocity norm, people engage in helping behavior to help those who have helped them (Myers & Twenge, 2019). The practices described by the participants that promote helping behavior indicate that they engaged in the practices not only to cope with the loss they experienced, but also to maximize external and internal rewards and to repay those who helped them, as discussed in social psychological theories. Alternatively, by practicing good and helping behaviors while engaging in charity and offering prayers to give the rewards to the loved one(s) they lost, the participants represented the Islamic concept of Ummah. In the Islamic concept of Ummah, the Muslim community represents a system

of social relations focused on the spiritual essence as guided in the Al-Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which includes caring for others, especially one's parents and other weaker members of the community (Dahlan et al., 2022; Embong et al., 2017).

The importance of Islamic teachings

The question "Why is it important for you to refer to Islamic teachings?" was asked of the participants to explore their opinions about the importance of referring to Islamic teachings about loss. The participants shared different views about the importance of Islamic teachings, such as returning to *fitrah* (original disposition) and meeting their loved one in the Hereafter.

Two participants, Fatimah and Sofia, expressed their opinion that Islamic teachings are important because that is what they have learned since childhood. According to Fatimah, her family stressed the importance of Islamic education. She had been exposed to Islamic education from kindergarten to high school, and later participated in "*usrah*" as her source of Islamic input after graduating from high school. Because she has been taught the importance of Islam since childhood, it is natural for her to engage in Islamic practices to cope. According to Fatimah, practices such as reciting the Al-Quran and Al-Mathurat are routine in the household.

Similarly, Sofia shared that her mother emphasized Islamic education in her life. Her mother regularly reminded her to perform prayers and recite the Al-Quran. Thus, for Sofia, performing Islamic practices is so normal that she only started doing it after her mother left.

"... It's not that when my mom has gone that I perform it (Islamic practices), no, (it's that) it has always been that way since my childhood ... so basically it... is the basic one in the family."

On the other hand, when asked about the importance of referring to Islamic teachings to cope with loss, two participants, Aisyah and Aminah, mentioned the concept of *fitrah* (original disposition). Aisyah mentioned that it is natural for people to return to *fitrah*. Referring to Islamic teachings makes her feel calmer than listening to music, a coping activity she used to engage in. Since she relied on her parents for physical and emotional support after the loss, she has only Allah to understand her, which makes her feel calmer. Aisyah quoted this sentiment as follows:

"... because it... (is about) back to fitrah ... for example, before... uh, when I'm stressed, maybe I would [makes expression] listen to music ... but... um, when [word stress] (going) back to Islam ... it (makes me) feel calmer [nods], because ... after (my) parents have gone, I felt like my dependency towards Allah becomes stronger, because before this, we (I) would share anything to (my) parents, but... we (I) know when (they have) gone, who else would understand us (me)..."

The feeling of increased connection with Allah mentioned by Aisyah as she said, "...I felt like my dependency towards Allah becomes stronger..." was mentioned in Basri et al. (2015). Muslim patients who applied Islamic teaching found the increasing connection with Allah as they prayed in the nights alone (Basri et al., 2015). The concept of reliance on Allah is a coping strategy that the Muslims use to deal with life stress (Achour et al., 2015).

Additionally, similar to Aisyah, Aminah also mentioned that Islam is a basic aspect in one's life. One will refer to Islam to calm themselves and to make them happy. She shared her view as follows:

"... I think it is... the very basic thing in our life, because it is our... uh, fitrah, fitrah that when we... when at some point, we... we think that we are getting far away, we [word stress] will go

back to basic, back to square (one), from where we come ... I think it is [word stress] really our natural disposition... we—at some point we will search for something that (makes us) calmer, something that... makes us... feel... happy ..."

The concept of *fitrah* in Islam refers to the human nature that one is born as a Muslim, and he accepts the reality of Allah by his nature. This reality becomes the pattern that governs his life, and he has the responsibility to lead others to the finality of a successful life in this world and the Hereafter (Bhat, 2016). In Islam, faith in Allah should be the primary approach to achieving inner peace and control over negative experiences such as anxiety and stress (Kasim & Majid, 2020). This was mentioned by Aminah who shared her opinion that Muslims who are further away from the natural disposition should return to Islam to experience calmness and happiness.

Alternatively, Putri shared her view of life in the hereafter, the Islamic concept of heaven and hell. First, she wondered why people look forward to meeting their deceased loved ones. She shared:

"... at the beginning, I [word stress] couldn't understand why people... uh, look forward, ... like, I know I learned that we, we have, um, the Hereafter ... after the 'hot zone' (of the loss), I kind of feel like this loss... helps me... motivate myself to... increase the practices so that... so that, "Okay, if I were to meet my grandfather I want to meet (him) in the Heaven," ... so I need to (improve) myself so that... we can be reunited ... so I think when I noticed this, then, "Oh, okay, I think I should... see the Islamic perspectives... Okay, what should be done, how to strengthen the iman," and all that..."

After the loss of her grandfather, she learned that she could have a reunion with her grandfather in the life of Hereafter. So, she wished to practice good deeds to invest for her life of the Hereafter and to improve

her *iman* (belief) so she can reunite with her grandfather. In the Al-Quran, Allah said in surah Al-Thur verse 21 (Quran 52:21, Quran.com):

"As for those who believe and whose descendants follow them in faith, We will elevate their descendants to their rank, never discounting anything 'of the reward' of their deeds. Every person will reap only what they sowed."

Religious coping strategies are one of the categories of coping strategies that include a combination of both emotional coping strategies and problem-solving coping strategies (Achour et al., 2015; Aldwin & Yancura, 2004; Kasim & Majid, 2020). Engaging in Islamic practices to cope with a life stressor helps a Muslim to achieve inner peace and soothe from negative experiences. As the participants shared their Islamic views about their loss experiences, they cope with the inner experiences they had about the loss. Therefore, it can be concluded that Islam serves as a protective and therapeutic effect (Basri et al., 2015) for Muslims to cope with life stressors.

Conclusion

By examining the loss experiences of HSPs, the study found that Muslims with high SPS applied Islamic teachings to cope with loss. The application of the concept of *redha* and the performance of Islamic practices, particularly the recitation of Al-Quran, were the main applications of Islamic religiosity used by the participants to view the experience of losing a loved one and to cope with the loss. The study of SPS and religiosity or spirituality as well as Islam is limited. Therefore, this study aims to enhance the understanding of the viewpoints of Muslim adults with high SPS related to coping with loss and contribute to the Islamic spiritual psychological

framework. Nevertheless, the study focused only on high SPS individuals whose experiences are not comparable to other levels of SPS. In addition, the study covered the experiences of loss from the perspective of Muslims, so the data obtained may not be comparable with other beliefs and practices. It is suggested that future SPS studies should focus on exploring how individuals with different levels of SPS view religiosity and spirituality aspects of life events. The study also recommends that future SPS studies should focus on the Malaysian Muslim community to help spread awareness of SPS characteristics while taking into account the Malaysian Muslim culture.

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Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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