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Gendered bereavement resilience in later life: A grounded theory from post-disaster Lombok, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the gendered aspects of bereavement resilience among older Muslim adults in Lombok, Indonesia, following the 2018 earthquake and tsunami. Utilizing grounded theory, the research employs in-depth interviews and non-participant observations to explore how cultural, religious, and gender-related frameworks shape coping strategies after spousal loss. Ten participants (five men and five women) aged 60 and above were purposely selected. Data were thematically analyzed, focusing on spiritual practices, social roles, emotional reactions, and meaning-making processes. The findings identify four primary domains of coping and resilience: (1) role-based identity restoration, (2) spiritual coping & moral reorientation, (3) spatial & symbolic coping mechanisms, and (4) emotional processing & acceptance. The study highlights gender-specific coping mechanisms: men predominantly engaged in public religious activities, labor, and emotional restraint, whereas women relied on caregiving, private devotional acts, sensory remembrance, and emotional openness. Core Islamic concepts such as *takdir* (divine destiny), *sabar* (patience), and *husnul khatimah* (a good death) were pivotal for both genders, guiding emotional recovery and spiritual preparedness. The Gendered Bereavement Resilience Framework illustrates the dynamic interplay of cultural expectations, religious beliefs, and gender roles in promoting adaptive coping in later life. This study contributes to resilience theory by framing bereavement as a psychological, social, and theological process. Unlike East Asian or Western models, centered on ancestor worship. It emphasizes collective ceremonies as critical to recovery, underscoring the necessity for culturally and theologically informed bereavement and disaster interventions in Muslim-majority, disaster-prone communities.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars across disciplines such as psychology, gerontology, and health studies have increasingly focused on how individuals particularly older adults adjust to significant life disruptions, including divorce, relocation, serious illness, or the loss of a spouse or close relative (Gallagher & Thompson, 1981; Lyberg et al., 2013; Lavretsky, 2015; Spahni et al., 2015). Earlier theoretical approaches often viewed resilience as a relatively fixed trait, rooted in personality and characterized by inner resources and coping capacities (O'Rourke, 2004). For example, O'Rourke

(2004) found that widowed older adults who demonstrated resilient traits were more likely to report sustained well-being and showed lower vulnerability to mood-related disorders. Similarly, studies involving older adult migrants have shown that resilience plays a protective role, lessening the psychological strain of relocation and social upheaval (Wang et al., 2022).

However, trait-based models have since been critiqued for their limited attention to the sociocultural and structural dimensions of recovery. Increasingly, interdisciplinary research in anthropology, family systems, and sociocultural psychology has reconceptualized resilience as a dynamic process embedded in local belief systems, social relationships, and cultural norms (Kirmayer et al., 2009; Walsh, 2011). This perspective views resilience not as an internal quality alone but as co-constructed through interactions with community networks, rituals, and shared cosmologies. For example, Walsh (2011) emphasized the importance of family belief systems and narrative continuity in enabling adaptation following loss or divorce, while Kirmayer et al. (2009) argued for models of resilience that acknowledge collective memory, symbolic systems, and historical trauma.

Disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis add further complexity to the adaptive capacities of older adults. These events often produce layered and compounding losses that go beyond physical destruction to rupture social and existential foundations. For older adults, the sudden death of a long-term spouse due to such a disaster destabilizes emotional bonds that have anchored their identity and daily life for decades. The abrupt nature of this loss disorients survivors, forcing them to navigate grief, isolation, and identity reconstruction simultaneously (Ahmadi et al., 2018; Aurizki et al., 2024; Kozu & Gibson, 2020; Smid et al., 2018).

Comparative insights from disaster studies offer important contributions to understanding these adaptive processes. In the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, Takakura (2023) documented how older adult survivors engaged in ancestral rituals and spiritual practices as culturally meaningful forms of healing, acts that reflect what he terms "cultural resilience." Similarly, Liu and Mishna (2014) found that Taiwanese female survivors narrated their experiences of loss through gendered frameworks rooted in caregiving, spiritual faith, and cultural expectations.

These insights are reflected in public health and social epidemiology. For instance, Takakura (2023) revealed that older adults who survived the Great East Japan Earthquake benefited from strong community integration and intergenerational ties, which served as psychosocial buffers. (Lee et al., 2022) further noted that resilience among older adults is often grounded in accumulated cultural capital, including spiritual maturity, caregiving experience, and moral leadership within the community.

These emerging understandings resonate with critical resilience theory, which critiques individualized, "bounce-back" models and instead frames resilience as a situated, relational process shaped by power, identity, and meaning (Gaillard et al., 2017). This theory highlights the significance of social structure, symbolic practices, and cultural continuity in shaping adaptive responses to adversity.

This critical framework becomes particularly salient in the Indonesian context, where Muslim cultural values shape mourning, caregiving, and community participation. Practices such as *tahlilan* (communal prayers for the deceased), gotong royong (mutual assistance), and the religious virtues of *sabar* (patience) and *takdir* (acceptance of divine will) form a culturally embedded system through which older adults understand suffering and cultivate resilience. These traditions interweave spiritual, ethical, and relational dimensions, creating a distinct cultural ecology of recovery.

This study examines the past five years of life experiences among older Muslim adults in Lombok, Indonesia, who lost their spouses during the 2018 earthquake and tsunami. The aims of this paper are twofold: (1) to explore the resilience techniques employed by these older adult

survivors, and (2) to identify gender-based differences in resilience strategies. By centering survivor narratives, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of resilience as a socially embedded and meaning-making process.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study explored how older adults coped emotionally and psychologically with the loss of a spouse during the 2018 Lombok earthquake. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on specific criteria: they had to be 60 years or older, have lost a spouse in the earthquake, and be cognitively and verbally able to participate. All participants gave informed consent. The final group included ten individuals, five men and five women. This deliberate focus, while critical for achieving theoretical saturation within the specific context of Sasak Muslim bereavement, limits the representativeness of the findings. In rigorous qualitative research, the goal is not statistical generalization to a larger population, but transferability, the ability for researchers or practitioners in similar contexts to assess the relevance of the findings to their own settings.

Data were gathered through non-participant observations and semi-structured interviews conducted in participants' homes and communal areas. Observations focused on daily life, social interactions, and religious practices. Interviews were guided by themes such as perceptions of the disaster, meaning-making processes, spiritual coping strategies, thoughts about the future, and overall psychological well-being. Each interview, lasting between 30 and 90 minutes, was recorded (with consent), transcribed in Bahasa Indonesia, and later translated into English. Before full rollout, the instruments were piloted to ensure they were culturally appropriate and clearly understood.

To manage potential researcher bias, a reflexive journal was maintained throughout the research process. The analysis employed a combination of thematic and content analysis, integrated with elements of grounded theory, to facilitate a nuanced and multilayered interpretation that connected individual experiences to broader sociocultural contexts. Manual coding was systematically organized using thematic matrices, which supported the identification and comparison of key patterns across the data. Credibility and trustworthiness were enhanced through multiple validation strategies, including triangulation, peer debriefing, and the maintenance of a comprehensive audit trail documenting all analytic decisions. Although opportunities for member checking were limited, the rigor of the study was reinforced through reflective memory and continuous engagement with the data during transcript review.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Universitas Negeri Malang Ethics Committee (Ref: 4.9.1/UN32.8.1/LT/2021). This Institutional Review Board (IRB) is accredited and recognized by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, ensuring compliance with both national and international ethical standards governing research involving human participants. All ethical principles, including confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent, were strictly observed throughout the study.

RESULTS

This section outlines four interconnected themes that describe how older adults coped with the loss of a spouse following the earthquake and tsunami. These themes include spiritual anchoring, sustaining emotional bonds with the deceased, maintaining daily and social roles, and viewing death as part of a divine plan. Each theme reveals gender-specific ways in which grief and resilience were expressed.

Coping pathways and resilience formation in later-life bereavement

Inner spiritual healing and anchoring:

After losing a spouse, many older adults turned to their faith for emotional and psychological support. Religious practice became central to their coping process, providing a structure for emotional recovery and meaning-making. When faced with the uncontrollable nature of the disaster, participants described finding comfort in prayer, worship, and personal spiritual discipline. These actions helped restore a sense of balance and purpose.

1. Faith as Solace and Direction: For both men and women, religious devotion served as more than just a routine. It became a vital source of comfort. Older men often emphasized their involvement in communal religious life. Participating in public prayers, reading the Qur'an with others, and attending mosque gatherings provided them with emotional support and social affirmation. One widower shared, "After prayer, I always said a prayer for her so that she could enter heaven. I became more diligent in religious activities because it kept me connected to her." Another noted, "Joining Qur'an readings with others helped me let go. I felt I wasn't alone."

Women, on the other hand, often described their spirituality in more personal and emotional terms. For many, prayer felt like an ongoing conversation with their late spouse. One widow said, "Even though he's gone, I still feel his presence in my heart when I pray." Another reflected, "I believed that if I became a better person, I could meet him in heaven." These stories show that both men and women relied on faith to navigate their grief, though in distinct and meaningful ways.

2. Preparing for One's Own Passing: The experience of bereavement also prompted many participants to reflect on their own mortality. Some began to prepare themselves spiritually, not only to cope with the present loss but to approach their eventual death with readiness. The Islamic concept of *husnul khatimah*, or a good death, became a meaningful goal and guiding principle.

Male participants often expressed this preparation in terms of daily actions and renewed commitment to religious life. One man explained, "God had determined all of this. I just have to live the life He gave me until He calls me." Another shared, "I try to do good things every day, not for others, but so I can meet her again." Their grief gave way to spiritual discipline, allowing them to face the future with clarity and intention.

Women described a similar sense of spiritual focus, but often connected it to the love they still felt for their spouses. One widow said, "Since he passed, I began doing more sunnah prayers and fasts. I want to be pure so I can be with him again." Another recalled her son's advice, "My son told me, 'Mother, worship more, so your deeds can follow you.' That's what I try to do."

These reflections demonstrate that for many older adults, grief has become a pathway to personal and spiritual growth. Through faith, they have found a way to reframe their suffering and prepare for the future with hope and resolve.

Ongoing bond with the deceased:

Although their spouses had passed, many participants did not describe their relationships as ended. Instead, they described an enduring emotional and spiritual connection, maintained through memory, ritual, and meaningful proximity. This theme explores how bereaved older adults sustained their bond with the deceased within their cultural and religious frameworks.

1. Rituals of Remembrance and Daily Acts of Connection: Many participants continued to engage in structured religious practices that honored their late spouses. Among male informants, these rituals often followed Islamic customs marking the 3rd, 7th, 40th, and 1000th days after death. These were performed with great care and deep intention. One widower explained, "I always celebrate the 3rd, 7th, 40th, and 1000th days. Every Friday night, I put in her favorite coffee and flowers. I believe she will visit." Another reflected on how dreams served as a form of continued presence: "Even in dreams, I see her smile. It makes me cry and remember her deeply."

For women, these acts of remembrance were often more sensory and emotionally textured. A widow described, "Every Friday, I put his favorite food and read Yasin. I ask my children to pray too." Another shared a personal gesture: "When I wear his perfume, I feel he is near me. I keep his cigarettes on the table." These everyday actions reflected not just symbolic gestures but a felt, ongoing relationship that remained part of their lives.

These rituals and personal practices were not viewed as signs of lingering grief but as culturally recognized ways to maintain spiritual ties. They allowed survivors to integrate their loss into their daily routines, honoring the deceased not through detachment, but through continuity and care.

2. Connection Through Place and Space: The emotional bond was also expressed through spatial choices. Several participants described choosing to live near sites that held personal or spiritual significance, such as a spouse's grave, a family garden, or a traditional cottage known as a brugga.

Men often emphasized the protective and comforting aspects of these spaces. One explained, "I built my tent near the cemetery. I wasn't afraid. I felt protected, close to her." Another noted, "The brugga was the only structure left standing. I stayed there. It was like she was still nearby." These spaces offered a quiet, familiar setting where grief could be experienced in a place filled with memory.

Women, too, sought nearness to their loved ones through meaningful locations. One widow chose to remain in a garden close to her home and her husband's grave, stating, "I didn't want to stay at the camp. I lived in a garden near our home, close to his grave." Another recalled, "I asked the soldiers to build our shelter where he used to sit. I felt safer there." These decisions were often deeply emotional, tied to memory and spiritual belief.

Together, these experiences reveal how resilience is not only found within individuals but also rooted in their surroundings. Physical proximity to significant places served as an anchor, helping survivors maintain a sense of connection and emotional stability.

Stabilizing life through routine and roles:

Following the traumatic loss of a spouse, many older adults did not retreat into isolation. Instead, they turned to the familiarity of daily routines and social roles as a way of regaining balance. Whether through farming, household tasks, or caregiving, these activities provided structure, restored a sense of agency, and reaffirmed their place within the family and community.

1. Reclaiming Routine and Livelihood: For older men, returning to agricultural and livestock work served both practical and emotional purposes. Tending to goats, preparing the fields, or repairing homes became more than survival. They were pathways to emotional stability. One widower explained, "I couldn't sit still. I went to the fields every day. My goats needed grass, and the rice wouldn't plant itself." For him, work was a form of grounding, a way to channel grief into physical activity. Another man shared, "If I stayed home, I'd go mad from remembering. It's better to stay active than let the pain eat you."

Women also described how re-engaging in domestic life gave them comfort. Their return to caregiving and household responsibilities helped restore a sense of normalcy. One widow reflected, "I took care of the chickens, gardened, and watched my grandchildren. That gave me reason to smile again." Another said, "Cooking helped me feel normal. Even without him, the routine comforted me. It reminded me that I still have responsibilities."

These narratives suggest that familiar roles offer more than distraction. They were a form of embodied coping, rooted in cultural values that view work and care as both moral and emotional acts.

2. Healing Within the Family: Alongside routine tasks, emotional support within the family played a vital role in recovery. For many participants, the household became a space where grief could be shared, not just borne alone. Relationships with children and grandchildren created opportunities for reciprocal care.

Men spoke of how their children supported them emotionally, often in quiet and practical ways. One widower recalled, "My child and I supported each other. He knew I was hurting, so he stayed by me and even got me a massage when I was too tired." This form of mutual support allowed him to maintain dignity while expressing vulnerability. He added, "We talk more now, and we share memories of her. That helps both of us."

Women frequently found meaning in continuing to care for others while receiving emotional support themselves. "I still had my grandchildren," one widow said. "I lived for them now. When I saw them laugh, I felt alive again." Another woman described a moment of collective healing, saying, "My children reminded me to pray for their father. We cried together, but also comforted each other. That closeness helped me recover."

These accounts demonstrate that resilience often develops within relationships. Emotional strength was nurtured not in isolation but within the daily rhythms of family life, where both grief and love were shared.

Acceptance and meaning-making:

Over time, many older adults came to terms with their loss through spiritual and cultural interpretations. Acceptance was not immediate, nor passive. It involved active reflection, prayer, and efforts to understand death as part of a broader divine plan.

1. Finding Peace Through Faith: In Islamic belief, the idea of *takdir,* destiny preordained by God, provided a framework for making sense of the tragedy. For many

participants, this belief did not eliminate sorrow, but it provided a way to contain grief within a larger spiritual context.

Male participants often expressed acceptance with a tone of quiet strength. One widower shared, "I lost my wife, my world collapsed. But I told myself, this was her destiny, and mine too." His words revealed a difficult, but intentional, spiritual surrender. Another man said, "I didn't mind losing the house. But losing her… only God can heal that."

Women also leaned into their faith, though often through emotional and relational expressions. One widow recalled, "I asked God if healing isn't possible, then take him gently. When he died, I knew it was written." Another spoke of struggling with guilt, saying, "I blamed myself for not saving him. But I learned to accept it as fate. We don't decide when people go, God does."

Through these reflections, it becomes clear that acceptance was shaped by both belief and emotion. Faith did not erase the pain but gave it meaning. It allowed survivors to move from asking "Why?" to saying "It was written," offering comfort in a world that had changed irreversibly.

Table 1. Gendered bereavement resilience domains and expressions

Domain	Subdomain	Masculine Expression	Feminine Expression	Key Characteristics
1. Role-based Identity Restoration	1.1 Cultural Gendered Function	Public labor, farm work, structural repair, and economic activity.	Childcare, domestic maintenance, and small-scale farming	Reaffirmation of culturally normative roles; coping through meaningful daily activity and task-based engagement
	1.2 Social Reintegration Role	Reasserting provider status and leadership in public spaces	Reclaiming nurturing roles in the household and family	Identity recovery is linked to functional continuity and culturally expected gender roles
2. Spiritual Coping & Moral Reorientation	2.1 Public Ritual Devotion	Mosque attendance, communal Qur'an recitation, group worship	Private prayer, Yasin recitation, domestic rituals	Gendered religiosity: public ritual vs. private affective devotion.
	2.2 Ethical Moral Reciprocity	Acts of charity, mosque service, and community support	Fasting, personal prayer, ritual purification	Moral preparation for death; desire for spiritual reunion with spouse.
3. Spatial & Symbolic Coping Mechanisms	3.1 Spiritual Symbolic Place	Residing near cemeteries, Brugga, ancestral land	Refusal to relocate; preference for emotionally meaningful domestic spaces	Spatial proximity used as emotional and spiritual continuity; place as a site of healing

	3.2 Emotional Memory Practice	Minimal or avoided; little focus on physical mementos	Preservation of scent, objects, and ritual items of the deceased	Sensory coping used by women to sustain emotional connection; absent or culturally discouraged in men
4. Emotional Processing & Acceptance	4.1 Religious Healing Practice	Internalization of pain, spiritual framing (*takdir*), and emotional restraint	Religious surrender through emotional openness and maternal language	Gendered norms of emotional expression; stoicism as masculine strength, expressive grief as feminine resilience
	4.2 Relational Support Network	Emotional support primarily through son or male kin, limited verbal expression	Intergenerational support; shared grief with children and grandchildren	Family as a reciprocal support system; women are more active in emotional caregiving and verbal emotion

Theoretical Contribution: Toward a gendered bereavement resilience framework

This study proposes a grounded theory of gendered bereavement resilience, based on qualitative fieldwork among older adults in Sasak Muslim communities who experienced the loss of a spouse during a natural disaster. The theory conceptualizes resilience not as an individual psychological trait, but as a gendered and culturally mediated process embedded in religious beliefs, social expectations, and relational structures. It consists of four interrelated domains, each containing gendered patterns of coping, adaptation, and meaning-making that reflect the lived realities of bereaved older adults.

1. Role-Based Identity Restoration: Following the death of a spouse, older adults sought to reaffirm their sense of identity by reengaging with culturally expected roles. This re-engagement offered emotional stability, social recognition, and a sense of purpose. Among older men, resilience was demonstrated through productive activity and public engagement. Farming, livestock care, and rebuilding tasks allowed men to reassert their roles as providers and maintainers of social order. These actions supported emotional regulation through physical activity and routine. In contrast, older women restored their identities through caregiving and household tasks. They focused on nurturing grandchildren, managing gardens, and sustaining daily domestic life. These activities reestablished their position within the family and helped them maintain emotional continuity. The restoration of culturally assigned roles allowed bereaved older adults to cope through familiar responsibilities that reinforced their social value.

2. Spiritual Coping and Moral Reorientation: Religious belief played a central role in how older adults navigated grief and reoriented their moral lives following loss. While both men and women turned to Islamic teachings and practices for comfort, their spiritual expressions were shaped by gender-specific norms. Older men typically engaged in public forms of religious practice, including participation in mosque-based prayers, communal Qur'anic recitation, and religious gatherings. These collective rituals provided structure, social presence, and a culturally accepted means of managing grief. Older women expressed spirituality more privately and emotionally. Their practices included personal prayer,

reciting the Yasin, and preparing symbolic offerings at home. These acts were often relational, involving continued remembrance of the deceased spouse. Both men and women expressed a desire for a good death, known as *husnul khatimah*. Older men emphasized public good deeds such as almsgiving and communal service. Older women emphasized ritual purity, increased prayer, and fasting as preparation for reunion with the deceased in the afterlife. This domain shows that spiritual coping was central to bereavement resilience, but that it followed different gendered pathways shaped by social expectations and theological interpretations.

3. Spatial and Symbolic Coping Mechanisms: The coping process also involved physical space and symbolic engagement, which supported emotional continuity and psychological comfort. Older men often chose to live near sacred or emotionally significant locations such as cemeteries, ancestral land, or traditional shelters. These spaces provided spiritual grounding and a sense of protection. They served as places where grief could be processed quietly and meaningfully. Older women, on the other hand, used sensory memory and symbolic objects to maintain emotional bonds with their deceased spouses. They preserved belongings such as clothing, cigarettes, or perfume and incorporated them into personal rituals. These acts were not merely sentimental but served as spiritual and emotional connections that allowed continued companionship in the absence of the spouse. While men tended to avoid physical reminders of the deceased, women embraced them as meaningful components of daily life. This domain illustrates that bereavement resilience involves not only inner emotional work but also the construction of healing environments rooted in physical and symbolic experiences.

4. Emotional Processing and Acceptance: Older adults processed grief and reached acceptance through emotional expressions that aligned with gendered cultural expectations. Older men often adopted a posture of stoicism and quiet endurance. They internalized emotional suffering and framed the loss as part of divine destiny, consistent with the Islamic concept of *takdir*. This interpretation allowed men to manage grief within the boundaries of culturally endorsed masculine composure. Older women were more likely to articulate their emotions and share their grief with others. They found support through conversations with family members, ritualized mourning, and collective prayer. Emotional expression was viewed not as weakness, but as part of spiritual healing and relational strength. Women played a central role in facilitating emotional exchange within the family, particularly across generations. This domain reveals that emotional resilience was shaped by gendered norms of expression, with men tending toward silence and religious surrender, while women adopted openness, connection, and shared sorrow as legitimate pathways to acceptance.

These four domains constitute a grounded theory of the Gendered Bereavement Resilience Framework (Figure 1), offering a culturally specific account of how older adults in Sasak Muslim communities adapt to spousal loss. The findings demonstrate that men and women engage in distinct yet culturally coherent coping strategies shaped by religious commitments, gender norms, and social obligations. Older men expressed resilience through productive labor, public religiosity, and emotional restraint, whereas older women did so through caregiving, private spirituality, symbolic remembrance, and emotional expression. Despite these differences, both groups sought moral continuity through spirituality, social reintegration, and preparation for the afterlife (Table 1). This theoretical contribution emphasizes the need for bereavement research and intervention models to integrate culturally and gender-responsive understandings of resilience, particularly within societies structured by religious values and communal traditions.
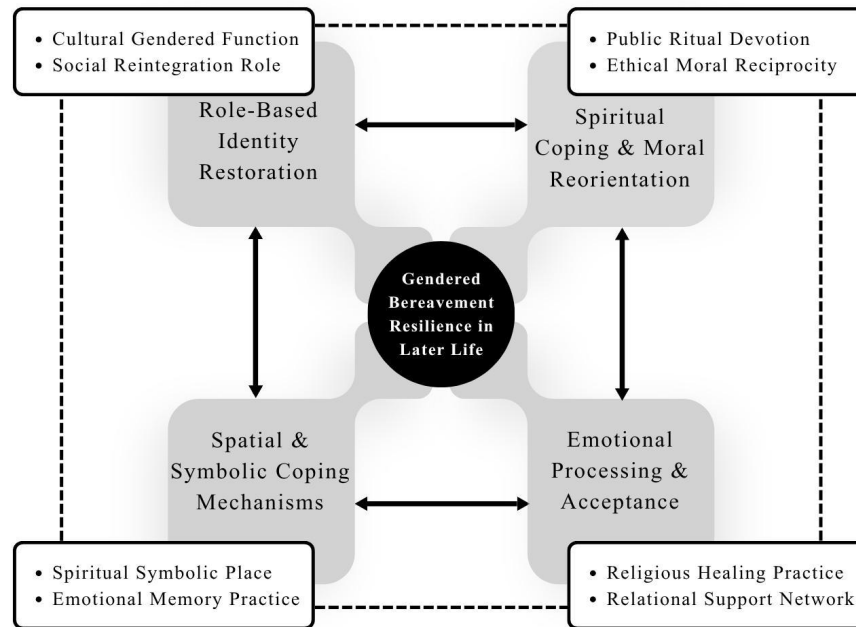
Figure 1. Gendered bereavement resilience framework

Policy implications and actionable guidance for culturally sensitive interventions

The derived gendered bereavement resilience framework moves beyond a contextual explanation of coping to provide crucial insights for informing multi-level disaster policy and psychosocial interventions, particularly for older adults in Muslim-majority, disaster-prone contexts. The identified coping mechanisms rooted in Islamic theology, gender roles, and communal practices necessitate a policy response that validates and strategically leverages these existing cultural and relational resources. This ensures that support is not generic but culturally and theologically congruent with the survivors lived experience.

Strengthening community-led initiatives (bottom-up approach)

Policy and support efforts should officially recognize, fund, and facilitate existing culturally embedded practices as primary components of psychosocial recovery, rather than imposing external, generic models of grief counseling. Communal Healing Rituals, Support the rapid re-establishment and funding of community rituals like *tahlilan* (communal prayers for the deceased). These practices are vital for collective emotional regulation, provide a structured public space for mourning, and reaffirm community solidarity. Leveraging *Gotong Royong*, Integrate the principle of *gotong royong* (mutual aid) into formal psychosocial and rebuilding efforts, focusing especially on tasks that restore older adults' Role-Based Identities. For older

185

men, this means supporting rebuilding and labor-focused activities for older women, this involves facilitating the restoration of domestic routines and small-scale farming. Supporting Spiritual Anchoring, Interventions should collaborate with local religious figures (*ulama* or community leaders) who can authentically frame loss within the context of *takdir* (divine destiny) and *sabar* (patience), providing the ultimate meaning framework that prevents psychological disorganization.

Measures by governmental agencies (institutional approach)

Governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in disaster management and public health must integrate Gerontological and Gender-Sensitive Preparedness into National Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) frameworks. Gender and Age-Disaggregated Data, Mandate the collection of age- and gender-disaggregated data in all post-disaster psychosocial assessments. This ensures that the distinct needs of older men (e.g., social affirmation through public roles) and older women (e.g., need for safe, meaningful domestic spaces) are accurately quantified and addressed. Culturally Competent Psychosocial Training: Develop training protocols for first responders, social workers, and mental health professionals that are grounded in the specific cultural ecology of recovery. Training must include sensitivity to Islamic terminologies and respect for gendered emotional expression, recognizing that stoicism in men and emotional openness in women are both culturally coherent pathways to acceptance. Infrastructure Prioritization: Prioritize the rapid re-building or restoration of sites critical for Spatial and Symbolic Coping, such as mosques (central to men's public religiosity) and access to cemeteries or ancestral land (important for spiritual anchoring and Continuing Bonds).

Strengthening family and kinship networks (relational approach)

The study underscores that resilience is cultivated within reciprocal family systems and through intergenerational networks of support. Accordingly, policies should be designed to actively reinforce these relational dynamics. Facilitating Intergenerational Caregiving entails providing targeted resources and basic psychosocial support to adult children and grandchildren who assume caregiving responsibilities across generations. Such intergenerational caregiving networks constitute a critical source of both emotional and practical stability, particularly for older women who derive a sense of purpose and meaning from nurturing others.

Equally significant is the Support of Gendered Emotional Exchange. Structured family dialogue initiatives should be promoted to normalize the shared articulation of sorrow and grief, especially among women, while maintaining respect for cultural expectations that may valorize emotional restraint among men. Family-based coping mechanisms, including collective memory-sharing and ritualized acts of remembrance (for example, the preparation of a deceased loved one's favorite meal), play a vital role in sustaining an Ongoing Bond with the deceased. Such "continuing bonds" are both theologically and psychologically adaptive within this sociocultural framework. Consequently, psychosocial interventions should prioritize the facilitation of these narrative and ritual continuities, as they serve as enduring sources of consolation and as mechanisms for the consolidation of identity in the aftermath of loss.

DISCUSSION

This study provides a culturally grounded and gender-sensitive perspective on bereavement resilience among older muslim adults in post-disaster Lombok, Indonesia. Through the development of the gendered bereavement resilience framework, the findings reveal how older men and women engage in distinct, yet complementary, coping strategies shaped by religious beliefs, gender norms, and social expectations. These strategies include spiritual anchoring, the maintenance of emotional bonds with the deceased, role-based identity restoration, and meaning-making through divine acceptance. By situating resilience within local cultural and theological contexts, this study reinforces the growing body of literature that challenges universal or individualistic conceptions of resilience and instead highlights its embeddedness in social, moral, and spiritual systems (Kirmayer et al., 2009; Walsh, 2011).

The culturally specific role of Islam in framing grief and resilience distinguishes this study from existing research conducted in other disaster-affected regions, such as Japan and Taiwan. For instance, Takakura (2023) observed that older Japanese survivors of the 2011 tsunami engaged in ancestral rituals and spiritual practices that promoted healing through cultural continuity, a process he termed "cultural resilience." Similarly, Liu and Mishna (2014) found that Taiwanese women interpreted their bereavement through frameworks of caregiving, spirituality, and family-centered duty. These insights are valuable in demonstrating how grief is processed through meaningful cultural scripts across different societies. However, in the present study, Islamic theology plays a more explicit role in constructing resilience. Concepts such as *takdir* (divine destiny), *sabar* (patience), and *husnul khatimah* (a good death) serve as central organizing principles that not only guide emotional processing but also provide long-term existential orientation and moral motivation. Rather than contrasting one approach against another, these differences underscore the multiplicity of cultural logics through which resilience emerges.

Moreover, the communal and relational aspects of bereavement in the Sasak Muslim community reflect a distinctive ecology of resilience. Rituals such as *tahlilan* (communal prayer), *gotong royong* (mutual aid), and intergenerational caregiving are not merely coping techniques but are culturally encoded expressions of continuity, solidarity, and moral healing. This contrasts with the more individualized or family-centered modes of grief found in some East Asian contexts, where remembrance may be practiced through household altars, symbolic offerings, or personal reflection (Conant, 1996). While both cultural models affirm ongoing bonds with the deceased, the Indonesian context emphasizes collective religious merit and public expressions of mourning, reinforcing community cohesion as part of the bereavement process. These findings resonate with Walsh's (2011) family resilience theory, which views shared beliefs and rituals as integral to adaptation, yet they also extend this framework by foregrounding theological and eschatological dimensions.

The gendered patterns identified in this study further illuminate how resilience is shaped by normative roles and social expectations. Older men demonstrated resilience through public religiosity, agricultural labor, and emotional restraint, reflecting cultural ideals of masculine strength and leadership. In contrast, older women expressed resilience through caregiving, domestic continuity, symbolic remembrance, and emotional openness, in line with maternal and relational roles. These patterns are not rigid prescriptions but culturally meaningful strategies that allow individuals to reassert their identities and maintain social belonging in the aftermath of profound loss. These insights are consistent with literature suggesting that gender shapes emotional regulation and grief trajectories

(Spahni et al., 2015; Johannsen et al., 2019), yet this study uniquely contextualizes those trajectories within an Islamic moral and communal framework.

Finally, this study contributes to broader conversations on post-disaster recovery by suggesting that bereavement can serve not only as a site of suffering but also as a source of moral and spiritual transformation. Many participants described their grief as a catalyst for deeper religious commitment, moral clarity, and preparation for the afterlife, outcomes consistent with the notion of post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). These transformations were not framed as individual psychological shifts, but as expressions of faith, duty, and community re-engagement. Thus, the study proposes that resilience among older Muslim adults is not simply about returning to baseline functioning but involves reconstructing meaning and identity in accordance with religious principles and communal values.

In conclusion, this research advances our understanding of bereavement resilience by offering a nuanced, culturally anchored framework that integrates gender, spirituality, and social structure. It complements existing literature by showing that while themes of ritual, relationality, and memory are present across cultures, the meanings and mechanisms of resilience differ in important ways. This underscores the importance of developing bereavement interventions that are not only trauma-informed but also culturally and theologically sensitive, particularly in contexts where community, faith, and identity are closely intertwined. However, the analysis acknowledges that gender is a fluid social construct that interacts complexly with age, socioeconomic status, and individual belief. Future studies must adopt a more intersectionality-focused approach to explore intra-gender variations. For instance, how does the grief of a widowed older man with high community status (e.g., a religious leader) compare to a man with limited social capital. Similarly, research should explore the experiences of individuals who may not strictly adhere to traditional gender norms or those navigating non-spousal loss in later life. This shift would refine the model, moving beyond broad gendered categories to capture a more nuanced spectrum of resilience expressions within later life.

CONCLUSION

The gendered bereavement resilience framework shows that men and women employ distinct yet complementary strategies grounded in Islamic values and communal traditions. Resilience is not universal but contextually shaped by religious meaning, social reciprocity, and moral practice. Effective bereavement support should be culturally and gender responsive, incorporating local mechanisms such as *tahlilan* (communal prayer) and *gotong royong* (mutual assistance) to foster collective recovery. Future research should explore these dynamics through an intersectional lens, considering factors like socioeconomic status and education to strengthen culturally grounded understandings of resilience in later life.

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