

The Phenomenon of Cognitive Anxiety in Learning Islamic Education Subjects

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ABSTRACT

The obligation to undergo tahsin and tahfidz and learn Arabic in Islamic schools is a frightening specter for some students, causing a phenomenon in the form of cognitive anxiety every time they undergo Islamic religion lessons. This study uses a qualitative literature research approach and phenomenology, where researchers try to understand the phenomena that occur and develop. This research aims to explain the essential points that can add to the readiness of knowledge from educational institutions in preparing learning methods and mental students to be ready to plunge into social life. This study's results indicate that optimizing the factors described can foster positive results by 1) gaining public trust, 2) developing learning methods, 3) improving student achievement, and 4) student achievement in academic and non-academic fields.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the process of changing the attitudes and behavior of a person or group of people to mature through teaching and training efforts (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 1991). In other words, education is an important aspect to improve human capabilities (Syarnubi, 2020). Every human being should have an awareness of the importance of education for future survival (Syarnubi, 2024). In education, there is an effort to gain knowledge from not knowing to knowing (Syarnubi, 2023). However, education in this case does not only prioritize reading and writing, but more than that (Fauzi, M., Lestari, A.R.S., & Ali, 2023). Education is expected to be able to instill social and religious values that can live and be maintained in people's lives (Syarnubi, Fauzi, et al., 2023). Thus, it is important to be able to manage education in accordance with what is expected (Syarnubi, 2016). Realizing a generation of love for the Qur'an aligns with Islamic education's goals, namely creating personal servants of God who are always devoted to God and can achieve a happy life in the world and the hereafter (Syarnubi, 2019a).

One of the crucial aspects to be explored in this research is the emotional state of adolescents. Adolescent emotions tend to be unstable, with fluctuations in feelings that are easily changed. Adolescents can easily fall into a very negative affective state but have the opportunity to change into a positive affective state (Ratih, et al., 2022). Anxiety or worry, in the Qur'an, is known as *Al-Khauf*, while fear or fear is known as *khasyyah*. There are verses in the Qur'an that explain that anxiety is an inseparable part of human life. Allah makes anxiety one of the tests for humans who claim to be believers, whether they will be able to pass the test or not (Hadinata, et al., 2023). In the teaching and learning process, it can be seen that each

individual has unique characteristics, whether from teachers or students (Syarnubi & Fahiroh, 2024). Everyone must have different character traits, especially when doing light or heavy activities (Syarnubi et al., 2021). When doing strenuous activities, of course, each child has a different level of anxiety. There are many factors that cause this to happen (Syarnubi et al., 2024).

In many cases, not all students who enter Islamic-based schools or boarding schools have a history or come from families with a solid religious education background, so some have difficulty memorizing or following Islamic religious lessons that begin to enter the Qur'an and Hadith and Arabic language material intensively. This could be due to students needing to familiarize themselves with the Qur'an or still being in the primary stage in BTA (reading, writing, Arabic), namely recognizing hijaiyah letters.

Recognizing the early signs of anxiety can be seen in how students behave in undergoing learning (Syarnubi, S., Alimron, A., & Muhammad, 2022). Some are confident, some are enthusiastic about new learning materials, and some have a sense of anxiety, tension, and fear, especially when entering memorization material, which is considered heavy due to lack of fluency in tahsin. Excessive concern, in this case, is undoubtedly what triggers students to be afraid of being left behind by their friends and what triggers anxiety causes fear of learning. Students have a negative tendency because they consider Islamic education to be a difficult lesson, so students eventually experience fear during learning. This fear can cause anxiety in students. Anxiety can interfere with cognitive students characterized by a sense of anxiety, tension, worry, fear, and restlessness (Saputri et al., 2020). These circumstances can lead to cognitive anxiety, which is commonly found in students who experience excessive anxiety in the academic field. Cognitive anxiety can interfere with learner performance through cognitive and concentration impairment, resulting in worry and fear (P.Vitasari et al., 2011).

Furthermore, psychotherapy is the treatment of the mind, or more precisely, the treatment and care of psychological disorders through psychological methods. This term includes various techniques that aim to assist individuals in overcoming their emotional disorders by modifying their behavior, thoughts, and emotions so that the individual can develop himself in overcoming problems (Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyah, 2004).

From the perspective of Islamic psychology, in this case, Islamic psychotherapy, the truth must be returned to the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Al-Hadith). As mentioned earlier, these same diseases negatively affect mood and temperament. Based on the background of the problem above, the following problems can be identified:

1. What is cognitive anxiety?
2. What are the factors that cause cognitive anxiety among students in learning Islamic education?
3. What are the strategies to overcome the impact of cognitive anxiety on students?

According to the theory by Degeng in the book by Lia Marlina and Suhertuti, in addition to being good at implementing strategies suitable for students, teachers must also be able to develop learning strategies by considering their students' characteristics and learning styles (Lia & Suhertuti, 2018). Therefore, the researchers want to examine the Phenomenon of cognitive anxiety in Islamic religious education among students.

METHODS

This research aims to obtain an overview of the relationship and influence of Islamic religious education subjects on cognitive anxiety commonly experienced by students. This research is intended to understand the phenomena that occur in research subjects by observing the classroom atmosphere and interpersonal dynamics during religious education and its impact on the effectiveness of students in understanding learning.

The data collection techniques used are literature research. According to Miles and Huberman, data analysis in qualitative research is carried out when data collection takes place and after completing data collection within a certain period (Sugiyono, 2017). Activities in data analysis

are carried out interactively and continuously until the data is saturated. The steps are a) data reduction and b) data presentation. Referring to several qualitative research studies, each presentation of research results is also different. Literature research is valid if it has a degree of trust (credibility), transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Satori, 2013).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Definition of Cognitive Anxiety

Anxiety is a state of worry that something terrible is about to happen (Nevid et al., 2005). In other words, anxiety can be interpreted as a variety of responses to situations that make it uncomfortable (Syarnubi, Syarifuddin, et al., 2023). Many things may be the source of a person's anxiety, such as social relationships, education, work, or health. When someone feels anxious about the above, it can still be said to be expected, even adaptive. Anxiety is beneficial if it encourages someone to do better things in anticipation of their anxiety (Antony & Swinson, 2000). Anxiety will become abnormal if it is excessive, causes discomfort, interferes with daily life functioning, causes distress, or avoids social situations that are stressful for the individual (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 2000). Facing overwhelming anxiety when facing an exam, presentation, or meeting new people, if it causes distress for the individual, interferes with daily life functions, and there is safety or avoidance behavior, it can be categorized as an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety itself, according to the study of Islamic psychology, referring to the Qur'an, is explained as the emotion of fear. In the Qur'anic verse in Surah Al-Baqarah 155, it is also explained that humans will be tested with fear, the meaning of which is as follows:

"And We will surely test you with a little fear, hunger, shortage of wealth, souls, and fruits. And give glad tidings to those who are patient (QS. Al-Baqarah: 155)".

Cognitive symptoms of anxiety are worry about something, disturbing feelings of fear of something happening in the future, belief that something frightening is about to happen, fear of inability to cope with problems, mixed thoughts or confusion, and difficulty concentrating. A person's attitude in dealing with anxiety from a cognitive perspective, such as over-prediction of threats, low self-efficacy, and misinterpreting signals that occur in the body's organs. Cognitive reactions are fears and worries that affect the ability to think clearly, interfering with solving problems and coping with the demands of the surrounding environment.

From the description above, it can be concluded that the occurrence of anxiety is how individuals can evaluate what actions to take when feeling anxiety besides having to understand what circumstances cause a person to feel anxious; of course, after that, individuals must be able to control themselves to be able to manage emotions and manage the problems that cause anxiety.

B. Factors Causing Cognitive Anxiety in Learning Islamic Education Subject

Some motivations for students to study Islamic education subjects are due to encouragement or desires from parents or family, which often need to be balanced with sufficient moral support. With this motivation, students sometimes have difficulty participating in learning because they carry an invisible mental burden. Islamic education learning levels begin to focus on religious activities such as memorizing the Al-Quran, hadiths, or Arabic. So, this can be a factor causing student anxiety. Students will feel anxious when they have to take a rote exam. However, with a lack of preparation on their part, feelings of anxiety will arise, and they will become more worried if those around them are superior to the individual (Aminullah, 2013).

Suppose students continuously experience difficulties and failures in adapting. In that case, it will have an impact, namely experiencing failure in education, failing to socialize with other people around them, and failing to move on to the next teenage life (Khotimah et al., 2020). The school and parents have various demands and expectations, including getting good grades in all subjects. This does not rule out the possibility that there are students who feel burdened by these demands and expectations because they feel unable to fulfill these demands and

expectations, which makes them depressed and uncomfortable and gives rise to feelings of excessive anxiety, which can then progress to the stage of stress, panic, and even depression (El-Azis et al., 2017).

Learning achievement influenced by stress will significantly impact students because it can cause health problems, decreased immune system, frequent dizziness, insomnia or difficulty sleeping, and others (Syarnubi, 2022). If a student cannot control anxiety or stress, it will cause the ability to learn to decrease, resulting in learning achievement also decreasing (Tamara & Chris, 2018). Apart from anxiety and stress, other external and internal factors, including teachers, the material being explained, interaction patterns, media and technology, learning situations, and systems, influence the learning process (Solihah & Liana, (2017).

Students who feel under pressure will show emotional involvement in dealing with academic stress, namely psychosocial and emotional aspects and impaired cognitive function, which can divert students' focus. Students feel less focused, worried, and annoyed about their assignments, which must be submitted simultaneously, and sometimes need to be more mindful about assignments that still need to be completed and sometimes need to remember the material that the teacher has delivered. However, at the same time, they need to face several graduation requirements exams such as written Arabic, oral exams (*tahsin* and *tahfidz*), and religious practice exams (*aqidah* and *fiqh*). Not only is a series of exams a source of stress that triggers cognitive anxiety in students, but also because of the demand for high achievement by getting good grades in exams from parents, teachers, peers, or oneself.

In connection with the causes of severe anxiety experienced by students, based on the results of research by Nur Hasiatur Rahma in their thesis, the level of anxiety experienced by students is because they are required to be able to adapt to the Islamic school environment and must be able to arrange a schedule between studying general subjects and Islamic education (Rahma & Hasiatur, 2017). According to the research conducted by Rahmatika, this information is relevant and consistent, which revealed that in adolescents in the age range of approximately 13-15 years, their relationship with their parents reaches its lowest point, some try to separate from their parents, and there is also a desire to remain dependent on their parents (Rahmatika, 2014). Therefore, there is internal conflict within teenagers, which makes them lack emotions.

This issue results in students having no desire to learn Islamic education except to fulfill parents' requests. Relationships with parents and family aspects are supports that make students more enthusiastic about learning, making it easier to adapt. The cognitive-intellectual aspect is an aspect that represents parental support in the form of providing activities that can stimulate children's cognition and providing material which in Islamic education requires primary education in the form of BTA (reading, writing, Arabic), familiarization with family religious activities such as reading Al-Qur'an that hoped can bring about an attitude of *tumakninah* at the *taraqqi* stage (listening to the words of Allah, not reading oneself), *tabarriy* (letting go of one's self-view towards pleasure and *tazkiyah*) which aims to develop children's cognitive development. Parents who actively stimulate their children's intellectual activities at home will foster their children's intellectual interest, impacting their children's motivation and achievement (Grolnick & Slowiaezek, 1994).

Based on the explanation above, students have needs that must be met, both physical and spiritual needs. These needs include physical needs, social needs, status needs, independence needs, the need for achievement, the need to be loved and cherished, the need to confide in, and religious needs.

C. Strategies to Overcome The Impact of Cognitive Anxiety on Students

The explanation of anxiety above can be concluded that in dealing with anxiety, specific techniques or ways are needed so that we can adapt, which is better known in psychological terms as psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is a way of intervention by a trained psychotherapist so that survivors can overcome their problems, in this case, their anxiety (Sarwono, 2017). Islamic Psychotherapy is a treatment for mental disorders that comes from the two primary sources that are most trusted by Muslims, namely the Qur'an and Hadith (Sumarni, 2019). In

Sufistic Psychotherapy, psychotherapy goes through three stages: *tajalli*, *tahali*, and *takhalli*. The three functions are interrelated. First, the *Takhali* stage is an introduction so students can cleanse themselves. This stage can be done in several ways, such as self-recognition, self-control by fasting, and self-cleansing by reading the Qur'an or dhikr. The next stage, *Tahalli*, includes the process of healing or self-improvement. The purpose of this stage is to generate praiseworthy traits that can be done in several ways, such as instilling the values of Tawakkal. The last stage is *Tajalli*, which focuses on interactions between fellow humans. With tawakkal, individuals will feel peaceful and calm when facing trials and tests to improve mental health (Subandi, 2013).

Islamic psychotherapy is an effort to handle psychological problems using methods that refer to Islamic principles, the Qur'an, and Al-Hadith. Islamic psychotherapies that are often used to treat anxiety are as follows:

a. Reciting Al-Fatihah

Islamic psychotherapy often uses the Qur'an as a tool or means of obtaining healing (Shifa) for health problems, both physical and psychological health or mind. Reading Al-Fatihah's reflective intuition can reduce the anxiety of speaking in front of a large audience of students (Julianto et al., 2018). Students' anxiety tends to decrease because certain parts of the brain are affected by it. It increases serotonergic neurons that inhibit a person's fear and ends in the subject being brave enough to speak in public.

b. Dhikr

Dhikr affects a person's psychological dynamics, which can be explained as follows: Dhikr is believed to calm the heart. The calmness of the heart leads to a clean mind and healthy body. Dhikr will bring a person's thoughts and mental state to be directed and balanced. Furthermore, when a Muslim practices dhikr, he will find himself close to the Creator, feel guarded, and get His protection, which will cause confidence, strength, security, peace, and happiness (Rahman, 2020).

c. Listening to Murottal and Prayer

Through comparison (comparative study) as a result of two types of treatment (quasi-experiment) given to two groups by purposive random sampling according to the inclusion criteria (Alivian et al., 2019). Murottal listening therapy and prayer from a statistical review can both reduce anxiety scores in hemodialysis patients. Prayer is a healing medium that can bring peace, positive motivation, surrender, a sense of optimism, and enthusiasm for life, so it is by the theory of anxiety management, namely increasing adjustment to feelings of pressure and psycho-religious therapy.

Teachers use Tawakkal on an ongoing basis (Syarnubi, 2019b). The therapist will guide students always to be patient when facing problems and submit everything that happens to Allah. When students practice the teachings or concepts of tawakkal, they will feel calm and peaceful because they will feel that whatever happens to them, good and bad, is the provision of Allah SWT. Based on these statements, it shows that tawakkal has a correlation with mental health, such as reducing anxiety and stress, and can improve personal well-being.

CONCLUSION

The Phenomenon of cognitive anxiety is rampant among students. However, at the same time, the thing that most escapes students' attention is an issue that must be addressed immediately and no longer ignored because it has a long-term impact on future generations of education. The reciprocal relationship causes a person to suffer from physical disorders that are also caused by mental disorders (Somapsychotic) and vice versa; mental disorders can also cause physical illness (Psychosomatic). Moreover, among the mental factors identified as one of the main factors that can cause these symptoms is religious belief (Spirituality) (Jalaluddin, 2011).

In essence, counseling and psychotherapy have the same meaning, namely assisting someone so that changes occur in the individual in a positive direction, both of which are interrelated in assisting. Psychotherapy in Islam is the process of healing and treating an illness related to mental,

spiritual, moral, and physical illnesses through the guidance of the Koran and As-Sunnah. Alternatively, empirically, it is through the guidance and teaching of Allah, His angels, His Prophet and Messenger, or the heirs of His Prophet. With its object, there are four things: mental, spiritual, moral, and physical.

Some methods to prevent mental illness include increasing outward practices (trusting in Allah) and inward practices (dhikr, gratitude, ikhtiar.). As well as doing muraqabah, an effort to perpetuate faith and knowledge in the heart about the close supervision of Allah to the inner and outer man in every time and condition, continue to make efforts to increase our closeness to Allah, presenting a sense of the heart that all our movements and actions are under the supervision of Allah.

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