

An Investigation of Motives As Beliefs and Learning Strategies: The Case for Online Islamic Education

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Abstract

The outbreak of Covid 19 requires students to learn online including for Islamic education courses. This paper aims to investigate students' motivation to learn Islamic education online. The research was conducted in January 2022 in three branches of one higher learning institution in Malaysia. The research used a quantitative approach to explore motivational beliefs and learning strategies for Islamic education amongst students. A sample of 139 students was purposively selected to answer a survey that was adapted from Pintrich & Ge Groot. The instrument contained three main sections which were a demographic profile, motivational beliefs and learning strategies. The motivational beliefs included self-efficacy, intrinsic values and test anxiety while learning strategies included cognitive strategy and self-regulation. The result indicated that the level of motivational beliefs was moderately high and most of the students used cognitive strategies in their learning. Intrinsic value was a key feature that shapes students' motivation in learning Islamic education online. This study suggests that lecturers can help to improve students' motivational beliefs and learning strategies by giving students challenging assignments. Lecturers also have to consistently motivate students to relate their learning process with the responsibility of a servant and Caliph of God to stimulate and strengthen students' intrinsic values.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Online Learning, Motivation, Learning Strategies, Teaching and Learning

Introduction*Background of Study*

Online learning is not something new in the institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. However, when the Covid-19 pandemic struck, almost all courses at the university had to take place entirely online (Hussin et al., 2021). The courses of Islamic Education in public universities in Malaysia are compulsory in all programs of study, whether in the fields of science and technology, management sciences or social sciences. Through Islamic education courses, students are expected to be able to explain and uphold the principles of Islam, integrate Islamic values in the field of study and internalize the Islamic values as well as enhance soft skills such as leadership, communication and teamwork. To achieve these goals, the lecturers were not only expected to give lectures on the syllabus but also to guide students to memorize some verses of the Quran, conduct discussions and mini studies so that students can experience the real situation and can make appropriate judgments in the lives (Hamzah et al., 2019; Nawati et al., 2015). Face-to-face learning allows the relationship between lecturers and students to be more effective at infusing Islamic values amongst students. However, online learning limits that. The effectiveness of Islamic education courses depends very much on students' motivation and their learning strategies (Rahawarin et al., 2020; Mansor & Jaharuddin, 2020). This study focuses on those two factors to improve teaching practice and approach.

Statement of Problem

The study of Islamic education is necessary for all Muslims because it serves as a gateway to a deeper understanding of Islam and its teachings. The development of the character of a good Muslim as an individual and as a contributing member of society would be promoted through Islamic education. Islamic education is extremely important in a Muslim's life and should not be overlooked (Mustafa & Salim, 2012). A major goal of Islamic education is to help people reach their full potential as a servant of Allah SWT and khalifah of Allah SWT. This includes both physical and spiritual potentials such as mind, feelings, will, and others. Islamic education can be a collective effort, a social institution effort, or even a self-effort (Danusiri, 2019).

Due to covid-19 a major influence and contribution to global education have been made by the development of educational technology. Rahmad et al (2021) asserted that the learning process in Islamic education is inescapably ongoing and must be carried out even when students are enrolled in distance learning programmes. The shift in the learning paradigm of Islamic education is currently seeing various innovations employing platforms such as Telegram, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Zoom meetings, and Webex. Through technological support, this innovation creates new possibilities for the long-term viability of Islamic education around the world. However, technology will never be able to completely replace the role of lecturers in the engagement of students.

Hence, this study is done to investigate motivations for learners to learn Islamic studies online. This study is done to answer the following questions:

- i. How do motivational beliefs influence the learning of Islamic studies online?
- ii. How do learners use self-regulated learning strategies in the learning of Islamic studies online?

Literature Review*Strategies for Learning Islamic Studies*

Recent research in higher education instruction reveals that teaching strategies are a central factor in student classroom learning and motivation. Teaching is a bilateral activity between educator teaching and student learning. Lecturing is one of the oldest and preferred instructional strategies often used by educators in the process of teaching and learning in universities. Teaching with this method will cause educators to be more involved in giving descriptions and explanations compared to students who only listen to the lecturer's explanation (Tamuri et al., 2011). The lecturer dominates and controls the learning activities which indirectly inhibits the creativity of students' thinking (Kaur, 2006).

Each student has their uniqueness and interests in types of learning strategies for acquiring knowledge (Osman & Osman, 2009). According to Ibn Khaldun (1967), to facilitate students to master the subject, teaching is conducted on stage. The teaching process is made according to a spiral strategy to embrace values from learning. Therefore, the lecture phase of learning can be divided into three parts; (i) beginning, (ii) middle and (iii) end to enable students to give full concentration to learning. Thus, at the initial stage, knowledge is given briefly in a general form (Anwar, 2008) to give an overview of the lesson. It could be displayed in a coloured mind map containing text and images (Mayer, 2001). In the intermediate level (middle-stage), the description is expanded and detailed in which the educators explain the lesson entirely. Next, at this stage, the educators display videos to reinforce the ideas delivered in lectures (Chin, 2004).

Video is used to create an atmosphere of reality (Stoddard, 2009). While at the final phase, the educator repeats the lesson and summarizes them. Another teaching strategy that is regularly practised in Islamic Studies is the method of discussion. This method is practised by the prophet to convey knowledge, understanding and lessons as taught by Allah to find answers, decisions or certain issues (Tamuri et al., 2011). Discussion is a conversational teaching strategy amongst students under the supervision of a lecturer. During the discussion, students are given an active role to participate and deliver a point of view.

Discussion empowers students with freedom of speech and seeking meaning throughout the conversation. The parties involved in the discussion value each other and feel appreciated. A study conducted by Hassan and Kosmo (2012) found that students responded positively (58.33%) to forums, and discussions conducted in lectures because it can expand the cognitive domain, increase students' ability to solve problems, and develop students' creativity and encourage collaboration in groups. Among the important method implemented nowadays in teaching Islamic Studies is contextual learning. Contextual learning suggests the educator relates the material with the field condition.

This learning method can make the student be able to relate the knowledge and the implementation both to family and community members (Priyani et al., 2019). Field trips or fieldworks allow students to deepen, appreciate and involve themselves in a real context directly. Students benefit from real experience and have the opportunity to acquire knowledge directly and give an effective effect on themselves (Hashim et al., 2003).

In addition, students may gain a better understanding of what is learned and what is happening. Students can remember a lot from what they see in a real context than the explanation from the lecturer alone (Hakim et al., 2020). Through the contextual learning approach, teaching is not a transformation of knowledge from educators to students by memorizing several concepts that seem to be detached from real life but rather emphasize efforts to facilitate students to seek the ability to be able to live or move from what they learn (Buckler, 2016). Students have fun because learning activities are diversified (Hashim et al., 2003). Darusalam (2001) concluded that the fieldwork strategy can evoke appreciation and love for the environment and humans.

Considering some of the limitations of this knowledge transfer strategy, other more active strategies have gradually been introduced, such as project-based learning or problem-based learning (Huang & Wang, 2012). Project-based learning is one of the learning strategies in which students are given an active role as problem solvers; they learn through tasks performed collaboratively for specific projects (Barret, 2005). This strategy is counted as one of the effective methods to engage with students and sustain learning (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). By doing project work, students will gain broader experience while developing their potential holistically and globally.

Lecturers need to equip themselves with sufficient skills in using a variety of different teaching strategies depending on the suitability of the course because each strategy has its level of effectiveness in teaching (Badusah & Hashim, 2009). The diversification of teaching strategies rather than the use of a single strategy also plays an important role in student engagement and learning. Indeed, using a multiplicity of teaching strategies not only reduces student saturation through a single strategy but also promotes student learning motivation (Paad et al., 2015).

The blended learning strategy combines and integrates the delivery method of electronic learning, collaborative software, web-based courses or computer-aided teaching (Gutierrez, 2006) and traditional learning with face to face. Learning strategy allows the use of a variety of instructional techniques such as case studies, tutorials, simulations or online learning. Moreover, blended learning is an interactive teaching strategy either during face to face or online learning, that can access the material at any time and any place. In conclusion, the teaching strategy should emphasize and reflect the combination of “reading, thinking, speaking, practicing,” and a variety of teaching methods work together.

Motivations for Learning Islamic Studies

Motivation is one of the important elements in motivating a student to learn effectively. Mok (2008) states motivation simply means to encourage, direct and maintain behaviour. Therefore, motivational factors are very important in ensuring that students will learn independently and continuously. In general, there are two types of motivation in learning, namely intrinsic and explicit motivation. Intrinsic motivational factors or internal motivation refers to the internal strengths that students have to learn. In the learning of Islamic studies, the strength of internal motivation is very important as it is related to one's intention. According to Al-Zarnuji (2019), the factor of intention in seeking knowledge is an important aspect and needs to be emphasized. Students who delve into the field of Islamic studies need to have sincere intentions because the great rewards of this practice are given in the form of

rewards that are metaphysical in nature. Therefore, the intention factor is the motivating factor for students to learn the sciences of Islamic law.

The element of intention in the motivation of learning Islamic studies is important because it has a connection with Allah SWT. The strength of sincere intention will stimulate students to always have a high spirit or drive to consistently pursue their studies in the field of Islamic law (Paad et al., 2015). This inner motivation results from the sincerity of the intention to learn for the sake of Allah. This is because it is the main factor in determining whether the practice is acceptable in the sight of Allah SWT.

The element of intention has a high position in Islam. Based on the hadith narrated by Umar al-Khattab RA, the Prophet SAW said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

Meaning: "Indeed, every practice depends on intention". [Narrated by al-Bukhari (1)].

Based on this hadith, it shows that intention factors can affect the status of one's practice. If a person has a sincere intention in learning Islamic knowledge, then they will always have a better commitment.

Past Studies

Based on previous research, online learning presents challenges to both lecturers and students. Online learning generally restricts the physical contact and communication between lecturers and students. For Islamic education courses, lecturers found it difficult to teach students the movement of daily prayers and Quranic verses recitation (Nursyahidin et al., 2021, Yusuf et al., 2020). A study by Hussin et al (2021) found that the values of Islamic faith and morality were difficult to be instilled by the lecturers while students faced some difficulties understanding the lesson. Nevertheless, students were found not to ask teachers because of social stigma and low levels of self-efficacy toward online communication (Chung et al., 2020). Studies on the challenges of online learning stated the issue of limited internet access, exhausting online learning schedules and limitations in the mastery of technical technological knowledge contribute to feeling burdened with online learning for both lecturers and students. In addition, economic factors, home environment and emotional stress had made online learning more challenging (Ibrahim & Razak, 2021; Hashim et al., 2020; Daud et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, despite the problem mentioned, online learning did not hinder the tahfiz program students from continuing their learning (Shokri et al., 2021). Course materials uploaded in Moodle, the use of audiovisuals from various sources such as PowToon, Panapto and Youtube, online activities using various mediums such as Kahoot, Padlet, Coggle, Mentimeter and Plickers as well as online continuous assessments were found to help students learn more effectively. Additionally, the online talaqqi method was found to have a positive impact on students and the public in terms of knowledge dissemination and more flexibility in learning activities regardless of time and place (Hamzah et al., 2019). Saleh et al (2021) also mentioned that the learning effectiveness of Islamic education had no significant difference between students who follow face-to-face learning and students who follow online learning. However, students asserted the use of uploaded digital materials makes learning interesting.

Studies on the implementation of online learning in universities were also conducted by several other researchers. They discovered that students were found to remain motivated to learn. Among the factors that motivate students to continue online learning was the intrinsic motivation that sees learning knowledge as a noble practice. Paad et al (2015) concluded that the factors stimulating students to continue their studies were the awareness to achieve life goals, purify the soul and enhance the spiritual potential to please God.

In addition, personality factors and lecturers' skills to conduct online teaching effectively also motivate students to learn. Similarly, the use of social media allows teaching and learning activities to take place anywhere regardless of time and can be done according to the level of interest and attention of students. Thus, online learning enables lifelong learning to take place and meet the educational needs of each individual (Yusuf & Tahir, 2017; Hamzah et al., 2019; Hashim et al., 2020; Burhan et al., 2021).

Past studies had also found that self-regulated learning helped students manage the learning process better, especially in a digital learning environment. The strategies of self-regulated learning assist students in the process of managing their thoughts, behaviours, and emotions to navigate their learning experiences successfully. This process occurs when a student's purposeful actions are directed towards the acquisition of information or skills" In this sense, learning strategies used by students are intrinsically connected to their beliefs. Students who can regulate their learning and positively believe that they can complete the task given would also be able to adapt themselves easily to the university learning environment (Zimmerman, 2002; Segaran & Hasim, 2021).

Conceptual Framework of The Study

The concept of this study (refer to figure 1) is based on Pintrich & Ge Groot (1990) who found that learners' motivational beliefs can impact learners' use of self-regulated learning strategies. The need to learn in learners is influenced by their motivational beliefs. These beliefs are influenced by their (i) self-efficacy, (ii) intrinsic value and (iii) test anxiety. In addition to that, their learning is enhanced through the use of self-regulated strategies. The strategies can be (i) cognitive strategy use and also (ii) self-regulation.



Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study

Methodology

This quantitative research is done to investigate how learners use cognitive and metacognitive strategies when they learn French as a foreign language. The instrument used is a survey adapted from (Pintrich and Ge Groot, 1990). 139 respondents were purposively chosen to answer the survey. The survey has 3 main sections. With reference to Table 1, section A has items on the demographic profile. Section B has 22 items on motivational beliefs and section C has 22 items on self-regulated strategies.

Table 1

Distribution of items in the Survey

SECTION	STRATEGY		SCALE	No Of Items	Total Items
B	MOTIVATIONAL BELIEFS	A	SELF-EFFICACY	9	22
		B	INTRINSIC VALUE	8	
		C	TEST ANXIETY	4	
C	SELF-REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGIES	D	COGNITIVE STRATEGY USE	13	22
		E	SELF-REGULATION	9	
TOTAL NO OF ITEMS					44

Table 2

Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.931	44

Table 2 presents the reliability statistics for the instrument. SPSS analysis revealed a Cronbach alpha of .931 thus showing high internal reliability of the instrument used. Data is collected online via the goggle form. Data is then analysed using SPSS version 26. Analysed data is presented in the form of percentages and mean scores to answer the 2 research questions.

Findings

Findings for Demographic Profile

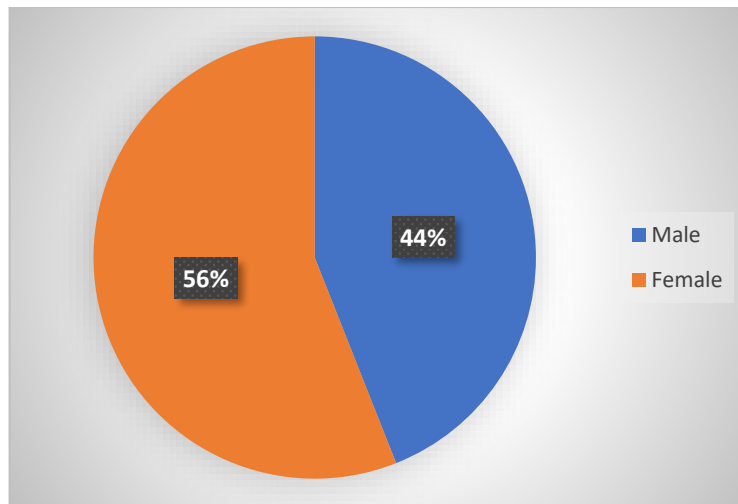


Figure 2- Percentage of Gender

Based on figure 2 above, there are 139 respondents in this study which is 44% (62 people) of them are male and another 56% (77 people) are female.

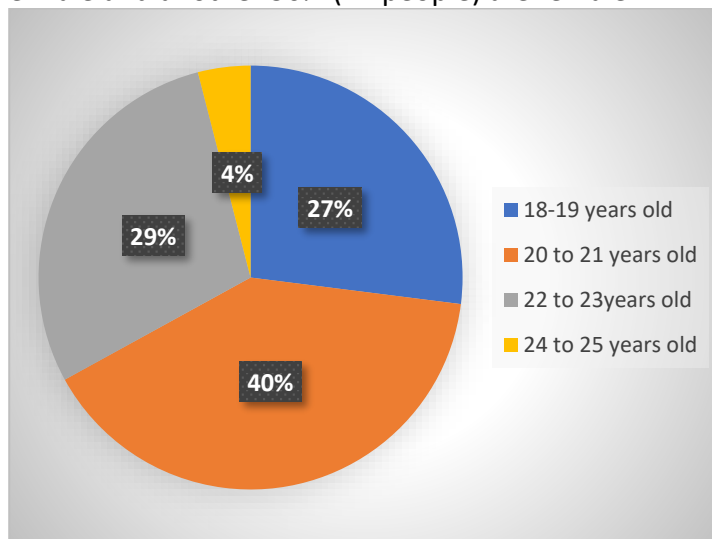


Figure 3- Percentage for Age Group

Figure 3 shows the largest age group is between 20 to 21 years, which amounted to 56 students (40%). While the smallest age group is in the range of 24 to 25 years with 5 students (4%), and there is no big difference between the 18 to 19 age group (27%) and 22 to 23 years (29%).

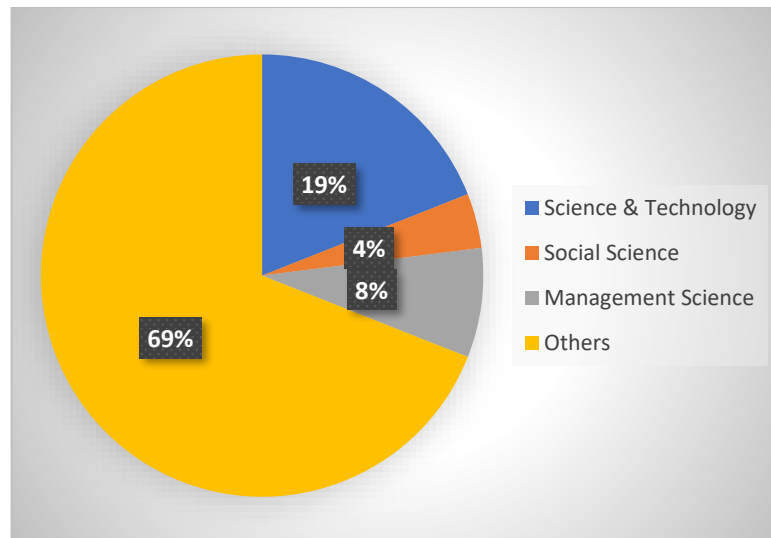


Figure 4- Percentage of Discipline

In figure 4 above, the majority of respondents, 69% of them are from various fields or disciplines, while 19% are from science and technology discipline and the smallest one (4%) is from social science discipline.

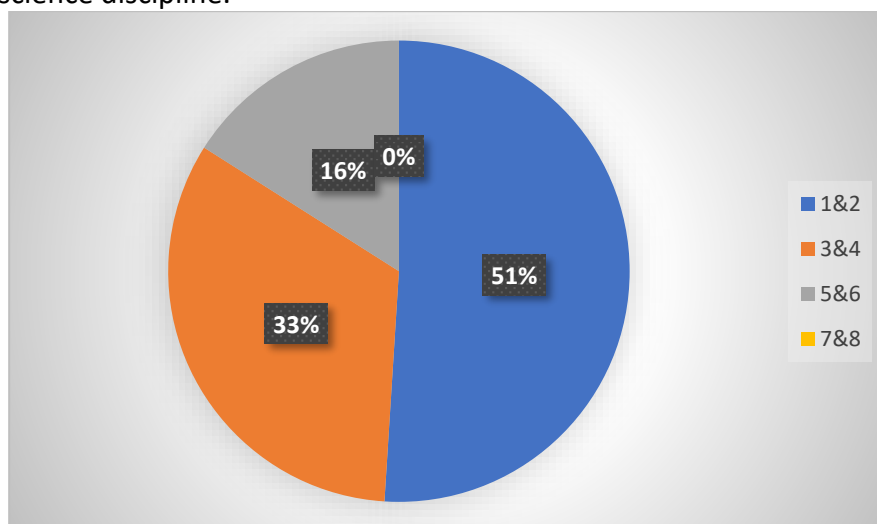


Figure 5- Percentage for Semester

A total of 139 students from 6 semesters throughout one public university in Malaysia have participated and shared their feedback on the online Islamic Studies implementation. The respondents of the study consist of 51% (71 persons) of part one and two students, while the lowest number of respondents are from part 5 and part 6 which only involve 16 % (22 persons). Most of the students are from semesters one and two and none of them is from semesters 7 & 8.

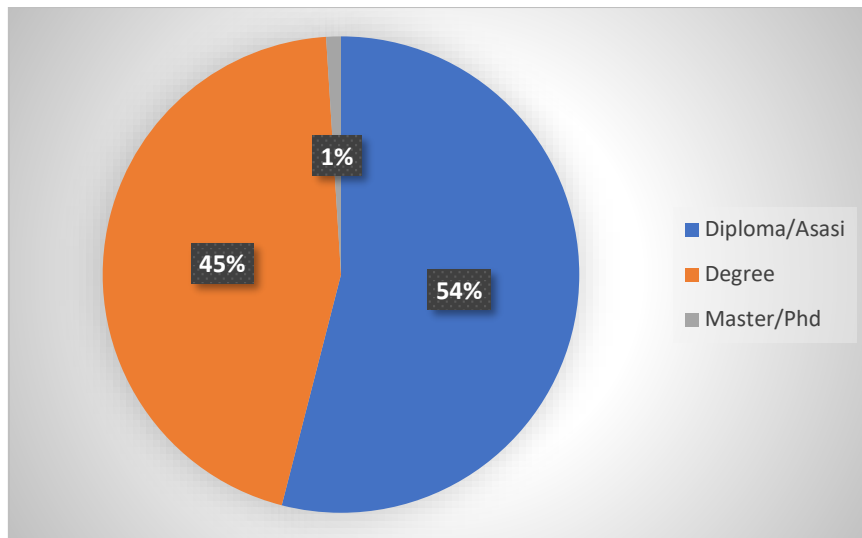


Figure 6- Percentage for Level of Study

This is consistent with the past category of the demographic background, in which most of the respondents are diploma students with 54 % (75 persons). The number of degree students is lesser than diploma students which involve 45% (63 persons) and the lowest number is from postgraduates only 1%.

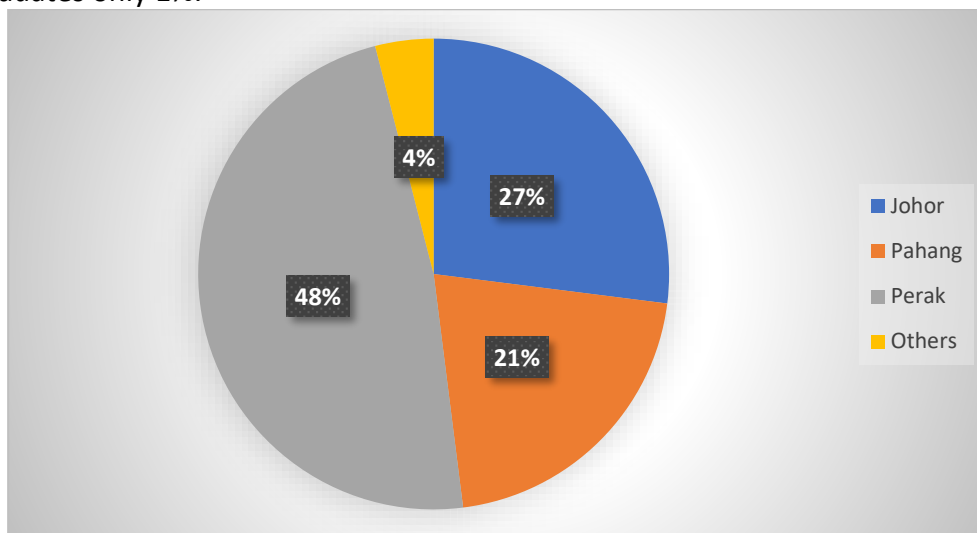


Figure 7- Percentage for Location of Campus

In terms of percentage for the campus, the highest percentages are the respondents who are currently studying in Perak with 48% and the lowest with 4% from different places. Johor and Pahang both have quite similar numbers of respondents with 27 % and 21 % which Johor is higher than Pahang.

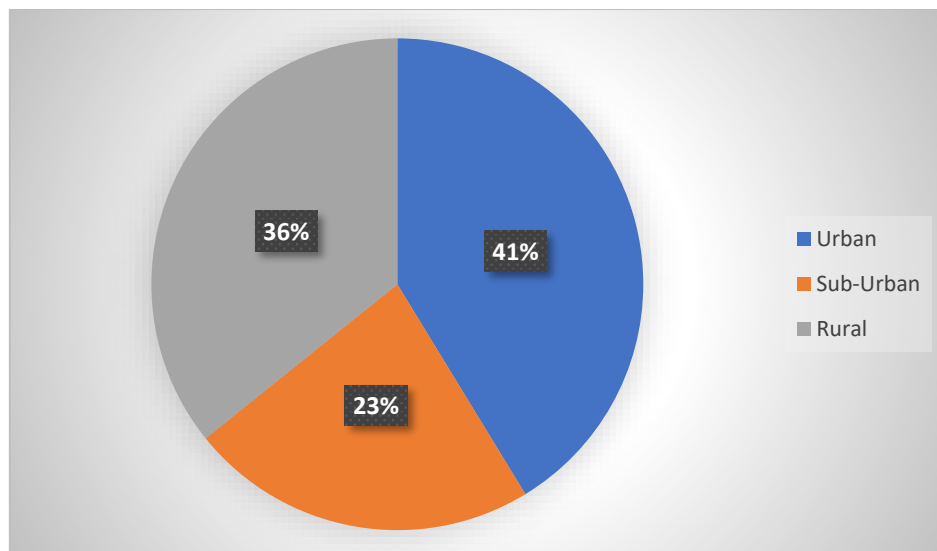


Figure 8- Percentage for Location

Most of the students are from urban areas 45% and sub-urban 25%.

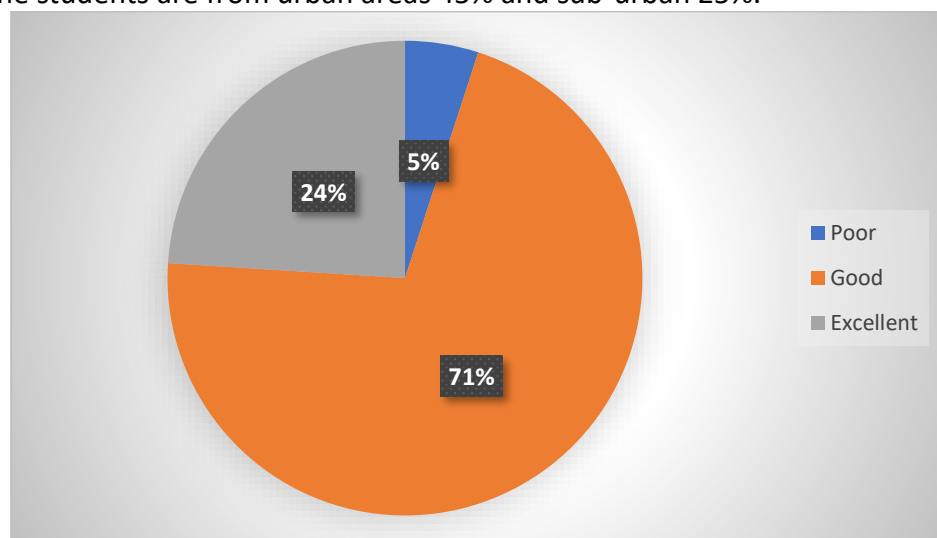


Figure 9- Percentage of Internet Access

Finally, the respondents were also asked to rate their internet connection quality during online studies. The majority had a good quality internet connection with the highest percentage of 71% and the least with poor internet connection quality, 5%. The end of very excellent internet connection quality shows a little bit different from good internet connection quality, which is only 24%.

Findings for Motivational Beliefs

This section presents data to answer research question 1: How do motivational beliefs influence the learning of Islamic studies online? In the context of this study, motivational beliefs refer to (a) Self-Efficacy, (b) Intrinsic value, and (c) Test anxiety.

(a) SELF-EFFICACY (9 items)

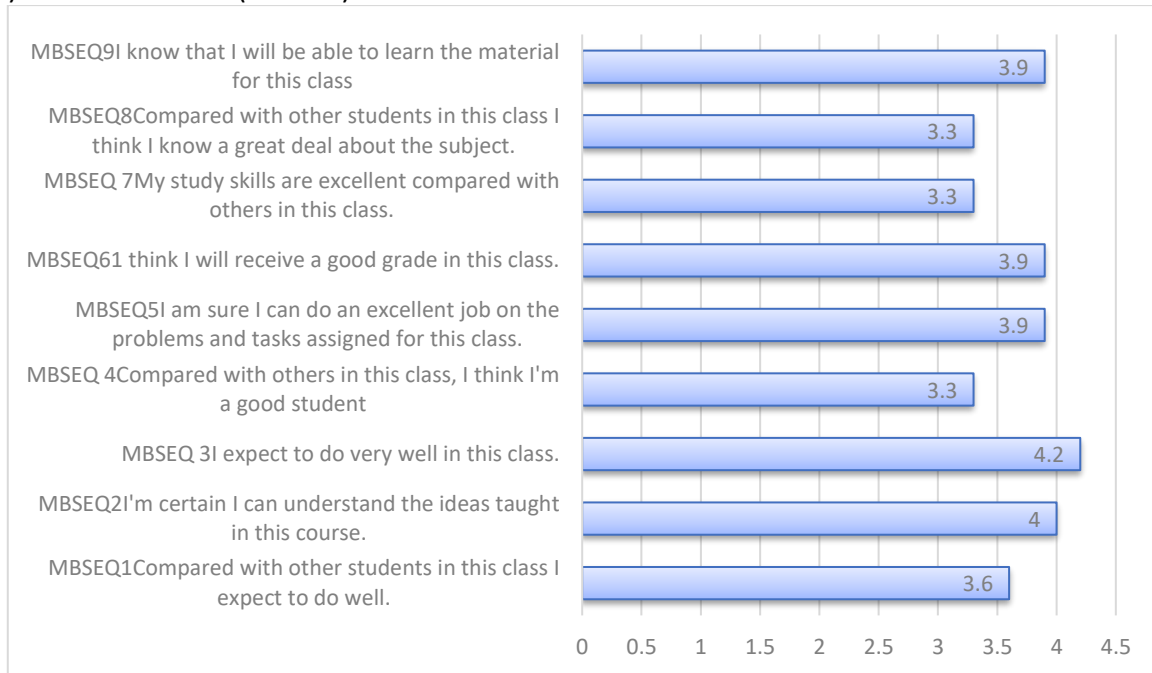


Figure 10- Mean for Self-Efficacy

Figure 10 shows nine conditions that reflect the self-efficiency among the students. The highest item of self-efficiency factor is the students can expect they can do well in this course with a mean of 4.2 and followed by the item the students can understand the ideas taught in the course with a mean of 4. According to the data, the three items were the same values which a mean value is 3.3. The items are students who believe they can do better than other students in the course.

(b) INTRINSIC VALUE (9 items)

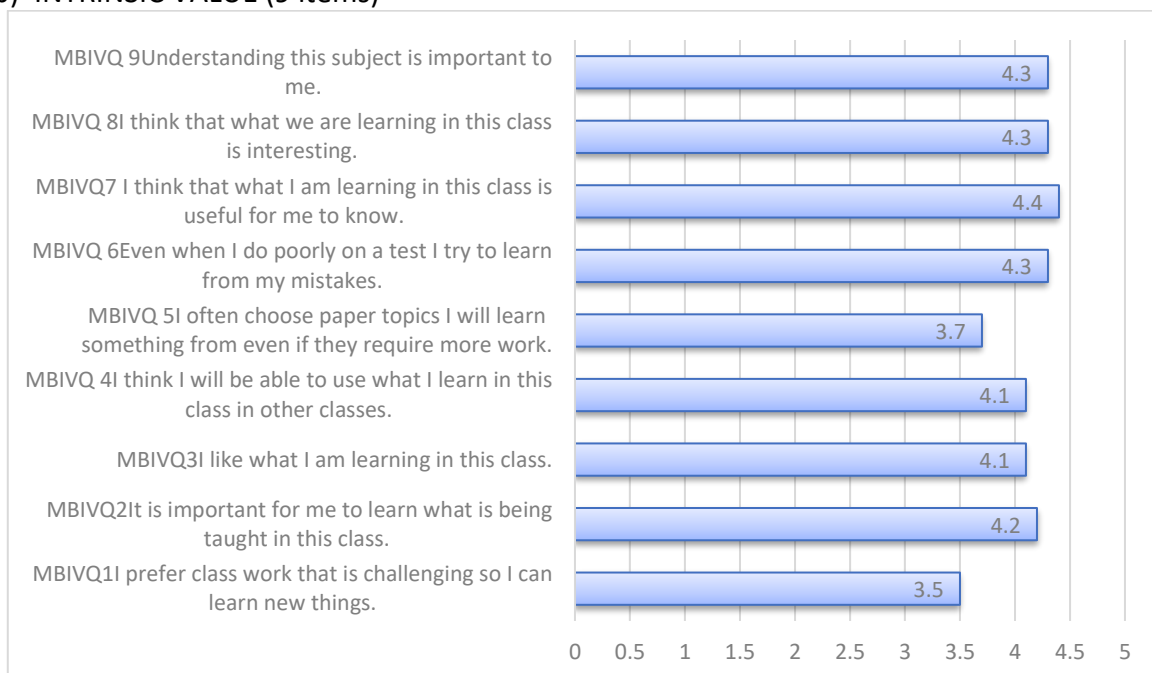


Figure 11- Mean for Intrinsic Value

The result in figure 11 shows that the majority of the items in this section got high mean scores of mean=4 and above. There are 9 items in this section, and only two of the items got a score (mean 3.5) and (mean 3.7). This proves that students have high intrinsic value in learning Islamic courses. The majority of the respondents have a responsibility and show interest in learning the subject very well. For example, for the highest item MBIVQ7 (mean score of 4.4) "I think that what I am learning in this class is useful for me to know ". for the item MBIVQ 8 "I think that what we are learning in this class is interesting" and item MBIVQ 9 "Understanding this subject is important to me" get an equal score (mean=4.3). The lowest score in this section is MBIVQ1 (mean 3.5) which is item no 1 "I prefer classwork that is challenging so I can learn new things". Even though the students have high intrinsic value, they don't prefer to do a challenging tasks in the class.

(c) TEST ANXIETY (4 items)

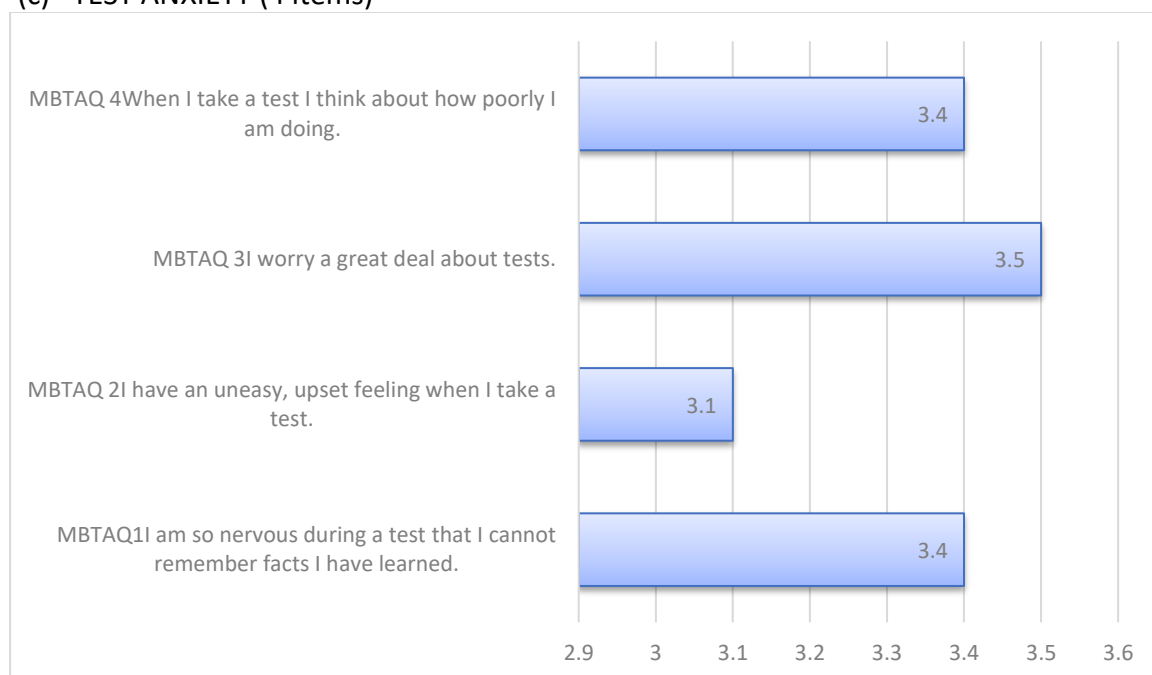


Figure 12- Mean for Test Anxiety

According to figure 12, the highest mean for test anxiety is the item the students feel worried about during the test session with a mean value of 3.5. The lowest score of test anxiety is an upset feeling when taking a test with a mean value of 3.1.

Findings for Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

This section answers research question 2: How do learners use self-regulated learning strategies in the learning of Islamic studies online? Self-regulated learning is presented in the form of (a)Cognitive strategy and (b)self-regulation.

(a)COGNITIVE STRATEGY USE (13 items)

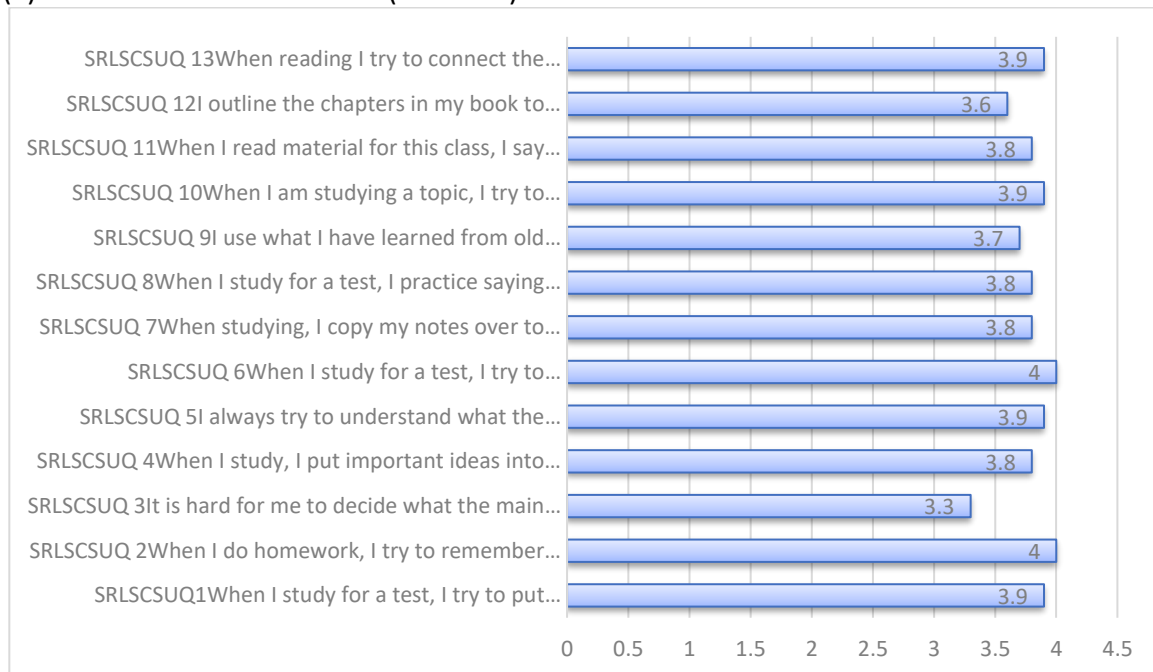


Figure 13- Mean for Cognitive Strategy Use

Results in figure 13 showed students moderately used SRLS in online Islamic Studies. Only two dimensions of SRLS achieved high values mean 4.0 for items "When I do homework, I try to remember what the teacher said in class so I can answer the questions correctly" and "When I study for a test, I try to remember as many facts as I can". Overall all items were on a scale of less than 4.0 and the lowest mean is "It is hard for me to decide what the main ideas are in what I read". Most of the students agreed to use a variety of cognitive SRLS as part of their SRL behaviour in online Islamic Studies (between 3.9 and 3.6 scales, see Figure 13).

1. SELF-REGULATION (9 items)

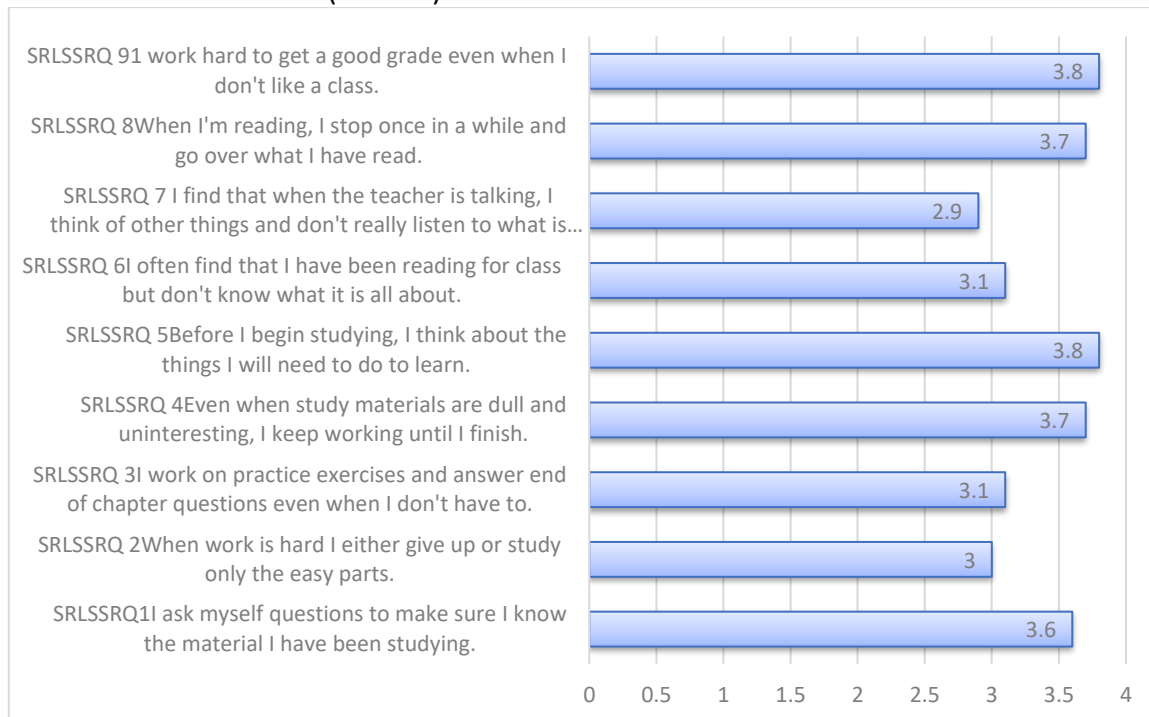


Figure 14- Mean for Self-Regulation

The last part of this study as shown in figure 14 is about self-regulation learning. There are 9 items in this section. The highest score is (mean=3.8) which is item SRLSSRQ 5 "Before I begin studying, I think about the things I will need to do to learn" and item SRLSSRQ 9 "I work hard to get a good grade even when I don't like a class". The majority of the students work hard in the class even though they don't like the course. The smallest score in this section is (mean=2.9) "I Find that when the teacher is talking, I think of other things and don't listen to what is being said". This shows the positive feedback from the student and shows that they are focused and committed in their class. All the students also show a good personality and commitment to learning Islamic studies courses.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings and Discussion

The major finding of this study is that students' motivation in learning Islam Education is most strongly influenced by intrinsic value. Students regard the knowledge learnt in Islamic Education as important and beneficial. This situation may be due to students' beliefs about the importance of Islamic knowledge in life as a Muslim. These internal values help students to focus their attention on appropriate actions to achieve learning goals (Yusuf & Tahir, 2017; Rahawarin et al., 2020). In addition, the nature of Islamic education guides ones' relationship with God, society and nature. The Islamic knowledge also reminds Muslim to do their best in the world in the preparation for the hereafter. Therefore, Islamic education classes provide many spiritual remembrances about the purpose of life as well as guidelines on how to live a real life (Fkrudin et al., 2020; Paad et al., 2015).

However, this study also clearly indicates that students do not prefer difficult activities when learning Islamic Education online. Students also believe that they are capable of doing their best for this course without feeling they are better compared to other students.

Throughout studying Islamic education online as well, students do not find taking any test as a problem that triggers anxiety or stress. With the advent of online learning, assessment has changed to a form of continuous assessment. The assignment involves group work and can be performed within a reasonable period with the guidance of the lecturer. By using the internet, students are able to search for information easily (Mansor & Jaharudin, 2020). Peer learning in virtual spaces across places also encourages students to stay motivated. This situation helps students reduce stress in facing final tests or exams (Segaran & Hasim, 2021).

This study also emphasizes on students' preference in applying cognitive strategies in learning Islamic education online. They choose to remember the main content and important facts. The aims and key learning objectives of the Islamic Education course are also clearly identified by students. Students also prefer to continue learning and refuse to easily give up when faced with a tough topic. By applying self-regulated learning, students develop the sense of responsibility for their learning process which helps them to be intrinsically motivated to achieve the goals they set for themselves (Daud et al., 2021; Hashim et al., 2020).

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Based on this study, lecturers can help to improve students' learning strategies by giving them challenging and doable assignments. In addition, it is also suggested for the lecturers to explain the purpose of the assignments and their relevance to students' learning. The explanation can further increase the internal motivation to study Islamic education and do the assignment enthusiastically. Lecturers can also encourage students to continue seeking knowledge with all sincerity because seeking knowledge is a form of worship and can bring goodness to themselves and the ummah (Nawi et al., 2015; Paad et al., 2015).

The study also reports that students focus a lot on the aspect of remembering as their learning strategies. Meanwhile, the nature of Islamic education also focuses on the practice and internalization of the knowledge learned in daily life. The Islamic Education courses at the university aim to build students' soft skills. Therefore, the assignments given in Islamic Education courses need to be creatively crafted to sharpen desired attributes in students such as ethical values, leadership, autonomy and responsibility so that students feel more meaningful and can practice Islamic values in life (Haziyah et al., 2021, Hamzah et al., 2019). The motivation of students should be driven towards improving their spirituality, being responsible for the environment and having a spirit of brotherhood among human beings by maintaining remembrance towards God (Ibrahim & Razak, 2021; Paad et al., 2015).

This study suggests that future studies should examine learning strategies that not only focus on the regulation of learning that develops cognitive aspects but also on the affective aspects. This is due to the affective aspect involving the formation of attitudes and values. The success of Islamic education lies in the effort to cultivate good manners and morals among students to become successful servants and caliphs of Allah in this world and the hereafter.

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