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COGNITIVE LEARNING THEORY AND ITS APPLICATION IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING

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Abstract: *This study aims to examine the application of cognitive learning theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning and how this theory can improve students' understanding and skills. Cognitive learning theory that emphasizes mental processes in acquiring knowledge, such as information processing, memory, and problem solving, has strong relevance in the context of religious education. This study uses a qualitative approach through literature studies and observations to explore the application of cognitive theory in PAI learning. The results of the study indicate that the application of cognitive theory in PAI learning can improve students' understanding of religious concepts, link religious values to everyday life, and develop critical thinking skills. The strategies used, such as problem-based learning and the use of interactive media, have proven effective in helping students organize religious knowledge systematically. In addition, this theory encourages a more active learning process, where students not only receive information but are also involved in problem solving and in-depth discussions. Overall, this study shows that cognitive learning theory can be used as a strong basis in designing more effective PAI learning strategies that are in accordance with the demands of current educational developments.*

Keywords:Cognitive Learning Theory, Islamic Religious Education, Learning, Religious Understanding, Critical Thinking Skills.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a strategic role in shaping students' personalities and morals, and is an important element in the national education system in Indonesia. As a subject that not only conveys religious concepts, but also instills Islamic values in everyday life practices, PAI requires appropriate teaching methods so that learning outcomes can be achieved optimally. However, with the rapid development of technology and the increasingly complex way of thinking of students, PAI teachers are faced with the challenge of developing a learning approach that is no longer conventional, but is able to stimulate critical thinking and encourage active participation of students in the teaching and learning process.(Laili, 2024)

One approach that can help solve this problem is cognitive learning theory. This theory focuses on understanding how individuals acquire, organize, and use knowledge through mental processes. Thus, this theory is very relevant to be applied in Islamic Religious Education learning which does not only rely on memorization, but also on understanding and applying religious teachings in everyday life.(Warmansyah et al., 2023)

In the realm of religious education, the application of cognitive learning theory has the potential to provide a major influence on improving the quality of learning. One of the core ideas of this theory is the information processing process, which emphasizes that each individual needs time and effort to organize and store the knowledge gained into long-term memory.By using techniques such as problem-based learning, discussion, and reflection, students are encouraged to think critically and analyze the information they learn, rather than simply memorizing it. In addition, this theory also emphasizes the importance of motivation and the influence of the social environment in learning, which can be strengthened by creating a conducive classroom atmosphere and supporting active interaction between teachers and students.(Al-Mahiroh & Suyadi, 2020)

Most Islamic Religious Education learning still relies on conventional methods that tend to emphasize memorizing religious texts, which often do not encourage students to think critically and relate religious teachings to real-life contexts. This causes religious learning to tend to be passive, which has the potential to reduce students' interest and understanding of the religious values taught.

By seeing the urgency of more active and enjoyable learning, this study aims to examine the application of cognitive theory in the learning process of Islamic Religious Education. The main focus of this study is to determine the extent to which the theory is able to improve students' understanding of Islamic Religious Education materials while fostering critical thinking skills that are useful in everyday life. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic Religious Education learning strategies that are more in line with the demands of the times, as well as being a solution to various problems in the implementation of religious education in Indonesia.(Muamanah & Suyadi, 2020)

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach by utilizing literature study and observation methods to examine the application of cognitive learning theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects. This approach was chosen because it provides researchers with the freedom to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that occur in the PAI learning process, especially those related to the concepts and

principles of cognitive theory.(DAMPd S. Ag & M.Pd.I, 2024)

Literature study was conducted to collect and analyze various references related to cognitive learning theory and its application in religious education. The literature used includes textbooks, journal articles, and previous research relevant to this topic. The literature analysis process aims to understand the basic concepts in cognitive theory, such as information processing, memory, and problem-based learning, and how these concepts can be applied in Islamic Religious Education learning.(PDAMYMPd, 2016)

In addition, observations were also conducted in a number of Islamic Religious Education classes to witness firsthand how cognitive theory is applied in the learning process. This activity involves recording interactions between educators and students, teaching strategies applied, and student responses to cognitive theory-based learning approaches. The information collected is then analyzed descriptively to provide an overview of the extent to which the application of the theory is able to improve student understanding and develop critical thinking skills in Islamic Religious Education learning.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Application of Cognitive Theory in Islamic Religious Education Learning

The implementation of cognitive learning theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects aims to create a learning process that does not only emphasize memorization skills, but also develops deep understanding and the ability to process information received by students. One form of application of this theory is through a problem-based learning approach, which encourages students to actively seek solutions to the problems given. In the context of PAI, this method provides space for students to explore the values of religious teachings in a more meaningful and relevant way to their daily life situations. For example, when studying material about zakat, students can be faced with practical cases, such as calculating zakat or the social impact of zakat in society. This approach helps students understand the rules of zakat thoroughly, not only theoretically, but also in their application in the real world.(Abdurrohman & Syamsiar, 2017)

In addition, group discussions are another method that is also applied in cognitive theory. In discussions, students are given the opportunity to share their views on the topic being discussed. This leads to collective information processing, where each student contributes, questions, and deepens their understanding of the material being studied. In Islamic Religious Education learning, discussions can involve topics such as moral values in Islamic teachings, the history of the Prophet, or the laws of religion. Through discussions, students not only learn from teachers, but also from their peers, which enriches their perspectives on religious teachings.

Another method used is the use of interactive media in learning. Media such as videos, animations, or digital applications can help students visualize abstract concepts in Islamic Religious Education. For example, in learning about Islamic history, animated videos depicting important events in the life of the Prophet Muhammad can provide a clearer picture and make it easier for students to understand the historical context. Interactive media also allows students to be more actively involved in the learning process, such as through quizzes or simulations that test their understanding of the material. Thus, cognitive theory supports the use of media as a means to facilitate more efficient and in-depth information

processing.(Nurjanah & Isti'anah, 2023)

The application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning aims to create a meaningful learning process, where students do not only memorize, but are also able to understand, analyze, and relate religious teachings to real life. This approach helps develop critical thinking and the ability to apply Islamic values in dealing with moral and social issues in the modern era.

Improving Students' Understanding of Religious Concepts
The use of cognitive learning theory in the teaching process of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has shown its effectiveness in deepening students' understanding of various religious concepts in real terms. One of the cores of cognitive theory is information processing, which emphasizes understanding, organization, and integration of information received in long-term memory. In the context of PAI, this is very relevant because religious education does not only require students to memorize religious texts, but also to understand the values contained in Islamic teachings and apply them in everyday life.(Dalimunthe, 2023)

Through the application of problem-based learning methods, students are encouraged to actively seek solutions to problems related to religious teachings. For example, when studying the concept of zakat, students are not only taught the formula or calculation of zakat, but are also asked to solve problems related to the distribution of zakat in more complex social situations, such as differences in poverty levels or the impact of zakat on community welfare. This allows students to understand zakat not only as an obligation, but also as part of a wider social system, which can enrich their insight into Islamic teachings.

In addition, group discussions in Islamic Religious Education learning allow students to share their views and understandings of various religious concepts. In these discussions, students can relate religious knowledge to their personal experiences, which helps deepen their understanding. For example, in a discussion about morals or ethics in Islam, students can discuss how these teachings relate to their behavior at school or at home. This kind of discussion enriches students' understanding, because they do not only receive information passively from the teacher, but also process and construct their understanding actively.(Cahya, 2024)

The use of interactive media plays a crucial role in helping students understand religious concepts better. Media such as videos, animations, and learning applications are able to present complex material in a simpler and easier to understand way. For example, in learning the history of the Prophet Muhammad, presentation through videos showing important moments in his life can make the material feel more alive and interesting. This kind of visualization helps students not only receive information verbally, but also strengthens understanding through visual experiences, making it easier to remember and understand.(Kirana & Ghani, 2024)

The application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning helps students understand religious teachings in depth and relevant to life. This approach encourages critical and applied thinking, thus strengthening students' religious beliefs and understanding.

Critical Thinking Skills Development
One of the biggest advantages of applying cognitive learning theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is the development of students' critical thinking skills. Cognitive theory emphasizes information processing, analysis, and synthesis of

received data, which is the basis for the development of critical thinking skills. In the context of PAI learning, critical thinking skills are very important because Islamic teachings not only teach students to follow the commands of Allah and His Messenger, but also to understand, analyze, and criticize various aspects of life based on Islamic principles.(Dalimunthe, 2023)

In addition, group discussions also greatly support the development of critical thinking skills. In discussions, students not only listen to the teacher's opinion, but also discuss and consider various points of view put forward by their friends. This process encourages students to think more deeply, criticize the opinions of others, and develop their own arguments. For example, in a discussion about morals or ethics in Islam, students can express their opinions about how Islamic teachings view certain actions in everyday life. This kind of discussion provides space for students to consider various perspectives and build a deeper understanding.(ANMPd S. Pd I., 2021)

Interactive media in Islamic Religious Education learning encourages students to think critically through displays such as videos or animations. These visual materials help students analyze moral values and relate them to their lives, while strengthening understanding through direct interaction with the content.(Nadhiroh & Anshori, 2023)

The application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning encourages students to develop critical thinking skills, which are important for understanding Islamic teachings and facing daily moral challenges. Students are trained to analyze information and relate it to Islamic values, so that a wise and moral person is formed.

The Role of Teachers in the Implementation of Cognitive Theory

Teachers have an important role in applying cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning. Not only delivering material, teachers function as facilitators who support students' thinking processes and encourage the development of critical thinking skills. In this approach, teachers need to create a learning atmosphere that encourages cognitive activity, facilitates interactions that strengthen understanding, and provides feedback that helps students construct knowledge effectively.(Light, 2022)

One of the important roles of teachers is to design student-centered learning. Problem-based learning, group discussions, and the use of interactive media require special skills from teachers to facilitate the learning process. Teachers must be able to guide discussions wisely, ensure that every student is involved, and stimulate critical thinking that encourages students to explore their own ideas. For example, in learning about the concept of justice in Islam, teachers can provide complex situations or cases that require in-depth analysis from students. In this situation, the teacher acts as a guide who helps students understand different perspectives and encourages them to think more critically about solutions that can be taken according to religious teachings.

In addition, teachers also play a role in creating a safe and open learning climate, where students feel comfortable asking questions, discussing, and expressing their opinions. This is very important in cognitive theory, where the learning process involves active interaction and dialogue. In Islamic Religious Education learning, where some topics can be very sensitive or controversial, such as matters relating to differences of opinion in the interpretation of religious teachings, teachers must be able to create a space that supports students to think critically without feeling afraid

or judged. With an open and supportive climate, students can feel freer to explore and test their understanding of religious teachings.(Afandi et al., 2023)

Teachers also play a role in providing constructive feedback and guiding students in the process of self-reflection. In cognitive theory, feedback is very important because it helps students realize errors in their understanding and correct their thinking. For example, if a student misunderstands the meaning of a verse in the Qur'an, the teacher must provide clarification in a way that not only corrects the error but also invites the student to understand the reasons behind the correct understanding. This feedback is not only about providing the correct answer, but also teaching students to develop deeper and more structured thinking skills.(Ph.D et al., 2023)

Thus, the role of teachers in implementing cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning is very vital. Teachers act as facilitators who encourage students to think actively, critically, and deeply, and help them relate religious knowledge to everyday life. Through a structured approach and using various methods that support cognitive processes, teachers can create more effective and meaningful learning for students.

Evaluation and Measurement of Learning Outcomes
Assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes are crucial components in the application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. In this approach, evaluation is not only focused on students' final achievements, but also examines their thinking processes and the development of their understanding during the learning process. Therefore, the form of evaluation used must be able to describe more complex aspects, such as students' ability to process information, conduct analysis, connect religious concepts, and apply them in real life.(Prasetyo & Inayati, 2024)

One form of evaluation that is in line with cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is portfolio-based assessment. Through this method, teachers can monitor students' overall development during the learning process, from the beginning to the end. In practice, students are asked to collect various evidence of learning, such as assignments, personal reflections, notes, and discussion results that describe their thinking process on the material being studied. This approach provides a deeper understanding of how students form knowledge gradually, and makes it easier for teachers to provide specific and constructive feedback.

In addition, the use of formative tests during the learning process is also very effective in assessing the extent of students' understanding and ability to apply the religious concepts that have been learned. This type of test is not limited to multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank forms, but also includes questions that challenge students' critical thinking, such as analysis and application questions. For example, in fiqh material, students can be given case studies that require them to apply fiqh principles to solve real problems. In this way, formative tests are able to display students' level of understanding more comprehensively.(Rofi'ah et al., 2024)

Measuring learning outcomes in the context of cognitive theory can also be done through observation. Teachers can observe how students interact during group discussions or other class activities that focus on the application of religious concepts. For example, in a discussion about ethics in Islam, teachers can see to what extent students can relate the values they have learned to real examples in their lives. This observation not only looks at the end result of students' understanding, but also

provides an overview of how students process and structure their thoughts cognitively.

In addition, the measurement of learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education must also include aspects of student attitudes and behavior. One of the main objectives of Islamic Religious Education learning is to shape students' character in accordance with Islamic values, such as honesty, tolerance, and a sense of responsibility. Therefore, the evaluation carried out does not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also on the development of students' attitudes and behavior. For example, students can be evaluated based on their activeness in carrying out religious duties, such as congregational prayer, zakat, or other social activities related to Islamic values. This measurement reflects that evaluation in Islamic Religious Education learning is not only limited to mastery of theory, but also on the application of religious values in everyday life.

Therefore, in the context of cognitive theory, the evaluation of Islamic Religious Education learning outcomes needs to be carried out comprehensively, not only assessing the final achievement, but also observing the thinking process and progress of students' understanding during learning. By utilizing various evaluation methods such as portfolios, formative tests, observations, and assessments of attitudes and behaviors, teachers can obtain a more complete and in-depth picture of the extent to which students are able to understand and apply Islamic teachings in everyday life. This comprehensive evaluation approach also helps teachers provide more targeted feedback and supports students' overall growth.(Zuhriyah et al., 2025)

Challenges in Applying Cognitive Theory
The application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning offers various benefits, but also presents a number of challenges that need to be faced by educators. These challenges can come from various factors, ranging from aspects of teachers, students, to the educational context itself. Below are some of the main challenges that can arise in the application of cognitive theory in PAI learning.(Al-Mahiroh & Suyadi, 2020). Lack of Teacher Understanding of Cognitive Theory One of the main challenges in implementing cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning is the lack of in-depth understanding of this theory from teachers. Cognitive theory requires teachers to prioritize students' thinking processes, which requires special skills in designing learning that can stimulate critical and analytical thinking. Many teachers still rely on traditional methods, such as one-way lectures, which are not effective enough in building students' cognitive abilities. Therefore, there needs to be training and professional development for teachers so that they can implement cognitive theory more effectively. Time and Resource Constraints. The application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning requires a long time to allow students to digest information deeply and relate their knowledge to religious concepts. However, time constraints in the learning schedule are often an obstacle. Learning that requires in-depth discussion, use of interactive media, and critical analysis requires more time than conventional learning methods. In addition, limited resources, such as adequate learning media, supportive classrooms, and access to technology are also significant challenges in the application of cognitive theory.(Warmansyah et al., 2023). Difficulties in Assessing Cognitive Processes. One of the main characteristics of cognitive theory is the emphasis on the process of thinking and information processing. Evaluation that focuses more on this process is certainly more complicated than traditional tests that measure learning outcomes

directly. Teachers must be able to design assessments that not only measure students' knowledge, but also their ability to analyze, interpret, and integrate the information they have learned. This requires teachers to have the skills to create more complex and holistic assessment tools, such as portfolio-based assessment rubrics or problem-based assessments. This process requires time and skills that are not always available in the context of everyday teaching.(Arif et al., 2024). Students' Perceptions of Religious Learning Religious learning is often considered a normative lesson and does not involve much critical thinking. Some students may feel that Islamic Religious Education learning is an activity that focuses more on memorizing texts or following established rules, so that there is no room for critical questions or debates. Meanwhile, the application of cognitive theory actually encourages students to think more deeply, evaluate religious teachings critically, and relate them to the realities of everyday life. Therefore, teachers need to try to change students' perceptions of religious learning by creating an atmosphere that supports critical thinking, and showing the relevance of religious teachings to contemporary life problems. Social and Cultural Challenges. Social and cultural contexts can also be obstacles in the application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning. Some cultures or communities may have a more conservative view of religious education, which may be less open to approaches that emphasize critical thinking or analysis. In some areas, religious and cultural values are highly respected, and any different interpretation of religious teachings can "This approach may cause debate or be considered less in line with local values. Therefore, teachers need to be wise in determining methods that are acceptable to the surrounding environment, but still maintain the essence of deep cognitive learning."(Nurjanah & Isti'anah, 2023)

"The use of cognitive approaches in the learning process of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) provides a number of benefits, especially in fostering critical and analytical thinking skills in students. However, the challenges that exist, ranging from limited teacher understanding to limited resources, must be faced wisely. To overcome these challenges, there needs to be more intensive training for teachers, provision of adequate resources, and a more flexible approach to assessment.

Cognitive learning theory focuses on how humans acquire, process, and store information. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, this theory provides the right approach to help students build a deeper and more significant understanding of religious teachings. Not just memorization, this approach requires students to understand the contents of Islamic teachings rationally, logically, and applicatively according to the context of their lives.

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning offers various advantages. This theory facilitates active involvement of students in the learning process through advanced thinking activities such as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. Thus, students not only understand Islamic teachings factually, but are also able to understand the reasons behind them and how to apply them in everyday life.

Second, the application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education has also been proven to form students' characters and personalities more completely. When students are given space to understand the meaning of teachings such as honesty, trust, responsibility, or tawakal through reflective and contextual learning experiences, these values will be more easily attached and become part of their attitude to life.

Third, the use of cognitive approaches also improves students' critical thinking skills. In cognitive Islamic Education learning, students are invited to question social, cultural, and moral phenomena through logical Islamic perspectives. For example, discussing social issues with the approach of verses of the Qur'an or hadith, and aligning them with contemporary life, can help students better understand the relevance of Islam in the modern world.

However, cognitive theory-based learning is also not free from challenges. There are still many teachers who do not understand and master this theory, so its application is not optimal. Other obstacles faced include time constraints due to tight learning schedules, minimal media and learning resources available, and differences in students' abilities in absorbing abstract material. In addition, learning habits that still emphasize memorization methods also pose a challenge.

Therefore, to optimize the application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning, regular teacher training is needed to better understand this approach. In addition, learning must be designed to be more flexible and student-oriented, and supported by interactive learning media and technology. Regular Training for Teachers. One of the main obstacles in the application of cognitive theory is the lack of teacher understanding of this theory. Therefore, it is necessary to hold regular training or workshops that focus on understanding cognitive learning theory and its application in the context of Islamic Religious Education. Teachers need to be equipped with cognitive-based learning strategies that encourage high-level thinking activities and the ability to relate Islamic teaching materials to the realities of students' lives.(Atika et al., 2019). Flexible and Student-Oriented Learning Design. The curriculum and learning design should be designed in such a way as to provide a larger portion for the application of the cognitive approach. The teaching and learning process should not be rigid or limited to memorization alone, but rather should open up opportunities for exploration, discussion, reflection, and problem solving. Approaches such as problem-based learning and discovery learning are very relevant and effective to be applied in this context.(Anggreini, 2013). Use of Interactive Media and Technology. To support students' understanding of abstract Islamic teaching concepts, the use of varied learning media is very important. Teachers can utilize videos, digital simulations, learning applications, and other visual media that can stimulate students' critical and reflective thinking. Technology can also facilitate students to learn independently and seek information that is relevant to their lives.(Priyono et al., nd)

CONCLUSION

The implementation of cognitive learning theory in the learning process of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) presents a more holistic and meaningful approach. This theory emphasizes the mental activities of students, such as thinking, remembering, understanding, and connecting new information with existing experiences. Through this approach, students are not only directed to master memorization of material, but are also encouraged to understand religious teachings logically and can be applied in the reality of everyday life.

Through the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning has been proven to be able to improve students' conceptual understanding, form strong religious characters, and improve critical and reflective thinking skills. Learning strategies used in a cognitive

context, such as discussion, problem solving, and reflection of Islamic values, are able to make learning more active and meaningful.

However, the application of this theory also faces various challenges, such as limited teacher understanding of cognitive theory, limited time and resources, and differences in learning styles and student readiness. These challenges need to be overcome through teacher training, development of appropriate learning media, and contextual and adaptive learning approaches.

Thus, cognitive theory is very relevant and useful to be applied in Islamic Religious Education learning, because it is able to develop students' intellectual and spiritual potential in a balanced way. With the support of all parties, the application of this theory can be a solution to improve the quality of Islamic religious education in the modern era.

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