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Evaluation of HOTS-Based Questions in Islamic Cultural History at Insan Cendekia Boarding School Sukoharjo

***Fathya Khairunamira[1,a] Siti Rohimah[2,b]**
[1,2] Mamba'ul 'Ulum Islamic Institute, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia
[a]fathyakhairunamira@gmail.com, [b]sitirohimahalfirdaus62@gmail.com

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***Correspondence Author:**
fathyakhairunamira@gmail.com

Abstract

This study evaluates the quality of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions in the Islamic Cultural History (SKI) subject for grade VIII students at SMP Insan Cendekia Boarding School Sukoharjo during the 2023–2024 academic year. Despite the Ministry of Religious Affairs' initiative to promote HOTS-based assessments, their implementation in SKI examinations remains inconsistent. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The interviews explored teachers' challenges in developing HOTS questions, including their understanding of HOTS, prior experience in question formulation, and implementation difficulties. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. An analysis of 45 SKI exam questions revealed that none met HOTS criteria, with 39 classified under recall (C1) and 6 under comprehension (C2), while none reached application (C3) or higher. These findings indicate that the SKI exam does not align with HOTS development criteria, as it predominantly consists of lower-order thinking questions. Consequently, students rely on rote memorization rather than developing critical, analytical, and evaluative thinking skills. This study highlights the need to revise assessment frameworks and enhance teachers' capacity in designing HOTS-based questions to foster deeper and more contextualized learning in Islamic history.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational assessment plays a pivotal role in measuring individuals' comprehension, skills, and development within a specific domain. Moreover, assessments provide valuable feedback to both students and educators, facilitating improvements in the learning process. The process of collecting, analyzing, and presenting data to support informed decision-making is referred to as evaluation (Magdalena & Kumarani, 2023).

Beyond individual evaluation, assessment also plays a crucial role in broader decision-making processes, such as curriculum review, education policy formulation, and professional field

selection. However, assessments are often perceived as separate from the learning process, which can lead to reduced student engagement. When students view assessments merely as formal requirements rather than integral to their learning journey, their participation in class diminishes, and their competencies are not fully utilized. Consequently, this disconnect may result in a sense of boredom and disengagement (Nurlitasari & Hamami, 2023). When implemented effectively, assessment can enhance both learning outcomes and overall educational quality in a sustainable manner. However, in the context of Islamic Education (PAI), the absence of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions remains a significant challenge. This issue stems from several factors, including limited teacher comprehension of HOTS-based assessments, an overemphasis on rote memorization, an overly dense curriculum, and insufficient training and support resources. Addressing these challenges is essential to fostering critical thinking and deeper learning among students.

According to (Komarudin 2016), assessment is an activity carried out to provide a variety of information on an ongoing basis about the processes and results achieved by students. A thorough assessment covers three learning domains: knowledge, attitudes and skills. The achievement of learning outcomes is important for evaluating learning completeness and measuring the effectiveness of learning, so the purpose of assessment must be carried out in a structured and systematic manner (Asfiyah, 2021).

According to initial observations and brief interviews with several teachers, the main challenges in developing HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) questions are a lack of a thorough understanding of the concept itself, a lack of appropriate question references, and the difficulty in designing questions that encourage analysis, evaluation, and creation. Furthermore, teachers encounter obstacles in adjusting questions to students' various levels of ability, as well as a lack of time to prepare and test questions before using them in the classroom. High-level thinking abilities in the cognitive domain include students' capacity to analyze (C4), evaluate (C5), and create or innovate (C6), all of which are advanced stages of low-level thinking skills consisting of students' ability to recall (C1), comprehend (C2), and apply.

However, there are still imbalances in the application of assessment, especially in the affective domain. Many educators tend to emphasize results, so affective and psychomotor aspects are often ignored (Rifa'i, 2023). The low critical thinking skills of students are also caused by the habit of teachers who only measure basic skills (Aripin, 2018). This is reinforced by (Arikunto, 2013) which states that assessment questions must be at a balanced level of difficulty in order to stimulate student effort. In this context, Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 66 of 2013 emphasizes the importance of comprehensive authentic assessment.

The transition from the 2013 curriculum to an autonomous curriculum in Indonesia, including the subject of Islamic Religious Education, has resulted in a considerable shift in learning evaluation (Ilham Fahmi et al., 2023). The assessment standards in Curriculum 2013 emphasize the importance of items that have a degree of HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills). The 2013 learning activities curriculum intends to prepare Indonesians to live as faithful, productive, creative, inventive, and affective individuals and citizens capable of contributing to the life of society, nation, state, and global civilization (Ahmad, 2020). Thus, the government seeks to improve the quality of education through curriculum development that adopts an international standardized assessment model, which emphasizes higher order thinking skills.

Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are high-level thinking abilities that include analysis, evaluation, and creation (C4-C6 in Bloom's taxonomy) (Setiawati, 2019). HOTS-based assessment can be a solution to improve the quality of education and students' learning motivation, as it links the subject matter with the real-world context. The implementation of HOTS is expected to shape students' ability to think critically, creatively, and innovatively, and find solutions to complex problems (Setiawati, 2019).

The Directorate of Islamic Education at the Ministry of Religious Affairs has developed HOTS-based assessment as part of the implementation of assessment standards for Islamic Religious Education subjects at the junior high school level. This study provides a distinct viewpoint as one of the first to examine the use of HOTS evaluation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in a pesantren context, specifically at Insan Cendekia Boarding School. Unlike earlier research, this study delves deeply into how teachers develop learning objectives and evaluation indicators, highlighting the problems they face. Furthermore, it uses a special analytical method to analyze question design, providing new insights into the efficacy of HOTS-based exams in developing higher-order thinking skills among students.

According to (Halimah, 2021) study examines the application of the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMAN 2 Pasuruan using a descriptive qualitative method. Data is gathered from teachers, students, principals, and learning documentation. The study's findings indicate that the implementation. Previous research on HOTS in public schools has demonstrated the usefulness of this technique in enhancing students' critical thinking skills in a range of topics. However, this study addresses a vacuum by investigating the use of HOTS in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at Islamic boarding schools, which are characterized by religious values-based education. With an emphasis on the pesantren environment, this study investigates how the HOTS technique can be utilized in a more moral and spiritual context, as well as how it contributes to improving Islamic

understanding and changing students' conduct in daily life.

Based on this background, this study entitled "Analysis of Higher Order Thinking Skills Questions in Islamic Religious Education Subjects for Class VIII Students of SMP Insan Cendekia Boarding School Sukoharjo in the 2023/2024 Academic Year" aims to evaluate the quality of HOTS questions in Islamic Religious Education subjects at the school. The study aims to identify whether HOTS questions in PAI learning comprise analysis, evaluation, and creation skills according to Bloom's taxonomy, as well as their complexity and relevance to the HOTS standards used in the curriculum. As a result, this study provides a full picture of the quality of HOTS questions as well as their effectiveness in motivating students to think critically. This research is expected to contribute to improving the quality of education and the effectiveness of learning at Insan Cendekia Junior High School.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected directly from Insan Cendekia Boarding School Sukoharjo. According to Sugiyono (2013), a descriptive qualitative approach enables researchers to explore social phenomena comprehensively, both in breadth and depth. This research method focuses on gathering descriptive data in the form of written and spoken words from individuals, as well as observed behaviors. Data collection techniques include interviews, non-participant observations, documentation, and test instruments (Sutikno, 2019).

Qualitative descriptive research aims to describe and analyze symptoms, phenomena, particular occurrences, and specific groups (Halimah, 2021). Through this approach, researchers describe and analyze the data that has been collected through data collection stages such as observation, interviews, and documentation conducted at Insan Cendekia Boarding School Sukoharjo Junior High School.

The research was conducted at Insan Cendekia Boarding School Sukoharjo Junior High School, a school under Al-Mujtaba Indonesia Foundation, which is located at Jl. Ovensari, Kadilangu, Baki, Dusun I, Kadilangu, Sukoharjo, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java 57556. This location was chosen because Insan Cendekia Boarding School has implemented HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) in learning and assessment activities, especially in Islamic Religious Education subjects. The research began with preliminary observations and interviews on March 10, 2024, followed by more detailed research from July to August 2024.

The subject of this research is the 8th grade Islamic Religious Education subject teacher at Insan Cendekia Boarding School Sukoharjo Junior High School. The informants in this study included one principle, three PAI teachers in charge of preparing evaluation questions, and many grade VIII students from SMP Insan Cendekia Boarding School Sukoharjo. The criteria for selecting informants include their experience and involvement in the learning process, as well as the evaluation of HOTS in PAI subjects. The

principal was picked because he was familiar with the school's education policy, and the PAI instructor was chosen because of their involvement in formulating and implementing the assessment questions. Grade VIII students were chosen to determine the extent to which they had encountered HOTS-based learning and how it affected their critical thinking skills.

Data collection techniques in this study include interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with oral questions to research subjects to obtain data directly (Sugiyono, 2015). Researchers used structured interviews, preparing research instruments in the form of written questions to obtain the views of the interviewees regarding the quality of HOTS questions in Islamic Religious Education subjects.

This study used a non-participant observation method, in which the researcher observes without actively participating in the discussion or analysis of the problem with the teacher. Furthermore, this study includes documentation analysis, namely 45 final semester test questions in the subject of Islamic Cultural History class VIII. Data was also gathered through direct interviews with informants, lasting approximately 30-45 minutes per session, to acquire a thorough knowledge of the preparation and application of HOTS questions in learning. In addition, documentation techniques were used to collect written and recorded information relevant to the research (Aryani, 2022).

Checking the validity of the data is necessary so that the research results can be scientifically accounted for. In this study, researchers used the triangulation technique, which involves checking data from various sources, techniques, and time (Sugiyono, 2013). Source triangulation is done by verifying data from different sources; technique triangulation is done by using various data collection techniques on the same source; and time triangulation is done by checking data at different times and situations (Sugiyono, 2013).

Data analysis involved classifying interview data depending on the major subject, such as teachers' grasp of HOTS, experience assembling questions, and implementation issues. Observations were classified based on the pattern of applying HOTS in learning, and documentation was reviewed to determine the cognitive level distribution of questions using Bloom's taxonomy. During the verification step, the results of interviews, observations, and documentation are compared to determine the adequacy of the teacher's understanding, question preparation procedures, and question quality, resulting in more valid and thorough conclusions. Data reduction involves summarizing and selecting key points to look for appropriate patterns and themes. Data presentation is presented thematically to facilitate understanding. Finally, data verification is used to find clear and credible research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The concept of HOTS in Bloom's Taxonomy

According to Anderson & Krathwohl in Primayana (2019) thinking skills that need to be developed by students are divided into two kinds of skills, namely

higher order thinking skills and lower order thinking skills. High-level thinking skills in the cognitive domain include students' ability to analyze (C4), evaluate (C5), and create or invent (C6), all of which are advanced stages of low-level thinking skills consisting of students' skills in remembering (C1), understanding (C2), and applying (C3). HOTS prioritizes learning that stimulates students to have the reasoning of knowing how, while LOTS is more about knowing what. Higher order thinking skills require complex learning skills such as critical thinking, creativity and problem solving. (Anderson, L.W., & Krathwohl, 2017) classifies the dimensions of thinking (cognitive) as follows:

Cognitive Processes According to the Cognitive Levels of Bloom's Taxonomy Revised:

1. HOTS Categories
   a. Create (C6)
      1) Create one's own ideas.
      2) Verbs: construct, design, create, develop, write, formulate.
   b. Evaluate (C5)
      1) Making one's own decision
      2) Verbs: evaluate, judge, support, decide, choose, support.
   c. Analyze (C4)
      1) Specify aspects/elements.
      2) Verbs: compare, examine, criticize, test.
2. LOTS category
   a. Applying (C3)
      1) Using information in different domains
      2) Verbs: use, demonstrate, illustrate, operate.
   b. Understanding (C2)
      1) Explaining ideas/concepts
      2) Verbs: explain, classify, accept, report.
   c. Knowing (C1)
      1) Recalling
      2) Verbs: recall, list, repeat, imitate.

HOTS questions should measure the ability to analyze (Analyzing-C4), evaluate (Evaluating-C5), and create (Creating-C6). In line with (Abduh, 2019) the indicators in the Bloom Revised Taxonomy levels that are included in the HOTS category, namely: analyzing (C4), which is decomposing information into certain parts and determining or explaining how these parts can be related, evaluating (C5), which is evaluating according to goals that make judgments based on standards or criteria, and creating (C6), which is putting elements together to form new patterns and structures.

In this discussion section, the researcher will explain the HOTS analysis data on the Final Semester Examination questions of Islamic Cultural History subject in class VIII of Insan Cendekia Boarding School Sukoharjo Junior High School. HOTS analysis refers to the revised Bloom's Taxonomy KKO. The analysis shows that the questions tend to be in the low category (C1-C2) because of the teacher's limited understanding of HOTS and the habit of compiling memorization-based questions. As a result, students are less trained in critical thinking, analyzing, and evaluating concepts in depth. To improve the quality

of the questions so that they are included in the HOTS category, teachers can change questions that only test memory to questions that require analysis (C4). In the text of the Final Semester Examination questions, there are 45 questions on Islamic Culture History, 25 multiple choice questions, 10 matching questions, 5 true false questions, 5 description questions and the analysis can be seen as follows:

1. The Abbasid dynasty was a dynasty that was very advanced in science. The characteristics of the progress of science in the Abbasid era are ...
   a. Many books and libraries
   b. There was no educational institutions
   c. The level of desire to read is low
   d. There is no appreciation for researchers
2. The branches of science that developed in the Abbasid era were very advanced and rapid, both general science and religious science, one of which was the science of Hadith, Hadith Science in language means ...
   a. Hisab
   b. Falak
   c. New or news
   d. Tafsir
3. The definition of a science is usually peeled from two meanings, namely linguistically and in terms, as for the science of Hadith in terms of ...
   a. Understanding Islamic law
   b. Everything that happened in the past
   c. All the behavior of the prophet Muhammad in the form of words deeds and decrees
   d. All the actions of the prophets
4. When the prophet Muhammad died, he left two things for his ummah so that they would not go astray. What are the two things that are used as two sources of law in Islam as a guide for the ummah of the Prophet Muhammad ...
   a. Fiqh and monotheism
   b. Siroh and mawaris
   c. Qur'an and sunnah
   d. Dictionary and atlas
5. Each branch of science during the Abbasid era had figures who were experts in their fields. There were two scholars of Hadith in the Abbasid era, namely ...
   a. Umar and Abu bakar
   b. Bukhori and Muslim
   c. Ibnu Sina and Al-Farobi
   d. Al-Ghozali and Ibnu Khuldun

Based on the questions, this is the fundamental information covered in Islamic studies. This question falls under the C1 category "Remembering" and the category of "LOTS" questions since it just asks pupils to remember or recognize basic facts without demanding analysis.

Recap of Problem Analysis Results

End of Semester Exam		
Question Types	**LOTS**	**HOTS**
Multiple Choice	35	25
Matching Questions	10	10
True/False	5	5
Description	5	5

Based on the analysis that the researchers have conducted on the Final Semester Examination questions for class VIII in the 2023/2024 academic year at

Insan Cendekia Boarding School Sukoharjo Junior High School regarding HOTS questions in Islamic Cultural History, there are 25 multiple choice questions, 10 matching questions, 5 true/false questions and 5 description questions. Of the 45 questions, there were no questions that met the criteria for developing HOTS questions, 39 questions fell into the category of remembering (C1) and 6 questions fell into the category of understanding (C2). Researchers analyzed the level of suitability of the cognitive domain based on the Operational Verbs (KKO) of Bloom's Taxonomy. Thus, it can be seen which questions are included in the realm of remembering (C1), understanding (C2), applying (C3), analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6).

The following is an example of HOTS questions for Islamic Cultural History class VIII:

1. One of the great achievements of the Abbasid Dynasty was the establishment of the Baitul Hikmah. What was the role of this institution in preserving the intellectual heritage of previous civilizations such as Greece and Persia?
   a. Archiving ancient manuscripts from other civilizations without studying them
   b. Translating and developing the scientific thoughts of various civilizations
   c. Isolating Islamic civilization from outside cultural influences
   d. Only studying works in Arabic

   This question belongs to the C4 (Analysis) category because this question requires students to analyze the relationship between Baitul Hikmah and the intellectual heritage of other civilizations. Students not only recall historical facts but also evaluate how the institution facilitated the transfer of knowledge across civilizations.
2. The Abbasid dynasty is known as the golden age of Islamic civilization due to various scientific advances. What was one of the main causes of the rapid development of science at that time?
   a. Support from the public who funded scientists
   b. Openness of the government to foreign cultures and sciences
   c. Restriction of science to matters related to religion
   d. Lack of competition with other civilizations

   This question belongs to the C4 (Analysis) category because students must analyze the factors that encouraged intellectual progress during the Abbasid period. They are asked to understand the effect of openness on scientific and cultural progress.
3. Why was the Abbasid dynasty able to extend its political influence to areas far from Baghdad?
   a. Full support from ethnic Arabs
   b. A political strategy that incorporated various ethnic groups
   c. Relying on a large military force
   d. Avoiding alliances with neighboring kingdoms

   This question belongs to the C4 (Analysis) category because this

question requires students to analyze the political strategies used by the Abbasid Dynasty to maintain and expand its influence. This requires a deep understanding of the social and political dynamics of the time.

4. How did the change of capital from Damascus to Baghdad affect the economic and cultural development during the Abbasid Dynasty?
   a. Restricting trade with other kingdoms
   b. Improving trade and cultural relations between regions
   c. Strengthening the military focus in the region
   d. Reduce trade activities with the West

   This question falls into the C4 (Analysis) category as students must analyze the geographical impact of moving the capital on the economy and culture. This involves analytical thinking about how Baghdad's strategic location encouraged cultural exchange and international trade.
5. At the end of the Abbasid Dynasty, there were various rebellions and social unrest. In your opinion, was the Abbasid Dynasty's political policy in dealing with the rebellions appropriate? Explain why.
   a. Appropriate, because it relied on strong military power
   b. Inappropriate, because there was no effort to reduce social discontent
   c. Appropriate, because it was able to suppress rebellion quickly
   d. Inappropriate, because it focused more on territorial expansion than internal stability.

   This question belongs to the C5 (Evaluation) category because it asks students to evaluate the Abbasid Dynasty's political policies in dealing with internal crises, involving critical thinking skills about the effectiveness of the government's strategy at the time.
6. Was the policy of translating Greek and Persian works into Arabic during the Abbasid Dynasty the right decision? Give your assessment.
   a. It was right because it enriched the knowledge of the Islamic world.
   b. Not right, because it eliminated the original identity of Islamic culture
   c. Appropriate, because it increased the political influence of the Abbasid Dynasty
   d. Inappropriate, because it focused only on the development of religious knowledge.

   This question belongs to the C5 (Evaluation) category because students are asked to evaluate the intellectual policies that played a role in shaping Islamic civilization during the Abbasid period. This requires judgment based on historical evidence about the long-term impact of the policy.
7. How would you assess the influence of the Abbasid Dynasty on the development of science in Europe during the Renaissance?

a. Not significant, because Europe developed without the help of the Islamic world
b. Very big, because Europe took a lot of knowledge from the translation of Arabic works
c. Considerable, but did not dominate European intellectual development
d. Very small, because Europe had different sources of knowledge

This question is included in the C5 (Evaluation) category because this question asks students to evaluate the relationship between Islamic civilization and the development of science in Europe. Students must be able to relate the role of the Islamic world to intellectual progress in Europe.

8. Was the Abbasid dynasty's decision to prioritize science over military expansion the right step in strengthening the empire?
   a. Yes, because it strengthened the intellectual foundation of civilization
   b. Inappropriate, because it weakened military power
   c. Appropriate, because it enables the development of a science-based economy
   d. Inappropriate, because it caused internal divisions

   This question is categorized as C5 (Evaluation) because it requires students to evaluate the Abbasid Dynasty's strategic decision to prioritize the development of science over the military, requiring students to weigh the benefits and risks.
9. If you were a leader during the late Abbasid dynasty, what would you do to prevent the decline of the dynasty? Choose the best strategy and explain why you chose it.
   a. Strengthen the military forces and avoid alliances with neighboring kingdoms
   b. Increase trade and improve diplomatic relations with other kingdoms
   c. Reduced taxes to appease the people, even though it reduced the kingdom's revenue
   d. Focus on territorial expansion to gain additional resources

   This question falls into the C6 (Creation) category as it requires students to come up with creative new solutions to prevent the decline of the dynasty. This requires the ability to synthesize thinking and consider various political, economic, and social factors.
10. If you were a scientist during the Abbasid Dynasty, how would you promote the importance of science to the wider society?
    a. Write a book explaining the practical benefits of science in everyday life
    b. Opening free schools for the poor
    c. Promoting science only to the elite
    d. Teaching science in military forums

    This question belongs to the C6 (Creation) category because students are required to create new ways of

promoting knowledge to society. This question involves creativity in designing relevant and effective solutions in the context of the history of the Abbasid Dynasty.

The results of this study reveal the dominance of LOTS (C1-C2) questions, which contradicts (Anderson & Krathwohl's 2017) approach, which highlights the necessity of higher-level thinking abilities, including analysis (C4), assessment (C5), and creativity (C6). There were few, if any, questions in this study that pushed students to examine and evaluate, which is what HOTS should be all about. As a result, pupils receive less training in critical thinking and problem-solving techniques. To improve the quality of the questions, they must be designed more methodically so that they not only test memory but also sharpen students' analysis and evaluation skills in accordance with HOTS guidelines.

The study by (Salsabila, 2024) examine the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the Islamic Cultural History (SKI) subject at MI Salafiyah Tanjungsari reveal that there are challenges, particularly in terms of teacher readiness and the availability of learning materials. These findings are consistent with recent study on the use of HOTS in SKI subject assessments, which discovered that most test questions still rely on low-level thinking skills (LOTS) and do not fulfill HOTS requirements. The primary reasons for the failure to use HOTS in assessment are limited teacher understanding and a lack of training. Therefore, the results of this study reflect earlier findings that, without sufficient training and resource support, implementing HOTS-based methodologies in SKI learning and assessment remains challenging to achieve optimally.

The prevalence of LOTS in education can have a considerable impact on student comprehension, particularly in courses like Islamic Cultural History (SKI). If learning is primarily focused on LOTS, kids are more likely to memorize facts rather than understanding cause-and-effect linkages or the deep significance of historical events. As a result, students' critical capacity for assessing the evolution of Islamic history is limited, and they are less able to connect historical events to current social, political, and cultural circumstances. Characteristics of LOTS Questions since LOTS questions simply need retaining the memory of information that has been taught, generally the questions that emerge are more directed to the definition of theory or idea alone, the form of the questions presented is usually easy to respond (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Previous study has confirmed that HOTS has a vital role in enhancing critical, logical, and reflective thinking skills, helping students to perceive history as a process that can bring insights into the future.

Building on constructivist-based learning concepts, an assessment is required to enhance the quality of HOTS evaluation in learning. Research indicates that real-world problem-solving, case studies, and research-based projects are more successful than rote-based examinations at gauging analytical, evaluative, and creative skills. In order for

assessments to gauge students' comprehension of more than simply facts, it is also essential that teachers receive ongoing training on how to create questions that are based on HOTS. Employing a variety of evaluation tools gives educators a thorough picture of their students' development and may help them comprehend how pupils think and pick up new abilities (Mahanal, 2019). By incorporating technology into assessments, such as through the use of digital platform-based debates or simulations, students' critical and reflective thinking abilities can be enhanced, better equipping them to handle the difficulties of the increasingly complex digital age.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal important insights into the nature of assessments in Islamic Cultural History (SKI). An analysis of 45 questions in the SKI assessment, consisting of 25 multiple-choice questions, 10 matching questions, 5 true/false questions, and 5 descriptive questions, indicates a lack of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-oriented questions. Specifically, none of the questions met the criteria for HOTS development, with 39 questions categorized under remembering (C1) and the remaining 6 classified under understanding (C2).

The absence of HOTS-based questions in the SKI assessment has significant implications for learning quality. The predominance of lower-order thinking skills (LOTS), particularly remembering (C1) and understanding (C2), leads students to rely primarily on rote memorization rather than engaging in analytical, evaluative, and creative thinking. As a result, they face difficulties in drawing connections between historical events and contemporary social, political, and cultural contexts, limiting their ability to critically engage with historical knowledge.

These findings underscore the extent to which the current SKI assessment framework fails to meet HOTS criteria, as stated in the research objectives. The overemphasis on LOTS-based questions (C1 and C2) suggests that the evaluation process has not effectively cultivated students' higher-order thinking abilities, which are essential for deep learning. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive revision of the assessment design to align more closely with HOTS principles. Furthermore, strengthening teachers' capacity to develop assessments that encourage a more analytical and contextualized understanding of Islamic history is imperative. Enhancing these aspects will contribute to a more meaningful learning experience and better prepare students for complex cognitive challenges in both academic and real-world contexts.

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