

SELF-REFLECTION TECHNIQUES TO INCREASE SELF-ACCEPTANCE IN MAN TEBING TINGGI STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the experiences of students in practicing muhasabah (self-reflection) and to examine how these experiences contribute to the formation of self-acceptance. The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the subjective meanings constructed by participants through their spiritual experiences. The research subjects consisted of two tenth-grade students from MAN Tebing Tinggi, selected through purposive sampling, along with two supporting teachers: a Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher and an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participatory observation, and reflective documentation. The findings indicate that muhasabah, carried out both through school-based religious activities and personal reflection, has a positive impact on how students perceive themselves. This process helps students to understand and accept their shortcomings, cultivate gratitude, and strengthen their spiritual connection with Allah SWT. Additionally, acceptance of destiny (takdir) plays a significant role in fostering inner peace and sincerity in dealing with life's realities. These findings emphasize that muhasabah affects not only the spiritual aspect but also contributes meaningfully to the psychological well-being of students. In the context of Islamic education, muhasabah can be integrated as a reflective strategy to develop character and strengthen students' self-acceptance. This study contributes to the development of Islamic counseling that emphasizes internalized values and the holistic formation of self-awareness.

Keywords: Islamic Counseling, Muhasabah, Self-Acceptance, Spiritual Reflection, Students

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap pengalaman peserta didik dalam menjalani muhasabah diri serta mengkaji peran pengalaman tersebut dalam membentuk penerimaan diri. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus, yang memungkinkan eksplorasi mendalam terhadap makna subjektif yang dibentuk peserta dari pengalaman spiritual mereka. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari dua siswa kelas X MAN Tebing Tinggi yang dipilih secara purposive, serta dua guru pendukung yakni guru Bimbingan dan Konseling (BK) dan guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI). Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi non-partisipatif, dan dokumentasi reflektif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa muhasabah diri, yang dilakukan baik melalui kegiatan keagamaan sekolah maupun refleksi pribadi, memberikan dampak positif terhadap perubahan cara pandang peserta terhadap diri mereka sendiri. Proses ini membantu siswa memahami dan menerima kekurangan,

membangun rasa syukur, serta memperkuat hubungan spiritual dengan Allah SWT. Selain itu, penerimaan terhadap takdir menjadi bagian penting dalam memperkuat ketenangan dan keikhlasan peserta dalam menghadapi realitas hidup. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa muhasabah diri tidak hanya berdampak pada aspek spiritual, tetapi juga memberikan pengaruh signifikan terhadap kesejahteraan psikologis peserta didik. Dalam konteks pendidikan Islam, muhasabah dapat diintegrasikan sebagai strategi reflektif untuk membina karakter dan memperkuat penerimaan diri siswa. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dalam pengembangan konseling Islami yang berorientasi pada nilai-nilai internalisasi dan pembentukan kesadaran diri secara holistik.

Kata Kunci: *Konseling Islami, Muhasabah Diri, Penerimaan Diri, Peserta Didik, Refleksi Spiritual*

INTRODUCTION

Self-acceptance is a fundamental aspect in maintaining mental health and psychological well-being, especially in adolescence, which is full of dynamics of emotional development and the search for identity. The ability to accept oneself as a whole includes awareness and acceptance of one's strengths and weaknesses, without being trapped in self-denial or hatred. However, various studies and observations show that adolescents often have difficulty developing self-acceptance. This phenomenon is reflected in withdrawing behavior, a sense of inferiority, excessive self-blame, to the appearance of psychological symptoms such as anxiety and depression. (Maulida & Mardiana, 2021) (Hamdani & Nurlela, 2020) (Suryani & Anshori, 2022)

Empirically, low self-acceptance in adolescents is caused by various factors, both internal and external. Among them are academic pressure, the influence of social media that triggers social comparisons, family conflicts, and the lack of reflective space in the school environment. In the context of Islamic education, the self-reflection approach, which is spiritual reflection on behavior and intentions based on religious teachings, can be a relevant alternative intervention. Muhasabah not only fosters religious awareness but also serves as a mechanism for regulating emotions and building character. (Azhari, 2023) (Iskandar T. , 2022) (Astuti & Wulandari, 2021)

Islamic counseling as an integrative approach between psychology and Islamic teachings provides a framework for the practice of muhasabah in the realm of education and guidance. In this perspective, muhasabah is positioned as an inner worship that has an impact on peace of mind, increasing piety, and improving morals. Al-Ghazali even called muhasabah the greatest form of jihad, which is the struggle against lust through reflection and self-evaluation. This activity can be done through dhikr, tafakur, writing a daily journal, to contemplating verses of the Qur'an. (Rahmatullah, 2020) (Lestari & Prasetyo, 2022)

A number of recent studies have underlined the benefits of muhasabah in improving psychological well-being. It was found that the practice of muhasabah was able to strengthen students' motivation to learn and confidence, especially in the face of academic pressure. Meanwhile, it concluded that students who regularly do muhasabah have a

higher level of self-acceptance than those who do not. These findings indicate that muhasabah has a significant therapeutic function in helping adolescents manage life pressures more constructively. (Firmansyah, 2021) (Putri & Wibowo, 2024)

Although muhasabah activities have become part of religious activities in Islamic-based schools such as Islamic boarding schools, tadabbur verses, and research reflection journals that specifically explore the influence of muhasabah experiences on the formation of student self-acceptance are still relatively limited. Therefore, it is important to explore more deeply how the practice of religious reflection in the school environment can support students' psychological development, especially in building a healthy attitude of self-acceptance. (Hasanah, 2020)

The results of initial interviews with Counseling Guidance (BK) teachers and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at MAN Tebing Tinggi strengthen the urgency of this research. The BK teacher said that some students showed self-denial behaviors, such as a tendency to close themselves off and blame themselves for failure. On the other hand, PAI teachers observed that reflective religious activities were able to help students become calmer and more open. This fact strengthens the suspicion that muhasabah has a strategic role in fostering students' character and mental health.

Theoretically and practically, this research is important to frame muhasabah not just as a practice of religious rituals, but as a psychospiritual approach in education. By exploring students' subjective experiences through a qualitative approach of case studies, this study aims to deeply understand the meaning of muhasabah in students' lives and its contribution to self-acceptance. In addition, this research is expected to provide recommendations for teachers, counselors, and schools in designing character education programs based on spiritual reflection that touch cognitive, affective, and religious aspects holistically.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with an intrinsic type of case study. This approach was chosen because the researcher aims to explore in depth the subjective experiences of students in conducting self-reflection and its influence on self-acceptance in the context of Islamic education. Qualitative research is well suited to explore the meaning that individuals construct towards personal experiences in complex social and religious environments. Intrinsic case studies are used because the focus of research is on understanding one specific phenomenon, namely the meaning of self-reflection for students who have difficulty accepting themselves. (Creswell, 2020)

The subjects in this study were two students of class X of MAN Tebing Tinggi, who were selected purposively based on the recommendations of the Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher. The selection was based on criteria: the first showed symptoms of low self-acceptance, such as withdrawal, worthlessness, and inner conflict with one's identity and destiny, then being active in the school's religious activities, and finally being willing to provide information openly. In addition, two informants supporting BK teachers and

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers were involved to provide triangulative views on the condition of students from psychological and religious aspects. A brief profile of the subject is prepared to clarify the context of the analysis that the researcher has detailed in the form of a table below.

Table 1. Brief Profile of Research Subject

SUBJECT	AGE	GENDER	FAMILY BACKGROUND	RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES	KEY PSYCHOSOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS
A	16	Woman	Single parent	Actively participate in religious studies at school	Passive in social communication
B	15	Man	Nurtured by grandparents	Be active in spiritual activities	Often alone, lack of confidence

Data were collected through three main techniques, the first of which was non-participatory observation to record non-verbal expressions, body language, and students' engagement during interactions, both in muhasabah activities and interviews. This observation aims to strengthen the interpretation of interview data. Furthermore, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with both students and supporting informants. The interview guide covers aspects of perception of muhasabah, spiritual experiences, emotional dynamics, and their influence on one's attitude towards oneself. In-depth interviews are important in qualitative research because they allow researchers to understand the inner world of respondents in a reflective and open way. Finally, reflective documentation is used as supporting data, including student daily journals, records of muhasabah activities, and quotes of spiritual reflection. The analysis was carried out with a thematic approach, namely identifying key themes related to the dynamics of muhasabah and self-acceptance. (Moleong, 2000) (Iskandar & Rasyid, 2022)

The data was analyzed using an interactive analysis technique that included three stages. First, data reduction, which is selecting and simplifying relevant information; second, data presentation, by compiling a descriptive narrative based on thematic patterns; and finally, drawing conclusions, which are carried out simultaneously with the data collection process to obtain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied. To maintain the validity of the data, a source triangulation technique was carried out by comparing information from students, BK teachers, and PAI teachers, as well as member checking by asking respondents to verify transcripts and interpretation results so that the meaning obtained truly represented their experience. (Miles & Saldaña, 2014) (Sugiyono, 2022)

This study also pays attention to research ethics. Before data collection, researchers took care of informed consent from participants and their guardians. All participants' identities

are kept confidential to maintain confidentiality. Participants are given the right to discontinue participation at any time without pressure or consequences, in line with the ethical principles of social research. With this approach, the research aims to uncover in depth the religious and psychological meaning of the practice of self-reflection for students, as well as how these meanings contribute to the process of self-reconciliation and the formation of spiritual identity in the context of Islamic education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of observations in this study show that both subjects experience a low level of self-acceptance before undergoing the self-reflection process. Subject A showed significant symptoms of academic distress, characterized by low confidence in following learning, while Subject B showed psychological burden because they felt unable to meet social and family expectations. Both showed withdrawn behavior, minimal participation in class activities, and tended to blame themselves for their failures. This condition was reinforced by the observation of Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers, who identified signs of mild stress and decreased learning motivation in both students.

The experience of self-reflection experienced by the subjects was carried out through various religious activities in the school environment, such as flash pesantren and reflective studies, and writing Islamic journals. Based on the results of observations and interviews, one of the participants admitted that reflection through these activities gave him space to reinterpret life goals and accept failure as part of the growth process. This process brings about the realization that failure is not the end, but the opportunity to improve oneself. Other subjects found that journaling activities were an effective means of expressing emotions and accepting their circumstances more openly.

The religious atmosphere formed in the school also plays a big role in facilitating this muhasabah process. Observations of school routines show that there is a habituation of activities such as tadabbur verses, congregational prayers, and self-evaluation sessions in informal religious forums. The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher said that this habituation is part of the spiritual value-based character education strategy. BK teachers added that written reflection is often used as part of the student mentoring process that is informal and adaptive to their emotional needs.

The behavioral transformation that occurs after the muhasabah can be seen from the change in the subject's attitude towards himself. They begin to show openness to social interaction, increased self-confidence, and acceptance of their strengths and weaknesses as part of human nature. This is also accompanied by an increase in spirituality, characterized by a more intense closeness to Allah SWT and the ability to manage negative emotions more wisely. This change strengthens the understanding that self-acceptance is not a form of resignation, but an awareness to grow within one's boundaries and continue to strive with gratitude.

Overall, observations show that self-reflection has a significant contribution to shaping students' self-acceptance. This process not only has an impact on the psychological

aspect, but also strengthens the spiritual and social dimensions of students. Thus, self-reflection can be considered as an effective reflective-religious approach in supporting the development of adolescent character in the Islamic educational environment.

The results of the observation are also in line with the findings of an in-depth interview conducted on five informants consisting of two main participant students, a Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher, an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher, and one homeroom teacher. The findings from these five sources corroborate the results of observations regarding the significant impact of self-reflection on students' self-acceptance.

Informant 1 (Subject A – Female student of class X)

Subject A said that before participating in muhasabah activities in the Islamic boarding school program, he often felt failed and useless due to declining academic grades. He stated:

"I often feel inadequate, sometimes I feel inappropriate to go to school here, because my friends are smarter. But after participating in study activities and writing reflection journals, I became calmer and could see myself differently."

This participant assessed that muhasabah helped him reframe the meaning of failure as part of the learning process, not the end of everything.

Informant 2 (Subject B – Grade X student)

Subject B, who was cared for by his grandparents, said that he often felt that he did not meet family expectations and tended to avoid social association. He says:

"I feel alone and not sure of myself. But after frequent spiritual activities and journaling my feelings, I feel more receptive to reality and become calmer."

He emphasized that writing is a medium of reflection that is very helpful in the process of self-acceptance and emotional management.

3 Reports (Teacher Guidance and Counseling)

The BK teacher stated that both students showed characteristics of student behavior with low self-acceptance, such as withdrawing, being passive during discussions, and showing tense facial expressions when speaking in class. He explains:

"After participating in religious programs such as flash boarding schools and the habit of written reflection, I see a difference. They become more open and start to be active again, albeit slowly."

The BK teacher also added that he accompanies students with a non-formal approach and provides a safe space for expression through writing.

Informan 4 (Teacher PAI)

The Islamic Religious Education teacher revealed that muhasabah has become part of the spirituality-based character curriculum in schools. He stated:

"We accustom students to recite verses, write Islamic journals, and reflective discussions. The goal is for them to learn to know themselves and get closer to Allah SWT."

According to him, this approach is very important in shaping the mental and spiritual life of students to be able to manage the pressures of adolescent life, especially in the academic field.

Informant 5 (Homeroom Teacher)

The second homeroom teacher of the students also observed a change in behavior after the muhasabah activity was carried out. He says:

"Previously, they were very closed and passive. But after the reflection activity, I saw that they were more confident when they spoke and started to blend in with their friends."

He added that the support of the religious school environment is very helpful in the process of psychological transformation of students.

The five interviews showed consistency in strengthening the findings of observations, that self-reflection has a positive impact on students' self-acceptance. Activities such as religious studies, tadabbur verses, and reflective journal writing can be a medium for emotionally and spiritually healthy self-actualization. These findings also indicate the importance of the role of the school environment and educators in creating a safe space for reflection, which ultimately shapes students' confidence and social openness. The muhasabah approach can be positioned as a relevant and contextual psychopedagogical strategy in fostering adolescent character in Islamic schools.

The results of this study show that *Muhasabah Alive* plays an important role in forming self-acceptance in adolescents, especially students in Islamic schools. Based on observations and interviews with two grade IX students, BK teachers, PAI teachers, and homeroom teachers, it is known that students who originally showed symptoms of low self-acceptance experienced emotional and spiritual transformation after going through the muhasabah process. Subject A experienced considerable academic pressure, characterized by feelings of insecurity, feeling left behind compared to their peers, and the emergence of a tendency to blame themselves for academic failure. Meanwhile, Subject B faces social pressure and high family expectations, and feels that they have failed to meet expectations. Both show symptoms of withdrawing from social interaction and tend to be passive in class. This is in line with the findings, which state that adolescents with low self-acceptance are more prone to experiencing stress, anxiety, and decreased motivation to learn. (Iskandar & Rasyid, 2022)

Through various forms of muhasabah activities such as Islamic boarding schools, tadabbur verses, writing Islamic journals, and reflection forums, both students began to

experience changes in their perception of themselves and their lives. This reflective process provides a safe space for them to process their inner experiences, evaluate mistakes, and foster awareness of the broader meaning of life. This is in line with the study that emphasizes that self-reflection is able to internalize spiritual values in facing the pressures of life and become a healthy emotional coping mechanism. (Kurniawan, 2020)

One participant stated that after actively writing a reflection journal, he felt calmer and began to see failure as part of the learning process, not the end of the journey. Meanwhile, other participants found that journaling helped them express their emotions and accept themselves more sincerely. This reinforces the view, which states that reflection-based spiritual activities, such as journaling and tadabbur, have a therapeutic effect in building emotion regulation and self-awareness. (Yulianti & Rahman, 2021)

The transformation experienced by students is not only psychological, but also touches the spiritual dimension. Their closeness to Allah SWT increases, as shown by the increased intensity of worship, inner peace, and the ability to manage negative emotions. The spiritual dimension has an important role in building adolescents' resilience to psychosocial pressure, especially when combined with religious activities oriented towards reflection and contemplation. (Fauziah & Hasanah, 2021)

The school environment also plays a big role in creating a religious atmosphere that supports the muhasabah process. The habituation of activities such as congregational prayers, Islamic discussions, and self-evaluation is a forum for the holistic character formation of students. BK and PAI teachers consistently build an open, non-judgmental, and non-judgmental communication space as part of the psychopedagogical approach. This reinforces the opinion that a spiritually and emotionally supportive environment will accelerate the process of forming positive characters in students. (Hidayat, 2022)

Significant changes can be seen from the increase in student confidence, the ability to accept themselves as they are, and openness in social interaction. They begin to understand that accepting themselves does not mean giving up, but rather becomes the starting point of awareness to grow and improve. This view is supported by, which emphasizes that healthy self-acceptance is the main foundation for forming confidence, meaning in life, and resilience in facing challenges. (Putri & Sari, 2023)

Interviews with BK teachers and homeroom teachers also showed that the muhasabah approach had a real impact on the process of assisting students who experienced emotional crises. This approach is considered more adaptive because it is personal, spiritual, and contextual with Islamic values that are close to the lives of students. According to, strengthening character based on religious values has advantages because it not only touches the moral aspect, but also forms the psychological integrity of students. Thus, the findings of this study show that self-reflection can be used as an effective religious-reflective strategy in fostering the character and mental health of adolescents in Islamic-based schools. Not only does it build self-awareness and self-acceptance, but it

also strengthens the dimension of spirituality that is the foundation. The researchers concluded the findings in more detail in the form of a table below. (Nasution, 2020).

Table 1. Summary of Observational and Interview Findings on Self-Reflection and Self-Acceptance

ASPECTS	SUBJECT A	SUBJECT B	SUPPORTING RESOURCES
INITIAL CONDITIONS	Academic stress, low self-esteem, withdrawal, self-blame.	Social pressure, lack of confidence, feeling like a failure, and withdrawing.	Direct observation, BK Teacher, Homeroom Teacher
PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS	Mild stress, passivity in class, restrained emotional expression.	Closing himself in, anxious about not meeting family expectations.	BK Teacher, Classroom Observation
FORM OF MUHASABAH	Islamic boarding schools, reflective studies, and writing Islamic journals.	Spiritual study, reflective journaling, and personal prayer.	Students, PAI Teachers
RESPONSE AFTER MUHASABAH	Feel calmer, understand failure as a process.	Able to accept oneself, express emotions through journaling.	Subject A and B Interviews
ATTITUDE TRANSFORMATION	More confident, open in social interactions, accepting oneself and the destiny of Allah SWT.	Be more active, do not feel alone, and increase spirituality.	BK Teacher, Homeroom Teacher, Follow-up Observation
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT SUPPORT	Religious atmosphere: congregational prayers, tadabbur verses, self-evaluation forums.	Support for religious activities and written reflection spaces.	Teacher PAI, Teacher BK
SPIRITUAL IMPACT	Increased spiritual awareness and relationship with Allah SWT.	Ability to manage negative emotions through a spiritual approach.	All informants

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Self-reflection is effective in increasing students' self-acceptance, spirituality, and emotional regulation in Islamic schools.

Just like Subject A, with the added meaning that journaling helps with deeper self-acceptance.

All data support (observation and interviews)

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *self-reflection* is an effective reflective-religious approach in forming *self-acceptance* in adolescents, especially in the Islamic school environment. The two subjects who initially experienced academic and social pressure and showed symptoms of withdrawal and low self-confidence showed significant transformation after participating in muhasabah activities. This process touches not only the psychological aspect, but also the spiritual, which synergistically forms mental resilience and increased gratitude and social openness. Activities such as flash pesantren, reflective journal writing, and verse tadabbur are effective media to encourage students to reflect on life experiences, process emotions, and form self-awareness. The support of BK teachers, PAI teachers, and the religious atmosphere of the school strengthened this process. Thus, self-reflection has proven to be a strategic approach in efforts to develop adolescent character and strengthen mental health in Islamic value-based education.

Self-reflection can be used as part of preventive and developmental counseling services, especially in helping students who show symptoms of low self-acceptance and emotional crisis. The integration of muhasabah activities in the school curriculum and culture, such as through reflective forums, tadabbur, or spiritual journaling, can strengthen the formation of students' character holistically. It is necessary for family involvement in supporting the child's reflection process through open communication, strengthening spiritual values at home, and empathic validation of children's emotions. Students can be trained to make self-reflection a habit, not only in a religious context but also in the face of learning challenges and social life. This study only involved two subjects as the main participants, so generalizations of results are limited. The contextual focus on Islamic-based schools makes the results not necessarily fully relevant for public or non-religious schools. The data was collected in a limited time, so it was not able to capture the long-term dynamics of changes in student behavior and spirituality. The research is qualitative with observation and interview methods, which are highly dependent on the subjective interpretation of the researcher.

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