APPLYING HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILL (HOTS) TO STRENGTHEN STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS MODERATION AT *MADRASAH ALIYAH*

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to analyze students' analytical abilities about religious moderation for religious worship through learning PAI (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*/Islamic Religious Education) at the State *Madrasah Aliyah*. This study uses a qualitative-quantitative approach with a survey method. The number of respondents to this study was 468 students of madrasah aliyah in West Java, Central Java and South Sulawesi. Data were collected using written tests and interviews. Data were analyzed using content analysis and descriptive statistics. The findings of this study indicate that studentrs' religious moderation is strenthened in the teaching of Islamic aspects of Aqidah in madrasah aliyah through the development of higher-level thinking learning (HOTS) by connecting the values of moderation in *aqidah* in everyday life. These findings reinforce the urgency of learning in strengthening religious moderation through higher order thinking skills.

Keywords: Analytical Ability, *Aqidah,* Moderation, Religious, Rosul Quran

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis kemampuan analisis peserta didik tentang kemoderatan dalam beraaidah melalui pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-kuantitatif dengan metode survey. Jumlah an responden penelitian ini berjumlah 468 peserta didik madrasah aliyah di Jawa Barat, Jawa Tengah, dan Sulawesi Selatan. Pengum-pulan data menggunakan tes tertulis dan wawancara. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis isi dan statistik deskriptif. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan, penguatan moderasi beragama dalam pem-belajaran agama Islam aspek Aqidah di madrasah aliyah dilakukan melalui pengembangan pembelajaran berpikir tingkat tinggi (HOTS) dengan menghubungkan nilai-nilai kemoderatan beraqidah dalam kehi-dupan sehari-hari. Temuan ini menguatkan urgensi pembelajaran dalam penguatan moderasi beragama melalui kemampuan berpikir tingkat tinggi.

Kata Kunci: Quran, Kemampuan Analisis, Kemoderatan Berakidah, Moderasi Beragama, Rasul

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INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation is a discourse that is at stake within the nation consisting various groups including Muslims in Indonesian context. The phenomenon of extremism and actions that lead to anarchism are always attached to aqidah as the foundation of religious ideology. To overcome this issue, education is required to contribute to nurture religious moderation. Strengthening students' aqidah which is the responsibility of Islamic Religious Education as a subject in *madrasah* is expected to be able to nurture the diversity of the Indonesian nation, which is predominantly occupied by Muslim. Faith as the basis of diversity plays an important role as values that encourage the realization of harmonious diversity in society based on the insight of nationality and unity through diversity with reference to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. This radical religious understanding in various studies and research has become a trigger for the emergence and development of anarchism in society. The radical group is also deemed to involve students (Mubarok & Hamid, 2018; Muchith, 2016; Rustam, et al., 2018; Tahir, 2015; Saifuddin, 2011; Yusar, 2016; Maarif, et al., 2022).

Islamic education researchers reported that various cases of extremism in the world of education are closely related to the weak learning of PAI (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*/Islamic Religious Education. The weaknesses of this learning can be seen from several indicators: Aqidah learning is delivered in form of indoctrination, priority is on memorization not contextual, opportunities for students to solve problems is not adequate, and only emphasis on one perspective (Sutrisno, 2019; Sahin, 2018; Nursobah, et al. , 2018; Islami & Aziz, 2018). PAI learning which is doctrinal through rote learning methods has an impact on learning that is oriented towards the inheritance of a closed religious' culture, so that it ignores social development and the development of science and technology. The clash between the demands of doctrinal values and teachings and the demands of social development on the one hand has caused an extreme religious attitude on the part of the students. PAI learning becomes non-contextual and non-functional in preparing students to face the dynamic developments of life in the future. This leads to chaotic future of religious behavior. Religious teachings seem to deal with eschatological issues that are separate from the social space of people's lives. In other words, the world and how to life well in this world is absence from Islamic teaching (Tampubolon, 2016; Karman et al., 2021).

Islamic teachings, one of which contains *tawhid*/belief in God, do not merely explain doctrines that are taken for granted, but beliefs based on thought. This description emphasizes that the learning of PAI which explains various religious doctrines is very open to truth based on rational thinking. This learning requires a dialogue of thoughts as can be seen in the Islamic histori where the scholars of *Kalam* conducted dialogue among theologians (*mutakallimûn*). Religion is the basis of values and teachings that can ideally solve current and future problems. PAI learning needs in this context, should be oriented towards honing students' intelligence in solving problems. The problem students face might be in aspects of their religious worship and their social life. Students require the ability to perform problem solving. Problem solving for dynamic situations requires a variety of perspectives in accordance with the demands of God's message regarding the context of human capabilities and social situations. Learning the Aqidah requires learning that is contextual, including through the application of higher-order thinking skills. Contextual learning through the application of higher order thinking skills can avoid learning that is verbalism. This is to say that students do not rely on their knowledge memorization. In Contrast, students are expected to be able to produce moderate thoughts and perspectives. This moderate way of thinking and perspective is briefly interpreted as a way of thinking by not easily assuming the other party is "wrong" (Tezcür, 2010; Islam, & Khatun, 2016; Subkhan, 2019; Harto, & Tastin, 2019).

Studies investigating HOTS (higher order thinking skills) have been carried out by many researchers. Ülger (2016) explain the analytical skills of high-level thinking inherent in critical thinking can be related to the use of ICT (Informatic Communication Technology), and the integration of knowledge. HOTS process shows the interrelationships between the components of the object being thought of, and can even be linked to personality (Lopez & Whittington, 2001). Prayoonsri et al., (2015) reported that analytical skills in HOTS are needed for students, especially in seeking moderation in thinking. Suntiah (2021) her research found that HOTS can shape students' critical thinking, especially in Islamic History and Civilization subjects. Nursobah et al., (2018) investigated high-level thinking in moral subject can build students ability in solving problems. However, those studies have not linked HOTS in the aspect of Aqidah.

Aqidah or religious belief is considered as a fundamental Islamic teaching that needs to be taught by using HOTS. Learning the subject by applying HOTS is directed at solving problems that are contextual by using various points of view. It is expected that HOTS encourages students to have moderate religious understanding, beliefs and attitudes. Understanding of aqidah needs to be based on the interpretation of the text of the verses of the Quran, both *muḥkamât* and *mutasyâbihât* and their application. By maintaining the beliefs, students are required to respect the beliefs of other people who are different in their interpretation and their belief. Students do not need to adjust to other people's beliefs when facing differences in understanding and teachings in one religion or different religions. Using their moderate belief and understanding, it is expected that students can show moderation in religion in various broad areas of life, such as political economy (Davis & Robinson, 2006).

Previous studies have not investigated the application of HOTS in developing students' moderate attitude in learning *Akidah Ahlak* subject. The present study tries to fill the gap. It investigates the implementation of HOTS to develop students' religious moderation in madrasah Aliyah in several cities. Religious moderation serves as national issue deserving attention from educational institution.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative-qualitative approach. It begins with extracting qualitative data then proceed with extracting quantitative data. The research was conducted at madarsah aliyah institutions located in West Java, Central Java and South Sulawesi. The data sources were determined purposively. The research subjects consisted of madrasah head, deputy heads, PAI teachers, and students from *madrasah* involved in three provinces. Data were collected using test techniques, observation, interviews, and documentation. The test was used to determine the students' ability to think at a high level in determining the moderation of Islamic teachings. Observations were made through observing students' activities in interpreting moderate Islam in everyday life. Interviews were conducted to strengthen the observation data. Documentation was carried out to obtain data in the form of learning documents such as textbooks and learning implementation plans used. The data processing and analysis were carried out. The results of data analysis were set forth in the research report. Data analysis was carried out through three phases of activity, namely data reduction, data presentation and inference/verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSION
Concept and Implementation of Learning by Using HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skill)

Educational units at the madrasah aliyah level have carried out learning with an emphasis on students' HOTS. HOTS refers to the students' ability to think strategically,

namely the ability to use information to solve problems, analyze arguments, negotiate issues, or make predictions. Students who have thinking skills can apply new information or knowledge to manipulate information in an effort to find solutions (answers) to a problem. HOTS need to be learned by students so that they can solve problems in everyday life which generally require HOTS (Encu, personal communication, September 2000). At the madrasah aliyah level, students in the context of HOTS are expected to have critical thinking skills, in the form of convergent thinking patterns, and creative thinking in the form of divergent thinking patterns. Convergent thinking is a process of processing information from various perspectives to draw conclusions. Meanwhile, divergence is the development of the mind from information to various ideas or points of view (Encu, personal communication, September 2000).

There are six aspects that can be used to measure the level of students' problem solving skills. First, determining the problem. By defining the problem, explaining the problem, determining the need for data and information that must be known before being used to define the problem, students are able to prepare and become more detailed in preparing criteria to determine the results of the discussion of the problem at hand. Second, exploring the problem. By determining objects related to the problem, students are able to examine problems related to assumptions and to state hypotheses related to the problem. Third, planning solutions. This aspect allows students to develop plans to solve problems, map sub-material related to problems, choose theoretical principles and approaches that are appropriate to problems, and determine information to find solutions. Fourth, implementing the plan. At this stage, students apply the plans that have been set, examine solutions, evaluate solutions used to solve problems. Fifth, evaluating solution. In this step, the students examine solution and assumptions related to the problem and estimate the results obtained when implementing the solution and communicate the solution that has been made.

Teaching subject *Aqidah Akhlak* by using HOTS in madrasah aliyah in West Java, Central Java, and South Sulawesi refers to Bloom's taxonomy concept. This high-level thinking includes analysis, evaluation, and creation skills. In other words, there are three aspects of high level thinking in Learning Akhlak Aqidah with HOTS. Those aspects and how they are applied in learning *Aqidah Akhlak* is shown in Figure 1.
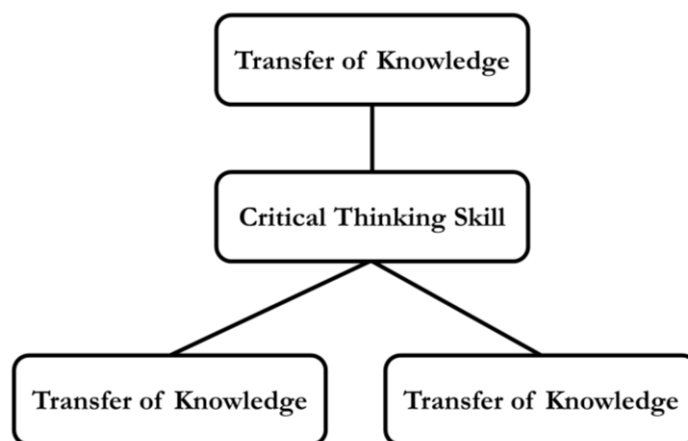

Figure 1. Aspects of HOTS

HOTS in the subject *Aqidah Akhlak* can be implemented in several models like discovery/inquiry learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning (Encu, personal communication, September 2000). The selection of learning models in the subject depends on the depth of the problem being studied. Teaching the subject in madrasah aliyah

using HOTS is oriented towards several learning objectives. The objectives include studying complex problems, thinking divergently, developing ideas, seeking information from various sources, thinking critically, solving problems creatively, thinking analytically, and making decisions.

Teaching subject *Aqidah-Akhlak* in madrasah aliyah, in addition to presenting learning material related to faith and morals, is geared toward building students' character. The objectives of learning *Aqidah-Akhlak* in madarsah aliyah: (1) to grow and improve students' faith which is manifested in commendable morals through the provision and cultivation of knowledge, appreciation, experience and practice of students about Islamic beliefs and morals, so that they become Muslim human beings who continue to develop and improve the quality of their faith and piety to Allah SWT; and (2) to realize Indonesian people who have noble morals in personal, social, national and state life as manifestations of the teachings and values of the Islamic faith. Based on this goal, learning the subject *Aqidah-Akhlak* provides students reinforcement in order to build their religious moderate thinking (Abidin, personal communication, September 2000).

Students' Analytical Skill on Religious Moderation concerning Faith

Madrasah Aliyah as an educational institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion gives a serious concern toward students who think moderately, especially in faith. Religious moderate thinking in this context is meant not to easily blame others who are different, let alone disbelieve other people who are different from their own way of thinking through their tolerance and egalitarianism abiltiy (Encu, personal communication, September 2000). This religious moderate attitude can be manifested in the students' daily lives in the context of their interaction with their family, neighbor and colleague life. Their egalitarianism and moderate religious attitude lead them and guide them to maintain a healthy and peaceful social interaction within their society where they live.

The present study found data related to students' analytical abilities regarding religious moderation in their faith in the context of everyday life. The data can be seen from the scores students obtained from the tests they took. The test assessed students' essential abilities, especially their analysis skill in the subject *Aqidah-Akhlak* learning material. There are two questions provided to the students to respond. They related to beliefs about faith in the Al-Quran (IQ) and faith in the Rosul or Messenger (IR) which are related in the context of everyday life. The data for these two aspects are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Analytical Ability in *Aqidah Ahlak* Religious Moderation in Their Daily Life

| Students' School | Total score and Mean of each item score | | | |
| | IQ | | IR | |
	Σ	$\overline{X}$	Σ	$\overline{X}$
MAN 2 Bogor City	42	0.66	47	0.73
MAN 1 Bogor Regency	49	0.69	59	0.83
MAN 2 Semarang	52	0.91	46	0.81
MAN 1 Semarang	117	0.88	125	0.94
MAN 1 Makasar	49	0.7	53	0.76
MAN 2 Makasar	53	0.73	64	0.88
Total	362		394	
Mean		0.761		0.82
Mean of all groups		0.79		

Based on Table 1, the students could obtain the highest score in the IR aspect (faith in the Rosul) with 0.94. this belongs to students from Madrasah 1 Semarang. Meanwhile, the lowest score is in the aspect of IQ (faith in the Quran) with 0.66. this belongs to MAN 2 Bogor City. The score for these two aspects is consistent with the difference in the overall average score of the two aspects, namely the aspect of faith in the Quran (IQ) 0.76 is lower than the aspect of faith in Rosul/ messenger (IR) 0.82.

In this study, data on aspects of the *Aqidah* regarding carrying out the teachings of the Quran in everyday life is obtained. It emphasizes that the aspects are the key to success that can lead people to safety. Students learned the material of faith in the Quran. They need to be taught that practicing the Quran is an indicator of the safety of human life. In the test, students performed their knowledge. The scores obtained are as follows: MAN 2 Bogor City 0.66; MAN 1 Bogor Regency 0.69, MAN 1 Semarang 0.91, MAN 1 Semarang 0.88, MAN 1 Makassar 0.7 and MAN 2 Makassar 0.73. The overall mean score for aspects of the context of daily life in the Aqidah aspect is 0.761. This score indicates high category because these scores fall in the interval 0.60–0.79. Based on the scores taken from six madrasah Aliyah institutions, the highest score was 0.91 obtained by MAN 1 Semarang and the lowest score was 0.66 obtained by MAN 2 Bogor City.

Their performance in the test yield score. The test assessed the relevance of the context of daily life to aspects of Aqidah. It is based on a question which states "In practice, the holybook Quran can ...". Based on this question, students' answers can be categorized into several types. Students who answered A. This option refers to Quran can be used as a defense of the interests of certain groups. The students belong to this option reached 37 people. Students answered B. this option refers to Quran can be used to unite various groups. Students belong to this option reach 362 people. Students chose C option. This option refers Quran can be used according to the tendency of human thought. This group of students totaled 42 students. Students answered D. This option refers to Quran can be used to interpret according to the needs of the authorities. The group of students totaled 26 students. In this test item, the correct option to answer is option B. Student answered B thought that Quran can be used to unite various groups. Students who chose this are 362 people. Based on the test item, the highest wrong answer is in option C. this option means that Quran can be used to suit the thinking tendencies. There are 42 students opted C.

Based on those data, a total of 362 students answered correctly. It means that they chose that Quran can be used to unify various groups in their society. The data shows that students have shown their HOTS in the form of associating their religious beliefs with their social life. *Tawhid* in their view is not only interpreted as a personal belief that is personal in nature, but the concept is also interpreted as monotheism in the context of their social life. The teachings of monotheism have become the energy for human to realize their social life. Monotheism to God is implemented in the students' attitudes and actions as part of the member of the society. This is what is called students' individual piety and social piety in their religion (Shadiq, personal communication, September 2000). The students' religion has also emphasized that students' belief in God *(tawhid)* must be manifested in their social life. For example, students who believe in Allah and the Last Day should exhibit the indicators of their faith by honoring and respecting their guests when it comes to social interaction in their life. They should be nice to neighbors, and always say good and productive words in their daily nteraction (Encu, personal communication, September 2000). The Quran in its several verses using the phrase *al-laẕîna âmanû* that is always attached to the phrase *'amihû aṣ-âliḥât* to emphasizes that one's faith or monotheism should be reflected in his actions and social activities. In other words, a person belief to God should reflect the indicators of being good to others in daily life. (Shadiq, personal communication, September 2000).

In this study, students' analytical skills in connection with aspects of the *Aqidah* with daily life activities is investigated in the test. In *Aqidah-Akhlak* learning test, the messenger of Allah are believed to be carried out by humans". For this test item, several scores are obtained as follows: MAN 2 Bogor City is 0.73, MAN 1 Bogor regency is 0.83, MAN 2 Semarang is 0.81, MAN 1 Semarang is 0.94, MAN 1 Makassar is 0.76 and MAN 2 Makassar is 0.88. The overall mean score for the aspects of *Aqidah* relevance in the daily life activities is 0.82. this score belongs to a very high category because the score falls within the interval 0.80 - 1. In this study, to measure students' analytical abilities to relate their *Aqidah* knowledge with their activities of daily life, the test is constructed in the questions as follows: "The teachings of prophet Muhammad are believed to only be carried out by humans ...". Based on these questions, students' answers can be categorized into four options available. Students who answered A thought thay the teaching of prophet Muhammad can be carried out only by the prohet. There were 30 students chose this option. Students who selected B option thought that the teaching of prohet can be carried out according to people abilities. There are 393 chose this option. Students who answered C thought that the teachings of prophet can be carried out by the clerical/*ulama* level. There are 24 students chose this option. Last option, there are 17 students chose D. in this test item, the correct answer is option B. the option states that the teaching of prohet can be carried out by the believers according according to their abilities. There are 393 students answered B. Meanwhile, the highest wrong option is A. the option states that the teaching of prophet can be carried out only by prophet. There are 30 students chose A option.

In this study, it was found that students' average score on analytical skills on aspects of *Aqidah* related to daily life activities in faith in the Quran (IQ) and faith in the messenger (IR) is 0.76 and 0.82: 2 = 0.79. The student's ability score is in the high category because it falls within the interval 0.60-0.79. Their ability to relate PAI learning material to daily life activities is a form of students' HOTS in terms of the ability to find moderate values in Islamic teachings, including in the aspect of aqidah. This study obtain data on students' abilities to show the relationship between moderate Islamic Aqidah and the context of daily life. Its average score is 0.79 which indicates that most students have beliefs about moderate *aqidah*. They show their analytical skill to the problems asked. Students were asked about the basic faith in the Quran which is embodied in carrying out the teachings of the Quran in everyday life. The score for this test item is 0.76. This shows that the majority of students believe in the Quran as the straight path for them to appreciate the value of humanity and the source to inspire people unity. They also believed that Quran is the source leading them to religious salvation in the world and the hereafter.

To corroborate the finding, the present study gained the data from interview. The result of interview with one of the students supports the finding. The students believes that Quran leads to human to salvation both in the world and hereafter. The Quran serves as a guidance in various life matters, therefore people who believes in the Quran will have a correct guidance in their life (Firman, personal communication, September 2000). Another interview was conducted with the teacher. Based on the interview, the same view is expressed by the teacher of *Aqidah Ahlak*. "*Students after learning show their belief in the Quran as a guidance in life. They believe that human will have no correct guidance for their life if they do not stick to the Quran and practice the teachings in their daily life*" (Malik, personal communication, 2000)

This study gained data on students' belief on the Prophet Muhammad as the best role model for their life. Students' average score in this test item is 0.82. in this test, a question is asked to respondents. It states that human has the ability to emulate the morals of the Prophet Muhammad. This question assessed students' knowledge related to the possibility for the human to emulate the prophet Muhammad. Moderate Islamic teachings explain that a

messenger is sent to deliver religious teachings that are in accordance with human nature, so that the example of a messenger can be followed by humans (Akhmadi, 2019; Safri, 2012). When it comes to implementation, humans are allowed to adjust their abilities to emulate the prohet. This situation is emphasized by the word of God in QS al-Baqarah/2: 286.

In this study, the data on students' belief about the example of the Prophet for all mankind provides the score 0.82. this score shows that most of the students believe that a messenger is someone they might emulate. This also shows that students have the chance to imitate the Prophet Muhammad. This shows students' moderate attitude because imitating the Prophet is considered something that is possible since the Prophet was sent from among humans who have daily activities like humans in general.

The present study corroborates the findings by conducting the interview with a student and the teacher. The student expressed his view that the Messenger of Allah is a role model who deserves to be followed, because the prophet has exemplary qualities. The prohet exhibit good behaviors such as saying and behaving correctly *(ṣiddīq)*, tasked with conveying a mission without hiding it *(tablīg)*, smart in completing every task and issues (faṭânah), and always fulfill and carry out the mandate properly and correctly (*amana*h) (Rifki, personal communication, September 2000). This view is relevant to the views of the teacher of *Aqidah-Akhlak* subject. According to the teacher view, the students after carrying out learning activities using HOTS experienced many developments. For example, they can explain, as well as understand that the Prophet or other messengers are believed to be role models. All of their characteristics and behavior do not conflict with God's teachings which they hold consistently (Encu, personal communication, September 2000). Based on this data, it can be emphasized that learning the *Aqidah Akhlak* by using HOTS can develop students' moderate religious perspective. Their moderate religious perspective can be seen mainly in their religious aspect of Aqidah that shows their understanding on the relevance of the prophet exemplary behavior and God teaching

Based on the research findings, it can be emphasized that students HOTS especially critical thinking is actually possessed by students at the madrasah Aliyah level. Their critical thinking can be realized in the subject *Aqidah-Akhlak*. Critical thinking for madrasah aliyah students is shown by the ability to interpret and evaluate skillfully and actively towards observation and communication activities, information and argumentation. To carry out critical thinking in a particular subject, several forms can be done reflectively and rationally oriented towards a decision that is believed or carried out (Ennis, 2011). This is based on the reality that madrasah aliyah students have the potential to demonstrate their HOTS in learning PAI. Their HOTS performance refers to their ability to think at a high level. In this level, students not only remember, restate, or refer without processing (recite) a particular knowledge, but also analyze, reflect, give arguments (reasons), apply concepts to different situations, compose and create (Miri, David, & Uri, 2018). HOTS include students' ability to solve problems, apply critical thinking skills, argue, and make decisions in their learning process.

21st century requires students to be able to perform critical thinking. Students who think critically are able to think logically, answer various questions well and can make rational decisions about something to do or believe in their social life. They also exhibit their ability to think critically in their learning process. Subject like Islamic cultural history may provide learning material that requires students to develop their critical analytical thinking. In 2013 Curriculum, students are required to have the skills to think and act effectively and creatively both in the abstract and concrete domains. Their critical thinking can be developed through observing, asking, trying, processing, presenting, reasoning, and creating independently according to their talents and interests in learning a particular subject (Chai & Kong, 2017;

Lin, & Wu, 2018; Rotherham, 2017; Saavedra & Opfer, 2012; Kay, 2009).

HOTS can be implemented in the subject by teaching the values of moderation with faith. This integration is in accordance with the aspirations of the Indonesian people to achieve 21ˢᵗ century skills promoted by 4Cs skills (Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication). To achieve creativity thinking and innovation, students are expected to be able to generate, develop and implement their ideas creatively both independently and in groups. They are expected to achieve critical thinking and problem solving by being able to identify, analyze, interpret, and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims data that are presented broadly through in-depth study, and reflect on them in everyday life. When it comes to communication achievement, students are expected to be able to communicate ideas and ideas effectively using spoken, written, and technological media. Students should also achieve collaboration skill where they are able to work together in a group in solving the problems found (Miterianifa, et al., 2004; Heong, 2012).

In a learning circumstance, HOTS is related to students' cognitive processes. Their Cognitive processes are categorized into two aspects namely critical thinking and creative thinking. The first aspect is based on existing evidence. When it comes to cognitive aspects, critical thinking includes analyzing (C4) and evaluating (C5). Meanwhile, the aspect of creative thinking refers to the process of producing a new product, or idea that student have never made before. When it comes to cognitive process aspect, creative thinking includes creating (C6). HOTS enables students to convey their ideas in an argumentative, logical, and confident manner. Their argument can be expressed in several modes: writing, speaking and in action. To teach students HOTS, several keyword questions can be used to train their higher-level thinking. Word questions like why, How, give a reason, in what way, should act what, If so, and other question words. Those questions words trigger students to express their ideas in a logical manner. It is clear that those questions words require no memorization of knowledge but analysis, and evaluation on a knowledge they learn (Yee, et al., 2011; Weiss, 2003; Krathwohl, 2002).

Creative thinking can be in the form of imaginative thinking that generates many possible solutions which are different and lateral. Critical and creative thinking skills play an important role in preparing students to become good problem solvers and able to make decisions and conclusions that are mature and academically accountable. The Skills enable students to exhibit a strong desire to be able to solve problems emerge in everyday life as can be seen from the application of faith skills in the *Aqidah-Akhlak* subject at madarsah aliyah in three provinces in Indonesia. Students will have different problem-solving skills and are influenced by several factors. As the experts view, there are a number of basic elements of the stages of critical thinking skills, namely F (focus), identifying the problem properly, R (reason) the reasons given are logical, I (inference) if the reason developed is appropriate, the reason must be sufficient to arrive at the actual conclusion, S (situation) compares with the actual situation, C (clarity), there is clarity of terms and explanations used in the argument, so there is no mistake in drawing conclusions, O (overview), checking of something have been found, decided, noticed, studied, and concluded (Ahiri, et al., 2013; Ennism, 2011; Miri & Uri, 2011; Lai, 2011; Ülger, 2016).

The present study describes the fidings from three *madrasas*. The findings related to students' analytical abilities towards students' religious moderation of *Aqidah* material in relation to activities of daily life. Their performance in the test demonstrates a very good score. There are two main things that are used as indicators: their ability to analyze the material of faith in the Quran and their ability to analyze the faith in the Prophet in relation to daily life activities. This data shows that students in the present study could associate HOTS in a frame of mind and are able to perform a moderate religious understanding (Ali, 2019;

Saputra & Azmi, 2022; Mahrus et al., 2020). The students' ability to relate PAI learning material to the context of daily life clearly represents their HOTS to find religious moderation values in Islamic teachings, including in the aspect of aqidah. For example, they have discovered the value of the Islamic teachings and at the same time they believe Quran as the straight path that can lead people to safety in the world and hereafter. Students in this context have understood well that Quran unifies people. Their religious understanding is relevant to the Islamic Aqidah. The Aqidah emphasizes that to unite human, Quran and Sunnah should be followed and practiced in their life (Yousefi, 2017; Yoesef, 2017). Islam provides specific guidelines for all people to follow in their daily lives. Its guidance is comprehensive and includes the social, economic, political, moral, and spiritual aspects of life (Esack, 2007). Tuhan telah menjadikan Quran sebagai petunjuk (hudan) bagi seluruh manusia. Nabi saw. menegaskan, manusia tidak tersesat hidupnya jika berpegang teguh kepada Quran.

In addition, the students found as well as believed that the the prophet Muhammad was sent by God to humans. The prohet deserves to be emulated as role models by the human. He is a representation of human beings chosen by God to bring goodness and truth. In this study HOTS framework is implemented to build students' moderate religious attitude. It is very reasonable to implement HOTS for students at madrasah aliyah. There are three reasons why students need to be trained to implement HOTS in their learning process. First, students implement HOTS to understand information. Students undergo the process of knowing and understanding information, as well as involving the ability to analyze information, find main ideas in information, make hypotheses, draw conclusion and produce a quality solution. With a lot of information, educators need to teach students how to find sources of information, how to evaluate the information obtained and determine how students can use this information for themselves and the interests of others. HOTS include aspects of critical thinking, creative thinking, and their ability to solve problems. In terms of critical thinking, students perform the ability to think at a complex level and use analysis and evaluation processes. When it comes to creative thinking, students show complex thought processes that produce new and original ideas. Second, for a quality thinking in learning process, HOTS should be trained so that the students are able to undergo a quality thinking process. In educational context, process and results are equally important. Third, for a quality end result, students should be trained HOTS. In schools, time which is a very valuable commodity is often used to produce learning output. One way to get quality final results is by using Bloom's taxonomy as a parameter (Ball & Garton, 2005; Giancarlo, Blohm, & Urdan, 2004; López and Whittington, 2001; Yee, et. al., 2011).

In this study, HOTS can be implemented among students at the madarsah aliyah level. HOTS can be implemented through the preparation of HOTS-based questions. The characteristics of HOTS questions are: (1) measuring creativity in solving unfamiliar problems, and evaluating the strategies used to solve problems from various perspectives, (2) using contextual problems based on real situations in everyday life so that students are expected to be able to apply learning concepts in class to solve problems, and (3) using various forms of questions, including: selection of answers (multiple choice questions, matching questions), and attempting to generate (questions with short answers, essays, and performance), and forms of giving explanations (providing reasons for a choice or answer to a question (Larsson, 2017; Sukla & Dungsungneon , 2016; Ball & Garton, 2005; Singh, et al., 2017).

The Present study has contributed to the body of knowledge on HOTS implementation in learning PAI. The study informed that students at Madrasah Aliyah could perform HOTS in learning the subject. There are some limitations in this study in terms of method. Further study is suggested to have a more robust method to investigate the issue.

CONCLUSION

Students' religious moderation is an issue that government and society pay serious attention. In educational sector, schools are expected to deveop religious moderation. In this study, 468 students have participated and shown their ability to perform HOTS in learning the subject. Their analytical abilities are shown in their religious moderation in *aqidah*. They could perform HOTS to deal with several questions to find the relevance of Islamic religious learning at madrasah Aliyah and their life. They had the ability to relate the values of religious moderation in aqidah and in their everyday life. Those findings reinforce the urgency of learning in strengthening religious moderation through higher order thinking skills.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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