



## Hope after Harm: *Rajā'*, Everyday Religion, and Post-Traumatic Growth among Women Survivors of Dating Violence

Dating violence can have profound psychological effects. However, such traumatic experiences may also trigger post-traumatic growth (PTG) when individuals are able to find new meaning in their lives. This study examines the role of *rajā'* as a religious coping mechanism that facilitates PTG in survivors of dating violence. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews. The analysis utilized time-series analysis, pattern matching, and explanation building. The results revealed that the recovery process occurred in two phases: the disorientation phase, characterized by emotional distress, and the meaning reconstruction phase, during which traumatic experiences were reinterpreted within a spiritual framework. Positive changes were observed across five dimensions of PTG: relationships with others, personal strength, new life possibilities, appreciation of life, and spiritual change. Within the ambivalent texture of everyday religious life, where romantic relationships outside of marriage may be seen as potentially compromising ideals of religious piety, this study argues that *rajā'* functions not only as theological hope but also as an experiential orientation that helps survivors regulate emotions, reconstruct meaning, and transform suffering into a catalyst for resilience and spiritual growth.

**Keywords:** *Rajā'*; religious coping; post-traumatic growth; dating violence; everyday religion.

Kekerasan dalam pacaran dapat menimbulkan dampak psikologis yang mendalam. Namun, pengalaman traumatis tersebut juga dapat memicu *post-traumatic growth* (PTG) ketika individu mampu merekonstruksi makna hidupnya. Penelitian ini mengkaji peran *rajā'* sebagai mekanisme koping religius dalam memfasilitasi PTG pada penyintas kekerasan dalam pacaran. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam. Analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan *time-series analysis*, *pattern matching*, dan *explanation building*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa proses pemulihan berlangsung melalui dua fase, yaitu fase disorientasi yang ditandai dengan tekanan emosional, serta fase rekonstruksi makna di mana pengalaman traumatis ditafsirkan kembali dalam kerangka spiritual. Perubahan positif terlihat pada lima dimensi PTG, yaitu relasi dengan orang lain, kekuatan pribadi, munculnya kemungkinan hidup baru, apresiasi terhadap kehidupan, dan perubahan spiritual. Dalam tekstur kehidupan religius sehari-hari yang bersifat ambivalen, di mana hubungan romantis di luar pernikahan dapat dipandang berpotensi mencederai ideal kesalehan religius, penelitian ini berargumen bahwa *rajā'* tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai harapan teologis, tetapi juga sebagai orientasi pengalaman religius yang membantu para penyintas mengelola emosi, membangun kembali makna hidup, serta mentransformasikan penderitaan menjadi katalis bagi ketahanan dan pertumbuhan spiritual.

**Keywords:** *Rajā'*; koping religius; PTG; kekerasan dalam pacaran; agama sehari-hari.

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## Introduction

Violence against women remains an urgent social issue and is widely recognized as a global public health concern as well as a serious violation of human rights. In Indonesia, legal protection for women is explicitly stated in Law No. 39 of 1999, Article 45, which affirms that the rights possessed by women constitute an integral part of human rights that must be protected. Despite this legal protection, the prevalence of gender-based violence remains alarmingly high. Globally, the World Health Organization reports that one in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence during her lifetime, a statistic that has remained relatively consistent over the past decade.<sup>1</sup> National data reflect a similar trend. The National Commission on Violence Against Women recorded 445,502 cases of violence against women in its 2024 annual report, representing a 9.77% increase from the previous year. Likewise, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection reported 20,562 cases of violence in 2025, with 17,705 victims identified as women.<sup>2</sup> A significant proportion of these cases occur within personal relationships, including non-marital romantic relationships, indicating that violence frequently arises in dating contexts, commonly referred to as dating violence.<sup>3</sup>

Dating violence refers to behaviors intentionally carried out to obtain and maintain power and control over a partner through various forms of pressure or coercion. This phenomenon can manifest as physical, sexual, psychological, or economic abuse.<sup>4</sup> Physical violence includes actions that cause bodily harm, such as hitting, slapping, or kicking<sup>5</sup>, while sexual violence involves coercive sexual acts performed without consent, including harassment and forced intercourse.<sup>6</sup> Psychological violence encompasses emotional manipulation, threats, insults, and excessive control over a partner's activities, whereas economic violence involves financial domination or exploitation.<sup>7</sup> These forms of violence often result not only in physical injuries but also in long-lasting psychological wounds that significantly affect victims' mental health and sense of safety.<sup>8</sup> Victims frequently experience emotional distress, confusion, and difficulties processing the traumatic events they have endured.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, dating violence should not be viewed merely as an interpersonal relationship problem but also as a psychological issue closely related to trauma recovery and overall psychological well-being.

Extensive research has documented the severe psychological consequences experienced by victims of violence in romantic relationships.

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, 'A Novel Approach to Ending Violence against Women in Indonesia: The RESPECT Framework', 2023.

<sup>2</sup> KEMENPPA, 'Ringkasan Data Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan Dan Anak', 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Fransiska Novita Eleanora, Zulkifli Ismail, and Melanie Pita Lestari, 'Perlindungan Hukum Korban Tindak Kekerasan Dalam Pacaran Ditinjau Dari Perspektif Viktimologi Dan Psikososial', *Jurnal Kajian Ilmiah* 23, no. 1 (2023): 33–42.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel C. Semenza and Jessica M. Grosholz, 'Teen Dating Violence and Stalking', in *Handbook of Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Across the Lifespan* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 1343–1364.

<sup>5</sup> Alyssa Brown, Shelby Clark, and Megan Steele Baser, 'Dating Violence', in *Encyclopedia of Adolescence* (Elsevier, 2024), 160–173.

<sup>6</sup> Gunnur Karakurt et al., 'Systematic Review and Data Synthesis on the Treatment of Sexual Violence Victimization by an Intimate Partner', *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 50, no. 1 (January 2024): 71–94.

<sup>7</sup> Adrienne E. Adams et al., 'An Exploratory Study of Financial Health as an Antecedent of Economic Abuse Among Women Seeking Help for Intimate Partner Violence', *Violence Against Women* 30, no. 15–16 (December 2024): 3825–3853.

<sup>8</sup> Gillian Kirkman, Dominic Willmott, and Daniel Boduszek, 'The Impact of Adolescent Dating Violence and Abuse on Victims' Mental Health and Social Isolation: A Thematic Empirical Evidence Review', *Mental Health and Social Inclusion* 29, no. 6 (December 2025): 761–773.

<sup>9</sup> Hannah M. Micklitz et al., 'Efficacy of Psychosocial Interventions for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis', *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 25, no. 2 (April 2024): 1000–1017.





Studies show that exposure to dating violence significantly increases the risk of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), eating disorders, suicidal behavior, and substance abuse.<sup>10</sup> Repeated experiences of violence often generate feelings of helplessness and loss of personal control, making it difficult for victims to envision a positive future.<sup>11</sup> Such psychological conditions may hinder recovery because individuals tend to perceive traumatic events as ongoing sources of suffering rather than experiences that can be constructively reinterpreted.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, trauma psychology also acknowledges that not all traumatic experiences lead to long-term negative outcomes. Some individuals demonstrate the capacity for positive psychological transformation following highly stressful events.<sup>13</sup> This phenomenon is referred to as post-traumatic growth (PTG), defined as a condition in which individuals experience positive psychological development after struggling with traumatic experiences.<sup>14</sup> PTG is commonly characterized by an increased appreciation of life, stronger interpersonal relationships, the

discovery of new life possibilities, and the strengthening of personal and spiritual values.<sup>15</sup>

The emergence of post-traumatic growth is influenced by various internal factors that enable individuals to reinterpret traumatic experiences constructively. One factor widely discussed in psychological literature is religiosity or faith as a coping resource.<sup>16</sup> In societies where religion plays a central role, spiritual values often serve as important psychological resources when individuals face adversity and suffering.<sup>17</sup> Individuals experiencing severe psychological stress frequently employ religious coping strategies, defined as methods of managing stress through religious beliefs, practices, and orientations.<sup>18</sup> Within the framework of Islamic psychology, one form of religious coping is *rajā'*, which refers to hope in the mercy and assistance of Allah. Conceptually, *rajā'* represents an attitude of the heart that fosters spiritual optimism and trust that every hardship contains wisdom and divine purpose.<sup>19</sup> This concept parallels the notion of hope in Western psychology, which emphasizes agency and pathways as mechanisms for achieving meaningful goals.<sup>20</sup> Through *rajā'*, individuals

<sup>10</sup> Isaline Malherbe et al., 'Teen Dating Violence and Mental Health: A Review.', *Psychiatria Danubina* 35, no. Suppl 2 (October 2023): 155–159.

<sup>11</sup> Ellen R Gutowski et al., 'Intimate Partner Violence, Legal Systems and Barriers for African American Women', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 38, no. 1–2 (2023): NP1279–NP1298.

<sup>12</sup> Tuğba Sari and Ali Eryilmaz, 'Positive Psychotherapy in PTSD and Post-Traumatic Growth', in *Positive Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Psychology* (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025), 155–166.

<sup>13</sup> Carolina Campodonico et al., 'Protective Factors Associated With Post-Traumatic Outcomes in Individuals With Experiences of Psychosis', *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 12 (November 2021).

<sup>14</sup> Grant J. Rich and Skultip (Jill) Sirikantraporn, 'Posttraumatic Growth and Resilience in Southeast Asia', 2020, 143–158.

<sup>15</sup> Olubukola Wellington, Adetutu Aina-Pelemo, and Onotayo Odunubi, 'Post-Traumatic Growth Following the Experience of Interpersonal Violence: The Roles of Perceived Stigma and Social Support', *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies* (January 2023): 1–27.

<sup>16</sup> Irfan Fayaz, 'Role of Religion in Posttraumatic Growth among Population Exposed to Armed Conflict: A Systematic Review', *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 26, no. 5 (May 2023): 455–469.

<sup>17</sup> Irfan Fayaz, 'Role of Religiosity or Spirituality in Experiencing Posttraumatic Growth among Sexual Assault Survivors: A Systematic Review', *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 26, no. 3 (July 2024): 330–347.

<sup>18</sup> Muzzamel Hussain Imran and Xin Leng, 'A Critical Review on Pargament's Theory of Religious Coping: In the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic', *Journal of Religion and Health* 64, no. 1 (February 2025): 657–671.

<sup>19</sup> Juraida Latif, Shaakirah Dockrat, and G. Hussein Rassool, *Integrating Spiritual Interventions in Islamic Psychology* (London: Routledge, 2024); Matthew D. Niemi, 'Hope in Islam', in *The Oxford Compendium of Hope* (Oxford University Press New York, 2026), 285–300; Dowlath Nisha Shaik, 'Integrating Islamic Theology and Psychology: A Systematic Narrative Review of Religious Coping', *Pastoral Psychology* (February 2026).

<sup>20</sup> Anthony Scioli, 'Emotional and Spiritual Hope: Back to the Future', *Current Opinion in Psychology* 49 (February 2023): 101493.





may reinterpret suffering as a meaningful spiritual experience that encourages personal growth and transformation.

Previous empirical studies have demonstrated that religiosity and religious coping significantly contribute to psychological recovery after trauma. For example, research by Dinhudayah and Kilis revealed that religious coping played a crucial role in enhancing post-traumatic growth among women who survived intimate partner violence.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Schultz found that positive religious coping was associated with higher levels of post-traumatic growth among women who were victims of sex trafficking.<sup>22</sup> Other studies emphasize that religious coping strategies help individuals reconstruct meaning in life following traumatic experiences.<sup>23</sup> However, most existing studies conceptualize religious coping broadly and seldom explore specific spiritual constructs derived from Islamic psychological perspectives. In particular, the concept of *rajā'* remains underexplored as a mechanism that may facilitate post-traumatic growth. Furthermore, research examining this process among victims of dating violence using qualitative methods is limited. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to analyze how *rajā'* functions as a religious coping mechanism that promotes post-traumatic growth among women who have experienced dating violence.

This study employs a qualitative approach using a single holistic case study design to explore the subjective experiences of women who have survived dating violence and their interpretation of *rajā'* as a coping mechanism following traumatic experiences. The case centers on the lived experiences of young women who have undergone psychological and spiritual

reconstruction after experiencing violence in romantic relationships. Accordingly, the unit of analysis comprises the psychological and spiritual processes through which victims reinterpret suffering, rebuild hope, and reconstruct meaning in their lives. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on specific criteria, including women aged 18–25 who had experienced dating violence more than four months prior and who exhibited early signs of post-traumatic growth, such as increased appreciation of life, strengthened interpersonal relationships, personal resilience, and spiritual transformation.<sup>24</sup> Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation to capture the depth and complexity of participants' experiences. The analysis followed case study procedures proposed by Robert K. Yin, including pattern matching, explanation building, and time-series analysis, enabling the researcher to examine how experiences of violence, religious meaning-making processes, and post-traumatic growth dynamically interact over time.<sup>25</sup> Through this approach, the study aims to contribute to trauma psychology by integrating the concept of post-traumatic growth with the Islamic psychological concept of *rajā'*.

Conceptually, the experiences examined in this study can be understood within the broader dynamics of everyday religion, or ordinary lived religion, where religious life is not always practiced in a fully consistent normative form but is continually negotiated within the realities of daily experience.<sup>26</sup> For instance, romantic relationships outside of marriage may be perceived as potentially compromising ideals of religious piety. Yet, when such relationships lead to emotional distress, conflict, or violence,

<sup>21</sup> Zakiyah Dinhudayah and Grace Kilis, 'Among Women Survivor of Intimate Partner Violence: A Literature Review', *Journal Title* 13, no. 3 (2024).

<sup>22</sup> Laura Luise Schultz, 'Whole Body Treatment', *Peripeti* (2021).

<sup>23</sup> Sanjana S et al., 'Religious Coping in Stress Management: A Systematic Review', *Journal of Research and Health* 15, no. 5 (August 2025): 447–458.

<sup>24</sup> Sivan S. Aulov et al., 'Posttraumatic Growth', in *Encyclopedia of Mental Health* (Elsevier, 2023), 796–800.

<sup>25</sup> Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec, 'Introduction', in *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes: An Anthropology of Everyday Religion*, ed. Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec (Berghahn Books, 2012), 1–16.





individuals often turn to God as a source of comfort, hope, and psychological support. This situation reflects a form of religious ambivalence: while individuals may recognize that certain actions conflict with religious teachings, they nevertheless maintain an emotional reliance on their relationship with the divine during moments of vulnerability. Consequently, the relationship between humans and God becomes complex and emotionally layered, shaped not only by doctrinal adherence but also by lived experiences of failure, suffering, and longing for mercy. Among ordinary believers, religious life frequently unfolds in a fluid space where religious commitments and non-religious practices intersect. Within such everyday negotiations, the reactivation of spiritual hope through *raja'* may gradually transform painful experiences into meaningful reflections that foster resilience and self-reconstruction. In this way, an ambivalent yet emotionally intense relationship with God can become a pathway through which individuals reinterpret trauma and move toward post-traumatic growth.

### Trajectory of Trauma and Recovery: A Time-Series Analysis

The informants' life histories reveal that experiences of dating violence do not occur in isolation but are connected to the dynamics of their previous life experiences. For example, Informant AS had been exposed to domestic violence since childhood, making romantic relationships a space where she sought emotional acceptance. However, this need for affection rendered her vulnerable to unhealthy relationships. Her first romantic relationship, which began in 2019, lasted one year and was characterized by physical and verbal abuse. After taking a two-year break from relationships, AS again experienced violence in a long-distance relationship in 2024, including psychological manipulation and economic exploitation,

resulting in financial losses of approximately eight million rupiah. This series of experiences triggered severe psychological distress, even leading to suicidal thoughts. However, in the subsequent phase, AS began to develop recovery strategies by drawing closer to God and expressing her emotions through artistic activities such as painting and singing.

This journey demonstrates that traumatic experiences do not always lead to permanent negative effects. In some cases, individuals can reinterpret the meaning of these experiences, resulting in positive psychological changes known as post-traumatic growth.<sup>27</sup> In AS's case, this process became evident when he began to perceive suffering as a spiritual learning experience. In an interview, AS explained:

*"I used to wonder, why do I have to go through all this? I'm not a bad person; I've never hurt anyone that badly. But now I realize that maybe God is allowing me to experience this so that I can learn and understand other people's pain as well. Now I can think more clearly, perhaps all of this isn't meant to torment me, but to make me a stronger person."*

This interpretation signifies a shift in meaning from victimhood to spiritual meaning-making, a process regarded as a crucial factor in post-traumatic growth within trauma literature.<sup>28</sup>

Informant S experienced a similar situation, but with different dynamics. The four-year relationship was not initially recognized as abusive because the partner's overly protective behavior was perceived as a form of care, especially since such actions were often justified by religious arguments. Over time, this control escalated into psychological abuse, including restrictions on social activities, prohibitions on interacting with members of the opposite sex, and verbal abuse. S explained that at the beginning of the relationship, she did not realize these actions constituted abuse, as they were

<sup>27</sup> Rich and Sirikantraporn, 'Posttraumatic Growth and Resilience in Southeast Asia', 143–158.

<sup>28</sup> Campodonico et al., 'Protective Factors Associated With Post-Traumatic Outcomes in Individuals With Experiences of Psychosis', 6–9.





seen as expressions of her partner's concern for her.

*"At first, I thought it was caring because he often said he just wanted to protect me. He also frequently used religion as an excuse, so I felt that maybe that was how women should behave in relationships."*

However, the intensity of this control increased and evolved into emotional pressure that made S feel restricted in her activities. After the relationship ended, S experienced severe stress and withdrew from academic and organizational engagements. She also exhibited symptoms of trauma, such as fear triggered by loud noises or shouting that reminded her of her past experiences.

*"I used to be afraid when I heard people shouting or loud noises; it felt like I was back in the past. So, I often locked myself away and didn't want to see anyone for a while."*

Nevertheless, recovery gradually progressed through peer support and self-reflection, enabling S to re-engage in social and academic activities over time.

The trajectory of the second informant's experience demonstrates that trauma resulting from dating violence not only produces immediate negative psychological effects but also initiates a gradual psychological process. Based on a chronological analysis of the second informant's experience, two main phases in this process can be identified: the disorientation phase and the meaning reconstruction phase. The disorientation phase is the initial period following the experience of violence, characterized by emotional confusion, feelings of helplessness, and the emergence of various psychological reactions such as stress, guilt, and a loss of trust in oneself and others. In trauma psychology literature, this condition is often described as the collapse of the assumptive world; an individual's basic framework of beliefs about security, justice, and the meaning of life

that was previously considered stable. When a traumatic experience disrupts this framework, individuals struggle to comprehend the events they have endured and begin to question the meaning of life and interpersonal relationships.

However, traumatic experiences do not always result in disorientation. Over time, through a process of self-reflection, individuals can enter a phase of meaning reconstruction: a cognitive and emotional process in which a person attempts to reorganize their understanding of traumatic events within a more coherent and meaningful framework. This process aligns with the concept of meaning-making in trauma psychology, which emphasizes that individuals strive to reconcile traumatic experiences with their belief systems. In this context, religion often becomes a vital source of meaning, providing a framework that allows suffering to be understood as part of a divine plan or spiritual test. It is at this stage that *rajā'* emerges as a significant religious coping mechanism. Hope for God's mercy and assistance enables individuals to shift their perspective on traumatic experiences, from viewing them as purely destructive to recognizing their potential for learning and self-transformation.

The process of reconstructing meaning is closely related to the concept of post-traumatic growth (PTG), as proposed by Tedeschi and Calhoun. PTG refers to positive psychological changes that arise from an individual's struggle to cope with traumatic experiences.<sup>29</sup> It does not occur automatically but rather through a process of deep reflection on suffering that challenges an individual's belief system.

### **Rajā' as Religious Coping: A Pattern Matching Analysis**

In the cases of both informants, *rajā'* served as a source of hope, helping them maintain a future orientation while reconstructing meaning

<sup>29</sup> Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun, 'Posttraumatic Growth: A Developmental Perspective', *Psychological Inquiry* 15, no. 1 (2004): 1–18.





in their lives after experiencing violence. Pattern-matching analysis was used to compare empirical patterns emerging from the experiences of both informants with the theoretical framework of *rajā'* in al-Ghazālī's thought. In case study methodology, this technique aims to assess whether the patterns found in the field data align with the theoretical propositions underpinning the analysis. Conceptually, al-Ghazālī defines *rajā'* as hope for Allah's mercy that is not passive but accompanied by moral awareness and genuine efforts toward self-improvement. This hope

arises after individuals become aware of their limitations and confront life experiences that provoke fear, suffering, or anxiety. Therefore, *rajā'* is always balanced with *khawf* (fear of Allah), ensuring that hope does not devolve into empty optimism but instead serves as motivation for self-betterment.<sup>30</sup>

The results of the analysis indicate that the experiences of both informants align with these dimensions of *rajā'*. The harmony between the theoretical concepts and empirical findings is evident in the following:

**Table 1.** Pattern Matching of the Concept of *Rajā'*

The Concept of <i>Rajā'</i> According to al-Ghazālī	AS	S	Suitability
Hope in God's mercy, accompanied by effort	AS interprets suffering as a test from God and strives to improve its life	S prayed to God for strength while increasing her worship and social activities	Hope accompanied by genuine effort
Hope follows fear	AS once felt unworthy of love and wanted to give up	S fears that suicide will bring greater suffering.	The shift from <i>khawf</i> to <i>rajā'</i>
<i>Rajā'</i> encourages charity and enterprise	AS want to help other victims of violence	S is becoming a women's rights activist	Hope motivates social action
<i>Rajā'</i> calm the heart	AS accepting pain as part of the learning process	S accepting negative emotions as part of recovery	Hope helps regulate emotions
The highest goal is to be close to God	AS want to be close to God	S making God the only support	Increased spiritual orientation.

Based on the table above, it is evident that in the experiences of both informants, *rajā'* did not manifest as abstract optimism but rather as a psychological process that developed gradually. In the early stages following their experiences of violence in relationships, both informants exhibited emotional responses dominated by fear, loss of self-esteem, and confusion in making sense of their experiences. This condition reflects the dimension of *khawf*, which involves an awareness of one's vulnerability and uncertainty about the future. However, through a process of self-reflection and the search for meaning, both

informants began to cultivate hope in God as a source of strength to continue their lives.

For informant S, *rajā'* appeared as a simple hope that provided strength to endure extremely difficult psychological conditions. She described this hope as a fundamental need for survival in situations perceived as highly stressful.

*"At that time, I only hoped for one thing: to be given strength... whether it was inner strength or physical strength, because I felt like I had completely broken."*

This statement demonstrates that hope in its early stages does not always manifest as high expectations for the future but often begins as a

<sup>30</sup> Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī, 'Kitāb Al-Khawf Wa Al-Rajā' Fī Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn', *Al-Maktabah Al-Shāmilah*, <https://shamela.ws/book/9472/1301>.





minimal desire to survive emotionally. From a psychological perspective, hope is a crucial element in the recovery process because it helps individuals maintain a future-oriented mindset when facing extreme stress.<sup>31</sup> Thus, *rajā'* functions as a religious coping mechanism that enables individuals to sustain hope even in the most challenging circumstances.

For informant AS, *rajā'* evolved into a motivation to engage in constructive and prosocial actions. After reflecting on her traumatic experiences, AS began to view her suffering as a source of empathy, enabling her to understand the experiences of others who had endured similar violence.

*"I have an advantage there... I can understand myself and help people who feel the same way I do."*

This transformation demonstrates that *rajā'* functions not only as a psychological survival mechanism but also as a source of prosocial motivation. Within al-Ghazālī's framework, hope for God's mercy should inspire individuals to perform good deeds and acts, as hope without accompanying effort becomes a misleading illusion.<sup>32</sup> The findings of this study reveal that this concept holds empirical relevance in the experiences of victims of dating violence, where religious expectations encourage them to transform their suffering into motivation to help others.

In addition, *rajā'* functions as an emotional regulation mechanism that helps individuals calm down after experiencing intense psychological stress. Both informants demonstrated the ability to accept negative emotions as part of the recovery process while

maintaining the belief that God has a better plan for their lives. This attitude enabled them to reduce feelings of despair and rebuild a more positive outlook on life.

Overall, the results of the pattern matching analysis indicate that the concept of *rajā'* in al-Ghazālī's thought strongly corresponds with the empirical experiences of both informants. *Rajā'* is understood not only as a theological concept within the sufi tradition but also as a religious coping mechanism that plays a crucial role in the psychological recovery process of victims of dating violence. Through hope in God's mercy, individuals are able to reconstruct the meaning of their traumatic experiences and orient themselves toward more positive and meaningful life changes.

### Post-Traumatic Growth among Survivors of Dating Violence

The findings of this study were further analyzed using the post-traumatic growth (PTG) framework developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun. This framework explains that traumatic experiences not only produce negative psychological effects but can also trigger positive psychological changes after individuals undergo a process of reflection and reconstruction of meaning regarding the events they have experienced.<sup>33</sup> PTG is generally reflected in five main dimensions: relating to others, personal strength, new possibilities, appreciation of life, and spiritual change. In this study, pattern matching analysis was employed to compare these PTG dimensions with the empirical experiences of two informants who were survivors of dating violence.

**Table 2.** Pattern Matching Dimensions of PTG

<sup>31</sup> Laura Hayes et al., 'Hope, Recovery and Symptoms: The Importance of Hope for People Living with Severe Mental Illness', *Australasian Psychiatry* 25, no. 6 (December 2022): 583–587; Wenqiang Cai and Yijie Wang, 'Family Support and Hope among People with Substance Use Disorder in China: A Moderated Mediation Model',

*International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 16 (August 2022): 9786.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Ghazālī, 'Kitāb Al-Khawf Wa Al-Rajā' Fī Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn'.

<sup>33</sup> Tedeschi and Calhoun, 'Posttraumatic Growth: A Developmental Perspective', 1–18.





PTG Dimensions	AS	S	Suitability
Relating to Others	More self-reliant	Opening up again to social relationships	Transformation of relationships
Personal Strength	Realizing mental strength	Persevere, even though you are still wounded	Self-empowerment
New Possibilities	Want to help victims of violence	Active in gender advocacy	New purpose in life
Appreciation of Life	Appreciating the little things in life	Accepting emotions as a process	Appreciation for life increases
Spiritual Change	Drawing closer to God	Surrender to God	Spiritual transformation

Based on the table, the experiences of both informants reveal a pattern of change consistent with the dimensions of post-traumatic growth. This indicates that trauma resulting from dating violence not only causes psychological wounds but also creates opportunities for individuals to develop a new understanding of themselves, their social relationships, and the meaning of life. Such growth typically occurs when individuals are able to reconstruct the meaning of their traumatic experiences, allowing events initially perceived as suffering to be interpreted as part of the process of learning about life.<sup>34</sup> Previous research has also demonstrated that victims of intimate partner violence can experience positive psychological development after trauma when they successfully rebuild meaning in their lives.<sup>35</sup>

The dimension relating to others is reflected in the changes in how both informants perceive interpersonal relationships after experiencing violence. In the case of the American informant, the traumatic experience made her more cautious about forming relationships and more reliant on herself as a source of emotional strength. In contrast, the Indonesian informant exhibited a different process, gradually reopening herself to social interaction after previously withdrawing from her surroundings. This transformation

demonstrates that traumatic experiences can alter the way individuals build interpersonal relationships, either by fostering increased emotional independence or by encouraging a renewed openness to social support.<sup>36</sup>

The dimension of personal strength was evident in both informants' increased awareness of their mental resilience after experiencing traumatic events. For informant S, this awareness stemmed from her ability to survive despite still bearing emotional scars from an abusive relationship. She described the process as a difficult struggle but one that revealed a resilience she had not previously recognized:

*"I felt like I would never be able to get back up again... but it turns out I can still do everything, even if it's slowly."*

This statement demonstrates that traumatic experiences can trigger a new awareness of one's capacity to overcome life's challenges, which is a key indicator in the process of post-traumatic growth.

The dimension of new possibilities is reflected in the emergence of new life orientations following experiences of violence. In the case of informant AS, this growth is evident in her desire to help other women who have undergone similar experiences. She felt that the

<sup>34</sup> Fatemeh Bahmani, 'The Concepts of Hope and Fear in the Islamic Thought: Implications for Spiritual Health', *Journal of Religion and Health* (2017): 57–71.

<sup>35</sup> Evi Deliviana, 'Resiliensi Dan Post Traumatic Growth Mahasiswa Korban Kekerasan Dalam Pacaran', *Jurnal Inada* 4, no. 2 (2021): 46–61; Amna Farida, Rahmia Dewi, and Yara Andita Anastasya, 'Post-Traumatic Growth Pada Remaja Korban Kekerasan Seksual Post-Traumatic

Growth in Adolescents of Sexual Violence Victims', *INSIGHT: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi* 1, no. 2 (2023): 25–36.

<sup>36</sup> Humaira Syahnya Almas and Chandradewi Kusristanti, 'Posttraumatic Growth Pada Remaja Wanita Yang Mengalami Kekerasan Dalam Pacaran Ditinjau Dari Perceived Social Support Dan Variabel Demografi', *Journal An-Nafs: Kajian Penelitian Psikologi* 6, no. 2 (2021): 231–243.





violence she endured had given her a deeper understanding of the suffering experienced by victims, which in turn enabled her to develop empathy toward others. In an interview, AS stated:

*"I also have a desire to help many people. Yes, I feel that way, and that makes me grateful to myself. I excel in that area, you know. I excel because I can understand myself and can help people who feel the same way I do."*

*"At first, I didn't force myself to join an organizational program like that, because I wanted to test myself. I mean, I wanted to see if I still had the courage to meet people, if I still had the confidence to get up, to make an impact, and so on."*

Meanwhile, for informant S, the dimension of new possibilities emerged through involvement in advocacy activities related to gender equality and the protection of women. Her experience of violence motivated her to prioritize healthy relationships and to raise awareness about violence within relationships. These two forms of change demonstrate that traumatic experiences can catalyze a transformation from personal suffering to broader social commitment.

The dimension of appreciating life is also evident in the changes in how both informants interpret their daily lives. After experiencing trauma, they exhibit a more reflective attitude toward life and are better able to appreciate the small things they previously took for granted. For informant S, this change is also linked to Her ability to accept negative emotions as part of the psychological recovery process. She recognizes that feelings of sadness, anger, or disappointment are integral to understanding herself and restoring emotional balance. The most notable change is observed in the dimension of spiritual transformation, specifically an increased spiritual orientation following the traumatic experience. Both informants demonstrated a stronger closeness to God as a source of strength in facing life's

challenges. This spiritual change was reflected not only in their religious beliefs but also in their broader interpretation of life experiences as part of God's plan.<sup>37</sup>

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that experiences of dating violence can trigger a process of post-traumatic growth, which includes changes in interpersonal relationships, increased awareness of personal strength, the emergence of new life goals, a greater appreciation for life, and spiritual transformation.<sup>38</sup> In the case of AS, this growth was evident in the development of a new life goal to support other women who had experienced violence. Meanwhile, for informant S, growth manifested as involvement in gender equality advocacy. Both forms of change demonstrate that personal traumatic experiences can evolve into broader social commitments, suggesting that suffering not only leads to individual recovery but also holds the potential to contribute to social change.

### **Mechanism of *Rajā'* in Facilitating Post-Traumatic Growth**

Explanation building analysis demonstrates that *rajā'* functions as a psychological and spiritual mechanism linking traumatic experiences to the process of post-traumatic growth (PTG). In a case study approach, explanation building is employed to elucidate how a phenomenon occurs by constructing cause-and-effect relationships derived from empirical data and theoretical frameworks. Within the context of this study, *rajā'* is understood as hope in God's mercy, which enables individuals to reframe traumatic experiences, not merely as suffering but as part of a process of spiritual learning and self-empowerment. This process aligns with the concept of meaning-making, defined as an individual's effort to reconstruct meaning in life

<sup>37</sup> Kenneth I Pargament et al., 'God Help Me (II): The Relationship of Religious Orientations to Religious Coping with Negative Life Events', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31, no. 4 (2022): 504–513.

<sup>38</sup> Fayaz, 'Role of Religion in Posttraumatic Growth among Population Exposed to Armed Conflict: A Systematic Review', 455–469.





after their belief system has been disrupted by trauma.<sup>39</sup>

In the literature on religious psychology, religious beliefs often serve as coping strategies that help individuals manage severe life stressors. Practices such as prayer, worship, and spiritual reflection can assist in regulating negative emotions while fostering hope for the future.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, religious activities provide a sense of connection to a higher power, helping individuals feel less isolated in their suffering. Other studies indicate that spiritual rituals can promote emotional calmness and aid in rebuilding optimism following traumatic events.<sup>41</sup> This pattern was also evident in the experiences of the second informant, who demonstrated increased engagement in religious practices as part of their psychological recovery.

For AS, her experience of violence triggered a profound spiritual reflection on the meaning of suffering in her life. She began to perceive her traumatic experience as God's way of "communicating" with her, which encouraged her to draw closer to God. In an interview, AS explained:

*"I feel like God wants to speak directly to me through all this pain... I just need Allah."*

This statement demonstrates that traumatic experiences not only cause psychological suffering but can also trigger profound spiritual reflection. Through *rajā'*, AS reinterprets her traumatic experience as part of God's plan, which carries a meaningful lesson. This type of

interpretation helps individuals reduce feelings of despair and rebuild a more positive outlook on life. Meanwhile, for informant S, *rajā'* manifests as *tawakkul*, the belief that the outcome of every human endeavor is in God's hands. This attitude enables individuals to release excessive anxiety about the future and accept life's uncertainties with greater peace of mind. In an interview, S stated:

*"Whatever I plan... in the end, I leave it up to God."*

This expression demonstrates that hope is not only connected to expectations for the future but also to the belief that God has the best plan for human life. From an Islamic psychological perspective, this form of religious hope is closely linked to spiritual reliance on divine power, which enables individuals to maintain inner peace even when facing difficult situations.<sup>42</sup> When individuals believe that God's help is always available, they tend to exhibit greater psychological resilience in coping with traumatic experiences.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to helping individuals manage negative emotions, *rajā'* also serves as a framework of meaning that enables traumatic experiences to be transformed into valuable life lessons. In this context, religious hope helps individuals perceive suffering as part of a spiritual journey that can strengthen their relationship with God while deepening their self-understanding.<sup>44</sup> This process of reinterpretation is a crucial mechanism in the emergence of post-traumatic growth, as individuals not only

<sup>39</sup> Carlos Laranjeira and Ana Querido, 'Hope and Optimism as an Opportunity to Improve the "Positive Mental Health" Demand', *Frontiers in Psychology* 13, no. February (2022): 1–5.

<sup>40</sup> Siti Aisyah Mohd Nasir et al., 'Religious Beliefs as Coping Strategies: Exploring the Conceptualisation of Hope in Islam', *Iium Journal of Human Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2022): 26–33.

<sup>41</sup> Abbas Masjedi-Arani et al., 'Effectiveness of an Islamic Approach to Hope Therapy on Hope, Depression, and Anxiety in Comparison with Conventional Hope Therapy in Patients with Coronary Heart Disease', *Journal of Advances in Medical and Biomedical Research* 28, no. 127 (2020): 82–89.

<sup>42</sup> Niemi, 'Hope in Islam', 285–300.

<sup>43</sup> Shamaila Kausar et al., 'A Review: Mechanism of Action of Antiviral Drugs', *International Journal of Immunopathology and Pharmacology* 35 (January 2021): 1–12.

<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, 'Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties', *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (2022): 469–480; Kenneth I. Pergament, 'The Meaning of Spiritual Transformation', in *Spiritual Transformation and Healing: Anthropological, Theological, Neuroscientific, and Clinical Perspectives*, (Lanham: Rowman Altamira, 2006), 10–24; Almas and Kusristanti, 'Posttraumatic Growth Pada Remaja Wanita Yang Mengalami Kekerasan Dalam Pacaran Ditinjau Dari Perceived Social Support Dan Variabel Demografi', 231–243.





recover from trauma but also develop a broader and more meaningful perspective on life.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that *rajā'* functions not only as a spiritual coping mechanism but also as a catalyst for psychological change that promotes post-traumatic growth. By fostering hope in God's mercy, traumatic experiences that were initially destructive can be transformed into a new source of meaning, helping individuals rebuild their life orientation. Thus, *rajā'* plays a crucial role in the psychological recovery process of victims of dating violence, while also encouraging the development of a more meaningful life focused on personal growth and social contribution.

### **Rajā' as a Catalyst: The Ambivalent Texture of Everyday Religion**

As a catalyst for psychological change that fosters post-traumatic growth, *rajā'* becomes more comprehensible when viewed through the lens of everyday religion. Rather than perceiving religion solely as a system of doctrines or normative prescriptions, scholars of lived religion emphasize how faith is experienced in ordinary life through personal and emotional engagements with the sacred. In this context, the informants' turn toward *rajā'* after experiencing violence cannot be understood simply as the application of theological knowledge. Instead, it reflects a lived relationship with the divine that emerges in moments of vulnerability and crisis. As argued by Orsi and McGuire, religious life is fundamentally relational. Believers cultivate intimate bonds with God and other sacred figures in ways that resemble human relationships with family or close friends.<sup>45</sup> These relationships are emotionally intense and shaped by a wide range of feelings such as hope, love, consolation, fear, pain, and disappointment. Within such relational dynamics, *rajā'* appears not merely as a doctrinal concept but as an

emotional orientation that helps individuals sustain connection with the divine while navigating deeply distressing experiences.

At the same time, these relationships with the sacred are rarely stable or morally straightforward. The narratives of the informants illustrate how religious life often unfolds amid ambivalence. Faith becomes both a source of hope and a site of tension. According to McGuire, the very religious frameworks that offer believers dignity, recognition, and consolation can also generate feelings of vulnerability, guilt, or marginalization. This ambivalence becomes particularly evident when personal experiences do not fully align with religious ideals.<sup>46</sup> For instance, romantic relationships outside of marriage may place individuals in morally complex situations. Yet, when such relationships result in emotional harm, the turn toward God does not necessarily diminish. The emotional bond with the divine may even strengthen as individuals seek reassurance that divine mercy remains accessible. In this sense, *rajā'* becomes meaningful not despite moral ambiguity but within it. Hope in divine compassion allows believers to confront vulnerability while maintaining their spiritual connection.

The dynamics observed in the informants' experiences also resonate with broader anthropological reflections on the role of religious ideals in everyday life. Schielke argues that grand religious schemes, such as ideals of moral perfection, divine justice, or ultimate salvation, often derive their power from being imagined as pure and certain realities that exist beyond the uncertainties of daily life. Because these ideals are situated outside the imperfections of everyday existence, believers can invoke them when navigating complex social and emotional situations. In practice, this does not mean that such ideals operate in a simple, instrumental way or remain entirely external to

<sup>45</sup> Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Meredith B.

McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 53.

<sup>46</sup> McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, 53.





human experience. Instead, they become intertwined with everyday struggles and shape how people interpret possibilities, obligations, and hopes within their lifeworld.<sup>47</sup> The narratives in this study reveal a similar dynamic. *Rajā'* does not erase the pain of past violence, nor does it immediately resolve the psychological consequences of trauma. Rather, it offers a horizon of meaning that allows individuals to continue moving forward even when their circumstances remain uncertain.

From this perspective, the recovery trajectories of the informants illustrate how spiritual hope emerges through the continuous negotiation between religious ideals and lived realities. Their experiences demonstrate that faith does not function as a perfectly coherent moral system applied consistently across all life situations. Religious engagement unfolds through moments of doubt, reinterpretation, and emotional struggle. Within this everyday religious landscape, *rajā'* becomes a particularly significant form of hope because it acknowledges human imperfection while affirming the possibility of divine mercy. This hope allows traumatic experiences to be gradually reinterpreted within a broader spiritual narrative. Feelings of despair can then be transformed into motivations for self-reconstruction and social engagement. The interaction between trauma, ambivalent religiosity, and spiritual hope reveals how everyday religious practices can quietly shape processes of resilience. The emergence of *rajā'* in the informants' lives shows that post-traumatic growth is not only a psychological process but also a relational and spiritual one, rooted in the ways individuals sustain their connection with the divine amid life's uncertainties.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that experiences of violence within dating relationships not only produce negative psychological consequences but can also serve as a catalyst for post-traumatic

growth when individuals are able to reconstruct the meaning of their traumatic experiences. The narratives of the participants reveal that the recovery process unfolds in two interconnected phases. The first phase is characterized by disorientation, marked by emotional distress, confusion, and the disruption of previously held assumptions about relationships and personal security. The second phase involves meaning reconstruction, during which individuals gradually reinterpret their experiences through reflection, spirituality, and renewed self-understanding. Through this process, several dimensions of post-traumatic growth emerge, including changes in interpersonal relationships, increased awareness of personal strength, the emergence of new life possibilities, a deeper appreciation of life, and spiritual transformation. The findings further emphasize the significant role of *rajā'* as a religious resource that supports survivors in navigating their recovery journey.

At the same time, the study shows that this process unfolds within the ambivalent texture of everyday religious life. Romantic relationships outside of marriage may be recognized as morally complex or as potentially compromising ideals of religious piety. Yet, when such relationships lead to emotional harm or violence, individuals often turn more intensely toward God in search of comfort and meaning. This dynamic illustrates that religious life among ordinary believers is not always practiced in a perfectly consistent normative form but is continually negotiated within the realities of everyday experience. Taken together, these findings suggest that post-traumatic growth among survivors of dating violence cannot be understood solely as a psychological process. It is also shaped by relational and spiritual dynamics that emerge within everyday religious life. *Rajā'* does not eliminate suffering, but it can provide a horizon of meaning through which painful experiences are reinterpreted and transformed into pathways toward resilience,

<sup>47</sup> Schielke and Debevec, 'Introduction', 1–16.





spiritual deepening, and renewed engagement with life.

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