The Psychological Issues Encountered by Students in Learning English Within the Pesantren Environment

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Article Info	Abstract
	The prominence of the English language in various global domains has positioned it as the most dominant international language. However, learning English, especially within Islamic boarding schools ("pesantren"), presents unique challenges. This study focuses on the psychological issues faced by students when learning English within the pesantren context. Three significant psychological problems were identified through observations and interviews with 30 students: lack of learning motivation, lack of self-confidence, and excessive anxiety. Firstly, the lack of learning motivation stems from factors like academic boredom, inadequate understanding of material relevance, and perceived irrelevance of English. This study emphasizes the negative correlation between learning motivation and academic performance, highlighting the need for engaging teaching methods. Secondly, the lack of self-confidence affects students' academic performance. Social comparisons and feelings of inadequacy due to past experiences hinder students' self-assurance. Psychological support programs are necessary to bolster self-confidence and overcome these challenges. Thirdly, excessive anxiety in the academic environment adversely impacts students' performance. The correlation between anxiety levels and academic performance underscores the importance of holistic approaches to manage anxiety. Creating a relaxed environment, offering counseling support, and teaching stress management skills can assist students in coping effectively. The study highlights the crucial role of addressing psychological challenges to enhance students' academic performance. Teachers, institutions, and counselors should collaborate to address learning motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, optimizing students' potential within a supportive educational context

Introduction

The mastery of the English language is not only regarded as an additional skill nowadays but also as an essential necessity for individuals to confront the challenges and

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opportunities presented in this modern era. The fact, many Islamic students (Santri) do not have enough capability in English. This is supported by research conducted by (Kamaliasari & Amrizal, 2021) which examined English learning activities in Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren). From this research, the findings indicated that the students (santri) tended to speak English less and were more inclined to use Arabic. Some of the students also struggled with pronouncing English vocabulary correctly, and the correction of errors was not very effective. The importance of an in-depth comprehension of various English language skills lies in the development of the most effective approaches for both teaching and learning these skills.

English has firmly established itself as the most dominant international language across various facets of global life. Serving as a universal means of communication, the English language opens doors to opportunities in the realms of education, business, technology, arts, and cross-cultural interactions. (Lauder, 2008) further elucidates that the "expanding" or "extending circle" pertains to nations that acknowledge the significance of English as a global language, even though they were not colonized by countries belonging to the "inner circle" and have not granted English any distinct official status. In these nations, English is imparted as a foreign language. Indonesia falls within this category.

The ever-evolving technological advancements and teaching methodologies offer diverse ways to optimize learning, ranging from interactive media utilization to project-based learning methods. In an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, proficiency in the English language has become a key to accessing opportunities, engaging in cross-cultural communication, and enhancing competitiveness across various domains. The process of learning English involves the cultivation of four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills collectively form a robust foundation for effective communication in the English language. These four English language skills are interdependent and play pivotal roles in effective communication. The development of each skill necessitates practice, perseverance, and a profound understanding of the structure and conventions of the English language. In an educational context, a well-balanced and integrated instruction of these four skills is paramount in producing proficient English language learners.

In the current era of globalization and interconnectivity, the English language has emerged as one of the most pivotal languages in cross-cultural communication, the realm of knowledge, and professional careers. Kachru and Smith (2008) affirm that amid the epoch

of globalization and the swift dissemination of knowledge, all nations are cognizant of the imperative to equip their populace with skills that ensure their prosperity and prominence on the global stage. Across various countries, including Indonesia, the acquisition of the English language has seamlessly integrated into the educational curriculum. However, despite the widespread recognition of the significance of English, it is undeniable that numerous learners encounter psychological challenges during the process of mastering this language. The psychological dilemmas that learners confront while acquiring the English language encompass multifarious aspects, spanning from motivational factors and self-confidence to feelings of anxiety and fear of failure. Learners often grapple with pressure when confronted with the demands of acquiring a language as intricate and dynamically evolving as English. These challenges hold the potential to exert profound implications on learning performance, self-perception as learners, and ultimately hinder their progression in comprehending and proficiently employing the English language. (Tambunsaribu & Simatupang, 2021) confirmed that students found the problems in learning English in various aspects. They are primarily challenging subjects, negative teacher influences and self-perception such as they got confusing in learning English, they dislike English subject and they consider that English is not important.

Learning English extends beyond merely comprehending grammatical structures or memorizing vocabulary. It is a process that encompasses the acquisition of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, along with an understanding of the cultural context embedded within the language. For many individuals, learning English represents an engaging challenge, yet it can also evolve into a perplexing or intimidating experience. One of the key factors influencing psychological challenges in learning English is the teaching method employed. Approaches that are not aligned with individual learning styles can lead to feelings of frustration and confusion. Additionally, negative perceptions of language proficiency can also emerge due to past negative experiences, whether in the form of unfavourable assessments or experiences of feeling incompetent in English communication. The importance of a deep understanding of the psychological issues faced by learners in learning English not only impacts classroom teaching improvement but also opens doors for the development of more effective strategies and interventions. By identifying the roots of psychological issues, educators can design a more holistic and supportive learning approach, while also providing emotional support to learners in need. (Jannah & Wuli Fitriati, 2016) supported that psychological problems faced by the year-eleven students in MA Nurul

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Ittihad Demak in speaking English were: 1) most of the students were afraid of making mistakes because they were afraid if they cannot convey the message clearly and being ridiculed by their friends; 2) most of them were shy because they felt that they did not have good pronunciation and they were also ashamed if their friends laugh off their wrong pronunciation; 3) most of them were anxious because when they spoke English, all of their friends" eyes looked at them and gave full attention to them, including their teacher.

As an English teacher at Mts Sunan Drajat Lamongan, it was noticed that some students seem reluctant to speak English especially in the classroom. Mts Sunan Drajat is an Islamic high school located in Drajat Lamongan. From my intimate conversation with the principal, most of the students at this school come from a difficult situation. They have a high level of family education but never take extra lessons outside of school, such as English and math. Therefore, they have difficulty learning English subjects at school. They are also not very motivated study especially in English. Observations was conducted at this school and found that most students do not speak English. During English teaching process especially the eighth graders of Mts Sunan Drajat, it was found that most of them has psychological problems in learning English.

The science of psychology is the investigation of how people and other creatures think and act in relation to their surroundings. Psychological issues are those that frequently affect one's mental or physical well-being. According to (Juhana, 2012) there are five kinds of psychological problems. They are;

Fear of mistakes

The fear of making mistakes is called "atychiphobia". Atychiphobia is an irrational and persistent fear of failure or making mistakes, which can cause the individual to avoid new experiences, challenges or tasks to avoid the possibility of making mistakes. This fear can have a significant impact on self-esteem, confidence, and overall quality of life, as it interferes with personal growth and learning opportunities.

Shyness

Shyness refers to feelings of discomfort or apprehension in social situations, often accompanied by feelings of embarrassment, anxiety, and a tendency to avoid interactions with others. Shy people can have a hard time initiating or engaging in conversations, especially with people they don't know well. Shyness can manifest as a reluctance to speak up, make eye contact, or engage in attention-grabbing activities. It is important to note that shyness is a common and natural human emotion and many people experience it to varying

degrees. While shyness can limit social interactions, it is not the same as social anxiety disorder, which involves a more intense and widespread fear of social situations that can affect significantly to everyday life.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal and natural human emotion that involves feelings of unease, worry, or fear in response to a perceived threat or stressful situation. It's a built-in response that prepares the body and mind to deal with challenges. However, when anxiety becomes excessive, persistent, and starts to interfere with daily life, it can develop into an anxiety disorder.

Lack of confidence

Lack of confidence refers to a situation where an individual experiences a lack of self-assurance or belief in their own abilities, skills, or judgment. It's characterized by feelings of self-doubt, insecurity, and a general sense of not being capable or competent in various aspects of life. People who lack confidence may avoid taking on new challenges or opportunities, second-guess themselves frequently, and may have difficulty asserting themselves in social or professional situations.

Lack of confidence can be caused by various factors, including past failures, negative self-perception, comparison to others, external criticism, or a lack of positive feedback and validation. It's important to note that lack of confidence is a common human experience and can affect anyone at different times in their lives.

Lack of motivation.

Lack of motivation refers to a state where an individual experiences a lack of enthusiasm, energy, or desire to engage in activities or pursue goals. It's characterized by a lack of drive or initiative to take action, often resulting in procrastination, avoidance of tasks, and a feeling of being stuck or unmotivated.

Learning foreign languages, especially English, in the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is undoubtedly quite distinct from learning in regular schools, English course, and similar institutions. Learning English within a pesantren environment presents its own set of challenges and difficulties. It's no surprise, as students at pesantren, referred to as "santri," bear a heavier load compared to students outside this environment. Aside from learning English, santri also have mandatory activities such as Quranic studies, among others. Consequently, they lack sufficient time for foreign language learning, particularly English. The differences in the approaches to teaching English among regular schools,

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English course, and Islamic boarding schools reflect disparities in educational contexts and goals. Madrasah, as formal educational institutions, generally follow official curricula that integrate English language learning with other subjects. The educational scope within madrasas is more diverse, encompassing various scholarly aspects, whereas the educational environment within pesantren is less comprehensive. In line with the aforementioned points, (Amirudin, 2019) in his study also emphasizes the role of the language environment in the acquisition of English within the pesantren setting. His study demonstrates that foreign language learners within the pesantren environment show lower proficiency in communication skills.

Meanwhile, in Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren), the approach to teaching English tends to be more focused on understanding religious texts in English. Here, the main objective is for the santri (boarding school students) to comprehend religious teachings through original texts in English, such as the Quran or hadith. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the ability to read and understand religious content in English. This reflects the role of the pondok pesantren as an institution that combines religious education and formal education, providing instruction within the framework of cultural and religious traditions. In certain contexts, English language instruction in pondok pesantren can also serve as a tool to broaden the santri's perspectives on global understanding. However, the differing focal points in English language education between madrasas and pondok pesantren highlight distinctions in educational priorities and instructional objectives. Both institutions have their own values and roles in meeting distinct educational needs within society.

Several previous researchers have studied learning psychology issues, such as. The first study by (Graesser et al., 2022) titled Developing Educational Psychology to Accommodate Technology, Various Disciplines, and 21st Century Skills. In this study, the focus is on educational psychology to reveal interdisciplinary aspects and accommodate 21st century skills alongside traditional foundations of literacy, numeracy, science, reasoning (problem-solving), and academic subjects. The study also discusses the use of technology to address learning problems for students with diverse backgrounds, encompassing research areas in literacy, collaborative problem-solving, motivation, emotions, and fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. In the subsequent research by (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2023) titled Mental Schema Theory: Contribution to a special edition in Frontiers Psychology on enhancing learning and teaching through neuroscience. The research emphasizes the underlying thinking skills of problem-solving – and more broadly – the more

models one learns, the more tools they have for complex problems in the future. The research is conducted starting from existing results, which can be further developed into broader aspects and can span various fields. The third study is conducted by (Wang et al., 2020) with the title Prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms, and the demands for psychological knowledge and interventions in college students during the COVID-19 epidemic: A large cross-sectional study. This study focuses on the psychology of students during the learning process in the COVID-19 era. The results of the study show that the prevalence of anxiety in students is 7.7%. 42% of students reported needing psychological knowledge and 11.2% required psychological interventions during the COVID-19 epidemic period.

From the above-mentioned researches that discuss educational psychology issues, all of them encompass studies from various fields of knowledge; there has been no specific inclusion of a particular field of science and a specific object of study. In this study, the focus is on the psychological issues faced by students in learning English within the scope of students in a boarding school environment. Therefore, this article primarily addresses why students encounter difficulties in learning English and its causes. Despite English being one of the most crucial assets for facing the evolving challenges of the global world according to the current era.".

Method

This research will employ a qualitative case study approach to investigate the psychological issues faced by students when learning English within the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). This approach will enable the researcher to gain in-depth insights into the experiences, perceptions, and psychological challenges encountered by students in the context of English language learning at pesantren. The first step of this research will be conducted at the Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic boarding school, which offers a language program and will serve as the research subject. Subsequently, the researcher will select 30 students using purposive sampling, who will become key informants in this study. Data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews during the learning process to understand their perspectives regarding the psychological issues that arise while learning English at the pesantren. Observation was carried out to observe the interactions between students and the learning materials, instructors, and learning environment at the pesantren. Additionally, interviews were conducted to analyze the English language learning program, curriculum, and methods implemented at the pesantren. The data analysis in this research utilized a qualitative descriptive approach. The

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data obtained from interviews and observations will be thematically analyzed to identify patterns, themes, and variations emerging from students' experiences. The results of the analysis will be used to comprehensively depict the psychological issues that students face in learning English at the pesantren.

Findings and Discussion

In this part, the thesis deals with the theoretical aspect meaning based on research results which was described in the previous section answer the research questions of this study. Therefore, this section has been divided into three parts based on goal of the study.

Students' Psychological Problem

English language is a skill that is not easy to learn, especially for boarding school students ("santri"). There are several issues that santri face in learning English within the pesantren environment, one of which is psychological issues. This study focuses on the psychological problems that santri encounter while learning the English language. Based on observations and interviews, three psychological issues were identified, as follow:

Lack of Learning Motivation

This finding reveals that some students, or 21 of 30 participants, encounter challenges in their learning motivation. Factors such as:

a. Academic Boredom

Students feel bored with learning the English language. They perceive learning English as very dull. The absence of new methods and strategies in teaching is one of the factors that contribute to their boredom. The use of monotonous methods, like constant vocabulary memorization without practical application, burdens the students.

b. Insufficient Understanding of Material Relevance

The delivery of the material also affects students' motivation in learning English. On the other hand, limited study time also impacts English language learning. In the pesantren environment, students allocate most of their time to religious studies. As a result, students struggle to comprehend English language learning.

c. Perceived Irrelevance of English Language

For students, learning English is not considered highly important. Consequently, they lack the motivation to study English because students believe there is no correlation between learning English and their status as religious students. They primarily focus on religious studies.

Based on the above explanations, the regression results show a negative correlation between learning motivation scores and students' academic performance. Therefore, there is a need for more attention in designing teaching methods that encourage active participation and relate the material to real-life situations Dornyei (2001) proposed some ways to overcome the students who have low motivation. It can be applied by the teachers in order to encourage the students‟ motivation. 1) The first stageis to create motivating condition for learning. It means creating a pleasant and supportive environment in the classroom. 2) The second stageis to introduce initial motivating techniques by creating materials that are relevant for the students. 3) The next stageis to take care to maintain and to protect students‟ motivation by offering stimulating activities and fostering self-esteem, self-confidence, and cooperation among students. 4) The last stageis to turn evaluation and feedback into positive experiences.

Lack of Self-Confidence

The second factor found among 8 out of 30 students is a lack of self-confidence among some participants. This can arise due to factors such as:

a. Social Comparison

Social status also plays a role within the pesantren environment. In this regard, students might feel embarrassed due to the perception that learning English is associated with peers who had previously taken English courses before becoming pesantren students. Social comparisons between students who were able to attend English courses and those who were not can encompass various aspects, such as accessibility, opportunities, and overall social impact. It's important to note that these comparisons are not meant to judge or measure a person's worth, but rather to understand the influence of English courses on their social environment. Those with access and the ability to attend English courses may have the chance to develop better English language skills during their time at the pesantren, while those unable to attend may face limitations in learning English. This can restrict their access to certain opportunities, especially if English proficiency is highly valued in their environment, particularly within a pesantren that employs English communication.

b. Feelings of Inadequacy

Feelings of inadequacy in English language skills are commonly experienced by many students. They might feel awkward and less confident when speaking or writing in a language that is not their native tongue. Difficulties in grasping grammar, limited vocabulary, and imperfect pronunciation can lead to frustration and decreased motivation to

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learn English. Despite their efforts, feelings of inadequacy can sometimes hinder the learning process and impact their self-confidence. It's crucial for educators and the learning environment to create a supportive and nurturing atmosphere so that students can feel more comfortable and motivated to overcome these feelings of inadequacy and continue developing their English language skills.

The analysis results indicate that self-confidence levels have a positive correlation with academic performance. Therefore, there is a need for psychological support programs that can boost students' self-confidence and help them overcome feelings of inadequacy. Clément cited in (Kubo, 2009) introduced a study that suggests that self-confidence resulting from previous pleasant and successful experiences with the target language outside the classroom is more relevant than self-confidence resulting from classroom success.

Anxiety

The third finding is the presence of excessive anxiety within the academic environment. Heavy workloads, high competition, and pressure to achieve perfect results can lead to overwhelming anxiety. Statistical analysis indicates a negative correlation between anxiety levels and academic performance. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed, involving the creation of a more relaxed environment, offering counselling support, and teaching students stress management skills.

Conclusions

This study reveals three main factors that have a significant impact on students' academic performance: lack of learning motivation, lack of self-confidence, and excessive anxiety. These findings depict the challenges faced by some students in navigating a complex academic environment.

First, the lack of learning motivation is triggered by various factors such as boredom and unclear academic goals. The negative correlation between learning motivation and academic performance indicates that increasing motivation can have a positive impact on learning outcomes. Therefore, educators need to adopt teaching methods that connect the material to the real world to stimulate participation and overcome boredom.

Second, the lack of self-confidence has a significant influence on academic performance. Students who lack confidence tend to face obstacles in tackling academic tasks. The positive correlation between self-confidence levels and academic performance underscores the importance of psychological support in enhancing students' self-belief. Psychological

support programs can help students overcome social comparisons and develop strong self-confidence.

Third, excessive anxiety in the academic environment can negatively affect students' performance. High levels of anxiety can disrupt learning abilities and focus. Statistical analysis showing a negative relationship between anxiety and academic performance confirms the need for a holistic approach in addressing anxiety. Creating a more relaxed environment, providing counselling support, and teaching stress management skills can help students' better cope with academic challenges.

Overall, this study highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to enhance students' academic performance. Teachers, educational institutions, and counsellors need to collaborate to address the lack of learning motivation, lack of self-confidence, and excessive anxiety, enabling students to optimize their academic potential within a supportive educational environment.

The implications of this study can provide valuable guidance for the development of more supportive and effective learning strategies to address the psychological challenges faced by students in the pesantren context.

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