

Cognitive Level of Essay Questions in the Islamic Religious Education Textbook for Class XI

Siti Toyibah¹

SUBJECT

Education

¹⁾ UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

Email: s.toyibah11@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the cognitive level of essay questions in the Islamic Religious Education textbook for Class XI. This research highlights the importance of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in 21st-century education, necessitating evaluation questions that measure students' analytical and critical skills. This research adopts a qualitative approach using the content analysis method. The method involves categorising questions based on the revised Bloom's Taxonomy, which includes cognitive levels from C1 to C6. The analysis results show that out of 50 essay questions analysed, 34% are at the C1 level, 32% at the C2 level, 18% at the C3 level, 6% at the C4 level, 8% at the C5 level, and 2% at the C6 level, with no questions at the C4 level. This study concludes that most questions remain at the basic cognitive level, emphasising basic recall and understanding. These findings imply the need to improve the quality of questions to encourage students' critical and analytical thinking skills comprehensively.

1. Introduction

21st-century learning requires students to master learning skills known as the 4Cs: Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity (Wulansari & Sunarya, 2023). These skills are important in preparing students to face the growing global challenges. One important aspect of developing 4C skills is through evaluations that demand higher-order thinking Skills (HOTS). Based on Bloom's Taxonomy, HOTS are at the levels of analysing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6) (Gunawan & Palupi, 2018). Meanwhile, lower-order thinking Skills (LOTS) are at the levels of remembering (C1), understanding (C2), and applying (C3). Thus, HOTS questions measure students' basic understanding and ability to analyse, evaluate, and create solutions to complex problems (Markhamah, 2021).

However, the main problem faced by the Indonesian education system today is that the learning evaluation questions in the books published by the Ministry, which are used as the primary learning resources, have not fully facilitated the development of student's abilities in line with the demands of 21st-century learning, especially in books that support Islamic Religious Education subjects.

For example, the results of Syarifah et al. (2023) show that essay questions with HOTS categories in the book *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam kelas XI* published by the Ministry

of Religion account for only 18%. Among the several cognitive domains, the most prominent is the C2 (understanding) category, with 40 questions, or 53%. Additionally, the results of Ahmad & Sukiman (2019) show that the questions used as evaluation materials for the *Dirasah Islamiyah* subject group (Islamic History, *Fiqh*, and Tauhid) are dominated by questions in the LOTS categories, namely remembering and understanding (C1 and C2). Only a few questions fall under HOTS categories, namely applying, analysing, and evaluating (C3, C4, and C5), and no items involve the ability to create thinking (C6).

This situation is a problem because education that cannot develop higher-order thinking skills will produce less prepared graduates to face real-world challenges. Students who do not have higher-order thinking skills will have difficulties when competing with other competitors in an increasingly competitive digital world (Dewi et al., 2023). Students unfamiliar with HOTS questions have difficulty solving complex problems, thinking critically, and innovating (Hariani et al., 2023). This can hurt their ability to continue their education to higher levels and contribute effectively in the workplace and society.

Based on these problems, evaluating and improving the quality of questions in textbooks published by the Ministry of Education and Culture by HOTS standards is necessary. Question development must include analysis, evaluation, and creation skills. One way is to first analyse the questions in the book (Mahendra, 2019). So, this study will analyse the cognitive level of essay questions in the Islamic Religious Education textbook for Class XI SMA/SMK, published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology in 2021, to know how much these questions measure HOTS abilities.

The book analysed by the researcher is entitled "*Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti untuk SMA/SMK Kelas XI*" and was written by Abd. Rahman and Hery Nugroho, and edited by Agus Imam Kharomen. This book has the ISBN 978-602-244-546-3 and was published in 2021 by the Center for Bookkeeping of the Education Standards, Curriculum and Assessment Agency of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology located at the Ministry of Education and Culture Complex, Jalan RS. Fatmawati, Cipete, South Jakarta. Each chapter consists of 10 chapters, and each chapter is equipped with a competency test in the form of 10 multiple-choice questions and five essay questions. This study will analyse the quality of the questions in the book regarding cognitive level. However, the object analysed is limited to essay questions in each book chapter.



Picture 1. Islamic Religious Education Textbook for Class XI
Source: Islamic Religious Education Textbook for Class XI digital version

This analysis aims to determine how much the questions measure HOTS skills. The guideline the researchers used in this study is the HOTS question writing guide prepared by the Education Assessment Center Team. According to the Education Assessment Center Team, a question falls into the HOTS category if it has characteristics, namely: (1) there is a stimulus, such as text, graphs, tables, as material for students to think; (2) distinguish between the level of difficulty and complexity of the thinking process; (3) there is a new context so that participants must process (think) and cannot answer only based on memory (Tim Pusat Penilaian Pendidikan, 2019).

The new context in the question refers to the overall content of the question; it can be in the form of material or question formulation. So, if the context of a problem has often been discussed in class or is common knowledge, students no longer need to think deeply but only remember information they already know. For example, a question asking students to criticise the work of author X, from a certain point of view, appears to measure higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). However, if the question is often discussed in class or listed in textbooks, students are not required to think critically but only recall the information given.

A problem in the HOTS category can also be identified by analysing the Kata Kerja Operasional (KKO) 's cognitive level. The following are the KKO of the revised edition of Bloom's theory at each level :

1. At the C1 cognitive level (remembering), the KKO commonly used are "identifying, recalling, reading, mentioning, reciting or reciting, writing, memorising, compiling lists, underlining, matching, selecting, giving definitions, stating and others". At this level, it requires the ability to recall terms, facts or concepts of a matter;
2. At the C2 cognitive level (understanding), the KKO commonly used are "explaining, deciphering, interpreting, telling, displaying, giving examples, summarising, concluding, comparing, classifying showing, distinguishing, adapting, predicting, estimating, explaining, replacing and others". At this level, it requires the ability to determine the concept or correlation of a thing;
3. At the C3 cognitive level (applying), the KKO commonly used are "implementing, implementing, using, conceptualising, determining, processing, demonstrating, calculating, connecting, doing, proving, producing, demonstrating, completing, adjusting, finding and others". At this level, it demands the ability to solve a problem;
4. At the C4 cognitive level (analysing), the KKO commonly used are "differentiating, organising, attributing, diagnosing, detailing, examining, detecting, linking, solving, decomposing, separating, selecting, choosing, comparing, contrasting, describing, dividing and others". At this level, it requires the ability to recognise the facts of a matter;
5. At cognitive level C5 (evaluate), the KKO commonly used are "checking, criticising, proving, defending, validating, supporting, projecting, comparing, concluding, criticising, assessing, evaluating, giving advice, giving arguments, interpreting, and recommending". At this level, it requires the ability to assess something;
6. At the C6 cognitive level (creating), the common KKO are "building, planning, producing, combining, designing, reconstructing, making, abstracting, categorising, combining, composing, designing, designing, recomposing, assembling and others". At this level, it demands the ability to produce something.

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of adjusting evaluation materials to the demands of 21st-century learning. In addition, this research is different from previous studies, with the novelty side lying in the books analysed. Efforts to evaluate and improve the quality of these questions are expected to encourage the development of critical, creative, collaborative and communicative thinking skills in students, which are needed in the current era of globalisation and digitalisation.

2. Research methods

This research uses a qualitative approach, which is an approach that describes and analyses a phenomenon in detail (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). At the same time, the method used is content analysis, which aims to study human behaviour indirectly by analysing communication, such as textbooks, newspapers, songs, and all types of communication that can be analysed (Sari & Asmendri, 2020). In this study, the qualitative approach and content analysis method were used to analyse in detail the cognitive level of essay questions in the Islamic Religious Education textbook, which became the object of research. The essay questions in the book were analysed thoroughly, namely, as many as 50 questions spread across 10 chapters. The data analysis technique in this study refers to the theory of Miles (1994), which consists of 4 stages, namely (Sujarweni, 2024):

1. Data reduction

Data reduction is the process of selecting data obtained by summarising, selecting, and focusing on important things in the text, questions, or images that are relevant to the research. At this stage, each question is used as a unit of analysis to be classified into cognitive levels based on Bloom's Taxonomy.

2. Data presentation

Data presentation is categorising data in matrix form. Each essay question is recorded and collected in a table at this stage.

3. Conclusions and verification

Conclusions and verification are making temporary conclusions from the results of data reduction and presentation activities. Then, it was verified using triangulation of data sources and methods, peer discussions, and member checks.

4. Conclusion

Conclusions in qualitative data are expected to be new findings and display selected data as a clear picture of the object under study (Emzir, 2012). The conclusion is data obtained based on temporary conclusions that have been verified.

3. Discussion

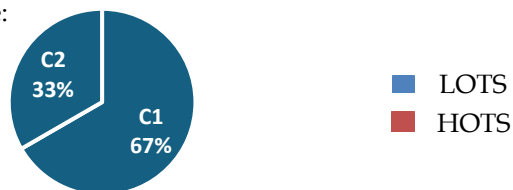
The results of this study refer to the principles of preparing HOTS assessment instruments by the guidebook for writing HOTS questions prepared by the Educational Assessment Center Team and the indicators of Bloom's Taxonomy Operational Verbs (KKO) revised edition, the following exposure:

Table 1. Quality of Essay Questions Chapter 1 *Membiasakan Berpikir Kritis dan Semangat Mencintai Iptek*

No.	Questions	Level	Categories	Description
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1.	“Sebutkan tingkatan berpikir, sehingga seseorang itu sudah sampai taraf, علم/’ilm ظن (dhann/dugaan), dan شك (syakk/keraguan)?”	C1	LOTS	The word "sebutkan" contains the element of remembering (C1). There is no stimulus and no new context.
2.	“Perhatikan potongan Q.S. ar-Rahmān/55: 33 berikut ini!” يُعْشِرَ الْجَيْنَ وَالْإِنْسَ إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْفُذُوا “Terjemahkan potongan ayat tersebut!”	C1	LOTS	The word “terjemahkan” contains the element of remembering (C1). There is no new context.
3.	“Sebutkan 3 ciri dari ulil albab?”	C1	LOTS	The word "sebutkan" contains the element of remembering (C1). There is no stimulus and no new context.
4.	Amati dengan cermat Hadis ini! عَنْ أَبِي دَرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: تَفَكَّرُوا فِي خَلْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَفَكَّرُوا فِي ذَاتِ اللَّهِ فَتَهْلِكُوا (رواه ابو الشيخ) “Berdasarkan hadis tersebut, jelaskan 3 (tiga) kandungan isinya!”	C2	LOTS	The answer is already available in the book, and students only need to explain it.
5.	“Tulis kembali Q.S. Ali Imran/3: 191 dengan benar!”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)

Based on the analysis results in the table above, the quality of each item in Chapter 1 is included in the LOTS category. It consists of 4 questions with cognitive level remembering (C1) and 1 question understanding (C2). The percentage of analysis results can be seen in the following picture:



Picture 2. Percentage Quality of Essay Questions of Chapter 1 Membiasakan Berpikir Kritis dan Semangat Mencintai Iptek.

Table 2. Quality of Essay Questions Chapter 2 *Bukti Beriman: Memenuhi Janji, Mensyukuri Nikmat, Memelihara Lisan, Menutupi Aib Orang Lain*

No.	Questions	Level	Categories	Description
1.	“Rasulullah Saw. bersabda, “Kalian tak akan masuk surga, sampai kalian beriman dan saling mencintai. Maukah kalian aku tunjukkan satu amalan, jika dilakukan membuat kalian saling mencintai? Itu adalah sebarakan salam” (HR. Muslim dari Abu Hurairah). Sebutkan 3 kandungan makna dari kalimat sebarakan salam?”	C1	LOTS	Students are only asked to mention the meaning of content without the need to explain, interpret, or connect concepts.
2.	“Sebutkan hubungan antara Iman (Akidah), Islam (Syariah), dan Ihsan (Akhlak)?”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)
3.	“Tulislah teks hadis yang menjelaskan bahwa cabang iman itu berjumlah 63, dan sebutkan 3 cabang iman yang lain, selain 4 cabang iman yang sudah dipelajari?”	C3	LOTS	Students are not only required to remember or understand but existing knowledge is used to find new answers.
4.	“Buatlah kisah nyata tentang runtuhnya karir seseorang disebabkan penggunaan medsos yang salah, dan apa saja pelajaran yang kalian ambil!”	C6	HOTS	There is the word “buatlah”, which contains the element of creating an essay (C6)
5.	“Sebutkan 3 isi kandungan Q.S. Ibrāhīm/14: 7, khususnya yang dihubungkan dengan kata <i>syukr</i> dan <i>kufr</i> ?”	C4	HOTS	Students must connect the verse with the concept of <i>syukr</i> and <i>kufr</i>

Based on the analysis results in the table above, the quality of the items in Chapter 2 consists of 2 HOTS questions with cognitive level C4 and creating (C6) and 2 LOTS questions with cognitive level C1 and C3. The percentage of analysis results can be seen in the following figure:

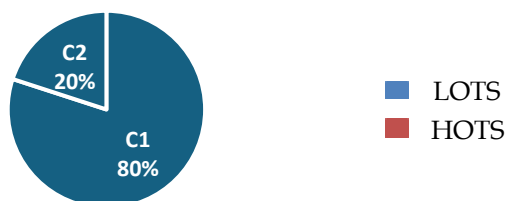


Picture 3. Percentage Quality of Essay Questions of Chapter 2 *Bukti Beriman: Memenuhi Janji, Mensyukuri Nikmat, Memelihara Lisan, Menutupi Aib Orang Lain*

Table 3. Quality of Essay Questions Chapter 3 *Menghindari Perkelahian Pelajar, Minuman Keras, dan Narkoba*

No.	Questions	Level	Categories	Description
1.	“Sebutkan 3 usaha, agar tidak terjadi perilaku menyimpang di kalangan pelajar?”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)
2.	“Perhatikan dengan cermat Q.S. al-Māidah/5: 90 ini” يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْحَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْجَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ “Sebutkan 3 isi dan kandungan ayat tersebut!”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)
3.	“Sebutkan masing-masing dari jenis narkotika dan psikotropika?”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)
4.	“Di antara 2 jenis zat adiktif adalah nikotin dan alkohol, jelaskan secara singkat dampak negatif bagi yang menggunakan!”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)
5.	“Sebutkan 5 cara mencegah penyalahgunaan narkoba?”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)

Based on the analysis results in the table above, the quality of each item in Chapter 3 is included in the LOTS category. It consists of 4 questions with cognitive level remembering (C1) and 1 question understanding (C2). The percentage of analysis results can be seen in the following picture:



Picture 4. Percentage Quality of Essay Questions of Chapter 3 *Menghindari Perkelahian Pelajar, Minuman Keras, dan Narkoba*

Table 4. Quality of Essay Questions Chapter 4 *Menebarkan Islam dengan Santun dan Damai Melalui Dakwah, Khutbah, dan Tablig*

No.	Questions	Level	Categories	Description
1.	“Pelaksanaan Khutbah Jum’at dapat dikelompokkan menjadi 2 bagian. Sebutkan!”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)
2.	“Sebutkan 3 rukun Khutbah Jum’at?”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)
3.	“Ada beberapa persyaratan yang harus diindahkan bagi mubalig, agar jamaah memiliki kerelaan hati untuk mengamalkan apa yang disampaikan. Sebutkan syarat-syarat itu!”	C2	LOTS	There is a stimulus that requires students to understand before mentioning
4.	“Jika kalian ingin berprofesi sebagai seorang dai yang sukses, maka harus memenuhi syarat seperti yang sudah diperankan oleh para Rasul, sebutkan 3 syarat yang paling utama!”	C3	LOTS	Students must connect the requirements to be a preacher with the example of Rasul.
5.	“Saat ini beragam kepentingan masyarakat ingin dipenuhi secara cepat. Banyak juga problema yang diderita. Bagaimana strategi kalian (jika menjadi dai, khatib atau mubalig, sehingga masyarakat bisa tenang dan tenteram!”	C5	HOTS	Students are asked to assess and choose the best strategy for dealing with social problems.

Based on the analysis results in the table above, the quality of the items in Chapter 4 consists of 4 LOTS questions with two questions of level C1, 1 question C2, 1 question C3 and 1 HOTS question with level C5. The percentage of analysis results can be seen in the following figure:



Picture 5. Percentage Quality of Essay Questions of Chapter 4 *Menebarkan Islam dengan Santun dan Damai Melalui Dakwah, Khutbah, dan Tablig*

Table 5. Quality of Essay Questions Chapter 5 *Meneladani Jejak Langkah Ulama Indonesia yang Mendunia*

No.	Questions	Level	Categories	Description
1.	“Ulama Indonesia ini pernah diundang untuk presentasi di hadapan para ulama Universitas Al-Azhar Kairo Mesir, tepatnya tahun 1870 M. Siapakah Beliau ini?”	C1	LOTS	Terdapat kata “siapakah” yang mengandung unsur mengingat kembali (C1)
2.	“Syekh Yusuf pada tahun 1644, menunaikan ibadah haji dan tinggal di Makkah untuk beberapa lama, lalu belajar kepada ulama-ulama terkemuka di berbagai negara. Sebutkan di negara-negara manakah itu”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)
3.	“Syekh Abdus Samad termasuk pengarang yang produktif. Sebutkan kedua karyanya yang terkenal dan sampai saat ini masih dipergunakan?”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)
4.	“Syekh Nuruddin awalnya belajar bahasa Melayu di Aceh, lalu memperdalam ilmu agamanya saat beribadah haji ke Makkah. Sepulang dari Makkah, didapati bahwa di Aceh, aliran wujudiyah sudah berkembang. Jelaskan apa itu aliran wujudiyah?”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)
5.	“Banyak karya-karya Syekh Abdul Rauf Singkil yang sempat dipublikasikan melalui murid-muridnya, di antaranya Tarjuman al-Mustafid. Sebutkan isi garis besar dari isi kitab tersebut”	C2	LOTS	Although the question uses the word "mention", which is usually associated with C1, students are asked to understand the book's contents first.

Based on the analysis results in the table above, the quality of each item in Chapter 5 is included in the LOTS category. It consists of 3 questions with cognitive level remembering (C1) and 2 question understanding (C2). The percentage of analysis results can be seen in the following picture:



Picture 6. Percentage Quality of Essay Questions of Chapter 5 *Meneladani Jejak Langkah Ulama Indonesia yang Mendunia*

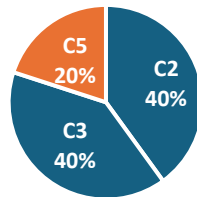
Table 6. Quality of Essay Questions Chapter 6 *Menguatkan Kerukunan melalui Toleransi dan Memelihara Kehidupan Manusia*

No.	Questions	Level	Categories	Description
1.	“Jelaskan pengertian muru’ah baik dari segi bahasa maupun istilah!”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)
2.	“Bagaimana cara menerapkan muru'ah bagi pelajar? Sebutkan tiga cara!”	C3	LOTS	There is the word “bagaimana cara”, which contains the element of applying by conceptualising (C3)
3.	“Bagaimana cara menerapkan isi kandungan Q.S. Yūnus/10: 40-41 dalam kehidupan sehari-hari! Jelaskan minimal tiga!”	C3	LOTS	There is the word “bagaimana cara”, which contains the element of applying by conceptualising (C3)
4.	“Bagaimana isi kandungan Q.S. Al-Māidah/5: 32! Jelaskan minimal tiga!”	C2	LOTS	Terdapat kata “bagaimana isi” yang mengandung unsur memahami dengan cara menyimpulkan (C2)
5.	“Pasa saat ada pandemi Covid-19, pemerintah mengeluarkan protokol kesehatan, yaitu menganjurkan masyarakat memakai masker, menjaga jarak, dan menghindari kerumunan. Bagaimana pendapatmu tentang	C5	HOTS	The word "bagaimana pendapat" contains elements of evaluating by assessing and

kebijakan tersebut dihubungkan dengan isi Q.S. Al-Māidah/5: 32!"

providing arguments (C5).

Based on the results of the analysis in the table above, the quality of the items in Chapter 6 consists of 1 HOTS question with cognitive level evaluating (C5) and 4 LOTS questions, including two questions with cognitive level understanding (C2) and two questions with cognitive level applying (C3). The percentage of analysis results can be seen in the



following picture:

Picture 7. Percentage Quality of Essay Questions of Chapter 6 *Menguatkan Kerukunan melalui Toleransi dan Memelihara Kehidupan Manusia*

Table 7. Quality of Essay Questions Chapter 7 *Menguatkan Iman dengan Menjaga Kehormatan, Ikhlas, Malu, dan Zuhud*

No.	Questions	Level	Categorie	
1.	"Jelaskan pengertian <i>muru'ah</i> baik dari segi bahasa maupun istilah!"	C2	LOTS	■ LOTS ■ HOTS
2.	"Bagaimana cara menerapkan <i>muru'ah</i> bagi pelajar? Sebutkan tiga cara!"	C3	LOTS	rd
3.	"Bagaimana bentuk <i>zuhud</i> orang yang memiliki rezeki melimpah? Sebutkan tiga."	C3	LOTS	which contains the element of understanding (C2)
4.	"Jelaskan tiga ciri orang yang memiliki sikap <i>ikhlas</i> !"	C2	LOTS	There is the word "bagaimana cara", which contains the element of applying by conceptualising (C3)
5.	"Jelaskan tiga manfaat sifat <i>malu</i> dalam kehidupan seseorang!"	C2	LOTS	There is the word "bagaimana bentuk", which contains the element of applying by conceptualising (C3)
				There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)
				There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)

Based on the analysis results in the table above, the quality of each question item in Chapter 7 is included in the category of LOTS questions. It consists of 2 questions with a cognitive level of understanding (C2) and 3 applying questions (C3). The percentage of the analysis results can be seen in the following picture:



Picture 8. Percentage Quality of Essay Questions of Chapter 7 *Menguatkan Iman dengan Menjaga Kehormatan, Ikhlas, Malu, dan Zuhud*

Table 8. Quality of Essay Questions Chapter 8 *Adab Menggunakan Media Sosial*

No.	Questions	Level	Categories	Description
1.	“Jelaskan apa yang dimaksud dengan adab bermedia sosial?”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)
2.	“Mengapa dalam Islam, bermedia sosial perlu adab! Jelaskan tiga alasanmu”	C5	HOTS	There is a word “mengapa” that contains an element of evaluating by assessing and providing arguments (C5)
3.	“Sebutkan tiga adab dalam bermedia sosial! Jelaskan.”	C1	LOTS	Terdapat kata “sebutkan” yang mengandung unsur mengingat kembali (C1)
4.	“Jelaskan tiga dampak positif dari media sosial dalam kehidupan sehari-hari!”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)
5.	“Jelaskan tiga hikmah melaksanakan adab menggunakan media sosial!”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)

Based on the results of the analysis in the table above, the quality of the question items in Chapter 8 consists of 1 HOTS question with a cognitive level of evaluating (C5) and 4 LOTS questions, including 1 question with a cognitive level of remembering (C1) and

three comprehension questions (C2). The percentage of the analysis results can be seen in the following picture:



Picture 9. Percentage Quality of Essay Questions of Chapter 8 *Adab Menggunakan Media Sosial*

Table 9. Quality of Essay Questions Chapter 9 *Ketentuan Pernikahan dalam Islam*

No.	Questions	Level	Categories	Description
1.	“Sebelum menikah seharusnya calon suami mengetahui akan identitas calon istri. Hal ini agar tidak terjadi kesalahan menikah dengan wanita yang haram di nikah dalam Islam. Maka pengetahuan akan wanita yang dilarang dinikah menjadi sangat penting. Sebutkan masing-masing dua wanita yang haram dinikah dari sebab ikatan pernikahan (<i>mushaharah</i>) dan sepersusuan (<i>radha'ah</i>)!”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)
2.	“Menikah merupakan anjuran agama, sebagaimana yang dianjurkan oleh Rasulullah Saw. Akan tetapi ada beberapa pernikahan yang dilarang oleh agama Islam. Jelaskan secara singkat tiga macam pernikahan yang dilarang oleh agama Islam!”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)
3.	“Jelaskan empat hal yang dapat merusak hubungan pernikahan”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)
4.	“Jelaskan perbedaan antara talak <i>sunny</i> , talak <i>bid'i</i> , talak <i>raj'i</i> dan talak <i>ba'in</i> !”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element

				of understanding (C2)
5.	“Wali nikah merupakan rukun dalam pernikahan. Sebutkan 4 orang yang berhak menjadi wali nikah!”	C1	LOTS	There is the word "sebutkan", which contains the element of remembering (C1)

Based on the analysis results in the table above, the quality of each question item in Chapter 9 is included in the category of LOTS questions. It consists of 2 questions with a cognitive level of remembering (C1) and three comprehension questions (C2). The percentage of the analysis results can be seen in the following picture:



Picture 10. Percentage Quality of Essay Questions of Chapter 9 *Ketentuan Pernikahan dalam Islam*

Table 10. Quality of Essay Questions Chapter 10 *Peradaban Islam pada Masa Modern*

No.	Questions	Level	Categories	Description
1.	“Jelaskan kondisi umat Islam pada tahun 1800!”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)
2.	“Bagaimana persamaan pemikiran dari Muhammad Abdul dengan Rasyid Rida?”	C4	HOTS	Students need to compare the thoughts of two figures, find similarities, and construct an answer based on their analysis of the concepts.
3.	“Bagaimana dampak pembaruan Islam pada masa modern bagi bangsa Indonesia?”	C5	LOTS	Students have to assess the impact of Islamic renewal on the Indonesian nation.
4.	“Bagaimana hasil peradaban Islam pada masa modern! Jelaskan!”	C2	LOTS	There is the word "jelaskan", which contains the element of understanding (C2)

5.	“Jelaskan 3 hikmah yang dapat diambil dari pemikiran tokoh-tokoh pembaharu Islam pada masa modern, khususnya pelajaran sekarang dalam kehidupan sehari-hari !”	C4	HOTS	Students must analyse the ideas of the figures, find the lessons learned, and relate them to daily life.
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Based on the analysis results in the table above, the quality of the items in Chapter 10 consists of 3 HOTS questions with cognitive levels C4, C5 and 2 LOTS questions with cognitive level understanding (C2). The percentage of analysis results can be seen in the following figure:



Picture 11. Percentage Quality of Essay Questions of Chapter 10 *Peradaban Islam pada Masa Modern*

Questions categorised as Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) have characteristics that distinguish them from Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) questions. The main characteristics of HOTS questions include the ability to analyse, evaluate and create, which are the highest cognitive levels in Bloom's Taxonomy (Nasution et al., 2024). HOTS questions in the context of education are designed to encourage students to think critically and creatively and be able to solve complex problems (Asfiyah, 2021). For example, in developing HOTS test instruments for high school students, the resulting questions require students to analyse data, evaluate arguments, and create new solutions to given problems (Litna et al., 2021).

Examples of HOTS questions can be found in various subjects, such as math, science and religion. Like other fields of study, religious studies categorise a question as HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) if it meets several criteria. These criteria include: (1) measuring higher-order thinking skills by maximising the ability to find, analyse, create, reflect, predict, argue, and make the right decision; (2) based on contextual problems; (3) has an interesting stimulus; and (4) is not routine in both illustrations and questions (Anazalia et al., 2021).

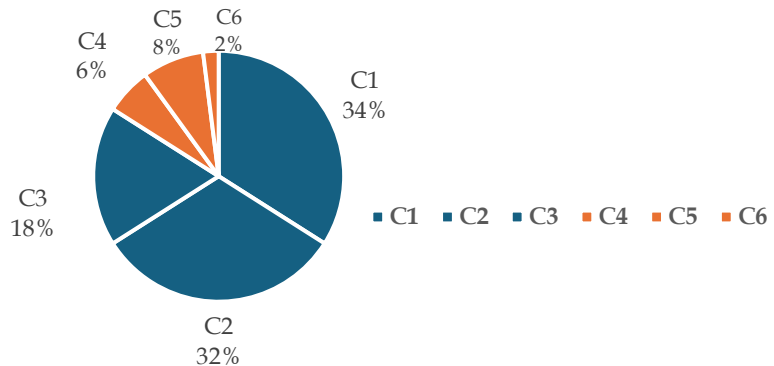
Referring to the module on the preparation of HOTS questions in Islamic Religious Education published by the Directorate of Upper Secondary School Development of the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2019, an example of the structure of HOTS questions in religious subjects can be seen in the following figure (Mustahdi, 2019):

“Dakwah Nabi Muhammad saw di Madinah berhasil memuaskan, disamping tidak terjadi peristiwa yang membahayakan, dibuktikan banyaknya orang-orang yang masuk Islam. Salah satu strategi dakwah nabi di Madinah adalah mempersaudarakan antara kaum Muhajirin dan Anshor. Buatlah contoh strategi yang bisa dilakukan untuk mensyiarkan agama Islam di daerah sekitarmu!”

■ : Stimulus
 ■ : Cognivite Level
 ■ : Contextual Problem

Picture 12. Example of HOTS Essay Questions in PAI Subjects

Based on the results of the analysis, the cognitive level of essay questions in the book “Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dan Budi Pekerti” for SMA/SMK Class XI” varies significantly. However, these questions are dominated by LOTS category questions with the characteristics of no stimulus, not based on contextual problems, and not using KKO, which demands C4 (analysing), C5 (evaluating) and C6 (creating) abilities. Of the total 50 essay questions analysed, the details of the distribution of cognitive levels are 17 questions at the C1 level (remembering), 16 questions at the C2 level (understanding), nine questions at the C3 level (applying), three questions at the C4 level (analysing), four questions at the C5 level (evaluating), and 1 question at the C6 level (creating). In percentage terms, this means that 34% of the questions are at level C1, 32% at level C2, 18% at level C3, 6% at level C4, 8% at level C5, and 2% at level C6.



Picture 13. Results of Cognitive Level Analysis of Essay Questions in the Islamic Religious Education Textbook for Class XI

The distribution indicates that most essay questions in this book are still dominated by the LOTS category, with 66% falling within cognitive levels C1 and C2. This condition reflects that religious learning at the senior high school level still emphasises the aspects of memory and basic understanding rather than higher-level thinking skills. In fact, in the context of modern education, especially in the digital era that is full of complex

challenges, students need to be equipped with critical, analytical and reflective thinking skills in order to be able to understand and apply religious values in real life.

These findings also indicate the need for improvements in question design to be more balanced by including more HOTS-based questions that encourage students to analyse, evaluate, and create solutions to various contextual problems. As facilitators of learning, teachers can utilise these findings to be more selective in choosing and formulating questions that stimulate students' critical thinking. Without such efforts, religious education risks becoming a rote memorisation process without deep understanding, potentially hindering students from developing a critical and practical approach to religious teachings daily. Therefore, revising the structure and formulation of questions in textbooks is a crucial step toward enhancing the quality of religious education to better align with contemporary needs.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the cognitive level of essay questions in the Islamic Religious Education and Budi Pekerti book for SMA/SMK Class XI published by Kemendikbudristek in 2021 varies. However, it is dominated by low cognitive levels, with 34% of questions at the C1 level and 32% at the C2 level. This shows that most questions only measure basic recall and understanding skills, while only a few measure analysis, evaluation and creative skills. Therefore, there is a significant need to improve the quality of questions in order to encourage students' higher-order thinking skills.

This study's results imply an urgent need to balance the distribution of cognitive levels in the evaluation questions in the Islamic Religious Education and Cultivation book. Educators and educational policymakers must consider revising and developing questions that measure basic skills and students' critical, analytical and creative thinking skills. This is important to prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century that demand higher-order thinking skills and complex problem-solving.

Direct feedback from teachers and students is needed to understand the effectiveness of questions in learning. Teachers can assess how much the questions support competency achievement, while students can express their difficulties. Additional studies through interviews or surveys are necessary to evaluate the relevance and impact of the questions on critical thinking. Therefore, further research involving teachers and students is recommended for a more comprehensive perspective.

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