Volume 2 Number 3 November 2024
Available online at https://cesmid.or.id/index.php/jerp | Email: jerp@cesmid.or.id
E-ISSN: 3062-7605 | P-ISSN: 3062-7613
Published by CESMiD Foundation

Journal of Educational Research and Practice
Empowering Education Through Research and Practice

The Application of Cognitive Learning Theory in the Subject of Islamic Cultural History

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of cognitivist learning theory in the subject of Islamic cultural history (Indonesian: Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam – SKI) at MAN 2 Sleman. This study uses a qualitative descriptive research type, namely a method that describes, describes, and explains the events that occur to the object being studied based on the situation and conditions when the research was conducted. Data collection techniques used in this study were interviews, observations, and documentation. The results of this study indicate that the application of cognitive learning theory to SKI materials can train students to think critically, they will learn to understand examples and materials through the analysis, observations, and understanding they do, especially in understanding historical events in SKI subjects. In addition, the obstacles that SKI teachers may face in implementing cognitive learning in the independent curriculum are that it is difficult to identify students' interests and talents, because they are given freedom in learning. However, as a teacher, maximizing methods, techniques, and media is the main thing that must be considered so that learning objectives can be achieved.

Keywords: *cognitive learning, islamic cultural history, critical thinking, qualitative research.*

DOI: 10.70376/jerp.v2i3.192

INTRODUCTION

Humans are constantly evolving, especially in Knowledge, through continuous learning, adaptation and innovation. This evolution is seen in the creation and refinement of Knowledge through various methodologies and cognitive processes, which often involve trial and error and are influenced by the organization of information both consciously and unconsciously.[1] This dynamic process is further enriched by the integration of different disciplines and the reinterpretation of empirical Knowledge, which is often overlooked by modern science.[2,3] Knowledge evolves through a series of experiments, where individuals apply their cognitive abilities in various ways, which facilitates innovation despite being faced with uncertainty.[4] This evolution of Knowledge is not only limited to observable phenomena but also includes abstract and empirical insights that contribute to a holistic understanding of the world.[5]

Technological advances, such as data mining and genetic programming, also support the automatic generation of new knowledge, expanding the capacity for scientific discovery.[6] In addition, computational models such as genetic algorithms enable the evolution of learning strategies in artificial agents, demonstrating the potential for knowledge to evolve independently of human intervention.[7] By viewing the world in terms of information rather than just in terms of matter and energy, a consistent framework for understanding the evolution of life and cognition is obtained, demonstrating the increasing complexity of information over time.[8] While the evolution of knowledge demonstrates humanity's ability to adapt and innovate, it is essential to recognize the limitations and biases inherent in this process. Modern approaches often prioritize observable and quantifiable data, potentially ignoring the value of introspective and empirical knowledge that has historically enriched human understanding.[9] This perspective underscores the importance of a balanced approach incorporating modern scientific methods and traditional knowledge systems.[10]

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[1] Brian J. Loasby, "The Evolution of Knowledge and Knowledge of Evolution," *Jahrbücher Für Nationalökonomie Und Statistik* 234, no. 2–3 (April 1, 2014): 142–57, https://doi.org/10.1515/jbnst-2014-2-304.

[2] MA Castañeda Cataña et al., "Knowledge Evolution: Inert Sciences to Living Science," *Global Journal of Ecology* 7, no. 2 (September 27, 2022): 082–089, https://doi.org/10.17352/gje.000066.

[3] Husnul Khotimah, "Pendidikan Anak Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Aktualisasinya Di Era Digitalisasi," *Tarbawi Ngabar: Jurnal of Education* 3, no. 1 (June 15, 2022): 14–35, https://doi.org/10.55380/tarbawi.v3i1.152.

[4] Loasby, "The Evolution of Knowledge and Knowledge of Evolution."

[5] Castañeda Cataña et al., "Knowledge Evolution: Inert Sciences to Living Science."

[6] Jürgen Paetz, "Evolving Scientific Knowledge," *Advances in Soft Computing* 33 (2005): 733–38, https://doi.org/10.1007/3-540-31182-3_68.

[7] Carlos M. Parra and Masakazu Yano, "Evolutionary Dynamics of Knowledge," *Complexity* 11, no. 5 (May 16, 2006): 12–19, https://doi.org/10.1002/cplx.20127.

[8] Carlos Gershenson, "The World as Evolving Information," in *Unifying Themes in Complex Systems VII* (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2012), 100–115, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-18003-3_10.

[9] Castañeda Cataña et al., "Knowledge Evolution: Inert Sciences to Living Science."

[10] Moch. Rizal Fuadiy and Qomarudin, "Analisis Perbedaan Nilai Hasil Belajar Antara Siswa Madrasah Aliyah Yang Bermain Dan Tidak Bermain Mobile Gaming," *DIMAR: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 1 (December 23, 2023): 106–18, https://doi.org/10.58577/dimar.v5i1.108.

Learning theory is an attempt to describe how humans learn. This theory arises from research and observation of living objects (humans and animals) and how they learn about their environment.[11] This research and observation reveals notions and ideas about learning or learning theory. From there, we can recognize various learning theories based on research. Learning theories can be grouped into five schools, namely behaviourism, cognitivism, humanism, constructivism, and cybernetics.[12,13,14]

In the Qur'an surah Al-'Alaq, verses 1-5 contain the command to read and write. Surah Al-'Alaq, verses 1-5, is the first revelation that came down to the Prophet Muhammad to humans as a command to learn and teach. From this surah, Allah glorifies humans by giving them knowledge and teaching them to read and write.[15] Thus, the noblest people in the sight of Allah have the knowledge, which can only be obtained through Learning.[16] Learning is a mental activity carried out by a person to produce positive behavioural changes that last long through experience or practice. This experience involves aspects of personality, both physical and psychological. Learning changes everyone, and these changes benefit them.[17] Learning is ever-present in everyday life. This includes mastering academic skills or degrees and emotional development, social interaction, and personality development.[18]

Learning theories offer a variety of frameworks for understanding how students acquire knowledge and skills, emphasizing the interaction between students and teachers and the design of relevant educational activities. Each theory brings a unique perspective on the learning mechanisms that influence educational practice. Cognitive theories see students as active agents who construct knowledge through strategic engagement, with Vygotsky highlighting the role of social interaction in cognitive development.[19] On the other hand, behavioural theories view learning as a response to external stimuli, focusing on reinforcement to produce observable changes in behaviour.[20,21] In science education,

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[11] Umi Kalsum Mohd Salleh et al., "Roles of Self-Directed Learning and Social Networking Sites in Lifelong Learning.," *International Journal of Instruction* 12, no. 4 (October 2019): 167–82.

[12] Musiarifsyah Putra et al., "Classical and Modern Conceptions of Learning Theory Development: A Historical Pedagogical Analysis," *Teungku: Jurnal Guru Nahdlatul Ulama* 3, no. 2 (July 25, 2024): 1–27, https://jurnal.pergunuaceh.or.id/index.php/teungku/article/view/52.

[13] Alice Y. Kolb and David A. Kolb, "The Learning Way," *Simulation & Gaming* 40, no. 3 (June 10, 2009): 297–327, https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878108325713.

[14] Idawati Idawati, Abdul Hayyi Akrom, and M. Hasanil Asy'ari, "The Effects of Cognitive Flexibility on Teacher's Readiness To Implement the Merdeka Curriculum," *Al-Adzka: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* 14, no. 1 (June 22, 2024): 55–63, https://doi.org/10.18592/aladzkapgmi.v14i1.12180.

[15] M Asep Fathur Rozi, Ahmad Patoni, and Imam Fuadi, "Student Planning in Improving the Quality of Education," *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies* 1, no. 1 (2021): 13–18.

[16] Ayilzi Putri et al., "Perintah Belajar Dan Mengajar Dalam Q. S. Al-'Alaq Ayat 1-5 Menurut Tafsir Ath-Thabari," *EDU-RILIGIA: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Islam Dan Keagamaan* 7, no. 3 (September 7, 2023): 158, https://doi.org/10.47006/er.v7i3.16141.

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[19] Clark A. Chinn and Kalypso Iordanou, "Theories of Learning," in *Handbook of Research on Science Education* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 89–120, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367855758-6.

[20] Shahla Abolhasani, Mehri Doosti Irani, and Fariba Haghani, "Application of Learning Theories in Clinical Education," *Iranian Journal of Medical Education* 11, no. 9 (2012), http://ijme.mui.ac.ir/article-1-2049-en.html.

cognitive and behavioural theories each serve to support epistemic development as well as sequential application of skills.

Constructivist theories direct learners to construct their knowledge through experience, as seen in the use of narratives and portfolios in nursing education, as well as the teacher's role as a facilitator.[22,23] Humanist theories also emphasize learners' personal development. At the same time, connectivism focuses on digital technology-enabled learning processes and learning communities.[24] While each theory has significant contributions, their effectiveness can differ according to cultural and educational contexts. For example, rote-based learning is more common in authoritarian environments, while critical thinking is emphasized in democratic environments, underscoring the importance of tailoring learning theories to specific educational goals and conditions.[25]

One of the theories in learning is cognitive theory, which is a form of learning theory that holds the view that learning is a change in human behavior that involves internal and mental processes such as memory, information processing, emotions, and other psychiatric elements. The learning theory says that people who learn have potential abilities, so that complex behavior is more than a set of simple behaviors, such as [specific examples of simple behaviors. Therefore, this school prioritizes the learning process over learning outcomes. Learning does not only depend on stimulus and response, it is also a very complex thinking process.[26]

Cognitive learning theory is a theory that is often applied in schools, ranging from early childhood education (PAUD) to higher education. The principles of cognitive theory can be adapted to the characteristics of students' cognitive development at each level. Thus, teachers can see the transformation in cognitive or mental students using cognitive learning theory. Thus, this study aims to examine the application of cognitivism learning theory in SKI subjects at Man 2 Sleman.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the application of cognitivism learning theory in learning Islamic Cultural History (SKI) at MAN 2 Sleman. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to observe, describe, and explain the situation that occurs in the field based on direct interaction with the research subject.[27] As descriptive

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[21] Sudhakar C. Agarkar, "Influence of Learning Theories on Science Education," *Resonance* 24, no. 8 (August 30, 2019): 847–59, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12045-019-0848-7.

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[26] Suharno Suharno, "COGNITIVISM AND ITS IMPLICATION IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING," *PAROLE: Journal of Linguistics and Education* 1, no. 0 (2010): 72–96, https://doi.org/10.14710/PAROLE.V1I0.72-96.

[27] John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks;Califorinia: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2023).

research, the main focus is on recording and analyzing the application of cognitivism theory and the challenges that teachers may face in its application to the independent curriculum, which gives greater freedom to students in the learning process.

Data in this study were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, providing a comprehensive view of the learning process. Interviews were conducted with SKI teachers to understand how the cognitivism theory is applied and the obstacles faced in the learning process.[28] Observations were made during learning activities to directly observe the application of this theory, such as through group discussions, the use of video media, and presentation methods that involve students actively. Documentation in the form of learning materials and records of teaching and learning activities were also collected, further enriching our understanding of the learning process.

The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which involved data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.[29] At the reduction stage, irrelevant data was filtered out, while the main data was grouped according to themes related to the application of cognitivism theory.[30] Data presentation was done systematically to facilitate the drawing of conclusions regarding the application of this theory and the challenges faced by teachers in learning SKI. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study used triangulation of methods by comparing the results from interviews, observations, and documentation, so that the information obtained is more consistent and reliable.[31] With this method, the results of the study are expected to provide an accurate picture of the application of cognitivism theory at MAN 2 Sleman and the obstacles faced in achieving learning objectives.

DISCUSSION

1. Cognitivism Learning Theory

The cognitive perspective, derived from the Latin word "Cogitare" which means to think, includes the study of the nature of thought and how mental processes influence behavior. In a more practical sense, cognitive theory is about understanding and improving our intellectual capacity involving knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. It's about enhancing our ability to reason and make decisions. Issues related to the development of this rationality are called cognitive. Cognitive theory in more detail explains how the process or efforts made to improve the ability of the rational aspects of the individual.

Jean Piaget said that children's cognitive development limits their knowledge, intelligence, and collaboration with the environment. Intelligence is an ongoing process that

[28] Lexy. J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017).
[29] A. M Miles, Matthew B.;Saldaña, Johnny;Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (New York: SAGE Publications, 2013).
[30] R Bogdan and S K Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (Allyn and Bacon, 2003), https://books.google.co.id/books?id=-2juAAAAMAAJ.
[31] Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (New York: Sage Publication, 2015).

produces the structure needed to interact consistently with its environment. In the context of the framework formed by intelligence, knowledge tends to be highly subjective during infancy and early childhood and becomes objective when entering the early adult phase. Subjective attitudes are based on one's opinion, which is then used as a yardstick against the events being informed, whereas objective attitudes have a realistic and reality-based rationale. The process of cognitive formation is related to physical experiences that are organized through the child's thought process, such as mathematical, logical experience or internal knowledge.[32]

Neurological maturation plays a pivotal role in cognitive development, as brain development and cognitive changes are closely intertwined. The neural circuits that process cognition also handle emotions. When an experience is emotionally charged, it becomes ingrained in an individual's memory and can be reactivated.[33]

There are four stages of intellectual/cognitive development, including:

a. Sensory-motor stage. Experience at this stage depends on the senses, where individuals can see and feel experiences but cannot categorize them categorically. In this phase, actions are still influenced by instinct.
b. Preoperative stage. The characteristics of individuals involved in this preoperational stage include combining and transforming various information, articulating reasons for their opinions, and understanding the link between cause and effect in a given context.
c. The concrete operational stage is characterized by things visibly or tangibly understood. As such, individuals' ways of thinking are still far from abstract, although their thinking appears logical and systematic initially.
d. In the formal operational stage, when a person can understand logic and use ratios, they become able to think logically, create abstract concepts, and solve problems.

Cognitive learning theory is rooted in four fundamental principles including: a) Learners actively participate in the effort to gain understanding from experience; b) Learners develop understanding based on their prior knowledge; c) Learners gain understanding from notes; d) Learning is a change in the mental structure of learners. Cognitive theory interprets learning as an internal process that cannot be directly observed. Changes in a person's ability to act and behave in certain situations result from internal changes.[34] The advantages and disadvantages of cognitive theory include:

a. The advantages of cognitive theory:
   1) Encourage students to be more creative and independent, facilitating a more accessible learning process.
   2) In Indonesia, the curriculum focuses more on cognitive theory, which emphasizes knowledge development in each individual.

[32] Nurhayani Nurhayani and Dewi Salistina, *Teori Belajar Dan Pembelajaran* (Yogyakarta: CV. Gerbang Media Aksara, 2022).
[33] Crístia Gonçalves Lopes Corrêa, "The Relation Between Affection and Cognition: Theoretical Perspectives," *Psicologia Escolar e Educacional* 28 (2024), https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-35392024-257346-t.
[34] Nurhayani and Salistina, *Teori Belajar Dan Pembelajaran*.

3) In the cognitive learning approach, educators only need to convey the basic concepts of the material taught, while the rest is left to the learners. In this way, the educator only needs to observe and explain the flow of development of the material that has been given.
4) The cognitive learning approach focuses on the learners' ability to remember what they have learned. Educators can use this cognitive theory to maximize learners' memory ability.
5) According to cognitive experts, it can be said that creation or creating something new from existing ones. Therefore, in cognitive learning methods, learners are expected to be able to produce something new or innovate something that already exists.
6) This cognitive approach is easy to implement and has been widely applied in education in Indonesia at every level.

b. Disadvantages of cognitive theory:
1) Basically, this cognitive theory focuses more on the memory ability of students. Therefore, one of the areas for improvement of this theory is the assumption that all students have the same memory ability and are not differentiated.
2) This method only sometimes pays attention to how learners explore or develop their knowledge and the approach used by each learner in the search process. Each learner has a fundamentally different approach to understanding the material.
3) Learners will not thoroughly understand the material if teaching only uses cognitive methods.

The ability of learners to develop the material they have received must be considered when using cognitive learning methods.[35]

2. Application of Cognitivism Learning Theory in SKI Subjects at Man 2 Sleman

Man 2 Sleman is a school located on Jl. Raya Tajem No.32, Tajem, Maguwoharjo, Depok Sub-district, Sleman Regency. Raya Tajem No. 32, Tajem, Maguwoharjo, Depok Sub-district, Sleman Regency. This school, which uses the 2013 curriculum and has just implemented the independent curriculum in class X, is exploring how these curricula can be aligned with the principles of Cognitivism Learning Theory. The vision of this school is to realize an inclusive, leading, character and environmentally friendly madrasah. Some things that must be considered when using learning theory are material selection, material development, and learning designs that are maximally arranged to make students understand the lesson more easily. The success of the teaching and learning process can not only be measured through text analysis, but also seen by positive actions, such as changes in the behavior of students.

One of the Islamic religious subjects taught at Man 2 Sleman is Islamic Cultural History (SKI), which discusses the history of Islamic culture, starting from the period before the

[35] Kaya Yilmaz, "The Cognitive Perspective on Learning: Its Theoretical Underpinnings and Implications for Classroom Practices," *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 84, no. 5 (August 11, 2011): 204–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2011.568989.

arrival of Islam, the process of spreading Islam, the period of the Prophet's life, to Islam in the present. Studying history has essential significance for students because they can understand the development of life, especially Islam, which developed in the past, and are expected to take lessons from these events. Learning SKI also has an essential value for educators because it can support the achievement of National learning objectives set in the curriculum.

The SKI teacher explained how he applied cognitive learning theory. For example, the material used is the material of the Prophet Muhammad's da'wah of the Mecca and Medina periods using learning media in the form of learning videos downloaded from YouTube. After viewing the learning video is complete, they are asked to discuss. Then, each group analyzes the material. After that, the students presented the results in front of the class and allowed other groups to ask questions about the material that had been presented.[36]

In addition, SKI teachers have also utilized PowerPoint presentations when delivering Khulafaur Rasyidin material, the development of the Umayah Dynasty, and classical period scientists. Then, students conduct discussions to analyze the material that has been delivered. That is how the learning process is carried out.[37]

The use of learning methods is adjusted to the subject matter. Because the curriculum implemented in the madrasah aliyah uses an independent curriculum, the learning activities are carried out differently. This means that a teacher must understand students' ability levels, interests, and needs to design compelling learning experiences.

When students show positive changes in their behaviour, it is a testament to effective learning outcomes. These outcomes are not just achieved, but they are also a result of the educators' commitment and responsibility. By accepting constructive criticism and suggestions, educators ensure that the learning process is not just successful, but also constantly evolving. As educated individuals, educators should be committed to accepting feedback as a means to improve and meet the set targets and standards.

The theory of cognitive development, also known as the development of the intellect, is the basis of Jean Piaget's theory of learning. Before introducing his theory, he said that intelligence is a state of equilibrium in which all cognitive functions move.[38]

According to Piaget, cognitive development in children generally consists of four stages, including: a) Sensorimotor period (0-2 years); b) Preoperational period (2-7 years); c) Concrete operational period (7-11 years); and d) Formal operation period (11-15) years. The learning stage includes three things, among others:

a. Assimilation is the process of integrating new information into existing cognitive structures. For example, if a student already understands the principles of addition, the teacher introduces the multiplication principle. There is a process of unification between the principle of addition that has been understood by the student and the principle of multiplication as new information that the student will understand.

[36] R1, SKI Teacher of Man 2 Sleman, "Interview Results," (Teacher's Room, March 15, 2024).
[37] Ibid.
[38] Nurhayani and Salistina, *Teori Belajar Dan Pembelajaran*.

b. Accommodation is the process of adjusting cognitive structures to new circumstances. The multiplication process is used in more specialized circumstances. For example, the teacher gives multiplication problems to students who have learned the multiplication principle.

Equilibration or balance is the adjustment process between assimilation and accommodation. It serves as a counterweight for students to continue to develop and acquire further knowledge. However, the balancing process is necessary to remain mentally stable. Without this process, one's cognitive development will be stunted and disorganized. Conversely, if one can maintain balance, they will be able to organize the various information they receive in a clear, sensible and logical manner.[39]

The SKI teacher also stated that in addition to using learning videos, she applies the *make-a-match* learning model in teaching SKI material.[40] This learning method allows students to collaborate, providing opportunities for them to work together. This technique can be applied in all subjects and grade levels. The pair-swapping method encourages active participation from all students in the learning process. In addition, this method requires students to collaborate with their group members to complete the task, resulting in active participation of all students in the process of learning activities.[41]

The advantages of making *a matching* learning model include increasing children's cognitive and physical learning activities. This learning model is fun because it contains game elements, increases children's understanding of the material being studied, and can increase the urge to learn, train and instil a sense of responsibility, and appreciate the time to learn. The weaknesses of the *make-a-match* learning model are that time will be wasted if this strategy is not well prepared, many students are embarrassed to find a partner with the opposite sex, and if the teacher does not direct well, then many students do not pay attention to the partner's presentation.[42]

The results of the application of cognitive learning theory are satisfactory. After applying this theory, students will learn to think critically and analyze the SKI material presented by the teacher. They will also learn to understand examples and materials through analysis, observation, and understanding. In addition, learners will feel more independent, creative and responsible for what they do. By using this cognitive theory, they will be trained to think carefully and be able to understand the lesson.

In addition, the SKI Teacher said that the obstacles he faced in implementing cognitive learning in this independent curriculum were that it was difficult to identify children's interests and talents because they were given independence in learning. Nevertheless, the

[39] Nurhayani and Salistina.

[40] R1, SKI Teacher of Man 2 Sleman, "Interview Results." (Teacher's Room, March 15, 2024).

[41] Moch. Agus Krisno Budiyanto, *Sintaks 45 Metode Pembelajaran Dalam Student Centered Learning (SCL)*, 2nd ed. (Malang: Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang Press, 2019).

[42] Fadhilah Raihani, Eko Kuntarto, and Khoirunnisa, "Penerapan Model Pembelajaran Make a Match Berbantu Media Flashcard Dalam Meningkatkan Kemampuan Membaca Siswa Kelas I," *Pendas : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 8, no. 1 (June 30, 2023): 5350–63, https://doi.org/10.23969/JP.V8I1.8705.

SKI Teacher tries to maximize the methods, techniques, and media that he teaches so that they can be adapted to the needs of students and learning objectives can be achieved.[43]

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions presented above, the researcher concludes that applying cognitivism learning theory to the study of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) at MAN 2 Sleman positively impacts the development of students' critical and analytical thinking skills. SKI teachers employ various methods that align with the principles of cognitivism, including group discussions, videos, and presentations, which encourage active student participation in the learning process. This approach emphasizes connecting students' existing knowledge with new information, strengthening their understanding of historical material. However, some obstacles are encountered in this application, particularly the challenge of identifying students' interests and talents under the independent curriculum. This curriculum grants students more freedom and requires teachers to customize their learning methods further.

The findings of this study focus on the specific implementation of cognitivism theory within the framework of the independent curriculum for SKI subjects in madrasah-based schools. This area has yet to be extensively explored in previous research. The study demonstrates that cognitive-based learning methods—such as discussion models and media-enhanced instruction—can enhance student engagement in history-related subjects. Furthermore, it contributes to the literature on the challenges of applying cognitivism theory in a learning environment that allows students greater freedom, particularly in schools with a religious background.

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[43] R1, SKI Teacher of Man 2 Sleman, "Interview Results." (Teacher's Room, March 15, 2024).

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