

# Exploring Psychological Well-Being Among Tahfiz Al-Quran Students: Empirical Study Using Psychoeducation Counseling and Therapy

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## Abstract

This study aims to explore mental stress, self-efficacy and coping strategies that contribute to the stability of tahfiz students' mental health. This study is a qualitative study that uses phenomenological methods in psychoeducational group counseling. The respondents of this study consisted of 5 students of Tahfiz School and Malaysian Armed Forces Orphans (STAY ATM) who were 17 years old. Data analysis using content analysis techniques. The results of the study found that the mental stress faced by tahfiz students is caused by parental coercion, military- lifestyle and environmental factors. As a result of the mental stress experienced, emotional changes also occur. In the aspect of self-efficacy, tahfiz students have personal advantages such as being talented in various fields, extroverted, and independent, but their introvert attitude, low self-esteem and not knowing how to manage time are also their weaknesses. From the aspect of coping strategies, tahfiz students have a mature and rational coping strategy in managing the mental stress they face and have a clear future plan. Al Quran approach clearly shows that it can have a positive effect on the mental stability of tahfiz students. The results of this study have positive implications for students, parents, STAY ATM's and community.

**Keywords:** Tahfiz Students, Psychoeducation, Counseling and Therapy.

## Introduction

The method of learning the Qur'an that uses the memorization method has been practiced since the time of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w when Malaikat Jibril a.s. sending down revelations to His Majesty (Zaid et al., 2020). Memorizing verses of the Qur'an is not an easy matter, but rather requires a high level of commitment (Murihah et al., 2015). The activity of memorizing the Qur'an is not the same as the activity of memorizing poetry or poems composed by humans. This is because memorizing the Qur'an is an activity related to mental, spiritual and physical strength that interacts with kalamullah (Suyanto, 2010). Thus, for tahfiz students they need a stable mental and emotional level while mastering and remembering the holy verses of the Qur'an. This is because through the miracle of the Qur'an, individuals who can memorize the Qur'an can guarantee intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical stability.

In Malaysia, al-Quran education has started since the beginning of the arrival of Islam in Malaya hundreds of years ago. Al-Quran study is practiced in

lodge schools, suraus and mosques (Murihah & Faez, 2015). The Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM) is also not behind in focusing on memorization to its citizens by establishing the Tahfiz and Orphanage School, also known as STAY ATM, which is located at the Sungai Besi Camp in Kuala Lumpur. This school has produced 76 al-Quran memorizers and produced many students who have successfully continued their studies in public and private higher education institutions with encouraging academic achievements since it was established in 2013. Research on the mental stability of tahfiz students is still limited. Many previous studies focused on memorization techniques and methods, the use of ICT in memorizing the Quran (Mardhiah et al., 2020; Marzuqi et al., 2018), the effect of memorizing the Quran on academic performance and discipline (Anis & Sabri, 2017; H et al., 2018; Santibuana et al., 2019; Syafawati et al., 2020). Therefore, this study tries to explore the stability of mental health from the aspects of mental stress, self-efficacy and coping strategies among tahfiz students at STAY ATM, Sungai Besi Camp Kuala Lumpur. The general objective of this study is to explore the psychological well-being of tahfiz students in terms of mental stress, self-efficacy and coping strategies. The specific objectives are as follows: identifying the mental stress factors of tahfiz STAY ATM students, identifying the self-efficacy of STAY ATM tahfiz students in overcoming mental stress throughout their tahfiz studies, and identify coping strategies for Tahfiz STAY ATM students in facing the challenge of becoming al hafiz.

## **Research Methods**

This study was conducted at the Tahfiz and Orphanage School of the Malaysian Armed Forces (STAY ATM). The respondents of this study, a total of 5 students aged 17 years old, were selected and identified by the STAYATM school and felt suitable based on their learning performance. The sample of this study was selected using purposive sampling. This study is a qualitative study through psychoeducational group counseling that uses phenomenological methods. Phenomenology was introduced by Edmund Husserl and developed by Martin Heidegger to understand or study human life experience. This approach evolved as a qualitative research method that matured over several decades in

the twentieth century. The general focus of this research is to examine the structure of experience into human consciousness (Tuffour, 2017).

This study uses the interview method in a group counseling session as a main method to obtain in-depth data for the study informants. This is in accordance with the epistemology of qualitative research, which is that communication is one of the ways to obtain information and deepen the context of a phenomenon experienced by information studies (Creswell, 2013). This is also to explore the real experiences experienced by the study informants through in-depth interviews with them. It is stated that phenomenological research is a qualitative study to describe a real experience experienced by informenkajian (Merriam, 2009).

### **Mental Stress**

Based on the evidence of the study informants, it clearly shows that they are not ready and show interest in the field of tahfiz studies. The inclination of their parents that prompted the selection of this field of tahfiz is not of their own free will. Because this tahfiz school was established under the Malaysian Armed Forces, the formation of student discipline through a military approach is fully applied. This situation causes the life of tahfiz students to become depressed and depressed.

The entire teaching staff of this school consists of members and officers of the KAGAT army, the methods applied also tend to military order. Research informants are not yet ready to accept this way. But they also admit that the military methods applied bring positive changes and their memory is also obtained well and quickly. Their parents also did not dispute this military method, since their parents were from the same military career field.

Environmental factors play a major role in the formation of a person's mental stress. However, it depends on the individual to respond to the environmental factors they face. Some of the study informants feel burdened by being a tahfiz student because they think that the stigma of outsiders who state that all tahfiz students cannot socialize and must maintain behavior in accordance with the dignity of tahfiz. They feel that the social life as students of their age is also what they want to go through. The reception of the family at home is also quite harsh so that they are depressed.

This study found that mental stress factors stem from parental coercion, military-style life and also environmental factors. These three factors clearly show that tahfiz students are indeed stressed by their lifestyle once they enter tahfiz school. The lack of motivation in memorizing the Qur'an and retaining the verses of the Qur'an is related to the element of coercion. This is because students who are not enthusiastic about memorizing the Al-Quran often feel burdened and under pressure so that they cannot control their emotions (Hani, 2014) Some are also forced by their families to send their children to tahfiz institutions when it is not the will of the students themselves. Support from parents is very helpful in shaping the personality and excellent morals of tahfiz students. The personality of children who receive attention from their parents is more outstanding than children who do not receive attention and support from their parents. Therefore, parents should provide support and involve themselves directly in monitoring children's spiritual activities at home as has been applied in maahad.

### **The Effect of Mental Stress on Emotional Changes**

A series of mental stress caused by parental coercion, military-style life and environmental factors, there are several emotional effects that affect the stability of tahfiz students' mental health. Among them are; sad, afraid, shy, happy, frustasted and stress. Based on this finding, it was found that all tahfiz students involved in the study have interesting talents hidden within them. These talents will be able to support them in building a career after graduating from tahfiz school. When they enter a tahfiz school from the age of 12, it is difficult for them to become extroverts and even a student who easily gets along with people. In addition, two tahfiz students are good at being independent and this may be due to habits from family upbringing.

In terms of personal weaknesses, most tahfiz students are introverted because they are not used to dealing with large crowds, which makes it difficult for them to adapt to the environment and socialize. When introversion is present in them, it will indirectly cause them to be less confident in themselves. There are also some of them who still cannot manage time when they return home. This is because the students want to be free from the rules when they are at home because the rules in their dorm make them stressed.

What is interesting about these students is that their intentions are good and noble because they want to guide the community and family. If viewed from this angle, it is not in vain that their parents force them to enter tahfiz school when they are 12 years old. In addition, they also have high ambitions to pursue a career and are even creative to create career opportunities by integrating the talents they have with the knowledge absorbed in the tahfiz school. The last element of the SWOT analysis is threats. This element refers to everything that poses a risk in every endeavor.

The perspective of tahfiz students towards the outside world is a little different because they think that the field of tahfiz they are studying now narrows their job opportunities in the future. This dogma has been rooted in the thinking of teenagers since a long time ago because some parents will threaten their children by sending them to tahfiz schools or lodges if they are naughty and lazy in day school. This situation causes tahfiz students to not be able to see their true strengths. They do not realize that they are actually jewels in society, who keep the holy verses of the Quran in their chests.

### **Self Efficacy**

In the 3rd session, the SWOT assessment of informants found various self-efficacy. In the aspect of the advantage of informants, having many personal abilities, including the ability to memorize well, skilled in the field of art and sports, having a good voice in reciting the Qur'an. There are also informants who are able to draw and write novels. Informants are also easy to get along with, has a forgiving and generous attitude. This attitude and nature of Mahmudah is common for Hafiz students. Students also have an independent attitude in daily life. A contributing factor to this attitude is the habit of living in a dormitory environment.

As for personal weaknesses, some informants have introverted traits, fail to speak and thick shyness. Most of the informants are quite difficult to get along with easily, even during the informant session at the beginning it is difficult to interact with the facilitator. After a little while of the session process, they actively communicate. This factor occurs because students in this school have less interaction with the outside environment. Poor self-confidence can also be identified in the session. There are also informants who fail in good time management. Informants also revealed the opportunities they have, among others,

the opportunity to serve the community one day with the knowledge of the Quran they possess. Become an imam and teacher of the Quran to the immediate family and other members of the public. They also feel that the field of tahfiz is very necessary in life outside. The need for the Quran will never end. His career as al-Hafiz stretched wide in their view.

Threats cannot be separated from the informant's point of view, among them, career competition one day, they also doubt their own ability to maintain memorization. Their lack in the academic field is also an obstacle according to the demands of the times. There are informants who have a desire to venture into the field of entrepreneurship but are afraid of not being able to because of the tahfiz midwife they have. Lack of communication is also a threat for them.

It can be concluded that, in the concept of self-learning, self-efficacy is a factor that can motivate students' efforts towards achieving the goal of learning Al Quran. Although the spiritual development of tahfiz students is certainly high, the fact is that the student's character or personality also affects the added value to form a praiseworthy personality in line with the adab hamalatul Quran. The characteristics of tahfiz students are described as good personality values, noble character, civilized, maintaining skills and memorizing Al-Quran verses (Zahir et al., 2019).

### **Behavioral Strategies: Coping Strategies to Deal with Mental and Emotional Stress**

Mental pressure due to coercion from parents manifests various types of positive and negative emotions. Based on the findings of this study, tahfiz students are more inclined to positive emotions. They choose to be positive with their environment. The way they think to deal with the pressures faced throughout their studies is very impressive when compared to their teenage years. This is because usually, the growth of teenagers is at its peak when they are 17 years old. These positive coping strategies are commendable and will even support their lives in a positive direction

As a result of coping strategies to manage mental stress throughout their studies in tahfiz schools that are more inclined towards a positive life, tahfiz students also have positive coping strategies for their future after completing

tahfiz studies. All tahfiz students know and are clear about their goals. They are already good at planning the basic needs for the formation of a better future and also to achieve their career.

The findings of the study found that tahfiz students' coping strategies in dealing with mental stress throughout their five-year studies at tahfiz schools are encouraging. This is because of the influence of Al Quran verses that are read and looked at every day. Students of tahfiz can think rationally and maturely in giving perspective on aspects of life. This finding is in line with (Santibuan et al., 2019) identifying the relationship between memorizing the Quran and quality of life among tahfiz students in Selangor, Malaysia. The results of their study found that there is a significant positive relationship between memorizing the Quran and physical health and mental health. The more students memorize the Qur'an, the higher their quality of life, and the number of pages memorized also affects the mental and physical health of tahfiz students. In terms of coping skills in planning the future, tahfiz students have clear goals for their lives in the future. In conclusion, memorizing the Quran has the potential to improve the quality of life as well as the mental and physical health of tahfiz students.

## **Conclusion**

Overall this psychoeducational group counseling process has given a lot of experience and new skills in the counseling world. The results of this study have provided an understanding of the factors of mental stress, self-efficacy and coping strategies of students of Tahfiz School and Malaysian Armed Forces Orphans (STAY ATM). It is also beneficial for STAY ATM, ATM and the Ministry of Defense to strengthen the quality and administration of this tahfiz school. However, there is a limitation of the study which is the possibility that there are study informants who are not honest and really share what problems they face. My suggestion to the next researchers to continue the study, especially related to the relationship of memorizing the Qur'an to the level of mental well-being which still has many gaps and various aspects of the study need to be researched and explored further. My hope is that this experience will be able to inspire my interest and that more studies like this will be done by researchers.

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