



Analysis of The Quality of Essay Problems in Class IX in The History of Islamic Culture

Ashma Tazkiya Al Zahra

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

ashmatazkiyaalzahra@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze essay questions in Islamic Cultural History textbooks for Class IX MTs published by the Directorate of KSKK Madrasah, Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, whether the items fall under the HOTS or LOTS criteria and whether this book is suitable for use by students or not. The method used is a qualitative method using a descriptive approach. Based on the results of the research conducted, it was stated that the number of questions studied was 35 essay questions in 7 chapters. There are 9 questions included in the Higher Order Thinking Skill category, 7 questions in the MOTS category and 19 questions in the LOTS category. The conclusions that can be drawn are that the questions are categorized in LOTS questions, namely 54.3%, the criteria for HOTS questions are 25.7% and those that are categorized as MOTS questions are 20%. The implication is that the Islamic Cultural History book that is analyzed can be used in training for the preparation of HOTS research questions and is suitable for use.

Keywords: Analysis; Quality; Tests

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Cultural History is a subject included within the group of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects. This subject provides opportunities to convey knowledge about the paths and development of Islamic civilization. Based on prevailing instructional practices, many teachers still rely predominantly on lecture-based methods when teaching Islamic Cultural History. Ideally, effective learning should enable students to achieve meaningful understanding; therefore, both teachers and students need to recognize the distinctive characteristics of the subject matter. Islamic Cultural History is characterized by an emphasis on internalizing exemplary values derived from Islamic historical figures and events. The subject is chronological in nature and its historical narratives contain causal principles (Yusria, 2020). At present, teachers frequently use questions from Islamic Cultural History textbooks as references for evaluating student learning. Assessment must be designed systematically and purposefully to function as an accurate measure of students' learning achievement. Measurement and evaluation constitute processes conducted by teachers prior to pedagogical evaluation (Asrul, 2014).

In the current educational context, Indonesian students are often reported to have relatively low thinking skills. One contributing factor is the limitation of textbooks or instructional guides used as learning resources, both in classroom instruction and in independent learning at home, which positions textbooks as a crucial component of the teaching-learning process. Teachers commonly rely on textbooks or guidebooks as supplementary resources, particularly when direct instruction is limited (Susanti, 2015). Consequently, textbooks serve as primary instructional references and must meet established quality criteria. Textbooks play a vital role in supporting educational processes, as they are among the most frequently used learning resources. Therefore, textbook quality must be carefully examined before being distributed to students. The quality of textbooks significantly affects not only school performance but also the quality of graduates (Fahrudiin, 2020).

However, current Islamic Cultural History questions tend to assess students' cognitive abilities at a low level, namely lower-order thinking skills (LOTS). Ideally, questions in Islamic Cultural History textbooks should stimulate students to engage in deeper thinking processes aligned with Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Cognitive test instruments are generally categorized into three levels: (1) low-level thinking skills, (2) medium-level thinking skills, and (3) high-level thinking skills. Cognitive levels C1 (remembering) and C2 (understanding) are classified as low-level thinking skills; C3 (applying) is categorized as medium-level thinking; while C4 (analyzing), C5 (evaluating), and C6 (creating) represent high-level thinking skills (A, 2021). Examples of low-level reasoning questions include items asking about dates of significant events in Islamic history or the names of figures involved in the development of Islamic civilization. Such questions reflect lower-order thinking because they primarily require recalling relevant information from prior knowledge. The cognitive process of retrieving stored information corresponds to the active verb "remembering," which falls under the C1 cognitive level. In contrast, questions that

demand higher-order thinking skills require students to distinguish Islamic history from that of other civilizations. Differentiation belongs to the C4 level, as it involves identifying and organizing essential components of a structure, which corresponds to the cognitive process of analysis (C4).

Previous research conducted by R. Ahmad Nur Kholis entitled “Analisis Kesulitan Soal Silabus Buku Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam Tahun 2013”, aimed to describe the difficulty levels of questions presented in Chapters 1 and 2 of the Islamic Cultural History Teacher’s Book (2013 curriculum) published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2015. The analyzed data consisted of questions related to two chapters: (1) Traces of Abbasid Dynasty Civilization and (2) The Brilliance of Abbasid Muslim Scholars. Two analytical techniques were employed: (1) descriptive statistical analysis (social statistics) and (2) ratio analysis of correct responses in difficulty analysis. The results showed that 25% of the questions were classified as easy, 35% as moderate, and 40% as difficult. Therefore, the study concluded that the questions represented ideal practice-based items (Kholis, 2017). This study shares similarities with the present research, particularly in analyzing Islamic Cultural History assessment items, differing primarily in the instructional material examined.

Another study by Ica Putri Cahyaningsih, titled “Analisis Soal Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam MI Perspektif HOTS Kelas IV”, revealed that questions presented in the Student Textbook (BSE) for Islamic Cultural History Grades IV MI, Chapters 1–7, showed the following distribution: (1) 78% of questions fell within the Low Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) category, (2) 21% were categorized as Medium Order Thinking Skills (MOTS), which can be considered relatively ideal, and (3) only 1% were classified as Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), indicating a very limited number of higher-level questions—specifically, only one HOTS question among 157 items. Consequently, the questions presented in the textbook were deemed insufficiently ideal for practical application (Cahyaningsih, Analisis Soal-Soal Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam MI Perspektif HOTS Kelas IV, 2020). This study aligns with the present research in its analysis of Islamic Cultural History assessment items, differing primarily in grade level focus.

Furthermore, research conducted by Naurah Nafisah and Indah Mulati entitled “*Analysis of Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) Questions in the Final Semester Examination of Islamic Cultural History for the 2020/2021 Academic Year in State Islamic Senior High Schools in South Solok Regency*” reported that, among 150 examination questions analyzed based on Bloom’s taxonomy, the dominant cognitive levels were C2 (36%) and C1 (34.6%), followed by C3 (12.6%), C4 (12%), and C5 (4.6%). The study also identified constraints faced by teachers in developing HOTS questions, including limited time, students’ difficulty in answering HOTS items, and teachers’ limited understanding of HOTS-based assessment design (Mulati, 2021). This research shares similarities with the present study in terms of analyzing Islamic Cultural History assessment items, but differs in the object of analysis, as the present study focuses on essay questions in textbooks rather than examination items.

Another related study by Ardiansyah, entitled “Analisis Tugas Tes Esai pPresent Mata Pelajaran SKI Kelas IX MTs STI Cdung Tahun Pelajaran 2020/2021”,

employed a qualitative descriptive method with purposive sampling. The findings indicated that the validity of the Islamic Cultural History questions was very high, as evidenced by 100% alignment between test items and the provided blueprint. The reliability coefficient of 0.60 indicated that the questions were reliable. In terms of difficulty level, 60% of the items were categorized as standard, 30% as acceptable, and 10% as acceptable but requiring improvement (Ardiansyah, 2022). This study is similar to the present research in analyzing Grade IX Islamic Cultural History assessment items; however, the distinction lies in the object of analysis, as Ardiansyah examined midterm examination essay questions, whereas the present study analyzes essay questions contained in the Grade IX Islamic Cultural History textbook.

As discussed above, the quality and qualifications of textbooks must be systematically analyzed to determine whether they are appropriate for use as learning resources for students. Therefore, this study aims to analyze essay questions in the Grade IX Islamic Cultural History textbook for Madrasah Tsanawiyah, published by the Directorate of Curriculum, Facilities, Institutions, and Student Affairs (KSKK Madrasah), Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Specifically, this study seeks to determine whether the essay items meet the criteria of HOTS or LOTS and to evaluate whether the textbook is pedagogically appropriate for student use.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach. The research subjects consisted of all essay questions in the Islamic Cultural History subject for Grade IX, written by M. Kholiluddin in 2020. In total, there were 35 essay questions derived from seven chapters, with each chapter containing five essay questions.

The data collection technique used in this study was documentation analysis. The research instrument consisted of documented materials in the form of students' essay questions. The collected data were analyzed and quantified using Microsoft Excel to identify the stimulus, content, context, cognitive level, and indicators of operational verbs in Islamic Religious Education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study was conducted to identify the categories of essay test items in the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade IX of Islamic Junior High School (MTs). The following are the details of the textbook analyzed:

Book Identity	
Title	: Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam Kelas IX MTs
Author	: M. Kholiluddin
Editor	: Hasan Basori
Publisher	: Direktorat KSKK Madrasah Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI
Year of Publication	: 2020
ISBN	: 978-623-6687-35-2 (Jilid Lengkap) 978-623-6687-38-3 (Jilid 3)

Tabel 1. Stimulus on Chapter

No.	Chapter	Number of Essay Items	Stimulus	
			Present	Absent
1.	1 (Sejarah Islam di Indonesia)	5	2	3
2.	2 (Kerajaan Islam Di Indonesia)	5	3	2
3.	3 (Peran Pesantren Dalam Dakwah Islam di Indonesia)	5	1	4
4.	4 (Nilai-Nilai Islam dan Kearifan Lokal dari Berbagai Suku di Indonesia)	5	3	2
5.	5 (Walisanga dalam Dakwah Islam di Indonesia)	5	3	2
6.	6 (Syaikh Abdul Rauf As-Singkili dan Syaikh Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari)	5	2	3
7.	7 (Biografi Tokoh Pendiri Organisasi Keagamaan di Indonesia)	5	1	4

Table 2. Test Analysis

No.	Chapter	Essay Test Item Analysis					
		Stimulus	Context	Content	Cognitive Level	Category	KKO
1.	1 (Sejarah Islam di Indonesia)	Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	LOTS	Explaining
2.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	LOTS	Describing
3.		Present		Statement	L3/C3	MOTS	Classifying
4.		Present	SKI	Pertanyaan	L6/C6	HOTS	Deciding
5.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	LOTS	Describing
6.	2 (Kerajaan Islam Di Indonesia)	Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	LOTS	Identifying
7.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	LOTS	Describing
8.		Present	SKI	Statement	L4/C4	HOTS	Relating
9.		Present	SKI	Statement	L6/C6	HOTS	Proving
10.		Present	SKI	Statement	L6/C6	HOTS	Summarizing
11.	3 (Peran Pesantr Dalam Dakwah Islam di Indonesia)	Present	SKI	Statement	L6/C6	HOTS	Proving
12.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	MOTS	Stating
13.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	MOTS	Explaining
14.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	MOTS	Stating
15.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	MOTS	Stating
16.	4 (Nilai-Nilai Islam dan Kearifan Lokal dari Berbagai Suku di Indonesia)	Present	SKI	Pertanyaan	L5/C5	HOTS	Creating
17.		Present	SKI	Pertanyaan	L6/C6	HOTS	Selecting
18.		Present	SKI	Pertanyaan	L6/C6	HOTS	Predicting
19.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	LOTS	Stating
20.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L3/C3	MOTS	Classifying

21.	5 (Walisinga dalam Dakwah Islam di Indonesia)	Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	LOTS	Writing
22.		Present	SKI	Pertanyaan	L6/C6	HOTS	Deciding
23.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L6/C6	HOTS	Searching
24.		Present	SKI	Pertanyaan	L3/C3	MOTS	Applying
25.		Present	SKI	Pertanyaan	L6/C6	HOTS	Appreciating
26.	6 (Syaikh Abdul Rauf As-Singkili dan Syaikh Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari)	Present	Ski	Statement	L1/C1	LOTS	Writing
27.		Absent	SKI	Pertanyaan	L1/C1	LOTS	Knowing
28.		Present	SKI	Pertanyaan	L5/C5	HOTS	Taking
29.		Absent	SKI	Pernyataan	L1/C1	LOTS	Stating
30.		Absent	SKI	Pertanyaan	L1/C1	LOTS	Knowing
31.	7 (Biografi Tokoh Pendiri Organisasi Keagamaan di Indonesia)	Absent	SKI	Pertanyaan	L2/C2	LOTS	Predicting
32.		Present	SKI	Pertanyaan	L1/C1	LOTS	Knowing
33.		Absent	SKI	Pertanyaan	L1/C1	LOTS	Remembering
34.		Absent	SKI	Statement	L1/C1	LOTS	Stating
35.		Absent	SKI	Pertanyaan	L6/C6	HOTS	Comparing

Discussion

The research findings indicate that higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) items are still relatively limited, and many test questions do not sufficiently stimulate students' cognitive development. Therefore, it is essential to analyze whether the implementation of HOTS-based questions is present in the textbook. The use of HOTS questions in learning has been shown to foster positive conditions for students, including increased confidence in addressing challenging questions, stronger peer collaboration due to the presence of effective interaction between students and teachers, and the development of more active and meaningful learning activities. Furthermore, HOTS-based learning contributes to the formation of positive student character traits, such as discipline, perseverance,

determination, responsibility, carefulness, and open-mindedness (Cahyaningsih, Analisis Soal HOTS Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam Kelas IV Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, 2020). Several essential components are required in developing HOTS-based questions, namely historical, theoretical, case-based, and value-oriented aspects, all of which serve as supporting elements for designing the desired HOTS-based instructional materials. In addition, the development of these instructional materials is motivated by teachers' concerns and aims to improve existing materials by identifying the weaknesses and limitations of those provided by the government. Consequently, this study successfully produced an instructional product that genuinely meets the needs of madrasah teachers responsible for the Islamic Cultural History subject (Ansori, 2019).

The stages involved in analyzing the test items consist of the following steps:

1. Stimulus

A stimulus is one element that functions as a tool to facilitate students in answering test items and to provide training in critical thinking through the questions they encounter (Oktifa, 2022). According to Nugroho, the analysis of test item stimuli is intended to encourage and support students in thinking about a given issue and to enable them to explain the meaning of the problem being addressed (Nugroho, 2018).

Table 3. Stimulus Per Item

N o	Stimul us	Test Item	Frequen cy	Percenta ge (%)
1	Presen t	3,4,8,9,10, 11,16,17,18, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 32	15	42,9
2	Absent	1,2,5,6,7,12,13,14,15,19,20,21,23,27,29,30,31,3 3,34,35	20	57,1
Frequency			35	100

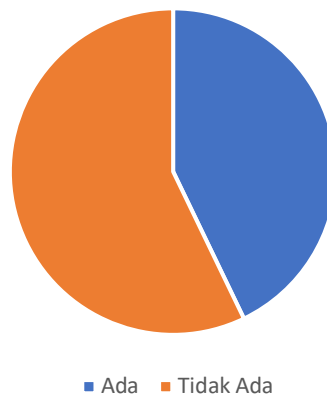


Figure 1. Stimulus

Based on the results of the analysis of the stimulus component used in the test items of the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade IX MTs, it can be observed that many of the questions presented do not include a stimulus component. The findings show that 57.1% of the questions contain a stimulus, while

the remaining 42.9%, equivalent to 15 items, do not include any stimulus. This indicates that a considerable proportion of the questions in the Islamic Cultural History textbook lack a stimulus component, which may limit students' opportunities to engage in critical thinking when answering the questions.

Furthermore, the analysis of the student context component in the test items of the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade IX MTs reveals that there are two types of context, as described as follows:

2. Context

Table 4. Context

No	Context	Test Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	History	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,21,23,25,26,27,28,29,31,32,33	25	71,4
2	Culture	16,17,18,19,20,22,24,30,34,35	10	28,6
Frequency			35	100

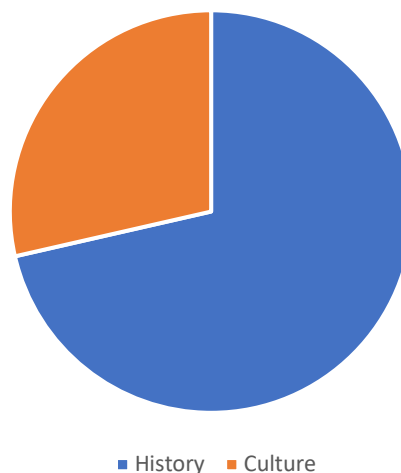


Figure 2. Context

Based on the analysis of the context presented in the table above, it was found that 25 test items (71.4%) fall under the historical context, while 10 test items (28.6%) are categorized under the cultural context. Therefore, it can be concluded that the context most frequently appearing in the Islamic Cultural History subject for Grade IX MTs students is the historical context, accounting for 71.4% of the total items.

Furthermore, the analysis of the content component in the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade IX MTs students is presented as follows :

3. Content

Table 5. Content

No	Content	Test Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Pertanyaan	13,16,17,18,22,24,25,27,28,30,31,32,33,35	14	40
2	Statement	1,2,3,5,6,7,8,9,11,12,14,15,19,20,21,23,26,29,34	19	54,2
3	Ibrah	4,10,	2	5,71
			35	100

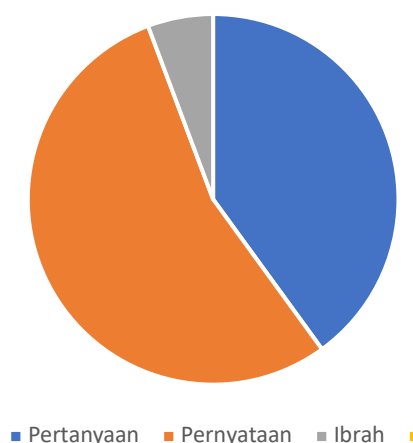


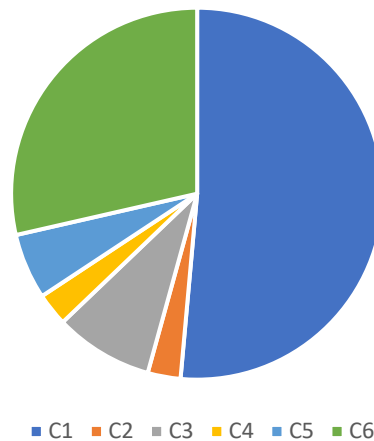
Figure 3. Content

Based on the analysis of the content component presented in the table above, it is indicated that the components used in the test items of the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade IX MTs consist of 40.0% questions categorized as interrogative content, 54.2% categorized as statement content, and 5.7% categorized as ibrah/hikmah (moral lessons) that can be learned. Therefore, it can be concluded that the most frequently occurring content in the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade IX MTs falls under the statement category, with 19 items accounting for 54.2% of the total questions.

Cognitive processes encompass the abilities to attend to, understand, and remember information, as well as to make decisions and solve problems. Bloom's Taxonomy is one of the models commonly used to describe cognitive categories, which consist of six levels: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Wahid, 2022).

4. Cognitive Level**Table 6. Cognitive Level**

No	Cognitive Level	Test Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	C1	1,2,5,6,7,12,13,14,15,19,21,26,27,29,30,32,33,34	18	51,4
2	C2	31	1	2,86
3	C3	3,20,24	3	8,57
4.	C4	8	1	2,86
5.	C5	16,28	2	5,71
6.	C6	4,9,10,11,17,18,22,23,25,35	10	28,6
			35	100

**Figure 4. Cognitive Level**

Based on the results of the analysis presented in the table above regarding cognitive levels, it was found that 18 test items were categorized as C1 (Remembering), accounting for 51.4%; 1 item was categorized as C2 (Understanding), accounting for 2.86%; 3 items were categorized as C3 (Applying), accounting for 8.57%; 1 item was categorized as C4 (Analyzing), accounting for 2.86%; 2 items were categorized as C5 (Evaluating), accounting for 5.71%; and 10 items were categorized as C6 (Creating), accounting for 28.6%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the most dominant cognitive level is the C1 (Remembering) category, with 18 items representing 51.4% of the total questions.

Anderson and Krathwohl (as cited in Nurcahyati, 2021) classify the dimensions of cognitive process as follows:

Table 7. Classify the Dimensions of Cognitive Process

Level	Cognitive	Definitions
C1	LOTS (Remembering)	Recalling information using verbs such as remembering, listing, repeating, and imitating.
C2	MOTS (Understanding)	Explaining, identifying, accepting, and reporting.
C3	HOTS (Applying)	Using, demonstrating, illustrating, and operating.
C4	HOTS (Analyzing)	Comparing, examining, critiquing, and testing.
C5	HOTS (Evaluating)	Evaluating, judging, refuting, deciding, and selecting supporting arguments.
C6	HOTS (Creating)	Developing, transforming, and constructing.

The subsequent analysis focuses on the operational verb (KKO) component conducted on the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade IX MTs students, as follows:

Table 8. The Subsequent Analysis Focuses on the Operational Verb (KKO)

No	KKO	Test Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Explaining	1	1	2,8
2	Describing	2,5,7	3	8,6
3	Classifying	3,20	2	5,7
4	Creating	4,16,17,18,22,24,25,28,35	9	25,7
5	Stating	8,9,10,11,12,14,15,19,29,34	10	28,7
6	Identifying	6	1	2,8
7	Knowing	13,27,30,32,33	5	14,3
8	Writing	21,26	2	5,7
9	Searching	23,31	2	5,7

Operational verbs, commonly referred to as KKO, are used as indicators for measuring the achievement of learning objectives. KKO serve as a foundation for educators in determining the depth and scope of instructional content to be addressed in the learning process. Based on the analysis conducted on the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade IX MTs students, the explaining category comprises 1 test item (2.8%); the describing category includes 3 items (8.6%); the classifying category consists of 2 items (5.7%); the creating category includes 9 items (25.7%); the stating category comprises 10 items (28.7%); the identifying category includes 1 item (2.8%); the knowing category consists of 5 items (14.3%); the writing category includes 2 items (5.7%); and the searching category consists of 2 items (5.7%). Therefore, it can be concluded that the most frequently used operational verb category in this textbook is stating, with 10 items accounting for 28.7% of the total questions.

Furthermore, based on the overall analysis conducted in this study of the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade IX MTs students, it was found that a

total of 35 essay questions across seven chapters were analyzed. Of these, 9 questions were classified as Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), 7 questions were categorized as Middle Order Thinking Skills (MOTS), and 19 questions were classified as Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS).

The calculation was conducted using the following formula:

1. HOTS (*Higher Order Thinking Skill*)

$$K = \frac{Ki}{Total\ Soal} \times 100\% = \frac{9}{35} \times 100\% = 25,7\%$$

2. MOTS (*Middle Order Thinking Skill*)

$$K = \frac{Ki}{Total\ Soal} \times 100\% = \frac{7}{35} \times 100\% = 20\%$$

3. LOTS (*Lower Order Thinking Skill*)

$$K = \frac{Ki}{Total\ Soal} \times 100\% = \frac{19}{35} \times 100\% = 54,3\%$$

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the Islamic Cultural History subject for Grade IX MTs, the findings indicate the following. Essay items that include a stimulus account for 42.9%. The most frequently used context in the questions is historical context, appearing in 71.4% of the items. In terms of content, statement-based items are the most prevalent, comprising 54.2%. Regarding cognitive levels, the most frequently used items fall under the C1 category, particularly those requiring students to state or recall information. Consequently, the overall analysis shows that the questions are predominantly categorized as Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) at 54.3%, followed by Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) at 25.7%, and Middle Order Thinking Skills (MOTS) at 20%.

Implications

Based on the results of this study, which analyzed the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade IX MTs students, the implications suggest that the essay questions can serve as examples or practice materials for developing HOTS-based questions and are appropriate for use in the teaching and learning process of Islamic Cultural History. This textbook can also continue to be used as a reference for teachers in designing practice questions aimed at training and enhancing students' higher-order thinking skills.

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