


Linking Religious Awareness of Madrasah Teachers with Critical Thinking

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received: 18-05-2023 Revised: 14-07-2023 Accepted: 14-07-2023</p> <p>Keyword: Critical Thinking; Madrasah Teachers; Religious Awareness.</p>	<p>This study aimed to obtain an overview of the critical thinking skills and religious awareness of madrasah teachers through three aspects: (1) the transcendental relationship of teachers, (2) teacher religious participation, and (3) the intensity of the teacher's religious intellect. In addition, the study also attempted to analyze the relationship of critical thinking skills with transcendental relationships, religious participation, and the intensity of teachers' religious intellectuality. Quantitative research with correlational study was conducted. This study used a stratified random sampling technique. It took 20 to 27 teachers randomly from each madrasah based on the proportion of the number of teachers in each madrasa so that the number of samples reached 154 teachers in Bandung Regency who teach at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Madrasah Tsanawiyah, and Madrasah Aliyah. The data collection techniques of the study were test and questionnaire. The results revealed that there was a significant correlational relationship between aspects of critical thinking and three aspects of religious awareness: transcendental relationships, religious participation, and religious intellectuality. The quality of the relationship varies with the highest significance being the relationship between critical thinking and religious intellectuality, followed by transcendental relationships and religious participation.</p>

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a religious country (Geertz, 1971; Marshall, 2018). However, religious awareness of the parties in education domain, both teachers and students, in Indonesia is still low. Religion has been mere ritual activities. Religious awareness is seen in the implementation of religious teachings that lead to the religious understanding of teachers and students. Findings from Mansur et. al (2018) showed that the religious

awareness of high school students in Kendari was still low. It was caused by the low and disproportionately low hours of Islamic education in schools compared to the other subject matters that students must receive.

In addition to the lack of Islamic education material, teachers are also a factor in the low religious awareness of students. Mansur et al. (2018) found that the professionalism of Islamic religious teachers was a cause of the low religious awareness of students. In their explanation, they stated that Islamic religion teachers had a low level of education. Therefore, their understanding of the material was lacking. In addition, the learning methods are also less varied. This finding is also reinforced by Rahayu (2019) and Kawashima (2019) that students' religious awareness can be influenced jointly by the personality variables of religious teachers and supervising school principals.

Based on the facts, efforts are needed to improve teacher skills and religious awareness, which can also increase students' religious awareness. One of the efforts is the optimization of the teachers' IQ function through critical thinking processes in the formation of religious personalities. To solve problems that arise in life, with regard to educational, social, political, economic, and religious issues, it requires the ability to think logically, rationally, and systematically. For this reason, the maturity of teachers in critical thinking – drawing conclusions, making hypothetical predictions, and evaluating social phenomena – will in turn affect their maturity in choosing, weighing, and deciding on the problems at hand.

Critical thinking skills are an important factor in a Muslim personality. Critical thinking skills also show that a person can consider objective values in life. Furthermore, cognitively, skills in determining objective values will have an impact on emotional and spiritual maturity. Therefore, critical thinking is part of the uniqueness of the individual that psychologically describes one of the integrity of a person. The present researchers realized that many previous studies in critical thinking have been carried out. Studies related to critical thinking have investigated four categories. First, critical thinking was mostly studied at certain levels of education such as universities in general (Lehmann, 1962; Shoop, 2014a, 2014b) as well as at specialized universities such as medicine (Ya-qing et al., 2010), nursing (Park, 2019), and engineering (Shoop & Ressler, 2011). Second, studies related to critical thinking covered its use in certain subjects such as the use of critical thinking in religious lessons (Dubuisson, 2016; Lindström & Samuelsson, 2021), Biology (Khasanah et al., 2017) and Mathematics (Walidainismawati et al., 2021). Third, studies of critical thinking covered the thoughts of figures such as Ibn Khaldun (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015) and John Dewey (Sanders, 2018). Fourth, some studies covered the influence of critical thinking in everyday life. Several studies have found that critical thinking affected users to use internet wisely (Nyrose, 2009). In addition, critical thinking also had an effect on users to be more fair in their actions (Endut et al., 2014), increased social tolerance (Kojas & Gabzdyl, 2016), and reduced superstitious beliefs (Wilson, 2018). From several previous studies, no one has conducted studies on teachers, especially in Indonesian Islamic schools (*madrasahs*).

In general, this study aimed to formulate a model of the dynamics of religious awareness of *madrasah* teachers in relation to critical thinking skills. Specifically, the objectives of this study were 1) to obtain an overview of critical thinking skills; 2) to obtain an overview of the religious awareness of teachers through three aspects (the transcendental relationship of teachers, teacher religious participation, and the intensity of the teacher's

religious intellectuality); and 3) to analyze the relationship between critical thinking skills and transcendental relationships, religious participation, and the intensity of the teacher's religious intellectuality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious Awareness

The passage highlights that religious awareness encompasses various aspects of human life. It extends beyond the performance of worship rituals and includes other activities driven by supernatural forces. Religious awareness is not only observable in external actions but also in the internal disposition of the individual. It refers to the condition of practicing and embodying religious teachings in all aspects of life, maintaining harmony and belief in God Almighty, and fulfilling religious obligations (Mansur et al., 2018).

Religious consciousness involves establishing a relationship or connection with a higher power, such as the Creator. This relationship is manifested through the inner attitude of individuals, visible in their worship practices and reflected in their daily lives. It emphasizes the holistic integration of religious beliefs and values into one's thoughts, behaviors, and interactions with others (Mansur et al., 2018). Religious awareness is not a static concept, but rather an ongoing spiritual expedition that progresses over time. Individuals with heightened religious awareness tend to engage in reflection and the cultivation of their religious character, allowing them to connect their beliefs with their everyday actions and experiences (Jackson & Bergeman, 2011). Furthermore, religious awareness involves a contemplative interpretation of religious teachings, wherein individuals reflect upon the meaning and implications of these teachings within the context of their lives (Karim, 2022).

Religious awareness can be categorized into different dimensions, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of one's faith. The cognitive dimension involves acquiring knowledge and beliefs about religious teachings, including theological concepts, sacred scriptures, and the historical and cultural context of one's religion. The affective dimension encompasses the emotional and experiential aspects of religion, such as feelings of connection, devotion, and reverence towards the divine. The behavioral dimension focuses on the practical application of religious values in daily life, including engaging in rituals, ethical decision-making, and contributing to society. These dimensions of religious awareness are interconnected, shaping an individual's understanding and lived experience of their religion.

Religious awareness encompasses affective, conative, and motoric aspects. The affective and conative functions are evident in the experience of the divine and the longing for a connection with God. Motoric functions manifest in religious behaviors and actions. These dimensions of religious awareness are interwoven and form an integrated system within an individual's personality (Rohman & Lutfiyah, 2020).

James (1902) provides insights into the nature of religious life. He acknowledges that religious devotion, when pursued sincerely, often leads individuals to exhibit exceptional and unconventional traits. He distinguishes between those who passively follow established religious practices and those who have genuine, firsthand experiences that shape their religious beliefs. James emphasizes the importance of exploring the original experiences that

serve as the foundation for religious practices, as these profound encounters drive true religious fervor.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability of individuals to analyze, evaluate, and solve problems objectively and rationally. It involves the ability to gather and evaluate information, identify strong or weak arguments, and consider different perspectives objectively before reaching a conclusion (Peter A Facione, 2011). Critical thinking also involves skills in recognizing biases and assumptions that may influence one's thinking, enabling individuals to make more objective and logical assessments (Robert H Ennis, 2015).

Critical thinking can be divided into several different dimensions, each of which has an important role in one's critical thinking. The first dimension, analysis and evaluation, emphasizes the importance of gathering and analyzing information in critical thinking. According to Facione (2011), individuals with strong analytical skills can effectively identify relevant data, evaluate the reliability of information sources, and discern between valid and invalid arguments. They are also adept at recognizing logical weaknesses and underlying assumptions in statements or arguments encountered. The second dimension, problem solving, focuses on the ability of individuals to identify problems, gather relevant facts, and consider alternative solutions. Paul and Elder (2006) suggest that critical thinking plays a crucial role in deepening the analysis of problems, identifying root causes, and evaluating a range of solution options. Effective decision-making, based on rational and logical considerations, is also an integral part of this dimension. The third dimension, creativity, underscores the role of creative thinking in critical thinking processes. Kaufman and Sternberg (2019) highlight that critical thinking involves the capacity to generate new ideas, discover innovative solutions, and approach problems from various perspectives. Individuals with creative thinking skills contribute unique and original insights to the resolution of complex problems.

These three dimensions of critical thinking are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Through the integrated development of analytical, problem-solving, and creative thinking skills, individuals can enhance their overall critical thinking abilities.

METHOD

This study adopted a quantitative research method to examine the relationship between critical thinking skills and religious awareness among madrasah teachers. By employing a survey and critical thinking test as the primary data collection method, information were gathered from teachers teaching at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), and Madrasah Aliyah (MA) in the Bandung Regency area. The population of the study consists of 329 teachers from six public madrasahs, and a sample size of 154 teachers is determined using stratified random sampling. The survey is designed to obtain numerical data that can be statistically analyzed.

The data analysis process involved utilizing statistical techniques. Correlation tests were conducted to examine the relationship between critical thinking skills and religious awareness. Furthermore, descriptive analysis were employed to provide a detailed description of the characteristics of critical thinking skills and religious awareness among

madrasah teachers. By combining quantitative analysis with a descriptive approach, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between critical thinking and religious awareness in the context of madrasah education.

FINDINGS

Variable of Critical Thinking Skills (Ket-BK)

The scores were obtained for this aspect came from a critical thinking test. Scores were obtained in the form of interval numbers to indicate actual thinking skills. From the acquisition of the calculated subject score, the average value ($X = 4.9$). This value also means that 49% of the ideal value of 10 was answered correctly by the subject. On the other hand, the standard deviation ($SD = 1.56$) was below the ideal SD standard of 2.00. It indicated that the subject's score for this psychological aspect tends to be homogeneous. With the ability of the subject in general which was only correct 49% of the questions given, the level of their critical thinking ability was still low.

Religious Awareness

Religious awareness included (1) transcendental relationships (Hub-Tran), (2) religious participation (Par-Keag), and (3) religious intellectuality (Int-Keag). Religion in this study is Islam. The analysis and interpretation technique for the aspect of religious awareness was carried out by referring to the comparison between the average score obtained from the subject and the ideal score.

Transcendental Relationship Variables (Hub-Tran)

Based on the results of data processing, the 164 public madrasah teachers had a relatively high intensity of transcendental relationships. The results of statistical calculations show that as many as 87.8% of the subjects scored in the range of 25-45 from the possible ideal score of 45. The score that appeared in the most frequency (mode) was 28 with 14.8% of the total subjects. The average value of the overall score was 31.61 (79.7% of the ideal score). It means that 8 of 10 people obtained a high transcendental relationship score. With such a spread of scores, the distribution of scores ensured that the curve was skewed to the right, and spreads more over the midpoint (22.5) from the ideal score range. It is evidenced by the high value of the distribution gap, which reaches -1.223. On the other hand, $SD = 3.47$ is below the ideal $SD = 5.93$. It means that the score obtained by the subject was homogeneous in the sense that the score between the subjects is relatively the same high.

Religious Participation (Par-Keag)

The teachers responded to 9 items. The scores on the religious participation aspect were ranged from 5 - 37. Although the score range in this aspect was not much different from the score range for the transcendental relationship aspect, most of the subjects' scores were relatively low. The spread of scores also tends to spread in the range of scores between 14-25 as much as 76.1%. The average score was 21.3. It means that most of the subjects scored below the midpoint of the ideal score (22.5). Considering the standard deviation value ($SD = 5.25$), which was slightly below the ideal SD value ($SD = 5.83$), the score on this

aspect tends to be more heterogeneous than the score on the transcendental relationship aspect.

Religious Intellectuality (Int-Keag)

Based on the calculation results, the average score of religious intellectual aspects reached 21.3. Compared to the two previous aspects of religious awareness, the small average value could be understood because the statements for this aspect only amount to 6 items, with an ideal score of 30. Considering the difference between the average value and the ideal score (3.71) and the midpoint of the ideal score (12.5), it can be concluded that in general the subject got a high score for this aspect. Based on the distribution of scores, they got a high score, with SD of 2.64 that was below the ideal SD of 4.17. It means that the distribution of scores tends to be uniform, with a conical normal distribution.

Correlation of Critical Thinking Skills (Ket-BK) with Transcendental Relationships (Hub-Tran)

Based on the results of statistical analysis through the correlation technique, the correlation coefficient value of r is 0.242. It means that the relationship between critical thinking skills and the transcendence of the subject has a significant relationship with the confidence level of $p < 0.01$. It implied that the relationship between the subject's thinking skills had an important influence on the quality of their transcendental relationship. Based on the positive and significant correlation coefficient value, it can also be interpreted that the level of a person critical thinking was directly proportional to the level of relationship with Allah.

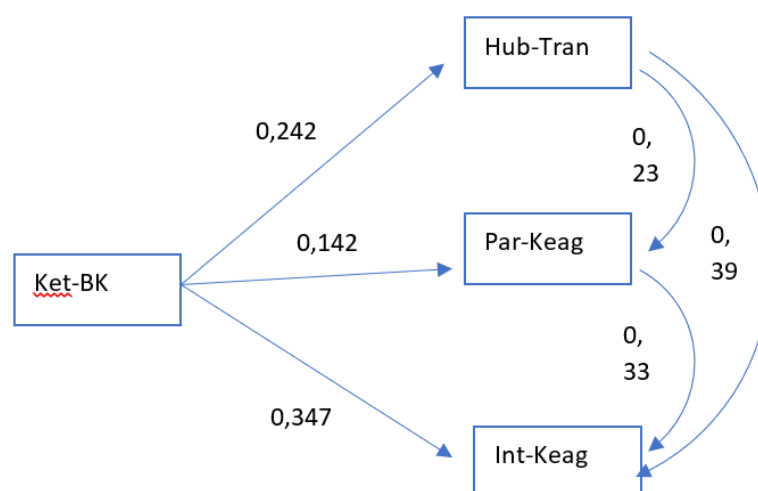


Figure 1: Correlational Relationship of Variables

Correlation between Critical Thinking Skills (Ket-BK) and Religious Participation (Par-Keag)

Based on the results of statistical calculations, the relationship between critical thinking and religious participation was not as strong as the previous two variables. Although it had a significant relationship with the correlation coefficient of r 0.142 ($p < 0.05$) which was not as high as the two previous variables. The quality of this relationship explained that

although critical thinking skills had an influence on teachers' religious participation, there were also teachers who actively participate in various religious activities because of their willingness rather than criticality. It confirmed the cognitivism believe, *thought will become action*, was not always proven. Therefore, what was more appropriate was what was thought was assumed to be action.

Correlation between Critical Thinking Skills (Ket-BK) and Religious Intellectuality (Int-Keag)

The relationship between critical thinking skills and religious intellectuality had a significant correlation coefficient with $r = 0.347$ ($p < 0.01$). This means that the relationship between a person's criticality has an important effect on that person's intellectual level. In this context, it was easy to understand considering that the critical characteristics and intellectual qualities of a teacher lie in logical and rational scales, both of which are centered on the brain. In addition, the teacher's ability to make inferences, formulate hypotheses, understand the principle of deduction, interpret, and evaluate were believed to be the basis for their religious intellectual development. The relationship between these variables can be understood. The critical level of teachers was directly proportional to their intellectual level.

Correlation between Transcendental Relationship (Hub-Tran) and Religious Participation (Par-Keag)

From statistical calculations using correlation techniques, the correlation coefficient was $r = 0.235$ ($p < 0.01$) for the relationship between the two variables. Thus, the relationship between the level of transcendence of subjects with their participation in religious activities was statistically significant.

It can be understood simply when the two correlated aspects were seen as an inseparable part of the spiritual dimension of Islam. The concept views that religious action and religious spirit were a unity. This, of course, only valid to religious person, not atheists. Therefore, the realities of religious action in the form of large religious participation had included transcendent values in them.

Correlation between Transcendental Relationship (Hub-Tran) and Religious Intellectuality (Int-Keag)

The correlation between the two variables showed a high and significant coefficient ($r = 0.397$, $p < 0.01$). The level of religious intellectuality of the subjects was comparable to the level of their transcendental relationship.

The result of the statistical calculation showed that there was a close relationship between the two aspects in question. The rationales need to be explained. Returning to the explanation of the relationship between critical thinking and the subject's transcendental relationship, which was also statistically significant, people with high religious spirituality are smart people. It can explain the relationship between the aspects of spirituality because one aspect concerns the spirit of the subject to acquire religious knowledge, which was closely related to intellectual maturation.

The correlation coefficient of the relationship between these aspects (0.397) was higher, compared to the relationship between critical thinking and transcendence (0.137) of a person. It shows that the first relationship was more closely related than the latter.

The Relationship between Religious Participation (Par-Keag) and Religious Intellectuality (Int-Keag)

The results of statistical analysis showed that the relationship between religious participation and religious intellectuality had a high correlation coefficient. In fact, the correlation coefficient was the highest coefficient value of the inter-correlation coefficient values of the dimensions and all other aspects of whole personality. The correlation coefficient of $r = 0.336$, $p < 0.01$ indicated that the relationship between the two variables was statistically very significant.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicated that the subjects have low skills in critical thinking, particularly in terms of logical reasoning abilities. This result supported the initial assumption that psychological tendencies alone are incomplete without considering the subject's intellectual abilities, which can be identified through their critical thinking skills. The analysis reveals that, overall, the subjects demonstrated a tendency towards low critical thinking abilities. Consequently, the subjects had not fully attained the intellectual values, encompassing scientific and knowledge values.

In terms of spirituality, the study reveals that the subjects exhibited a high level of religious spirit. The spiritual values related to transcendental relationships, religious participation, and religious intellectuality were intertwined with other values. The subjects demonstrated a synergy between spiritual values and psychological and social values. The spiritual dimension encompasses values such as monotheism, *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), religious responsibility, and religious intellectuality. Monotheistic values are reflected in the subjects' behavioral tendencies, such as feeling guilty when engaging in wrongdoing, not being enticed by worldly possessions, maintaining a close relationship with God in times of difficulty and happiness, and engaging in prayer. *Ukhuwah* values are manifested in the subjects' behavior by forgiving those who dislike them, fostering positive relationships with neighbors, and contributing to charitable causes. The value of religious responsibility is evident through the subjects' participation in mosque management, delivering sermons, guiding students in extracurricular activities, and serving as committee members in religious events. Religious intellectual values are observed through the subjects' participation in religious seminars or discussions, possession of numerous Islamic books, exploration of the meanings within the Quran, seeking guidance from teachers or religious leaders, and displaying an interest in Islamic discourse. These spiritual values serve as the driving force behind the teachers' social and emotional behavior.

These findings aligned with previous research that highlighted the importance of critical thinking skills in education. Studies have emphasized the need for educational practices that foster critical thinking abilities among teachers and students alike (R.H. Ennis, 1985; P A Facione, 1990). The findings of this study supported previous research

highlighting the positive correlation between critical thinking skills and religious awareness (Khasanah et al., 2019).

The results indicated that madrasah teachers with higher levels of critical thinking skills were more likely to exhibit a deeper understanding and engagement with religious teachings. By analyzing, evaluating, and solving problems in an objective and rational manner, these teachers could enhance their religious awareness and apply religious values more effectively in their lives.

These findings emphasized the importance of comprehensive teacher competency improvement programs that integrated critical thinking skills with religious education (Bailey, 2012). Such programs should focus on strengthening faith, habituation to religious practices, and intellectual development. By nurturing critical thinking skills, teachers can navigate the complexities of religious teachings and guide students in their religious education more effectively.

The integration of critical thinking skills within the process of Islamic religious education for students is essential (Ghani, 2021). It should involve creating a conducive religious learning environment, developing an appropriate curriculum of Islamic Education, and facilitating guided habituation under the guidance of teachers (Musfirah, 2019; Ghani, 2021). This holistic approach enables students to develop their own critical thinking abilities, deepen their religious awareness, and apply religious values in their daily lives (Khasanah et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

There is a significant correlational relationship between aspects of critical thinking and three aspects of religious awareness, namely transcendental relationships, religious participation, and religious intellectuality. The quality of the relationship varies with the highest significance being the relationship between critical thinking and religious intellectuality, followed by transcendental relationships and religious participation. The situation explains that religious awareness needs to be built from a critical thinking paradigm. Therefore, teachers have the ability to analyze and solve problems in education by involving Islamic values, morals, and norms. On the other hand, these correlational findings can also be interpreted that the elaboration of Islamic values, morals, and norms also needs to be sharpened through the development of critical thinking schemes. Therefore, Islamic religious education needs to be developed through learning based on actual problems to test prescriptive norms by descriptive facts.

One limitation of this study is its focus on madrasah teachers specifically in the Bandung regency area, which may restrict the generalization of the findings to other regions and contexts with diverse educational systems and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the sample size of 154 teachers might limit the extent to which the results can be applied more broadly. A larger and more diverse sample could provide a more comprehensive perspective on the relationship between critical thinking skills and religious awareness among madrasah teachers. Furthermore, the use of self-report measures in the form of surveys may introduce response biases and social desirability effects. To enhance future research, employing mixed-methods approaches and incorporating objective assessments of critical thinking skills and religious awareness would offer a more robust understanding of the topic.

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